Gender and Decolonization in the Congo

The Legacy of Patrice Lumumba

Karen Bouwer

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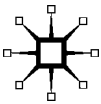

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Printed in the United States of America.

I dedicate this book to my parents
Harriet Johanna Bouwer (née Pretorius)
and
Jeremia Jess Bouwer

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INTRODUCTION: THE GENDER OF DECOLONIZATION

Shortly before independence on June 30, 1960, Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba met resistance from a surprising source: his wife. Pauline Opango and other women organized against their husbands in Lumumba's incoming administration at a moment when the men would seem to need the loyal support of their spouses. Why? Anicet Kashamura explains the mounting tensions in the Lumumba household as independence approached:

> Lumumba's family drama intensifies when he starts assuming responsibilities. Pauline Opango, his wife, is worried. . . . She is the first in the Congo to notice that independence is going to bring about changes in Congolese homes. A man who happens to become a minister, she says, will be tempted to marry a better educated, more Europeanized woman, able to play a part in diplomatic ceremonies. That's why she organizes a women's movement in Leopoldville to protest the behavior of the ministers and of her husband. (7)[1]

The discovery of this event, almost eclipsed in the turmoil surrounding the struggle for independence, raised a whole range of questions that spurred me to undertake this study.

Pauline Lumumba's political initiative draws attention to a dimension of women's political involvement beyond what is commonly acknowledged in the literature on the Congo. I seek to foreground women while I use the iconic figure of Patrice Lumumba as the focal point of my investigation of gender and decolonization. This protest underscores the family as a crucial locus for the manifestation and contestation of gender relations and emphasizes the interconnections between public and private domains at this transitional moment in political life.

During my meeting with Madame Lumumba in Kinshasa in March 2008, she corroborated Kashamura's account in *De Lumumba aux colonels*.[2] The women's protests emphasized the effect of the changing

political circumstances on their personal lives, and they asked for justice in the family based on their contributions to the anticolonial struggle. Kashamura represents their voices in two brief sentences:

> —Why, in Africa, when someone becomes a minister, diplomat or parliamentarian, must he take a new wife?
> —Yet women also fought against colonialism. (7)

At this important historical juncture, Congolese men were elevated from colonial subjection, and some were affirmed as leaders to be respected. In many African societies, "big men" took on new wives as their status rose, in part because they could pay the bride wealth and in part as a means of extending their alliances. This practice not only privileged wealthy and powerful men but also reinforced their position, since multiple wives created more wealth and produced more children. The concern that activated Pauline and the women who joined her was based on the men's continuation of what could be regarded as customary patterns in an unprecedented historical situation of independence won on European terms. However, it seems that in the Congo these men's wives would not have become senior wives when their husbands took new, "more Europeanized" wives. Certainly that would not have happened in Lumumba's case; he had only one recognized wife at a time. The *évolués*—those Africans who had received a certain amount of Western education and were considered to be "evolving" toward the "civilized" standards set by the supposedly superior Europeans—supported monogamy; more often than not they would divorce or repudiate their wife so that another woman could take her place. The term used by the protesting women was "changer de femme," which literally means "to change wives" rather than to take additional wives. In attaining office, African men seemed not only to be taking over powers previously arrogated by Europeans but also to be assuming a more Europeanized style of displaying power, most immediately in a public, diplomatic ceremony. The men who assumed positions of power in the Congo belonged to the small elite of *évolués*. In the scenario depicted by Kashamura, women obviously feel left behind in the status hierarchy typical of the *évolué* class whereby a woman's rank depended not so much on her own kin connections as on her degree of education and Europeanization.

In their protests the women counter the notion that the woman to be honored is an *évoluée* with the assertion that the women who deserve respect are those who contributed to the struggle for independence, regardless of their rank in terms defined by Europeans or by African networks of kinship and patronage. The practice of taking a new wife (or the

threat perceived by current wives) also elicits reflection on what conduct is expected of spouses in diplomatic and international circles. How does a wife's respectability and her compliance with particular constructions of femininity contribute to her husband's public image, whether in the minds of the husband or the society at large?[3] The women's claims and the questions they raise bring to light crucial aspects of the gendered configurations of decolonization: the marginalization of women in the public sphere based on conceptions of appropriate womanhood; the subsequent neglect of the contributions they nevertheless did make; and the assumption by the primary actors of the moment of decolonization that the needs of women are automatically subsumed in demands they, the men, see as gender-neutral and therefore universal. But the women's actions also suggest that at this time of change, new ideas and a degree of autonomy were becoming available to them, as contradictions within and among the discourses in circulation became evident.

In the voluminous mass of scholarly, journalistic, and literary works dedicated to Lumumba and decolonization in the Congo, no sustained gender analysis has yet been undertaken. Addressing this significant absence in the scholarship, I ask: Where are the women? What new ideals of masculinity and femininity were generated in this struggle?[4] Were masculinist biases reinscribed in later depictions of the period and of the martyred nationalist leader?[5] Through analysis of Lumumba's writings and speeches, the life stories of women activists, and literary and cinematic works, this study challenges male-centered interpretations of Congolese nationalism and illustrates how generic conventions both reinforced and undercut gender bias in representations of Lumumba and his female contemporaries.

Why Lumumba?

Lumumba's time at the helm of a free Congo was short; he was assassinated on January 17, 1961, just six months after the declaration of independence. Yet his memory remains a political and cultural force within and beyond the country's borders. A recent survey in *Jeune Afrique*, a leading news magazine, revealed that a majority of Africans consider Patrice Lumumba to be the second most important African leader of the twentieth century after Nelson Mandela. The success of Haitian director Raoul Peck's feature film *Lumumba* confirms his continued relevance. Released in Belgium in September 2000, it was presented at various film festivals and had commercial releases in Africa, Europe, and North America. It won the Paul Robeson Diaspora Award at FESPACO in 2001 and was aired on HBO. Many Congolese I met in the Democratic Republic of the

Congo (DRC) in 2008, including Madame Pauline Lumumba, had seen the film. These very recent examples are only the latest among a myriad of signs of homage. Streets, squares, stadiums, schools, universities, stamps, and children came to bear his name in the aftermath of his martyrdom. Malcolm X called him "the greatest black man who ever walked the African continent" (Breitman 64). Today at the Échangeur de Limete in Kinshasa, a statue of Lumumba erected in January 2002 greets all those heading from the airport to the city along Boulevard Lumumba.

While in the Congo Lumumbism and nationalism go hand in hand, Lumumba's name does not produce a univocal response, and detractors abound. Nevertheless, a dozen or more political parties still claim Lumumba's spiritual and political legacy (Mutamba Makombo, "Destinée" 11).[6] Mobutu declared Lumumba a national hero in 1966 in an attempt to appropriate Lumumba's legacy and deprive Lumumbist rebels of their legitimacy.[7] It was only after Mobutu's power started to wane, thanks to the end of the cold war, that Lumumba's legacy could openly be reevaluated. An academic gathering organized by the Institut de Formation et d'Études Politiques (I.F.E.P.) in February 1992 and its subsequent publication edited by Mantuba-Ngoma, *A la redécouverte de Patrice Emery Lumumba*, featured contributions whose titles confirm the close association between Lumumba and nationalism in the Congo: "La mort de Lumumba, père de la révolution congolaise" "The Death of Lumumba, Father of the Congolese Revolution," "P.E. Lumumba, le MNC ou l'affirmation du nationalisme zaïrois" "P.E. Lumumba, the MNC or the Affirmation of Zairian Nationalism," and "Lumumba, le lumumbisme et les lumumbistes." A popular expression of Lumumba's lasting influence is presented by a journalist who tells of a politico-religious movement located in Orientale Province whose adherents call their divinity Nzambe Lumumba, God Lumumba. He ends his article with the various ways in which Lumumba's memory has been appropriated: "Once dead, the memory of Lumumba is erased, then revived to prop up a dictator, then to legitimize the rebel who overthrew that dictator [Laurent Kabila] and then, out in the jungles along the river, an imaginary Lumumba cures the sick and promises to come back to life" (Parenti).[8]

In addition to the rich body of scholarship dealing with Lumumba and the "Congo crisis" and the varied political uses to which the figure of Lumumba has been put, Lumumba's image has been represented and invoked in a wide array of works of popular and high culture, predominantly outside the Congo. The volume edited by Pierre Halen and Janos Riesz, *Patrice Lumumba entre dieu et diable: Un héros africain dans ses images*, presents a kaleidoscope of images of Lumumba, ranging from popular songs emanating from Lumumba's homeland to those showing up in the

U.S. Congressional Record. The most comprehensive study to date of representations of Lumumba, this collection offers chapters on Lumumba in Francophone literature, Congolese letters, Césaire's play *Une Saison au Congo*, Tchicaya u Tam'si's poetry, Nigerian Onitsha Market Literature, an article on Ernesto "Che" Guevara's relationship to Lumumba and the Congolese rebellion, and more. Lumumba is conspicuous in his absence from Congolese literary production, as Charles Djungu-Simba explains in "La figure de Patrice Lumumba dans les lettres du Congo: observations." When visible at all, his presence is so discreet or ambiguous "that its meaning remains very uncertain" (Djungu-Simba 84). Most Congolese/Zairian poets of the postindependence era sang the praises of Mobutu. When Lumumba does appear in this corpus, he is cast in the role of advisor to the all-powerful new leader. Djungu-Simba concludes that in Congolese letters "Lumumba is rather considered as a vestige of the past, albeit an illustrious past" (91).[9]

Recent examples of works not included in the Halen and Riesz volume are Barbara Kingsolver's *Poisonwood Bible* and Ronan Bennett's *The Catastrophist*, both published in 1998. In both instances Lumumba is not a main character and forms part of the context rather than the action. An African example highlights the way Lumumba's legacy tends to be invoked in the Third World and pan-African context. Ghanaian novelist Kofi Awoonor's character, in *Comes the Voyager at Last* (1992), rejects his African American name, Marcus Garvey MacAndrews, in favor of an African one, Sheik Lumumba Mandela. Sheila Smith McKoy expounds: "[Awoonor's] Lumumba is the composite 'every' African, embodying the cultures of the Afro-Arabic north, the black sub-Saharan center, and the apartheid south. His name is a testimony to two of the most powerful symbols of African independence movements, Patrice Lumumba and Nelson Mandela" (Smith McKoy 200). In *Léopolis* (1984), recognized as a novel representing Lumumba's life under a different name, Sylvain Bemba (Congo-Brazzaville) has his protagonist travel to Europe where he is met by supporters brandishing signs bearing portraits of Kwame Nkrumah, Fidel Castro, Ho Chi Minh, and Patrice Lumumba (Djungu-Simba 85). This visibility seems to corroborate Djungu-Simba's argument that Lumumba figures in a "revolutionary museum" of the oppressed. His name serves to offer "a certain legitimacy, a revolutionary veneer" (Djungu-Simba 91).

Lumumba's name, often used in tandem with others in a gesture of internationalism, continues to represent hope and light. In the literatures of Africa, the Caribbean, and the Indian Ocean, Lumumba's predominance in the pantheon of historical personages is equaled only by that of Chaka and Toussaint Louverture, as Marie-José Hoyet shows in

"Quelques images de Patrice Lumumba dans la littérature du monde noir d'expression française" (49). Although he is sometimes placed within an epic tradition, alongside Chaka, Sundiata, and Samory, he is more often coupled with modern African leaders such as Cabral, Kenyatta, and Nkrumah, or placed in a more universal, Third-World context along with Che Guevara and Hô Chi Minh. We also find references to Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Marcus Garvey, Ruben Um Nyobé, Nguyen Van Troï, and Biko. The "idéologème" Lumumba, as Halen calls it (15), is nicely captured in a poem by Maxime N'Debeka from Congo-Brazzaville which evokes the impending rebirth of the Congo and griots singing of Lumumba and hope (Hoyet 63) and another by Charles Nokan from Côte d'Ivoire in which Lumumba represents in turn the oppressed proletarian (whether from Saint Domingo, Algeria or Vietnam) and the Black man who raises his fist in a gesture of resistance. (Hoyet 67). Hoyet argues that once the myth has been consolidated, it is no longer necessary to evoke the specific characteristics of the hero. His very name suffices to make him present. (54)

Despite the emptying out of the content of Lumumba's political life and his reduction to a metaphor and a symbol in "a dream-like sphere" (Porra 293), part of the "idéologème" that stays intact is Lumumba's link to nationalism, whether it be Congolese, African, or pan-African. Strikingly, this pantheon is comprised entirely of men. Since nationalism was the main vehicle of decolonization, what were the consequences of the masculinism of nationalistic discourse for women's decolonization?

"Decolonization Is Truly the Creation of New Men"

This oft-quoted phrase by Frantz Fanon (*Wretched* 36) emphasizes the transformation to be wrought by decolonization. He urges those working toward this transformation to reject European humanism that is "never done talking of Man" (312) yet whose proponents "murder men everywhere they find them" (311) and to "work out new concepts, and try to set afoot a new man" (316). During the Year of Africa, 1960, the eyes of the world were fixed on the Congo, with its immense riches, its strategic importance, and its polarizing prime minister, Patrice Emery Lumumba. As a proponent and a product of this dramatic process of decolonization, how did he represent the "new man," yearned for by the colonized and despised by those with vested interests in the country? How were these "new men" constructed in the discourses of the time? What did Lumumba as a New African represent for the Congo and for Africa?

The language of Fanon is that of presumed gender neutrality, "men" subsuming "men and women." But this subsumption is gendered.

Because colonization has been presented as emasculating and Fanon makes an implicit call for men to reclaim their manhood, this figuration has become commonplace and has been used to explain the masculinist bias in nationalistic discourse: "the colonial man has been constructed as effeminate in the colonial discourse and the way to emancipation and empowerment is seen as the negation of this assertion" (Yuval-Davis 60).[11] A corollary to this logic has been the subordination of black and other subaltern women's rights, as the rehabilitation of colonized men's masculinity is seen as a necessary first step to emancipation.

The focus on men's suffering tends to mask women's oppression, which took distinct forms. In "Sheroes and Villains" Amina Mama paints a vivid picture of the violence and degradation women suffered under colonialism (46–54). Focusing on rape and the violence of conquest, she concludes "that colonialism also humiliated women, not only as colonial subjects but also in gender-specific ways" and asks, perhaps rhetorically, to what extent African men have been concerned with restoring the dignity of African women (Mama 54).

Women have been marginalized from political discussions and the fruits of political changes because they "have often been treated more as symbols than as active participants by nationalist movements organised to end colonialism and racism" (Enloe 42). Relegating women to the realm of iconography has multiple consequences: attention is deflected from women's material conditions and actions; the content of the symbolic discourse actually shapes the terms of women's participation in various realms of social, economic, and political life; and their contributions are undervalued or ignored. Examples abound. Mama cites Kwame Nkrumah, who "for all his revolutionary vision" was unable to view women beyond their reproductive and nurturing roles: "Mothers of the nation, the beauty that graced the homes and the gentleness that soothed men's tempers" (Mama 55). This view is corroborated although not critiqued by the activist Andrée Blouin, who explains that Nkrumah asked her "to make a call to Africa's women to help bring the men together, setting aside the old quarrels between peoples" (203). Even Samora Machel, who is well regarded for his views on women's issues, reinforced the sexual division of labor when he called on women, but not men, to clean up the streets of Maputu (Mama 56). Even when women broke out of customary gender roles and participated in military action, as they did in Mozambique, their engagement did not necessarily translate into real gains after independence.

Women played a symbolic role in helping the fathers of new nations to demonstrate that they had entered into the modern world, even if the rhetoric was not always backed up by action: "Female emancipation—a powerful political symbol describing at once a separation from the

past, the aspirations of an activist present, and the utopia of an imagined national future—supplies a mechanism of self-description and self-projection" (Heng 31).

But, we may ask, where does Lumumba fit into this picture of commonplace interpretations of nationalist movements and the images associated with them? Although Western detractors showed a morbid fascination with Lumumba's polygyny, he was considered within the pantheon of nationalist leaders as a champion of women's rights.[12] However, those promoting his position on women seldom analyze his views, and their appreciation of his stance is often accompanied by statements that betray a superficial understanding of women's political, social, and economic needs. For example, a short section devoted to "Women in Congolese Society" in the Panaf biography of Lumumba (73–77) offers a brief examination of Lumumba's views on women and ends with these words: "in his own way, he paid the Congolese women the greatest tribute they could have wished for, because his last political testament, when he knew that he was about to die was written to a woman—his wife Pauline" (*Patrice Lumumba* 77). Conor Cruise O'Brien asserts that "Lumumba was a strong feminist, and processions of women carrying green branches were a feature of his movement" (211). In addition to pointing out that women's participation in processions does not necessarily translate into a feminist stance on the part of the leader of the party, D'Lynn Waldron suggests that O'Brien calling Lumumba a feminist may be more likely to constitute criticism than praise.

In order to understand Lumumba's legacy, we must investigate the concrete situation in which Lumumba and his male and female contemporaries found themselves and contextualize the gender relations of the period. To this end I ask whether Lumumba's discourse manifests the notion of the colonized man as effeminate and whether his thoughts and actions show a "macho" style of affirmation of Congolese manhood. I explore how his discourse and that of the period situate women vis-à-vis the body politic and how the men's discourse pertaining to women relationally constructs their conceptions of manhood. Bringing to light women's voices, I ascertain whether their contributions reinforce or contest the dominant constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Masculinities/Femininities: Sites of Representation

The privileged sites for the formation of masculine and feminine identities during the period of decolonization are all constituted by the multiple intersections of discourses, among them "traditional" or "customary" African, colonial, and nationalist.[13] The degree of influence of each of these and the ways in which they intersect depend on a variety of

factors: educational levels of both women and men, urban versus rural contexts, class status, membership in cultural associations, political participation, marital status, and so on. Rather than offer a comprehensive view of all sectors of society, I draw on intersecting influences as they relate to issues raised in each of the chapters.

Because much of the discourse focuses on women in the so-called private sphere, a few words on the divide between "public" and "private" as well as on the forms of patriarchy at work in the Congo at the time are in order here. A brief overview of the "sexual contract" (Pateman, *Sexual*) inherent in the modern social contract is helpful because the Congo at the moment of decolonization was still contending with paternal forms of patriarchal power (kinship relations and chiefdoms, albeit weakened by the colonial regime), the paternalism of Belgian colonialism, and the emergence of a modern polity, that is, a contract of social order among men in the political sphere. But how does the original social contract resolve the contradiction between "democracy's ethos of equality and masculine assertions" (Keating 145)? Pateman argues that the contract creates the distinction between the private and public spheres. Because the private sphere is not seen as politically relevant (Pateman, *Sexual* 3), the men "get the right to rule over their women in the private domestic sphere" (Yuval-Davis 7) and they are subordinated to men as a fraternity (Pateman, *Sexual* 3). One of the basic tenets of feminist scholarship and action has been to demonstrate that the personal or private is in fact political. In the colonial context this is quite clear: state interference in the domestic sphere included programs that controlled women's domestic labor, birth-spacing and breastfeeding practices, and even home visits. These interventions were often mediated by women—religious, social workers, volunteer wives of white *colons*—although the overall structures remained patriarchal and had attendant consequences for models of African masculinity. But the "sexual contract" is also articulated with the "racial contract" (Mills).

Despite the fact that Belgium's politics were purportedly rooted in liberal democratic principles, they continued to perpetuate gross inequalities. In the struggle for independence, the "racial contract" implicit in the social contract—which accords people of color an inferior moral and legal status, as is clearly the case in the ideology used to justify colonialism—is brought to the fore and challenged. But often aspects of the "sexual contract" remain intact. Christine Keating offers a cogent analysis of what she calls the "postcolonial sexual contract" in India, demonstrating that the assembly charged with drafting the new constitution "established equality in the public sphere as a fundamental right for women yet sanctioned discriminatory personal law that maintained women's subordination in the family in order to secure fraternal acquiescence to centralized rule" (130). Therefore, she concludes,

"the story of the postcolonial sexual contract is at once a story of women's emancipation as well as subjection" (145).[14] To what extent decolonization and the postcolonial contract in the Congo represented emancipation for women is debatable. Their marginalization from politics, despite their active participation in struggle, meant that the men who sat at the negotiating tables did not fight as hard for the women's rights as they did for their own: women did not vote in the historic elections of 1960.

Lumumba and his contemporaries were predisposed to practice the exclusions of the sexual contract. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the discourses the authors engage with when they study the period, subsequent portrayals of Lumumba tend to re-present the masculinist biases of the discourses of decolonization. Nevertheless, these discourses have to be examined as they intersect with those circulating at the time of production as well as with generic conventions associated with particular portrayals. In addition to Lumumba's writings, the texts I analyze include two women's life stories, a play, a documentary, and a biographical film.

Among the creative works featuring Lumumba, those of Aimé Césaire (Martinique) and Raoul Peck (Haiti) command the attention of scholars and amateurs alike. The scope and quality of their works make them worthy of in-depth analysis, and their wide appeal and influence make a gendered reading indispensable as they are critical conveyors of Lumumba's legacy today. Producing their works at different historical moments, both operate in the context of pan-Africanism or Third-World solidarity. I focus on Césaire's play *A Season in the Congo* (written in the late 1960s) and two films by Peck: *Lumumba: La Mort du prophète* "Death of a Prophet" (documentary, 1992) and *Lumumba* (feature film, 2000). In these accounts and others, gender is not considered a central element and women remain peripheral to the "big" story.

In the life stories, the women express acute awareness of the gendered character of their experiences and of their exceptional status as female leaders in the society at the time. Andrée Blouin was the chief of protocol in Lumumba's government. *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionaria* (1983) was published in collaboration with Jean MacKellar. The biography of Léonie Abo, Lumumbist rebel and wife of the leader of the rebellion Pierre Mulele, was authored by Ludo Martens: *Abo: Une Femme du Congo* (1995). Although the body of scholarship on African women's vital involvement in struggles for justice continues to grow, no systematic study of women's political participation in the Congo has yet been completed. The narratives of Blouin and Abo help to redress this problem. While stories of experience have come under attack because they too are "constituted through ideological lenses," Shari Stone-Mediatore, in *Reading Across Borders*, shows that "stories of marginalized experiences

[often] reckon with contradictions or obscurities within experience or with aspects of experience that confound the logic of ruling discourses. . . . Such stories do not naively reinscribe received discourses; on the contrary, such texts can problematize the institutions and ideologies that shape all of our lives" (1–2). The narratives of Blouin and Abo serve not to present unmediated versions of the "truth," but to demonstrate how they can "destabilize the received truths" (Mohanty 244), characteristic of the discourse of Lumumba and the period of decolonization.

In their texts, despite the fact that they privilege female perspectives, Blouin and Abo position themselves in solidarity with the men alongside whom they struggled against colonialism and neocolonialism. Many other women did so too. This stance mirrors that of Third-World feminists who include their struggle against gender inequities within broader movements for social, economic, and political justice; they fight against patriarchy but also against colonialism, racism, imperialism, poverty, globalization, and often capitalism.[15]

Until now, references to Lumumba and women have focused exclusively on his personal life, overlooking the gender politics that so strongly affected his life and legacy. Detractors condemned him as an untrustworthy womanizer unfit for political office, while proponents casually dismissed his relationships with women as irrelevant to his political stature. In contrast, I interrogate conceptions of "new men" and women to be gleaned from the discourses circulating at the time and from subsequent representations of Lumumba and the period. Who are these new Africans, men and women, who take shape in Lumumba's discourse, as well as in those of Blouin and Abo? How do others cast Lumumba's masculinity in their representations of the man, and what images of femininity are concomitant to their conceptions? The chapters that follow are quite distinct in terms of the materials analyzed and the approaches used to raise questions of gender in relation to Lumumba and his representation. While each chapter constitutes a different angle of vision and analyzes different modes of representation, they all contribute to a sustained gender analysis of Lumumba and decolonization in the Congo.

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CHAPTER 1

LUMUMBA ON WOMEN: FROM DOMESTICITY TO POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

> When you civilize a man, you only civilize an individual; but when you civilize a woman, you civilize an entire nation. (130)

This declaration from Lumumba's *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* is frequently quoted to epitomize Lumumba's position on women. It does contain elements central to his thinking, but its meaning and import are not as self-evident as they are assumed to be. Those reproducing the passage generally do not question the term "civilize" or interrogate the way Lumumba locates women within the family and the nation. Examining Lumumba's writings and speeches on issues of women and gender reveals how the complexities of his position as a new member of the emerging *évolué* class passionately committed to decolonizing the Congo as well as the minds of his fellow citizens, women and men alike, influenced his thinking about gender relations. The first two chapters ask a set of interrelated questions: What were the most difficult conundrums that Lumumba and the women in his life and in the movement against colonial power faced? How were those structured by the dynamics of this intense and transformative process of struggle, whose end was always uncertain? What gender-related issues could be addressed and at least in part resolved by the political and discursive strategies Lumumba and other male leaders of the movement employed, and what remained intractable and irrepressible, leading to conflicts that he and others—including women—found distressing? The first chapter follows Lumumba's lead in focusing more narrowly on the *évolué* class, while the second chapter considers broader transformations in women's lives in the Belgian Congo, as well as discusses the women in Lumumba's personal life.

Drawing primarily on his writings and speeches, this chapter focuses on the contradictions within Lumumba's life, thought, and political movement

on matters of gender. The primary resources at our disposal are the collection of essays *Le Congo, terre d'avenir, est-il menacé?* and Lumumba's speeches presented in *La Pensée politique de Patrice Lumumba*.[1] The collection of essays synthesizes the ideas Lumumba had expressed in his writings in the press from 1948 on; the text was completed while Lumumba was in prison in 1956, but was published posthumously in 1961. Those familiar only with the fiery nationalist of later years are taken aback by the discourse of this body of writing.[2] The speeches collected by Jean Van Lierde and published in 1963 cover the period from late 1958 to Lumumba's death. The work starts with the speech Lumumba gave at the pan-African conference held in Accra—a conference considered crucial to Lumumba's radicalization—and ends with the very last words we have from Lumumba: an interview conducted by journalists who managed to get access to Lumumba while he was in prison at Camp Hardy in Thysville before being transferred to Katanga and killed and his political testament in the form of a letter to his wife Pauline. Lumumba's thinking changed significantly in the years separating the publication of *Le Congo, terre d'avenir* from the speeches that mark the beginning of *La Pensée politique*. Mutamba Makombo sums up the shift in Lumumba's thinking: "The model *évolué* of "Congo, My Country," was transformed into a tribune of the people. The *immatriculé* of yesterday disappeared behind the anonymous, timeless Congolese" ("Destinée" 46).

In order to better understand the arguments put forward by Lumumba in his early writings, we need to ask what a model *évolué* would look like. If colonization effected a "conversion" from one sociocultural and religious system to another, as V.Y. Mudimbe describes it, the "évolués" (literally, "evolved") were Africans from a great diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds "making the transition from ethnic customs to the new culture" (*Corps* 38). The other term in circulation at the time, "évoluant" (evolving), indicates the emphasis on an ongoing development from customs considered backward to a state of civilization represented by European models by means of education and example.[3] Although the term was sometimes used vaguely, after the Second World War it applied to individuals who self-identified as *évolués,* were educated beyond primary school, and had successfully entered into the world created by the arrival of the colonizer (Young, *Politics* 197). The *évolués* included the clerks, nurses, and teachers who lived alongside artisans and skilled and manual laborers in the urban or mining *centres extra-coutumiers* (literally, centers not subject to customary law and ways of living). Educated in colonial institutions, predominantly by missionaries, the *évolué* class largely echoed colonial opinions even as they demanded more rights and greater respect. Lumumba especially pointed out contradictions in colonial discourse. The forums created for the *évolués* to express their views,

whether *La Voix du Congolais* (a monthly founded in 1945) and other publications or clubs and associations, were carefully monitored by Belgian mentors or sponsors. Few Congolese were allowed to travel abroad, and reading materials imported into the Congo excluded texts that were considered to have revolutionary potential. No political activity was permitted until the late 1950s.

"Immatriculation" was the primary method by which the colonial authorities tardily recognized the status of *évolués* in 1952. While many who fulfilled the formal requirements refused to submit themselves to what they considered a humiliating charade, Lumumba pursued and obtained this status in 1954 after an initial refusal two years earlier.[4] Although provisions had been made as early as 1890 to recognize Africans who had adopted Western ways in King Leopold's Congo Free State, it was not until 1948 that the Belgians introduced an intermediary measure that officially recognized this "accomplishment" through the introduction of the *carte de mérite civique*. Awarded after inspection to men who were literate, had foresworn polygamy and witchcraft, and expressed a sincere desire to embrace Western mores, it offered little beyond the prestige of being placed in the upper echelons of Africans within the colonial hierarchy. In 1948, former colonial magistrate Antoine Sohier was appointed to lead a commission on the status of the "civilized" Congolese population. He initially proposed full assimilation with a draft *article unique*: "Congolese immatriculés are governed by the legal and statutory dispositions of the Colony applicable to non-natives of metropolitan status" (Antsey 206–7). This law would have accorded *évolués* the status of European in any field covered by legislation distinguishing between European and native, including housing, employment contracts, and schooling, but it was never approved. The proposal would have provoked much less debate among the *évolués* if they had known that Sohier himself had suggested in discussion in 1950 "that a mere half-dozen individuals were currently eligible, apart from some hundreds of Congolese priests" (Antsey 210). The immatriculation legislation of 1952, dubbed a "damp squib" by Roger Antsey (211), did not bring the anticipated rewards. Although *immatriculés* were subject to the European rather than customary courts and their status accorded them rights under the civil code, they were not exempt from all laws and regulations applying to Africans, and significantly, their salaries were not increased (Antsey 209). In 1955 the holders of the *carte de mérite civique* and the *immatriculés* gained the right to buy alcoholic drinks in restaurants and access to clinics, hotels, and transportation. In church they could use the sections reserved for "les classes intermédiaires," between whites and blacks (Ndaywel è Nziem 461–62).

The questions asked of a candidate for immatriculation and his wife serve as a shorthand guide to colonial ideology. Women would be asked questions Lumumba considered "dangerous traps": "In case of a family quarrel, do you leave your husband to return to your relatives? Do you share meals with your husband? Does he beat you? Does he let you manage the household?" (Young, *Politics* 86).[5]

Lumumba's early writings often echoed the discourse of the colonial powers. He argued in *Le Congo* for progressive emancipation, although ABAKO (Alliance des Bakongo) had already rejected the Van Bilsen plan, which stated that it would take thirty years to prepare the elite necessary to govern an independent Congo.[6] He also accepted a qualified vote, that is, voting rights earned by attaining a certain level of education and Westernization. He deemed those calling for immediate independence overhasty, imprudent, and most likely instigated by left-wing Europeans.[7] Although Lumumba did not accept the colonial ideology concerning women in its entirety, he was influenced by conceptions of domesticity introduced by the Belgians. In many respects, the patterns of gender relations generated by eighty years of policy decisions intersecting with earlier practices circumscribed the future he imagined for Congolese women.

The Belgians advocated and attempted to institute a European model of the nuclear family, in which pious Christian women fulfilled the roles of wife and mother. Mission education was aimed primarily at shaping the moral character of their female wards, and basic instruction was followed by classes in hygiene, child-rearing, and housekeeping. The same values were inculcated by the *foyers sociaux*. In these domestic training institutions married women living in urban centers learned to cook, clean, sew, raise their children, and decorate their homes. As Timothy Burke shows in *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women*, Europeans displayed a racially charged antipathy toward the bodies of "savage" Others, bodies infected by the disorder of the natural world, exuding dangerous contagion to all who came in contact with them" (19). Cities had already been set up with "cordons sanitaires," green areas separating the European quarters from the African quarters, in order to reduce the chance of supposed contagion.[8] Congruent with the "civilizing" mission and the "evolution" of the local population, the colonial administration instituted laws and codes to discipline the bodies of Africans and to control the most intimate details of their lives. The domestic space became a prime index of a family's level of evolution, with personal and social hygiene portrayed as a key attribute of feminine domesticity (Burke 18). The "conversion" to colonial ideals of hygiene and domestic behavior was reinforced by the fact that women did not generally contest colonial

education because in many ways it reproduced indigenous sexual divisions of labor, and women as well as men aspired to "civilized" status (Mianda, "Colonialism" 155).

The narrow definition of family that colonialists assumed and inculcated had no precedent in previous Congolese practices. Extended kin networks and the influence of relatives, especially in matrilineal societies, were to be replaced by a family made up of the parents and a small number of children with the man as the head of the household and the sole breadwinner.[9] Although these models had been institutionalized through church and state for decades, they had been neither fully internalized nor embraced in their entirety. Nevertheless, they had become the dominant ideals for family life, especially in urban areas, and they offered new forms of prestige. The new configuration of kinship meant that women and men dealt with each other more directly, without the mediation of communities of extended kin where age and other factors mitigated gender relations and women received more support from other women rather than being isolated in their individual households.

Writings, 1951–1956

Lumumba tackled women's rights and emancipation in this context. For the most part his discourse matches that of the other *évolués.* Although he occasionally mentioned rural women, his main preoccupation was with women in the *centres extra-coutumiers*. He advocated for the rights of single women, but focused most of his attention on married women of his own class. While he never explicitly addressed the subject of masculinity, his concern for men's responsibilities toward women also posits a new kind of manhood. The woman is primarily wife and mother, and the man—whatever his roles outside of the home—is to be a caring and responsible breadwinner and enlightened guide to his family.[10]

A brief overview of his ideas concerning the social well-being of women is followed by an in-depth look at Lumumba's primary preoccupation: education and the tensions created in *évolué* households as a result of the discrepancies in the education received by boys and girls under the colonial regime.

Of Husbands and Wives

The most comprehensive text dealing with women is the chapter "Éducation de base" (119–43) in *Le Congo.* The general introduction (119–27) presents education as "the vital wellspring of all societies" (119). In "Éducation de l'enfance congolaise" (127–29), he rebukes men for

renouncing their role as educators of their children. The lion's share of the chapter is "Éducation de la femme congolaise" (129–43).[11]

Lumumba critiques the old ways, represented in his text as arranged marriages, reluctance to educate women, and the custom of bride wealth. Elsewhere, in a general statement about indigenous institutions, Lumumba says that the Congolese should consider getting rid of customs that are outdated, have become obsolete, or have been "overtaken" by "evolution" (82). He acknowledges that the new "extra-coutumières" customs are a mixture of European and Bantu practices. Although later he asks for educational approaches that take into consideration "the Bantu core" and "Africans' psychological reactions" (200), he vehemently opposes practices he considers unjust, even if they are sanctioned by indigenous "tradition": "And if others call that custom, for my part I would qualify this custom as subjection" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 143). Chief among them is bridewealth, the customary practice of the husband's family giving gifts to the wife's family.[12] In opposition to other *évolués* who campaigned to reduce the sums required (Mianda, "Colonialism" 154), and despite the fact that he himself paid it, Lumumba condemned this practice for making women into objects of exchange, accusing parents of taking their daughters out of school and using them "as material assets" that serve to obtain dowries (*Congo* 131).

Congruent with the erosion of parents' and relatives' power over their sons and daughters in Belgian models of domesticity, Lumumba expects women to detach themselves from the "bad influence" of uncles and aunts and to recognize the husband as the rightful head of the nuclear family household. Once they are married, women "come under the authority of their husbands" (142) and are therefore no longer dependent on their relatives. Men, especially those from matrilineal groups, happily embraced their new role of family head with rights over their wives and children.[13]

For the most part, Lumumba addresses husbands and urges them to assume their responsibilities toward their wives. Many men, he contends, spend money on themselves but do not allow their wives to control enough cash to maintain a decent standard of domestic life. They let their families live in a "dilapidated shack" and deprive their wives of the opportunity to practice the skills they learned at school by denying them the trivial sums it would take to buy the tools and materials required for embroidery, knitting, or even baking (138).

He is strikingly outspoken in his criticism of the "little king" ("roitelet") who treats his wife as no more than a servant rather than as a valued companion (121). Lumumba offers a concrete depiction of the daily life of these women, who are treated as servants and laments the fact that

women are valued only for the functions they serve: bearing children and enriching the clan. The man is a "master" who watches "his servant slave away" (136). In a few passages Lumumba enumerates all the women's tasks, from going to the market, cooking, washing dishes, sweeping the house and the yard to raising children "single-handedly" (136). The enumeration has a cumulative effect, giving us a sense of the heavy burden shouldered by the woman as well as of her fatigue. To add insult to injury, in Lumumba's harsh portrait, the man eats alone at the table while his wife eats in the kitchen and even has to leave her own meal in order to bring him water which is within his reach. Lumumba adds pathos to his account by imagining the woman's meal being pecked at by the chickens or a dog running off with her piece of meat while she is serving her master. Lumumba spared Pauline Opango some of the more onerous household tasks by hiring a domestic servant.

According to Lumumba, many men are rarely home, abandoning their wives, briefly or chronically, when they go out to drink, dance, and seek sexual pleasure with other women. Here Lumumba engages the women's emotions in a way that is not true elsewhere in his text. Since he himself was seldom home—both his wife and children attest to his frequent and prolonged absences—it is tempting to imagine that Lumumba is in part examining his own conscience. In addition to pursuing his education, taking leading roles in various associations, and becoming politically involved, he found time for other women. In Lumumba's scenario the husband is a despot and the pitiable wife an "innocente" who awaits her husband's return. He sums up the pathos of the situation of such wives: "What a sad existence, to be neither loved, respected nor supported by their husbands" (137).

When Lumumba imagines such a woman as so "disheartened, exasperated" (137) that she falters in her good behavior, we cannot but conjure up images of Pauline Lumumba. Lumumba complained about his wife's absences from home and pointed out her "bad behavior" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139) in letters to friends. Nevertheless, here he places the responsibility for the wife's behavior squarely at the feet of her husband, and he states his belief that a woman who finds herself in an emotionally healthy relationship with her husband "*generally* behaves in a dignified manner" (139). He sums up the circumstances that can explain and even excuse women's infidelities: the husband doesn't come home at night, does not provide for his wife's material and emotional needs and even "keeps another woman (at his wife's expense)" (139). In short everything that would affect "the morale of any human being" (139).

In language that not only articulates a critique of women's position but also evinces a certain complacency that may bespeak his own position

more than the views of women, Lumumba claims that most women seem to accept their degradation and abusive treatment. "Of course they don't complain because it's tradition" (136). Nevertheless, Lumumba himself acknowledges that women, especially young women, are seeking opportunities to enter the "modern" world. Since women do not want to be seen as "*basendji,*" they seek education in order to becomes "évoluées" and to increase their chances of marrying *évolué* husbands (135).[14]

Some women, such as Louise Efolio, the first woman whose contribution (translated from Lingala) appeared in *La Voix du Congolais* in July 1956, did object and speak out:

> We do not believe that, when they begin to drink our male compatriots discuss serious things or speak about problems which concern our Congo's evolution. Thus, can they make us believe that they are civilized? Is civilization in alcohol? Rather, on the contrary, civilization is revealed by a person who respects himself, by a man who maintains his prestige in order to distinguish himself. [The man will offer] proof of a true evolution, when he abstains from the irregular maintenance of two or three women, and when he no longer frivolously dissipates money which is indispensable for the maintenance of his household. (Mianda, "Colonialism" 156–57)

Her intervention demonstrates how women challenged their husbands to live up to the ideals they purported to embrace and put forth their own definitions of notions debated predominantly by men. She does not conflate civilization with being an *évolué*. Pons pointed out that "*évolués* were, like *non-évolués,* likely to be sensitive to grades and shades of 'civilization' " (268). "A man readily recognized as an *évolué* might well in some respects be judged as less 'civilized' than another who was not normally regarded as an *évolué*" (269). Louise Efolio's contribution makes the class-sensitive distinction clear.

In Lumumba's vision of the new men and women, men abandon these destructive behaviors and women become full-fledged partners in marriage. It is significant that he talks not only about material neglect but also about moral suffering and then articulates this suffering in broad humanistic terms: the experiences to which women are subjected would undermine the morale of "any human being." He continues in this vein when he urges *évolué* men to assume their responsibilities vis-à-vis women who need esteem, affection, and moral support. This final section switches from the third person ("les maris" "the husbands") to the first person plural, perhaps bringing his diagnosis of marital dysfunction closer to home for readers while apparently implicating himself more directly: "Our wives share our misfortunes, our anxieties and our troubles. . . . Our wives suffer whenever they see that we are neglecting them"

(*Congo* 140). Lumumba admits that men do not always realize the extent of their wives' distress (140).

He does, however, chastise women for their continuing attachment to their own families: "They must also abandon the foolish habit of constantly wanting to leave home in order to spend long and idle holidays with their own families" (142). Chapter 2 provides details of the extended periods that Pauline Opango spent with her parents. Ironically, of course, that is precisely where she was while Lumumba was writing these very words in his prison cell.

Education

According to Lumumba, the solution to all these problems is education, the bedrock of "civilization" and emancipation. However, the ways in which education figures in *Le Congo* reveal his fundamental conception of women as wives and mothers. Each of the three parts of the text on women's education deals with a group Lumumba considers responsible for women's education: educators, parents, and husbands. Women themselves are not given a voice, but are seen as perpetual minors, always under the tutelage of others.

Although he makes broad statements in favor of the education of girls and women, the context that haunts Lumumba's discussion is that of many an *évolué* household: the husband and wife are to be equal partners in the marriage, but their social status is not commensurate because of the discrepancies in the education they received. Colonial education is responsible for "the regrettable disparities" that mark *évolué* households, disparities in educational levels, as well as in "lifestyle and outlook" (129). This disparity creates a "gulf" between the husband and wife and is one of the principal sources of misunderstandings leading to separation and divorce. The fact that in Lumumba's case this gap was even more marked than in many other *évolué* households—Pauline Opango had received no formal education, while her husband was qualified for university entrance—undoubtedly contributed to the sense of urgency he brings to his declarations on this matter.

Lumumba laments the fact that women have not been taught French and that children's education is "impeded" (130) by women's lack of education. As a result, the *évolué* who would like to educate his children according to the norms of Western civilization has to contend with a wife who is still under the sway of ancestral customs and whose actions undermine or destroy everything the husband tries to accomplish (130). He expresses his frustration in an unintentionally ironic phrase: "When the husband says white, the wife says black" (130). He exclaims that he

and his contemporaries have "lived" some "truly dramatic cases" of conflict between husbands and wives over the type of education given to their children (130). Lumumba's use of the word "lived" ("vécu") makes us wonder just how close to home those instances came. He finds it deplorable that the majority of Congolese women, even those who have received a mission education, still maintain faith in fetishes and that even in Christian families one often finds children wearing protective amulets "to which their mothers attribute supernatural powers" (130).

The tensions arising from discrepant levels of education damage family life. Lumumba contends that because Congolese men are unable to find "a woman corresponding to their ideal, or rather their level" (130), some divorce up to four times (legally, only three customary divorces were allowed). Although he concedes that some of these men are philanderers, he insists that in some instances it becomes impossible for a man to share his life with a particular woman. Such a relationship can also constitute "a handicap to the advancement of the husband and the raising of the children" (130). Here Lumumba makes no bones about the role the spouse of a man bound for an important role in the new dispensation is expected to play. We can anticipate from this statement, made four years before independence, how threatened the uneducated wives of future parliamentarians would feel; Pauline's action of trying to organize these women to protect their interests is not so startling.

However, the daughters of these women will fare better given the introduction of secular schools and the "upgrading" of the curriculum offered in girls' schools. Lumumba unequivocally supported equal educational opportunities and curricula for boys and girls. He expressed satisfaction with the secular schools because of their "tolerance for freedom of thought" (211). He understood that the coeducational system enabled girls to make up for lost time by receiving the same education as boys (211). He proposed a special tax to fund scholarships. If each person were to contribute the price of one bottle of beer per year (10 francs), the Congolese would be able to send their children, both boys and girls, to study in Belgium or in Africa in order to receive "specialized training in the various disciplines" (167).

At the same time, Lumumba sees the goal of women's education as preparing them for their role in the home. In the very 1953 article in *La Croix du Congo* in which he stresses that theoretical knowledge is indispensable to every man and every woman who desires to "evolve" and to embrace "modern life" (Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba* 135), he states that the aim of educating women is "to educate knowledgeable and informed women who can suitably keep and competently manage

their households" (Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba* 134). While other *évolués* think French and theoretical knowledge a waste of time for women, Lumumba disagrees—but on the grounds that these accomplishments would make her a better companion for her husband:

> Yes, they will serve her amply! What is more pleasant than having a spouse who speaks French and who puts all her theoretical knowledge into practice!...we know that *all* the *évolués* wish sincerely that their wives spoke French. Are we not distressed each time we observe that, as soon as we start speaking French to visiting friends, our wives suddenly become "strangers" because they do not know the language? (Mutamba Makombo 134–35)

While Lumumba wants to educate the "modern girls" needed by the "Congo of tomorrow" (135), he does not examine how this development might affect family life. This question did not urgently arise in part because educated women who were active outside of the household and kin-group continued to fulfill their roles as homemakers, wives, and mothers.

Women's Work

While he assumes a clear sexual division of labor, Lumumba does not trivialize or devalue women's work. He speaks of household responsibilities with respect and compares the empowerment of the wife to what men would like to experience in their own work situation. Still, he espouses the ideals promoted by the colonial institutions, rehearsing the familiar litany of maxims about cleanliness, thrift, and childcare. Given the family's new nuclear form, even the wife's domestic education ("domestic, family and social training") becomes the husband's responsibility. He entreats men to teach their wives how to run "the home of which they are the lawful mistresses" (*Congo* 141). He lists managing household finances and the fundamentals of child-rearing while stressing the importance of inculcating "a sense of moderation, order, cleanliness." Once women have acquired greater competence at these tasks, men are to place the management of the home "entirely in their hands" (141). In Lumumba's case, he did not assume this responsibility alone. Pauline Opango's older sister helped him to prepare the young woman fresh from the village to adapt to her husband's *évolué* expectations.

Lumumba expresses some support for women's employment, although only in response to the questions raised by an outraged contributor to *La Croix du Congo* on July 5, 1953: "What do we want to turn the black girl into? An office worker?" Lumumba replies with a resounding "Yes,

this is to be desired" (Mutamba Makombo 134). He elaborates: "If white women work in offices, why not black women? If we men work in offices in the same way as Europeans do, why can't our women/wives?" (134). Despite these bold arguments, Lumumba does not extrapolate. He endorses in principle women's right to work, but rarely mentions concrete examples. The extent to which Lumumba speaks for the elite is emphasized by his focus on *évolué* household. Rural and poor women to whom toil is routine, and even the wives of salaried workers who hold jobs in order to supplement their husbands' wages, are rarely mentioned in his discourse.

While Lumumba most often speaks of married women, he contends that single women deserve special treatment. In the context of generalized penury, he addresses the "scourge" represented by prostitution. He is very sympathetic to the plight of women who have no recourse other than prostitution, which he approaches from a pragmatic rather than a moralistic point of view. His explicit support for women's employment outside the household came in response to derisive criticism, not because he (like some European Marxist feminists) saw women's exit from the "private" family into the "public" domain as a solution to women's oppression. In granting an exception from the primacy of domestic life for women without husbands, he emphasizes economic and demographic realities. He asks how single women from poor families "who have not had the good fortune of finding a husband" can support themselves "unless they misbehave" (*Congo* 90).

Lumumba endorses the general principle that women have the same right to work as men (*Congo* 107).[15] But at times the specific colonial context overrides the principle. For example, he contends that if a husband has a good income, it is surely "only fair" for the wife to give up her place to a man who has no resources (107). In this instance, he was speaking not about African women but about European white women and African men at a time when a huge influx of Belgians was heading for the Congo in an attempt to stave off black domination after independence.

Some of the contradictions in Lumumba's statements may be explained in part by women's responses to the ways in which they were interpellated by the discourses concerning appropriate behavior. For example, Madame Thomas Nkumu, née Josephine Siongo, the first Congolese woman to sit on Leopoldville's city council in 1956, emphasizes that domestic responsibilities are a woman's natural duty: "The role of a black woman is to aid her husband to promote the household economy. In this same order of ideas, I cannot tolerate my husband having any other washerwoman than myself. The order and cleanliness of the home and parcel of land devolve upon me personally" (Mianda, "Colonialism" 156). Most

women had no alternative to accepting the roles assigned to them by the confluence of practice emanating from "traditional" society, colonial education and legislation, and *évolué* ideology. The attendee of a *foyer social* explains: "I learned many new things at the social center, but what interested me most was the way to raise and educate children, to put a cloth on the table, and to eat at the table with my husband and all our children.... I was enchanted with that. Because a woman who maintains her home well and accomplishes all the duties of a homemaker honors her position" (Mianda, "Colonialism" 156). Dining practices took on iconic value: "Any *évolué* worthy of his name had to eat at a table in the company of his wife and children" (154). Photographs from *La Voix du Congolais* show families with one or two children sitting down to a meal. Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain, reporting on a slightly earlier period, points to the material obstacles to achieving this ideal (extended families living in houses with small dining rooms) and describes all the possible maneuvers undertaken by the Congolese to live up to the ideals promoted by the colonials and embraced by the *évolués*. These included eating in succession or eating in different places. (*Food* 69–70). It was the wife's responsibility to organize this family occasion and the colonial state institutionalized this transformation of family life through homemaking schools, missions, and social centers. Women were trained "to create and orchestrate family meals, to preserve order, and to maintain the home's interior. The degree to which women fulfilled these roles as wives and mothers, creating well-appointed interiors, clean and well-organized, demonstrated their success" (Mianda, "Colonialism" 155). In this context, dining practices become sites of representation of ideal—or regressive—femininities and masculinities and can betray the attitudes of those who practice a form of what Lumumba considers in his tirade against the "kinglet" a "despotic authority which was inherited from his forebears" (136).

Contradictions persist in Lumumba's discourse. He wants girls to receive the same education as boys, but he does not consider how that change might influence family life in the future. Despite his sympathy for women's plight and his vigorous advocacy of their education, at the end of the section, and in loud agreement with other *évolués* and the Belgian authorities, Lumumba concludes categorically about women: "Their place is in the home" (*Congo* 142).[16]

Social and Political Rights for Women

Lumumba advocates for women's rights as citizens at a time when citizenship was coded male. In *Le Congo* Lumumba espouses a qualified vote and progressive emancipation. Adopting a concept of political rights as

based on education, he identifies groups that should gain political rights immediately, while others must still earn them. Given the neglect of girls' education under colonial rule, this pronouncement had far-reaching implications for women. Sartre, in the introduction to *La Pensée politique*, points out that in the 1950s 22 percent of the population was considered *extra-coutumier* (i.e., living outside of areas where traditional customs pertained). But only the "mince" (limited) elite of employees, functionaries, and storekeepers (about 150,000 individuals out of a population of 14 million) (*Pensée* IV; *Lumumba Speaks* 6) would qualify immediately for suffrage according to the terms laid out in *Le Congo, terre d'avenir.* When Lumumba says that "tout homme" "every man" has the right to participate in the running of his country, does he mean *homo* (a human being, man, mortal) or *vir* (a man, male person)? Is it significant that he sticks to the more ambiguous "homme" (38) even when, to support his position, he quotes Jacques Maritain who expressly evokes "chaque personne humaine adulte" "every adult person"? (39) Lumumba wants to accord suffrage to all those who know how to read and write, indigenous chiefs, and notables and judges (42) until everyone is literate, limiting the fundamental principle he espouses.

Lumumba insisted that larger numbers of Congolese should be recognized for their *évolué* status. He argues for the extension of the civic merit card to single women (eight years after its introduction there were only 884 card holders), as well as the suppression of the humiliating immatriculation application procedures for educated people that prevent many from applying for the status, keeping the numbers pitifully low (116 *chefs de famille* from May 1952 to December 1955) (65). Lumumba wanted the civic merit card to be given to all who had completed a cycle of postprimary studies, all workers and employees in good standing, chiefs working to the satisfaction of the administration, clerical workers, wives and children of card holders (59–60), and to all single women who have completed a full course of primary education or have been awarded a certificate of domestic training by a *foyer social* (59). All these people would also have to provide a "certificate of good character" awarded by the territorial authority (59).

Lumumba is adamant in his support for single women. Since all women are not "fortunate enough" to find a husband, he protests that they should not therefore be consigned "to the bottom of the social scale" (59). Lumumba upholds their right to emancipation as well as government protection, rights readily awarded to married women (59). It is not clear whether this category would also include divorced and widowed women, but the stipulation of a certain amount of formal education would exclude older women, who were even less likely than younger women to

have had such opportunities. Lumumba's views are congruent with those of other *évolués* who were willing to let single women work but insisted married women should stay home. Otherwise, the argument runs, wives will no longer respect their husbands and mothers will neglect their children. These men did concede, however, that if supplementary income is needed women should be able to earn money, preferably at home.

While supporting single women's right to the civic merit card, Lumumba also wants to extend the status of the civic merit card to the members of the man's family, as is true of immatriculation. A man shares his life with his wife and children and he educates them "in accordance with his own status" (60). If he is considered to have reached a certain degree of civilization, Lumumba argues, it is only natural that his wife and children should receive the same recognition. A wife adopting the status of her husband should be considered "a general principle of law" since family stability demands "a common status for all its members" (60). Lumumba argues cogently that for a husband and a wife to have different juridical statuses could lead to complications in the household, especially in cases that have to be brought to court. He does not specify whether the children of a single woman should be treated analogously.

In summary, Lumumba argues in *Le Congo* to expand the number of registered *évolués* and advance education as quickly as possible so as to prepare the population for the long-term goal of qualified suffrage.

Lumumba's Radicalization, 1956–1958

By 1954 Lumumba was president or secretary of seven associations in the city of Stanleyville (Zeilig 164). Charged with embezzlement of funds upon his return from Belgium in 1956, he spent fourteen months in prison. His conviction signaled the end of his career in the post office, and he started working for the Bracongo brewery the day after his release. Lumumba's radicalization is usually attributed to his attendance at the pan-African conference held in Accra in 1958. No doubt the militant nationalistic discourse provided an empowering antidote to the infantilizing and emasculating paternalism of the Belgian regime that Lumumba originally appeared to accept. But important changes had already occurred in the Congo before Lumumba set out on his journey to Accra. The liberal minister Auguste Buisseret introduced social reforms; a free, independent African press emerged; and major political parties were formed. The Brussels World Fair created an opportunity for Congolese to meet progressive and liberal Belgian groups. Lumumba's political activities culminated in the founding of the Congolese National Movement (Mouvement National Congolais; MNC), the first nationwide Congolese

political party, in October 1958. In Accra that December, Lumumba forged friendships with Nkrumah, Sékou Touré, Nasser, Fanon, and others. From then on, his discourse displayed his dedication to the ideology of Pan-Africanism: unconditional and immediate emancipation, anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and African sovereignty. In January 1959 riots rocked Leopoldville, accelerating the run-up to independence. After clashes between his supporters and government troops in Stanleyville in October 1959, Lumumba was imprisoned on the charge of inciting to riot. He was released before serving his full term because the other MNC members refused to continue without him at the Round Table talks laying the groundwork for independence in Brussels in January 1960.

In the mid-1950s, women were also starting to make their voices heard, and their statements and demands undoubtedly informed those of Lumumba. Women such as Madame Thomas Nkumu pointed out that women's needs are not necessarily met when a program is developed that is presumed to be gender-neutral and beneficial to all. In a short piece addressing the topic of women's role in civic life published after a conference of the World Union of Catholic Women in Togo, she explained that only women could truly represent the perspectives, needs and demands of their female compatriots (117). Lumumba would have had ample opportunity to hear statements about women's political activism. This declaration was made when an MNC office opened its doors in the commune of Kinshasa at the end of March 1959: "Women were associated with this undertaking. During the inauguration of the Permanent Office, Henriette Bamba evoked the Congolese woman's role in the future society; she wanted women to vote in the Congo" (Mutamba Makombo, "Destinée" 39). Lumumba sought to mobilize women politically and moved from a position favoring progressive emancipation to a demand for immediate voting rights for all, including women. But this position did not win the day. Congolese women were not enfranchised until 1967. In a "footnote in colonial history," Piet Creve concludes that women's voting rights were not strongly promoted by anyone and that the Belgians and Congolese quietly agreed, despite their other differences, that politics was "een mannenzaak" "a male affair" (151).[17]

Speeches, 1958–1961

Education Redux

Lumumba continued to be concerned about women's lack of education. Speaking in Brussels in April 1959, he denounced the fact that the colonial government had reduced the education budget even though, as he judiciously points out, the budget for education in a colonized country

ought to be "the largest item of expenditure" (*Lumumba Speaks* 96). His party, the MNC, accorded primacy to education and, given the paucity of trained professionals, to postsecondary education. Most of Lumumba's statements use the supposedly gender-neutral masculine, but in the context of the time we can safely assume that his referents are usually male, rather than universal and inclusive of girls and women. Considering that the first high school diploma issued to a female postdated independence, it is understandable that when speaking of university students, Lumumba would be thinking of men. In February 1960 in Brussels, he again talks about how the "evolution" of women had been neglected under the colonial regime. He invites the young women of Belgium to come to the Congo as welfare workers to educate "our Congolese girls" and adds that in the future the country will want to send many Congolese girls to Belgium in order to further their education (169). He insists that the MNC fights for equality and that its members should demand the same political rights for men and women. Yet, he lapses into evoking only masculine referents when in July 1960, during a speech broadcast on the radio, he expresses his desire to send "the best of our sons abroad to learn" (259).

Despite the masculinism of Lumumba's discourse, his emphasis on scholarships and specialized education for all leads us to believe that he, and perhaps others, could even before independence foresee a different future for their daughters. He remains true to a statement made in 1951: "The secret resides in schooling, that's the end of the story" (Mutamba Makombo 134).

Political Mobilization

Upon his return from Accra, during the first meeting held since the creation of the MNC (December 28, 1958), he made the call to support the program of the new party inclusive, stating the need for "the active collaboration" of all Congolese, men, women, and children (59). He goes on to invoke "universal" suffrage "without discrimination based on race, tribe, religion, education or wealth" (61). After this promising introduction, however, women's issues are not explicitly mentioned in the outline of the MNC program. The list reflects the issues that had inhibited unified action—race, ethnicity, and religion—and serves as a negation of previous proposals for a qualified vote based on education and economic status. When Lumumba makes his call to all Congolese patriots, he again mentions gender. While he seeks women's support and wants to mobilize them, he makes no promise to support their rights. He addresses a passionate appeal to all associations and groups to rally around the MNC.

He specifies that his appeal is addressed to all Congolese, "regardless of tribe, sex, or religion" (62).

By April 1959, while explaining in Brussels some of the MNC's initiatives, Lumumba recognizes explicitly that women are likely to bring to the table issues that men overlook. Acknowledging that women have "their own particular problems" (85), he promises the establishment of women's chapter. He concludes that this will enable the party to engage "all levels of the population," including women and young people (85). In his discourse women and young people are often paired in this way, a grouping that Cynthia Enloe has come to call "womenandchildren." They represent those segments of the population that have traditionally been marginalized and must be mobilized if any campaign is to be successful. Lumumba invites the Congolese students studying in Belgium to communicate their knowledge of youth organizations and the women's movement in Europe, which might be useful to organizers at home (86).

Voting Rights for Women

By early 1960 (in a text prepared for the Round Table), Lumumba states that universal suffrage includes women. Evoking the elected assembly he sees as crucial to the future organization of the Congo, he specifies that all men and women eighteen and over will enjoy the right to vote (152).[18] He places the party's decision to demand "the same political rights for women as for men" (169) squarely in the context of egalitarianism. But he acknowledges that there is opposition to this ideology of equality and positions himself as a champion of women's rights. Rejecting the reactionary circles that continue to denigrate women and deprive them of their rights, he promises that upon his return to the Congo he will "conduct a noisy campaign on behalf of Congolese women" (169). The audience members greet these remarks with applause. Although he positions himself, rather than Congolese women (a plural collectivity), as a prime mover of a campaign on behalf of "the Congolese woman" (singular in the French), he affirms that attitudes toward women are changing and that women themselves are starting to mobilize. Lumumba understands that the educated young people no longer regard women "as people who should stay in the background" and he intends to capitalize on the progressive trend, on "the tide . . . running in favor of women" (176). As a result, he says, he has set up a large national organization, the Union des Femmes Démocratiques du Congo [Union of Democratic Women of the Congo], "a political organization bringing women together" (176). This sort of body, in which women organize politically, should be distinguished from organizations that are affiliated with parties without being

recognized as political. For example, although it was never a branch of the political party, FABAKO (Femmes de l'Alliance des Bakongo, founded in 1958), helped raise campaign funds for Kasavubu's ABAKO (Alliance des Bakongo) in the period leading up to independence (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes* 278).

Speaking in Brussels in February 1960, Lumumba evokes women's actions in the Congo as well as their mounting demands. He reports that "women all over the country are beginning to agitate, to demand independence" and that during the congress they had held the previous December a woman had delivered "a magnificent speech" in which she had said: "If we're not allowed to vote in the coming elections, we're going to sabotage them" (176). The text indicates that the audience responds to this statement with laughter. Is the laughter an acknowledgement that this is still a highly unusual thing for a Congolese woman to say? Does it mean that the audience finds it hard to take the threat seriously? Or is it nervous laughter? Could it be a reaction to Lumumba's delivery when relating this incident?

We see a clear shift in Lumumba's views on women's political rights over time. But we also see evidence that Congolese women were not recognized as autonomous political actors. For example, when the wife of secessionist leader Albert Kalonji was discovered carrying 720,000 francs and seven pistols while escorting a shipment of arms meant to help equip her husband's army, Lumumba went to great pains to reassure the members of his parliament that she was immediately released (338, 367).[19] While Lumumba expresses outrage that Kalonji had gone in search of weapons "to massacre his own brothers!" (368), none of his indignation is directed at Madame Kalonji. Despite the fact that she was as actively involved as her husband, she was freed and not charged with any wrongdoing.

The Masculinism of Lumumba's Discourse

We now turn from the continuities and changes over time in Lumumba's statements about women alongside social and political developments in the Congo to a closer examination of the language and rhetorical devices he uses as well as to an analysis of the intersection of context and ideology in his writings and speeches. This analysis illuminates when and how Lumumba tended to include references to women and persistent contradictions or tensions in Lumumba's discourse concerning women.

At the end of *Le Congo,* Lumumba contends that "outdated colonial vocabulary" needs to be "scrapped" (200). The terms he would like to see disappear from the lexicon include: "conqueror, right of occupation,

subjects, masters, civilized, savage people, etc." (200). He proposes the adoption of a new vocabulary, one more in keeping with "the dignity of the Africans, and with universal ethical principles" (200). Despite this statement, in general Lumumba does not question or politicize the terms he uses. For example, he uses the term "boy" in its colonial sense, never questioning the infantilization it entails, and he never challenges the term or the ideology of the word *évolué*.[20] Lumumba draws attention to a term when he is talking about sexual assaults on Belgian women, however. He avoids the word "rape" and prefers the phrase "des femmes blanches qui auraient été inquiétées dans leur dignité" (*Pensée* 263). Although the translator renders it as "white women had been insulted" (*Lumumba Speaks* 288), a more literal translation would be "white women who had allegedly incurred the loss of their honor." (The past conditional in the French makes it clear that this is an allegation as opposed to an established fact.) Yet, Lumumba felt obliged to use the language of the Belgians in order to avoid confusion during his press conference in New York on July 25, 1961: "des femmes blanches auraient été violées. Je m'excuse du terme, mais il a été employé et j'aimerais que la vérité soit rétablie" "white women had [allegedly] been raped. I apologize for using this word, but it was precisely the one that was employed and I would like the truth to be established" (264; 288–89). This example emphasizes Congolese reserve when discussing matters of a sexual nature, while reminding us that these incidents long preceded the definition of rape as a crime of violence.

A constant in Lumumba's discourse is the language of fraternity. He repeatedly calls on his "frères" "brothers" to rise to the challenge of building a united and viable Congo, whether he adds the qualifier "de race" (*Congo* 52) or not. He also uses the term to embrace sympathetic Belgian "brothers" who are ready to serve the Congo, or even as a term to persuade recalcitrant Belgians that they can all work together for the common good of both Europeans and Africans. An excellent example is found in the opening pages of *Le Congo, terre d'avenir*, which is addressed both to the Congolese and the Belgians. He wants them to engage in dialogue, to tell each other "as friends, as brothers, what we think" (18). The examples are too numerous to reproduce. In his speeches he addresses the people of Congo-Brazzaville as "Brothers and comrades in struggle" (334); calls on all Congolese to try to neutralize the actions of those being misled by the Belgians: "Let us foil the maneuvers of these brothers, our brothers who are strengthening the enemy's position today" (338); appeals to his compatriots to engage constructively even with those who can be bought for 100 francs, "your brother, your son who is selling our country" (339); salutes his "brothers in the struggle"

(342) during the opening ceremony of the pan-African conference held in Leopoldville in August 1960; laments about Kasavubu, "we thought he was a brother" (355); and implores the members of his parliament: "Brothers, remain united" (356).

Another constant in Lumumba's text is a privileging of context. Where Lumumba deviates from general principles he claims to endorse, two primary factors seem to be at play: a concrete situation that involves conflicting values—need versus rights—or competing ideologies—women have a right to work versus women's place is in the home. Some examples contain both sorts of conflict. While in many of Lumumba's writings concerning women he is focused on the relationships between Congolese men and women (albeit in a larger context where racial hierarchies inform every aspect of life), in a situation in which white women and black men are competing for the same resources, gender is not the most salient factor. A concrete situation—large numbers of Congolese families without work or income and the threat of a huge influx of Belgians in an attempt to mitigate the effects of black domination after independence—overrides the general principle—that women have the right to work. Lumumba asserts that women "certainly" have the same right to work as men (*Congo* 107). Yet, in this particular instance, he supports the trade unions' stance against offering to white women posts that could be entrusted to the Congolese elite. These women, he contends, should be satisfied with their husbands' incomes so that Africans can be afforded the opportunity to earn their living (106–7). Whatever hardships lower-class colonials were experiencing, the Congolese readily concluded that a white woman's employment amounted to an unnecessary luxury since at the time educated *évolués* were paid less than half the lowest wage paid to Europeans (*Congo* 27). The situation also elicits positions that contradict long-held opinions about women's roles and the ideal of the family. While both Belgians and *évolués* believed that a woman's place is in the home, the Congolese did not raise that belief in this context (although Lumumba does implicitly evoke the ideology of the man as breadwinner), and the Belgians were happy to deviate from their own stated values in the light of what they perceived to be an imminent threat. Fierlafyn recognizes the pragmatism of nationalist discourse. He contends that often writers are responding to a particular situation as opposed to developing coherent ideological frameworks. This certainly seems true in this instance. However, one class of white working women, Belgian social workers, is never resented since they are seen as contributing to the African woman's development.

Another example of conflicting ideological frameworks can be garnered from the section in *Congo* devoted to women's education. Two

phrases capture tensions inherent in Lumumba's analyses of women's rights, roles, and responsibilities.

> Our wives are human beings with the same rights we have to human dignity. (140)
>
> If we demand that our employers give us responsibilities and grant us the rights essential for human dignity, why should we not give our wives their responsibilities and above all their natural rights, since the running of the home is the wife's responsibility? (141)

Here we see both an insistence on the human dignity of the woman and her status as an individual who deserves the same rights as men—"personnes humaines," "dignité humaine," "responsabilités," "droits" (human beings, human dignity, responsibilities, rights)—and the definition of the woman as spouse, without an existence outside of the bonds of marriage—"Nos femmes," "nos épouses" (Our women, our wives). The rights accorded to women are not those of a citizen vis-à-vis the state. Their rights are "natural" rights, that is, based on the body and belonging to biological and social reproduction—"running the home." The fact that Lumumba makes exceptions for single women reinforces the notion that the norm is marriage and motherhood.

In his response to an article about the education offered by the nuns at Mbansa-Moboma (*La Croix du Congo* on July 5, 1953), the question of whether a girl should be trained to work in an office provokes Lumumba to make bold statements in favor of equality between men and women despite his typical emphasis on the gaps emblematic of *évolué* households and his conception of women as wives.

> Yes, this is to be desired. We want progressively to make of the black girl an evolved, civilized woman, equal to man so that our evolution, of men and of women, goes hand in hand to eliminate the gaps and inequalities that unfortunately separate us from our spouses, gaps and inequalities resulting strictly from their lack of schooling and education that we had the advantage of receiving at their expense. Do we not sincerely deplore these gaps? (Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba* 134)

The language of equality is reinforced by the evocation of the woman as "évoluée" (usually a male category) and the language of parallel development (the evolution of men and women "goes hand in hand"). Once again Lumumba conflates equal rights with men's desire to have partners whose class and cultural status match their own. The African woman is to be educated to be the man's equal, not in terms of her rights to personal

autonomy, but in her degree of "evolution" toward "civilization," so that she does not hold him back or drag him down on the one hand or fracture the family and, by implication, society, on the other.

When expressing himself orally, Lumumba—who was considered a great orator by proponents and detractors alike—is very sensitive to his audience. In writing he addresses men, mostly *évolué* men, since only they can read and understand French. The audience for speeches were more likely to be mixed, and the vehicle of communication depends on the audience. How might the use of a vernacular language (Swahili or Lingala) influence the kinds of images he uses, the ways in which he illustrates or embellishes his points? Since his speeches were often improvised, how would the composition of the audience at a particular event influence what he chose to focus on?

A couple of examples exemplify his exquisite sensitivity to audience. In Belgium (February 1960), thanks to Lumumba's use of the adverb of place "ici" "here," we suspect that it is the presence of women in the audience that prompts him to raise questions related to women: "tomorrow the young ladies who are here will come to our country as welfare workers to educate our Congolese girls" (169). In Stanleyville in July 1960, he makes a declaration on the equality between the sexes. Here too the deictic "là-bas" "over there" (rendered as "here" in *Lumumba Speaks*) leads us to believe that women were in the audience. Madame Lumumba has confirmed that there were many politically active women in Stanleyville who supported Lumumba.[21] Perhaps their presence induced him to give voice to something he already believed but saw fit to introduce into his speech: "And our women who are here, who are listening to us and hearing what we have to say—we want our women to be at our side. Women must no longer be shunted aside. We want to live on an equal footing with our women" (272). These examples reinforce the point that, given the marginalization of women in the Congo at the time, most of Lumumba's referents are male. Unless they are specifically mentioned, it is more than likely that women are not being kept in mind.

When Lumumba imagines the future of the Congo, when the necessary education will have produced the required technicians, a list that appears gender-neutral reveals itself to be gender-inflected when the occupations at the end of the list appear in the feminine ("ses assistantes sociales, ses infirmières, ses accoucheuses"): "When the Congo has its own technicians in every trade, its doctors, agronomists, engineers, entrepreneurs, geologists, administrators, contractors, skilled workers..., social workers, nurses and midwives" (*Congo* 168). In these instances the masculinist bias of the French language, reminiscent of earlier periods when certain

professions were male dominated, combine with contemporary society in the Congo to influence language use.

As a rule, women figure in situations where Lumumba uses lists to evoke the entirety of the Congolese population. Enumeration, repeated use of the adjective or pronoun "tout" "all" and the adverb "ensemble" "together," as well as numerous references to unity, all serve to evoke a sense of shared purpose and inclusivity. In his speeches he calls on brothers and sisters, workers, employees, intellectuals, manual laborers, the rich, the poor, Africans, Europeans, Catholics, Protestants, Kimbanguists, Kitawalists who, "united, will build a great nation" (273).[22] At another time he adds deputies and senators, adults and children, boys and girls so that everyone together ("all together, the children of this country united") can build a great and strong Congo and liberate the rest of Africa (283). When he is calling on all his compatriots to contribute to the development and future grandeur of the Congo, we hear the Lumumba that people the world over remember. The first example is from his independence day speech, which starts with the famous address to Congolese men and women ("Congolais, Congolaises"). The second example is from a radio address made less than a month later on July 22, 1960. The hopeful future awaiting those he invites to true citizenship is quickly followed by a desperate bid to save the country.

> I invite all Congolese citizens, men, women, and children, to set to work to create a prosperous national economy that will be the crowning proof of our economic independence. (224)
>
> You know about the French Revolution; France was built with the labor of each of its men and women citizens. . . . we can save this great country, dear brothers, dear sisters, dear citizens. (284)

Despite the radicalization of Lumumba's thinking, when it comes to women, contradictions remain. For example, how do we reconcile Lumumba's assertion in 1953 that women should be trained to be office workers with his terse statement three years *later* that their place is in the home? In terms of political rights, the move from advocating for a qualified vote to calling for universal suffrage is momentous. We can speculate about parallel developments in his thinking in terms of women's roles in other realms, but unfortunately the evidence remains insufficient to support anything but conjecture. What is clear is that instead of becoming a collaborator in advancing European hegemony or a mediating figure between colonialists and Africans, Lumumba rejected colonial and neocolonial rule and much of its ideological and cultural baggage, even though he himself carried this baggage. At the same time, he did not

seek to return to some romanticized notion of indigenous culture, as some nationalist leaders and thinkers did. Many male nationalist leaders enshrined what they defined or invented as "traditional" gender relations that categorically subordinated and marginalized women in order to advance men's position *as men* relative to the colonizers and to assert their control over women in terms that enjoyed a certain legitimacy because of their supposed authenticity. Those same men often elevated their image of "the woman" (the singular matters) in a hypostasized "traditional" culture into an icon of national independence that tended to silence women's voices and annihilate their agency as self-conscious, collective subjects. Although Lumumba appealed to women as mothers of the nation, he did not anchor them in an imagined, unchanging past; rather, he called on them to participate in the revolutionary movement and embrace change.

We have concrete evidence of Lumumba's commitment to women in the figure of Andrée Blouin, with whom he worked closely in the period leading up to independence and whom he appointed chief of protocol in his government. Before we examine the story of Blouin's participation in Congolese politics, we need to look at the women in Lumumba's life and place their experiences in the context of the time.

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CHAPTER 2

LUMUMBA AND WOMEN: THE PERSONAL MEETS THE POLITICAL

> In fewer than six years (1945 to 1951), Lumumba took four wives. In 1960, he is about to marry a fifth. How do we explain such fickleness in someone who portrays women as his equals? (Omasombo and Verhaegen 141)[1]

Omasombo and Verhaegen display the common tendency to point out the disparities between the ideals Lumumba expressed in his writings and his own actions.[2] They publish a talk that he gave on the question of Congolese women under the heading "Lumumba critiques his own marriage" (141). The relevance to his own life of many of the issues Lumumba addressed in his writings no doubt contributed to the impassioned tone he sometimes used. Nevertheless, his ideas as well as his actions are better understood as self-contradictory, expressing and enacting the conundrums encountered by a person in his position. Just as the previous chapter situated Lumumba's writings and speeches in the context of the period and especially in relation to his position as *évolué*, this chapter offers an account of Lumumba's personal relationships with women and examines how the dynamics of cross-gender interactions were shaped by colonial discourses, social relations among Africans in various places and positions, and his personal cum political aspirations.[3]

Pauline Opango was Lumumba's wife of ten years, mother of three of his children, and his widow. Her relationship with Lumumba—and the tensions that characterized it—therefore receives privileged attention. Despite the frequent quarrels between Patrice and Pauline pointed out by Omasombo and Verhaegen, their daughter Julienne says about her parents' marriage:

> My parents were very young; when my father died he was 36 years old. My mother was a widow at 28. It was a partnership that had all the problems

> of marrying at such a young age, and with a couple who often didn't see much of each other. She knew that he was totally preoccupied by politics and that our house was open to everyone. I don't think that they had any more problems than this. (Zeilig 39)

However, Margot Lovett ("Gender Relations, Class Formation, and the Colonial State in Africa") reminds us that gender struggles within individual households should be seen as indicating the degree to which both husbands and wives maneuvered for positions of control and autonomy within a larger economic situation that rendered them largely powerless and uneasily interdependent. But because they occurred within the "private" domestic domain, the root causes of such struggles were masked (Lovett 36–37).

These conflicts must be understood as resulting from wider "structural stresses" rather than from particular marital situations (Lovett 37). Although Patrice and Pauline may not have conceived of their difficulties in terms of "gender struggles," their story dramatizes the intersecting forces coming to bear on conjugal and other kinds of unions between men and women in the period surrounding independence in the Congo. In order to examine the structural stresses suffered by the Lumumba household, in this chapter I explore the discourses and policies that shaped the lives of the subjects of the Belgian Congo in rural areas as well as the industrial compounds and cities of the *centres extra-coutumiers* with a special emphasis on their effects on women's lives. What are the intersecting legal, social, political, and economic forces that women and men try to negotiate in their private and public lives? What resources can each partner bring to such negotiations, including material and cultural capital, kin or other networks? What is the variable weight and authority of customary practices versus new models and ideals? What influence does their extended family have on their relationship? What, specifically, are the colonial incursions into the domestic space that influence women's experiences of colonization and the moment of decolonization? Although Lumumba's family is foregrounded, understanding the broader context takes us well beyond the 1950s and the vagaries of their *évolué* household.

King Leopold's Congo (1885–1908)

> Help us by all means in our ability to protect, to care for the child while educating indigenous mothers, it is a duty. We need black labor . . . To protect the child in the Congo is a duty, not of altruism, but of patriotism. (Van den Perre qtd. in Hunt, "Bébé" 405)

Mme van den Perre founded the Ligue pour la Protection de l'Enfance Noire under the patronage of the Belgian queen in 1912 in response to a report of high infant mortality rates in the colony (Hunt, "Bébé" 402–3). In her 1926 plea, she uses the language of solicitude for the Congolese population found in much of the literature touting the benefits of colonialism. Interestingly enough, she also expresses overtly the economic imperatives of the colony, and apparently she sees no contradiction in the juxtaposition of these two discourses. In fact, this impassioned call for Belgians to fulfill their patriotic duties had been occasioned by a population crisis that had its roots in the Congo of King Leopold II. The appalling conditions in the Congo Free State had provoked the first international human rights campaign. It had been estimated that, as a result of murder, starvation, exposure, and disease, the population of the Congo was, by the end of Leopold's reign, about half of what it would have been without the brutal, exploitative regime that had tried to extract as much ivory and rubber out of the land and the people as possible. Slave labor had fueled the economy of the Congo and depleted the population. At times women (as well as chiefs) were taken hostage to ensure that the male members of their families would produce enough rubber. Under these circumstances, rape was common. Women had to provide food for the Force Publique troops overseeing the work. Birth rates plummeted because of the frequent absences of the men, malnutrition, and women's refusal to bear children because when pregnant they were more vulnerable during attacks on their villages (Hochschild 232). When the Belgian government took over, heavy head taxes forced the Congolese into the wage economy, particularly on plantations and in mines. These extreme disruptions of labor patterns and family relations had a lasting impact on Congolese lives.

Lumumba was born in Onalua in Kasai Province just two decades later in an environment profoundly scarred by traumatic memories and a society continuing to negotiate ongoing transformations of its material and moral fabric. His father Tolenga, born around 1897, would have witnessed events or remembered stories told of the hardships that devastated the village of Onalua. Omasombo and Verhaegen present testimonies that tell of the burdens of taxes to be paid, of roads, hospitals, schools, and administrative buildings to be built, of rubber collecting and cotton cultivation, of porterage, and of chiefs whipped by the infamous chicotte in front of their subjects (61). The old villagers spoke of men spending weeks in the forest to gather rubber, sometimes traveling as far as 125 miles; the women brought food to their husbands while also taking care of those at home in the village (63). It was in this context that Lumumba's paternal grandmother raised her children after her husband's death: "she climbs

palm-trees to cut down nuts, builds houses, works tirelessly in the fields and at hunting in order to feed her children . . . She is feared because she talks a lot and especially because she acts aggressively toward anyone who dares to stand up to her" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 72).[4] From a word that offers a glimpse of Atetela conceptions of gender, we learn that she was known as a "femme-homme" "woman-man" because of "her build and her courage" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 72).

The Erosion of Women's Status in Rural Congo

> The legal and educational apparatus of the colonizer's "civilizing" undertaking forged gender relations that would restrict women's access to and control of resources. (Mianda, *Femmes* 152)

The profit motive combined with the ideology of the Belgian colonizers—that Africans were lazy and needed to be "rehabilitated" through work, that women were treated like beasts of burden by African men and had to be spared the hard labor of agriculture, that the man was the head of the household—radically disrupted existing practices in Congolese homesteads and families.

While heavy head taxes forced many men to migrate to plantations, mines, railways, ports, and white residential areas to find paid employment, those remaining in rural areas struggled to fulfill the demands made by the colonial authorities. Cotton was introduced in 1917, and mandatory cultivation of crops (under a state monopoly) was imposed in 1933. For example, in Onalua in 1935 every adult man was obliged to cultivate cotton (almost an acre if single and a little over an acre if married), with prices being determined by the authorities. The minimum area was increased during the Second World War. Many Atetela left for the urban areas during the war and did not want to return to the villages afterward in order to escape from this mandatory cultivation.

Although women, as was customary, continued to do the bulk of the agricultural work, they were excluded from wage-earning because obligatory cash-crop cultivation was imposed only on men, "Hommes Adultes Valides" (Mianda, "Dans l'ombre" 54). In precolonial Congolese societies "women generally had independent rights to cultivate land and to dispose of its produce. They could also inherit and pass on rights in land and other real property to others" (Rusan Wilson 153) and they had control over the surplus they might generate from agricultural production. As a result of their critical role in food production, their status "was relatively high compared with that of their late-nineteenth-century European

counterparts" (153). But the colonial agents dealt only with men and imposed taxes on the male heads of households. When men started controlling the money, women's rights and access to land and their managerial responsibilities were eroded. Lovett shows that expanding cash-crop production meant that men's supervisory rights over land were increasingly transformed into ownership rights, negatively impacting "women's usufructuary and trusteeship (for their sons) rights in land" (25).

The legal and material changes in women's status were complemented on the ideological front by colonial prejudice against female farming. Belgian conceptions of the man as the head of the household and of the primacy of women's domestic responsibilities meant that women's education in agriculture was limited to subsistence crops while boys were introduced to new technologies and cash crops. The introduction of Christianity (in Onalua the first mission was founded in 1909) and the monopoly of missions over education until the mid-1950s transformed African family life by condemning and trying to abolish practices current at the time of their arrival.

Campaigning for Monogamous, Indissoluble Unions

From the earliest contacts, the Europeans wanted to impose religious, monogamous marriage, but they had not fully succeeded and in some instances colonial policies actually worked against the stated goal of supporting Christian marriages based on European family ideals.

One of the fundamentals of Christian unions was the indissolubility of marriage. This idea ran counter to indigenous norms: "There is a general consensus of opinion that in this region [Central Africa] marriages have always been readily dissolved" (Mair 99). Families were prepared for the eventuality of a marriage failing. For example, Thornton points out that the Kikongo word for marriage, *sompa*, also means "to borrow," which reflects the idea that the man is borrowing the woman from her family. If the couple found the union unacceptable, the bride wealth would be returned and the woman would return to her family (82). Mair lists the types of complaints a woman could make against her husband, reasons that would have been found insufficiently serious by the missionaries advocating lifelong commitments for better or for worse:

> Discriminates against her in favour of another wife, fails to provide clothing, beats or curses her unreasonably, is impotent, or is generally unpleasant around the household, encroaching upon the woman's prerogative of managing the household foodstock or refusing to allow her to offer hospitality to her relatives or generally showing himself hostile to her kin. (99–100)

In areas where Christian values had taken hold, sometimes couples would live together to see whether their union was viable before entering into an indissoluble Christian marriage, thwarting the missionaries' intention of banishing all nonmarital sexual relations.

The missionaries earnestly tried to eradicate polygamy and were joined in this effort by the colonial authorities. Well before Lumumba's birth legislation had been introduced to discourage the practice. Starting in 1910, polygamous husbands had to pay extra taxes for each additional wife. Nancy Hunt argues that this policy reinforced the association of polygamy with wealth and it therefore acquired—or retained—a certain prestige, an unintended consequence ("Noise" 474). By the late 1940s, the *évolués* had jumped on the anti-polygamy bandwagon and were hotly debating the various modern forms of polygamy that were emerging.[5] Women's voices were largely absent from the written debates. There were a few exceptions, as interviews with women were transcribed and translated for publication. The director of the Elisabethville *foyer social* (1950) presented women's opinions in opposition to polygamy: "in the past polygamy was a source of wealth. Women's work increased the family's assets. But in the city, polygamy diminishes those assets, because the husband is obliged to share his ration and his salary among his wives" (Dutillieux 110). Their response is pragmatic and acknowledges their economic dependence on their husbands in the new environment. But they also criticize the abuses that develop when polygamy is practiced in urban centers far from the pressures exerted by the traditional village community, abuses that serve to undermine the status the first wife once held: "before, the first wife herself chose the second wife. Nowadays, the husband makes his own choice in secret, and disregards the desires of the first wife" (Dutillieux 110). What did polygamy look like at the time? The familiar old form of polygamy—"colonial visions of lustful, chiefly husbands with large 'harems' of multiple wives and slave concubines—*la grande polygamie*" (Hunt, "Noise" 478) still existed in a modified version: it was now practiced by state-invested customary leaders who monopolized rural women by paying bride wealth for most girls in their area of jurisdiction. They would then demand high bride wealth prices or practice "double polygamy," ceding them temporarily to poor bachelors in return for plantation work or palm wine (479). As young men were unable to compete with the wealthy leaders, they would stream to the cities, along with, it was supposed, the polygamists' overworked, dissatisfied, "run-away wives."[6]

The authorities' primary preoccupation was *la petite polygamie*, which was increasing for reasons that had been created by the colonialists themselves. Forced labor obligations had been increased during the Second

World War from 60 to 120 days per year. Since most forced labor fell into what was customarily defined as women's work, "rural zones gradually came to approximate labour camps" (Jewsiewicki qtd. in Hunt, "Noise" 479). As a result, more husbands, with the encouragement of their wives, were taking additional wives: "Only polygamous husbands seemed to be able to fulfill their agricultural, hygienic and other corvées with ease. Those usually in trouble with the state for not accomplishing them were monogamous husbands" (479). One of the *évolué* writers engaged in the debate pointed out that if agricultural machines were not introduced, polygamy could not be suppressed, for its abolition would ruin Africans, pointing to the clear connection between economic exigencies—as opposed to cultural traditions—and social practices.

To the *évolués*, and also to those colonial authorities who became aware of it, the most disturbing kind of polygamy was the new, non-customary sort practiced by urban *évolué* men who were taking additional women secretly. "Mocking the [supplementary] tax they evaded, they would refer to the 'concubines,' their wives of 'pseudo-marriages,' as their 'supplémentaires'" (Hunt, "Noise" 480). This "camouflaged polygamy" practiced by men who had been married by civil or religious ceremony had a commercial aspect. Hunt argues that these deviations were usually responses to colonial state policies, regulations, and taxes:

> Urban and rural Christian men, for example, who were reluctant to declare inherited widows to the state or have them live on their property, were committing a form of "camouflaged polygamy." They had them work for them clandestinely as "widows or *femmes libres*" or put them under the care of a relative who declared them to the state in exchange for the supplementary tax. (482)

On the other hand, the benefits gained from pro-natalist incentives for monogamist fathers—family allocations for workers and head tax exemptions for fathers of four—were being abused. Instead of taking care of their wives and children, men were collecting "supplémentaires."[7] Attempts to penalize forms of camouflage in 1950s "increased the need for artifice and masquerade" and concubinage and camouflaged polygamy continued to grow, as did the protests among the *évolués*. Hunt presents the worries expressed of J. Sumuwe, whose article appeared in *La Voix du Congolais* in 1950: "In this cohabitation, where there is no engagement, the parties are free. The woman also acts as she pleases . . . *a marriage crisis ensues*" (emphasis added) (482). I return to the question of the "marriage crisis" later in the chapter when examining Lumumba's personal relationships in depth.

While rural and urban areas remained interconnected, as the discussion of polygamy demonstrates, the new spaces of the *centres extra-coutumiers* led to the forging of new relationships and identities.

The Position of Women in Industrial and Urban Centers

By definition the *centre extra-coutumier* (CEC) was removed from customary practice. Africans living in these spaces were sometimes called "détribalisés" "detribalized." Mudimbe presents the CEC as a space where "an intermingling of African and colonial elements" can be found and as the "exclusive locus for bridging the gulf between traditional memory and a radically reconstructed one" (*Idea* 130). Many Africans wanted to escape from the "rigid prescriptions that govern village life" (Gondola, "Amours"), both colonial and traditional. But industrial compounds, as opposed to cities, were spaces in which the most intimate details of workers' lives could be closely monitored and controlled.

Stabilizing the Work Force in Industrial Compounds

As the demand for vine rubber subsided and the Congo started focusing more on mining, the lives of men, women, and families would be greatly influenced by the labor needs of the large companies.[8]

The 1920s population crisis that inspired Mme van den Perre's call to support Congolese mothers and children led to the adoption of pro-natalist policies whose implementation involved the colonial regime entering "into some of the most intimate aspects of African women's lives: the birthing process, breast feeding, weaning, dietary choices and sexual activity" (Hunt, "Bébé" 431). The policies included "family allocations; expansion of medical services; laws to repress abortion, prostitution, and polygamy; maternity gifts; and tax exemptions for monogamously married men with more than four children" (404). Belgians were encouraged to see the protection of Congolese children, the future work force, as a patriotic duty: "Without black labor, our colony would never be able to send to Europe the wealth buried in its soil" (405). Hunt explains that the Ligue was little appreciated until the emergence of colonial concern about the impact of population loss, infertility, and low birth rates on growing industrial labor requirements (403). Although the whole country was affected by these pro-natalist policies, the most striking examples emerge from the industrial areas because of the extensive control that could be exerted in the compounds where the workers lived. Here the company, bringing together various ethnic groups, could shape African families to its needs.

In the mining sector the first order of the day was the "stabilization" of the work force. Until the population crisis, the mine owners had preferred to rely on migrant labor since it exempted them from providing food and lodging for the workers' families. However, the Haut Katanga had become known as "the land of death," and statistics showed that migrant laborers died at three to four times the rates of "stabilized" workers (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 106). Increased mechanization also required more skilled workers, which made long-term contracts more desirable. Starting in the late 1920s, women, who had previously been shunned, were now needed and policies were put into place to facilitate marriage.

Promoting Marriage

To implement this policy, offices for "marriage palavers" were created, the head of the camp was expected to intervene personally to initiate "palavers" (107), and bonuses were paid to those delivering high numbers of marriage files to the department of indigenous labor, which had created a special department to deal with marital issues (Dibwe dia Mwembu, *Bana* 59). Until the end of the 1940s, the department of indigenous labor transmitted the files of women concerned to the territorial administrators, who facilitated the transportation of young women who wanted to join their husbands and even, under certain circumstances, paid an advance on the bride wealth of well-regarded unmarried workers (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 107). Because the mortality rates of the women were also of concern, the authorities made sure that only the strongest women were selected. Those weighing less than forty-five kilograms (ninety-nine pounds) or who had a small pelvis were brushed aside. What counted were "health and hardiness" (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 107). A former worker explained that, in the beginning of the 1930s, workers with good reputations got extraordinary support, often at great cost to individual freedom and community integrity: "It was sufficient, for a well regarded recruit, to give the name of the young woman of his village or the neighboring village that he wished to marry for the colonial authorities to dispatch her to him even without the consent of the girl or even less that of her parents" (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 117). Between 1927 and 1931 there were thirty-five "legitimate" women per 100 men in the camp; by 1957–1961 the number had increased to eighty-five (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 110).

Once the mine owners had managed to bring more women to the workers' camps, they faced the challenge of feeding the families. Although women were supposed to be spared the hard agricultural labor, the poor

wages their husbands were paid forced them to supplement the family income by growing food, sometimes voluntarily and sometimes under duress. So the women, who were supposed to be homemakers, were enlisted to help feed their families. In 1928, the authorities introduced "zones maraîchères" "market garden zones" around the industrial and urban areas.[9] By 1933 the workers' wives were expected to supplement the weekly rations provided by the employer, which many city women also did out of necessity. At the same time prices were unilaterally fixed by the colonial authorities. Vegetables grown on European farms were to be sold at 2 franc per kg, those grown by Africans (if they had a surplus to sell after feeding their families) at 0.30 francs per kg. Many women ended up selling cooked food, homemade drinks, or beer, or sewed and knitted to supplement their husbands' wages (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 112). Rusan Wilson sums it up: female farming allowed men to become wage earners without completely disrupting food production, and women's food production and other revenue-producing activities supplemented the low wages paid in the mines and plantations. In this way the "so-called subsistence sector directly subsidized the colonial economy" in the mining compounds (Rusan Wilson 154).

Women in the industrial compounds, despite their contributions to the family's income, saw the husband's authority reinforced, because he alone was responsible to the camp authorities for the conduct of all family members (Dibwe dia Mwembu, *Bana* 65). For example, until the end of the 1930s, if a woman committed an infraction, her husband would be sanctioned, for he was considered incapable of controlling his wife and exercising his proper authority over his family (65). Later wives were directly subject to the control of the industrial bosses, which undermined the man's position as household head even as this role was touted by the colonial powers. Women recalcitrant to supplement the weekly rations provided by the employer were deprived of their food ration (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 112).

Despite the obvious need to improve their workers' productivity, the discourse of the company focused on "freeing the woman from her village chores" (Dibwe di Mwembu, *Bana* 61). If her burden of labor was lightened, she also lost a certain amount of economic autonomy since the male worker was the sole provider, "an effective strategy for domesticating the woman" (62). The ideology remained consistent over time. In 1959 a company publication reiterated that the man is "the head of his household" (67, 68). Although a good man is present in the home, provides for his family, educates his wife and children, and tries to resolve problems together with his wife, the conclusion remains unambiguous: "it is the husband who rules, not the wife" (68).[10] At the same time, the man had to submit to the pervasive paternalism of his employers.

Changing Birthing Practices and Child Spacing

While women were enlisted to complement the weekly food rations and their husbands' wages, feeding programs were introduced in the mining compounds to reduce stillbirths and infant mortality. From the sixth month of pregnancy until a year after the birth of the child, women received rations equal to those of men rather than their usual smaller weekly rations. Colonial authorities tried to overcome women's resistance to birthing in the presence of strangers, even men, by offering incentives for delivering in maternity wards, such as a gift of 50 francs, soap, sugar, and clothes for the infant. Recalcitrant women were deprived of their ration cards for a week if they did not show up for their prenatal visits. This combination of the stick and the carrot seems to have worked. In the thirteen years between 1940 and 1953 the proportion of women delivering their babies in the maternity wards at Union Minière increased from 51.8 percent to 85.5 percent, while rates of stillbirth and infant mortality both declined by 75 percent between 1931 and 1961 (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 113–14). Providing infants, small children, and pregnant mothers with additional nutrition was not considered enough to supply the industry with the workers it needed, however. Colonialists were worried about the small number of children women were bearing.

Given popular conceptions of overpopulation in Africa, state intervention designed to reduce birth spacing seems implausible. The fact that "African women would abstain from sexual intercourse for up to two or three years after giving birth had always puzzled the colonial imagination," since Europeans assumed that "sexuality in the tropics, especially among Africans, was uncontrollable" (Hunt, "Bébé" 406). In order to reduce birth spacing, they encouraged women to stop breastfeeding their children earlier and provided milk to help them do so. The Europeans thought that "nature would certainly permit them to support more frequent pregnancies without harm" (410). By the 1950s the Belgian authorities had succeeded in reducing birth spacing, and commentators began noticing the extra burden this shift had placed on Congolese women. Not only did they give birth to more children, they also lacked the aid they might have received from co-wives in a polygamous situation (427). Comhaire-Sylvain's accounts of hunger among children in Leopoldville in the mid-1940s are heartbreaking. She reports that children up to the age of two or three tended to be healthy and well fed. Once a new baby was born, the child was left more and more to its own devices and large numbers of children went hungry. Shorter intervals between births, when generalized to the larger society where feeding programs were not available, meant greater physical hardship for small children (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Food* 52).[11]

"Free Women" in the Cities

The tight controls of the compounds did not pertain in the cities. What kinds of freedoms did exist? Did the "the apparent social instability of colonial cities" help women succeed in dismantling "the sexual hierarchies that kept them under masculine guardianship in the rural environment," as Gondola ("Amours") claims?

According to T. K. Biaya, to rural Africans, colonization seemed like a vise from which only the city offered an alternative, with the possibility of freedom and wealth (Gondola, "Amours"). Although colonial cities were riddled with constraints, including segregation and curfews, they nevertheless represented an escape from colonial taxes, mandatory crop cultivation, and both customary and new prescriptions. How did women fare in these new spaces?

Adult women were legitimate urban dwellers if they were wives, widows, or elderly. Many more were the single women whose plight Lumumba recognized and tried to improve by allowing them to acquire the *carte de mérite civique*. In 1928, there were already 5,000 unmarried women in Kinshasa. The majority worked in the market gardens on the outskirts of the city. Some specialized in making and selling charcoal, palm oil, and cassava bread, while others turned to prostitution in order to survive (Gondola, "Unies" 4–5). If clerks like Lumumba struggled to make ends meet and other wage laborers depended on their wives' contributions to pay their bills and take care of their children, how would single women, with or without children, manage in a city in the absence of extended kin networks?

Unmarried women preoccupied the industrial bosses who demonstrated their influence on the colonial administration. Even though the industry tried to encourage marriage with partners from the male laborers' areas of origin, many of the men could not afford to do so and cohabited with single women from their own or other ethnic groups already present in the *centres extra-coutumiers*. In order to combat unions they considered unstable,

> around 1936 the employer asked the colonial government to provide each woman (who is free) with an identity booklet *mwikala bule*, in which should be listed all the unions already entered into by the holder. That, they believed, would make it difficult for them to change spouses too frequently and would permit the managers of l'Union Minière to expel from their camps this kind of unstable woman. (Dibwe dia Mwembu, "Fonctions" 110)

When the *femmes libres* were accorded a legal status, they were labeled "*femmes indigènes adultes et valides vivant théoriquement seules*"

"indigenous able-bodied adult women officially living alone" (Gondola, "Popular" 66).

From the colonial administration's perspective, the primary criterion for allowing people into the *centres extra-coutumiers* was economic utility. Men needed to show proof of employment. But "large numbers of free women and prostitutes are admitted because they pay taxes and represent the principal source of revenue for the Center with the tax on sales of alcoholic beverages" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 112). In Stanleyville from 1939 to 1943, shortly before Lumumba's arrival, over 30 percent of the women were registered as *femmes libres* and their taxes represented the second-highest source of revenue for the city (MacGaffey 174). In Leopoldville in 1958, by contrast, registered *femmes libres* constituted just 6 percent of a female population of 75,406 (La Fontaine, "Free" 94). Although it was often assumed that *femmes libres* engaged in prostitution, administrative distinctions were made that showed that this generalization was false. In Leopoldville the colonial authorities were so convinced that all unmarried women were engaged in prostitution that they imposed an annual tax of 50 francs on them, the equivalent of ten days of work for a "boy," at the time the highest paid category of worker (Gondola, "Unies"), but in Elisabethville there was a two-tiered tax system, with prostitutes paying more than "honest" single women (Hunt, "Noise" 489). Nevertheless, the term *femme libre* is often used indiscriminately, as if it were synonymous with "prostitute." The term "ndumba" or "ndoumba," which means "unmarried woman" in Lingala, has similarly taken on the meaning of prostitute or woman of loose morals.[12]

The statistics for Kinshasa in 1945 give us a better idea of the demographics of the "more independent urban women" (MacGaffey 165) who had "broken away from the control of guardians, whether husband or kin" (La Fontaine, "Free" 95).

> At that time, men outnumbered women seven to four; the majority of women were in the 20 to 40 years age group and had few children. Forty to fifty percent of the 8,000 over 14 were unmarried; 1,000 of them were between 14 and 18 years, some engaged or living with the prospective husbands; about 100 were elderly and divorced or widowed; approximately 600 were prostitutes. This left about 6,000 women living in concubinage or temporary unions and listed as dependents of male partners or kinsmen. (MacGaffey 165)

These independent women were considered " 'free' of traditional stereotypes of subordination to a man; husband or father. It is thus intelligible why the label '*femme libre*' is applied to any woman who supports herself

in a job, in the modern manner, be she ever so virtuous" (La Fontaine, "Free" 96). La Fontaine also demonstrates that in Kinshasa in the 1960s becoming a prostitute was "a strategy, not necessarily irreversible nor unaccompanied by other strategies" (90).[13]

Where men far outnumbered women, women could use this to their advantage. They negotiated "matrimonial unions not only, as in the village, according to the ethnic group of the suitor, but also by emphasizing criteria such as education, age, social status and, a novel idea, love" (Gondola, "Unies"). Among the *femmes libres* engaged in selling sexual favors, the practice could take forms that actually economically and socially empowered women, especially in cities such as Leopoldville with a significantly larger number of men than women. For example, bar owners were often women who had accumulated capital through prostitution. Gondola quotes an informant: "I used to go with different men and make a lot of money, and then I became a strong woman. . . ." (L. White qtd. in "Popular" 69). Although women normally did not get to own property, significant numbers were now renting out rooms to workers.[14] For example, when Jean La Fontaine investigated a commune in Leopoldville in 1962–1963, she found that fourteen out of the forty-six lots she investigated were owned by women, showing that "the role of independent women is an established phenomenon of urban life" (*City* 60).

According to Pons, "a set of fashionable women setting modern or 'urban' standards for the masses" (215) managed to be relatively independent of individual men. He emphasizes that "their fashions and their styles of feminine conduct were distinctly 'African' rather than 'European' or 'Western'" (215). Most members of this set were formally registered as *femmes libres*, and many

> led relatively independent lives as the mistresses of wealthier African men—and in a minority of cases of Europeans—or as semi-prostitutes of high status. The semi-prostitutes commonly had small changing set of "lovers" or clients who ordinarily gave them "presents" in return for sexual favours granted regularly over a period of time rather than strictly contracted cash payments in return for intermittent sexual encounters. (215).

Concubines seemed to prize their liberty because a lover was less able to be a despot and exercise control (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes* 23–25).[15] Negative sentiments about the position of wives, the primary role for women favored by colonialists and *évolués,* appear in a popular song from the colonial period. A young woman sings: "Mother, I would like to become a *ndoumba*" and goes on to explain what inspires such a

desire: *ndoumbas* earn their own living and don't have to endure endless household quarrels (Gondola, "Amours"). As Gondola sums up the situation, colonial cities represented "the crucible of new identities" where the "the conjugal taboo," inherited both from traditional societies and imposed by Victorian Europe, could be broken, a taboo that limited the solidarity, visibility, and mobility of women in the cities. Another song of the colonial period presents the wife as a "curtain rod" ("Amours") who is condemned to live inside her home while her husband spends his time in the worldly company of the *ndoumba*. So while wives became dependent on their husbands, unmarried women negotiated new kinds of relations with men. Gondola sees the *ndoumba* as incarnating a new kind of modernity, particular to the colonial city, because of her position in relation to European modernity and African cultures, not only in her liaisons with both white and African men but also in her freedom from conjugal constraints. If most women were not *ndoumbas*, they did find other ways to empower themselves.

Women's Associations from Elegance to Emancipation

Mutual aid organizations flourished in the cities where more traditional support systems were no longer available. Deprived of many of the opportunities available to men, women organized recreational activities such as regular meetings in bars. Members would take turns at playing hostess and paying for drinks and food. These *muziki* (Lingala for music, a reference to the entertainment) were made up of "basi ya kilo" or "basi ya poids," women of "weight" who had the means to participate, initially "woman traders, mistresses of Europeans, bar courtesans, et cetera" (Gondola, *Villes* 290). The *muziki* appear to be the precursors to recreational associations that often took on more obvious elements of prostitution, though that was never their primary purpose (291). Leopoldville "with a population of roughly 300,000, had some 400 bars. Clubs such as Les Diamants, Rosette, La Lumière, and La Beauté flourished in Leo during the same period" (Gondola, "Popular" 73). The *associations féminines d'élégance* also provided a form of financial support for unmarried women. For example, the association La Reconnaissance was created in August 1958. The owner of the bar Chez Mingiédi commissioned a friend "to create a club of neighborhood young women and to gather them [in his bar] three times a week in order to attract male patrons "(Malingwendo qtd. in Gondola, "Popular" 73). This club, unlike the *muziki*, had a male patron, though the president and secretary were both women. The members were called *bana* ("children"; sing. mwana). The club's bylaws promised financial support in case of marriage, death, and hospitalization, and during meetings the

owner served beer and grilled food to members. Twice a month, they purchased a whole piece of wax cloth with matching headscarf and sandals. All the *bana* wore this uniform at their gatherings and would popularize songs by creating dances for them (73–74). Although women and children could also be seen at the club, the main clients were men, many of them married. Gondola, while rightly seeing opportunities for financial independence for the *bana*, overstates his case when he says that women who were dominated by men during the day were "masters" of the night (Gondola, "Popular" 76), because the majority of women in the cities were in fact "ordinary wives" (Pons 215). Although Gondola correctly identifies the tone of what he calls an "anti-*bana* feminist," he fails to recognize the importance of his own accurate description of a division of labor that leaves the "ordinary" women bearing the brunt:

> One anti-*bana* feminist commented condescendingly: "She generally lives with her mother and another relative, i.e., an aunt or a sister, who does the marketing, the cooking and the child rearing: in a word, keeps or runs the house. The *ndoumba* dresses up, runs all over town in search of the latest fashions and beauty products, places orders with the jeweler, tries on outfits at the dressmaker's, and gets her hair braided by friends as they chat, if she is not showing herself off in the bars." (Mambou Gnali qtd. in Gondola, "Popular" 75)

We are not told what kind of financial contribution the *ndoumba* is making to the household of the women who are doing the reproductive labor; *femmes libres* often had dependents. This account does not say whether there are any men in the household.

Even organizations not initiated or managed by men still remained dependent on them, according to Comhaire-Sylvain: "The members had to be elegant and know how to behave in society. They certainly had loose morals: they needed money, lots of money. Where could it be obtained if not from men?" (*Femmes* 265). Whether she is excluding successful women traders or not, she interprets women's reliance on men differently than Gondola and La Fontaine, who focus on *femmes libres*' freedom of movement and ability to spend money. But Comhaire-Sylvain acknowledges the important role the associations played in the social advancement of women. They wasted a lot of money, their conduct was not irreproachable, and they did little besides organize parties. Nevertheless

> they did it without being managed by men or masterminded by "Europeans." During these parties where they met men on equal footing, they got accustomed to talking to them, they learned to resist them. . . . [They had] the opportunity to travel and to meet people beyond the circles usually

> available to them. From an economic point of view, several of them went into business (refreshment stall, bar, interurban trade) and succeeded, in part because their experiences in the associations had made them bolder and given them more confidence in themselves. (267)

Other associations worked explicitly for "l'émancipation de la femme congolaise." In 1956 Lumumba started the "Association Libérale," which was made up of twenty women and twenty men. Apolitical and multiethnic, it was among the first organizations created to work toward the liberation of Congolese women. Its goal was to create evening classes and *foyers sociaux*, but after a year it had held only meetings and discussions (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes* 277). One of Lumumba's associates in the association, identified by Comhaire-Sylvain only as "Mme Elisabeth C., foyers sociaux privés," became frustrated by the lack of action and in 1959 founded an organization that started evening classes for women and girls (350). Other organizations included an ephemeral Association des Femmes Évoluantes Kinoises (1957) and FABAKO (1958), founded by another of Lumumba's close associates in the Association Libérale, Mme Julienne Mbengi (277). The multiplicity of smaller organizations would be replaced by larger national organizations in the postindependence era.

The informal education that women received complemented and filled the gaps left by the formal educational system. Whether "ordinary wives" or *femmes libres*, women had little access to education, which continued to prevent them from entering salaried work in the public sector. Women's employment was increasing during the 1950s. A tobacco factory in Stanleyville opened its door to women in 1955, and the same year the company Utexleo in Leopoldville hired sixty women in its weaving department. Women secretaries, typists, and radio announcers were making their appearance. Women were even being appointed to the City Council (M'Poyo Kasa-Vubu, "Évolution" 178). But the distinct curriculum provided for girls and the small number of girls in schools delayed women's educational progress. Indeed, education was a powerful ideological tool used to reinforce the models of feminine behavior endorsed by the colonial regime and to a large extent the *évolué* class.

Women's Education as Resocialization

At the time of independence in 1960, fewer than twenty Congolese had completed university degrees, and among these there were no doctors, lawyers, or engineers. The figures for women are even more dismal. In "La condition féminine au Congo-Belge dans les années cinquante,"

Sohier-Brunard concludes that out of a population of more than 10 million, there were only about 1,000 women who were "emerging a bit from the backward mass of the Congo" (Mutamba-Mukombo, *L'Histoire du Zaïre* 276). In 1960, "there were still only two girls for every ten boys in primary education and in official secondary education, 20 girls out of 1,417 pupils" (Verheust 5). Barbara Yates concludes that less than 9 percent of two million Congolese girls aged 5–19 were enrolled in school at independence (143). She contends that during the Leopoldian era "Catholic education for girls could best be described as resocialization, rather than instruction" (134).[16]

Let us take a closer look at the education that was offered to women during the period that the women in Lumumba's life were growing up.[17] What did it try to teach them, and did it amount to resocialization in Western values rather than training for professional occupations? Since Pauline Opango was born in the 1930s, her schooling opportunities would have been determined by the Education Code of 1929. The legislation recognized three levels of schooling: two-year village schools for grades one and two, which were coeducational and offered the same curriculum to boys and girls, except that girls did lighter manual labor; three-year upper primary schools for grades three to five, which had separate schools for boys and girls, and the time girls devoted to literacy and numeracy was reduced in order to add needlework, sewing, and child care; and three-year vocational schools for grades six to nine. While French was offered to boys as an elective and was the language of instruction in schools to prepare male clerks, girls' schools used only Congolese languages (Yates 136). The code opened up a number of new opportunities for boys, but it reinforced the domestic role of women under the guise of vocational education. The motto was "education" or even "resocialization" as opposed to "instruction" (134). Vocational schools for girls prepared them only to work as elementary school teachers and focused on home economics and subsistence agriculture (137). Had Pauline received an education, it would have focused on making her a good wife and mother after she attained rudimentary skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic in her mother tongue.

By the time Pauline Opango's children were ready to go to school, the situation had improved for both girls and boys. In fact, Lumumba was proud to send his two older children, François and Patrice, to the secular Athénée where their classmates were both European and Congolese. He would no doubt have sent Julienne there too, but she was only six years old at the time of her father's death. These children could benefit from postwar legislation. The Education Code of 1948 established the first full six-year academic secondary school for African boys as preparation

for university studies. By the mid-1950s, secular coeducational primary and secondary schools for Congolese were introduced (Yates 141). At last, girls could receive an education in which French was both a subject and the medium of instruction. But few "select" primary sections—the track that led to secondary education—existed for girls (142). Yet, these changes did not alter the goals set for girls. The Coulon Education Commission, which visited the Congo in 1954, criticized girls' education not so much because of its limited academic program but because it did not even teach home economics efficiently. In 1957 a provincial director declared that a girl's education should prepare her "to occupy in a dignified manner her place in the true (i.e., Christian) home" (Moffarts qtd. in Yates 142). In 1954, despite the establishment of secular state primary and secondary schools, the Catholic-run Lovanium University opened with a solely male Congolese student contingent. The first Congolese female to receive a high school diploma, Sophie Kanza, graduated in June 1961, a year after independence (148).[18]

Pauline had been deprived of formal schooling. What other educational options were open to her? Lumumba had continued his education as an adult, notably by taking night classes. Evening classes were also available to women. The larger cities had *foyers sociaux*, "Belgian domestic training institutions for African women, founded for married women" that taught them "to cook, mend, iron, and wash clothes, and how to wean their infants and decorate their home" (Hunt, "Domesticity" 447). The program was relatively popular. By 1953, "more than 5,000 women and teenagers were enrolled in such activities in six establishments sponsored by the colonial municipality of Leopoldville" (Gondola, "Popular" 68). These foyers cultivated the ideals of domesticity that helped men gain the status of *évolué*, either through the *carte de mérite civique* or the *carte d'immatriculation*. They also promulgated the notion that the man was the head of the household. A former director of a *foyer social*, Mme Thecle Mutono, remembers lessons on domestic morality: "it was emphasized that the head of the household was the man; the woman owed him total submission" (Sizaire 32).

Interestingly enough, Pauline did not participate in such programs despite Lumumba's endorsement of all kinds of educational opportunities for women and his insistence on women being prepared to run the home efficiently. At first I thought that Lumumba might have objected to the intrusive nature of some aspects of the program. Women participating in these programs had to submit to supervisory home visits and to carry a "social card" containing the following information: "ethnic background, religion, type of marriage, bride wealth payments, sources of revenue (including money received from her husband), husband's job

and salary, the size and condition of housing, and types of kitchen utensils and bedding" (Hunt, "Domesticity" 465). In the early 1950s, when he and Pauline got married, Lumumba himself had proposed house visits. In "L'évolution de la femme noire" (published in *La Croix du Congo* in June 1951), Lumumba tackles the problem of a "false *évolué*" who, after his wife has set a beautiful table, alone benefits from the "civilized" environment while his wife retreats to the kitchen to eat on the floor. He suggests a range of remedies to right this wrong, including direct action as well as lectures. The organizers of action groups might go to the homes of participants during meal times "to make sure that the instructions are followed," and hold feasts during which "the members, accompanied by their wives, will sit down at the table together with them" (Mutamba Makombo, *Patrice Lumumba* 91).

Although the authorities always insisted that "civilization" should not be confused with the external trappings of a Western lifestyle, the requirements for *évolué* status and the models presented to students at the foyers demonstrate that they were often conflated. In "La Femme détribalisée du centre extra-coutumier" (1950), Mlle. G. Dutillieux, the director of the Foyer Social of Elisabethville, comments about the *foyer*'s participants: "They would very much like to pass for civilized while not knowing very well what that means, and while confusing the external signs of civilization with the education of the heart and of the person" (113). While she attributes this confusion of moral with material values to the girls' naiveté, the system itself fostered this conflation. The girls were encouraged to live frugally and to use local products. Yet, the model house at the *foyer social* program described by Hunt (which was the size of an *évolué* home at the time, with dining room, kitchen, and bedroom), contained a full complement of imported European china and silverware ("Domesticity" 458).

The economics of the situation are paramount. Salaries (as Lumumba goes to great pains to explain in *Le Congo, terre-d'avenir*) were hardly compatible with the standard of living expected of *évolués*, who were supposed to send their children to the schools frequented by European children.[19] Few if any could live up to these models of *évolué* masculinity, of the husband as sole provider. Lumumba himself struggled to buy and furnish a house, and the funds he embezzled from the post office may well have been a means for him to try to live up to these ideals. Hunt concludes: "Civilization was exclusively white. Complete duplication of the trappings of European life was not only structurally impossible, but also strategically not permitted by the curriculum and activities of the *foyer*" ("Domesticity" 470). The quest to attain elite status was always frustrated by the colonial hierarchy of race.

The Education of Pauline Opango

Those who strove to receive the recognition and privileges associated with the status of *évolué* also had to accept the intrusive and demeaning process it involved.[20] Lumumba subjected himself to the home examination on two occasions after his marriage to Pauline Opango and finally obtained the desired status late in 1954.[21] Julienne Lumumba reports on what she learnt from her family about proving that one was civilized: "I once asked my parents what this meant. It was a deeply humiliating process. You would be given a test, someone would come to the house and see if you had an inside toilet, if your children wore pyjamas, if you ate with a knife and fork—only then would you be given the accreditation 'évolué' " (Zeilig 34).

Although Pauline was spared intrusions into her home except for the immatriculation application, the education she recalls receiving from her husband was also a trying business. She did not always give in quietly to his Pygmalion urges.

> My husband and my sister had to teach me everything. Lumumba had asked me to hide myself, each time I saw him arriving, in the bedroom where he would come and find me to judge my appearance. At that time I would also talk to him about the meals. Only then, when he had told me how I was to receive his friends, did he accept that I leave the room after him, in order to carry out his instructions. (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139)

If he was so strict at home, what would be the case at public events?

Pauline Opango accompanied her husband to only one official event, during King Baudouin's visit to the Congo in 1955.[22] Although Lumumba explains that *évolués* attend public events alone because they feel embarrassed when their wives who cannot speak French are unable to converse with Europeans, his preoccupation with Pauline's appearance suggests that more than language was involved. A *Time* magazine article published on September 25, 1964, under the snotty title "How to Appear Evolué," draws attention to the conundrums of *évolué* households years after independence.

> The men of Katanga, particularly those in government, have no greater desire than to appear évolués (progressive) in the eyes of visiting African and European dignitaries. But they learned long ago that their wives would be no help. Usually married by 15 and quickly saddled with the burdens of multiple motherhood, the Katangese wife has no time to acquire social graces. At a formal affair, she usually sits immobile, responding to

> conversational gambits with an agonized oui or non, counting the minutes until she can return to her manioc masher.

More useful and acceptable in public, the article suggests, are the *femmes libres* who "dress with style, rarely drink too much, and often come equipped with a handful of French phrases which they drop as delicately as perfumed handkerchiefs. Tightly organized by a formidable, fortyish femme who sees to it that they mind their manners, Elisabethville's 2,000 free women now dominate the distaff side of diplomatic life." One of those young women, Marie Chantal la Charmante, is quoted as saying "I am more évoluée than the wives." Lumumba would certainly not have attended an official event with Hélène Bijou on his arm,[23] but Pauline was not even present at the day of Lumumba's greatest exultation: "Mother of most of his children, she was not at her husband's side at the ceremony of June 30, 1960, Lumumba's triumph, because 'her hair was a mess'!" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 141).[24]

The disparity in their education and cultural inclinations made the situation trying for both women and men. In harsh colonial language, the 1948 Report of the Coulon-Deheyn-Renson describes "the drama of *évolué* households in which a black has become conscious of his personality as a civilized man and wishes to have others' behavior and relations conform to his, but must in fact spend his life at the side of a *musenji* [a backward person, a savage]" (Mianda, "Colonialism" 148). While everyone from colonial advisors to the *évolués* was commenting on the difficulties experienced in *évolué* households, Lumumba's marriage represents the high end of differential experiences and expectations. Most educated men were more likely to seek out a spouse from amongst the few educated women available (see Pons 216, Table 60 for details). One of the possible reasons Lumumba found himself in this situation is that, as he wrote in *Le Congo*, marrying "an educated and *évolué* wife" meant that you had to approach the Reverend Sisters and you were obliged to enter into a religious marriage, "without this, a man cannot have the wife he desires" (132). Although Lumumba praises the work done by certain missionary schools in educating girls, he himself embraced secular education and avoided religious marriage.

Lumumba's Women

Lumumba entered into adulthood and embarked on relationships with women in a society in flux. He straddled two worlds and sought acceptance in both (Zeilig 39). At that time, observers were worried about a

marriage crisis, both because of the new kinds of unions being forged in the cities and because of the camouflaged polygamy that was undermining both established and emerging forms of marriage. Lumumba arrived in Stanleyville in 1944 and first got married a year later, at the age of twenty. Over his lifetime, he contracted three customary marriages, but never married in the church.

Lumumba was raised in an environment where polygamy and divorce were common despite missionary efforts to eradicate both practices. In fact, polygamy was so prevalent among the members of Lumumba's ethnic group that when Omasombo and Verhaegen report on the extra taxes polygamous men had to pay to the state, they comment on its profitability for the colonial government: "Among the Atetela, where polygamy is common, the extra taxes easily set the public coffers afloat" (64). Although his father was not polygamous, Lumumba's own parents François Tolenga and Julienne Amatu, who were married in a religious ceremony in 1919 or 1920, divorced in 1940. Later both remarried and the two couples remained on friendly terms. François Tolenga went on to live with yet another woman before marrying a young wife who bore him a child in 1963, bringing his total of wives and concubines to four (81–82). Lumumba's two younger brothers, Emile Kalema and Louis Onema Olela, had four and two wives, respectively (80).

Lumumba, although never polygamous, continued the family tradition. He entered into customary marriages with three women and lived with two more. As the following table illustrates (see table 2.1), the relationships overlapped at times.

Very little is known about Henriette Maletaua. It is said that Lumumba married her in order to benefit from family allowances (Omasombo and Verhaegen 135). Perhaps the union was useful to both of them for economic reasons. It may also have provided her with the necessary documentation to stay in the city. No explanation is offered for their divorce.

We know that Lumumba had some happy times with Hortense Sombosia. At the time, he was living with Paul Kimbula in Stanleyville. Kimbula recounts how Lumumba would gather their spouses and neighborhood children to play games. Lumumba played the drums, sang, and even danced with a *pagne* tied around his hips, much to the amusement of all present (Omasombo and Verhaegen 114). However, Lumumba started seeing Pauline Kie while he was married to Sombosia, and many quarrels ensued. Hortense Sombosia left Lumumba two years before their official divorce, and Lumumba repaid the bride-price to her uncle.

Kimbula intervened when "Patrice argue[d] with a woman" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 114). The indefinite article here suggests

Table 2.1 Lumumba's partners

Name	*Beginning of Relationship*	*End of Relationship*	*Children*
Henriette MALETAUA First wife	Married: October 21, 1945	1947	None
Hortense SOMBOSIA Second wife	Married: June 25, 1947 Marriage registered: December 20, 1948	Divorced: September 2, 1951 Sombosia abandoned Lumumba two years prior to the divorce.	None
Pauline KIE (already mother of a small girl called Léonie)	Met in Léopoldville in 1947 (Lumumba arrived at the beginning of July and remained for nine months); Kie moved to Stanleyville in 1948.	Relationship with Lumumba maintained until his death She refers to Lumumba as her husband.[25]	François (September 20, 1951)
Pauline OPANGO ONOSAMBA Third wife	Marriage: March 15, 1951	Periods of separation April 1952 to January 1953 (Pauline with her parents. During her absence Pauline gave birth to Patrice, and Lumumba officially recognized François). March 1956 to end of 1957 (Pauline with her parents. Lumumba in prison from mid-1956 to end of 1957). Widowed by Lumumba's death.	Patrice (September 18, 1952) Julienne (August 23, 1955) Roland (1958) Marie-Christine (1960; died within a few months of her birth on November 18)
Alphonsine MASUBA26	Met beginning of 1960	Relationship maintained with Lumumba until his death.	Guy (born after Lumumba's death)

that this might have been a fairly regular occurrence. Kimbula goes on to say that Lumumba would come to him afterward to explain why he needed to separate from a given companion. Lumumba displayed a rather casual attitude toward marriage when three years and two children into his marriage with Pauline Opango; he explained his desire to study in a letter dated April 28, 1954 addressed to Emile Luhahi, who lived in Pauline's hometown of Wembo-Nyama. Although the tone is perhaps playful, the passage is telling and highlights Lumumba's conflicting desires to maintain a stable family and pursue higher education:

> I have been admitted to the University of Kimuenza…but this has not become reality as a result of my matrimonial situation because lodging for married students is not yet available—unless I get divorced in order to become single!!!! Which is unseemly. It's problematic! (Omasombo and Verhaegen 123–24)

The university assumed that students were young and had not taken on adult responsibilities, while Lumumba was an adult male with a family of his own.

Before settling on Pauline, Lumumba had been presented with another candidate for marriage, Louise Yema, who was a student nurse. When it was insinuated that Yema was already familiar with men, Lumumba allowed himself to be persuaded to marry Pauline (Omasombo and Verhaegen 147). All agree that Pauline was young and ill-prepared for marriage. It is reported that she considered her marriage a burden and tried to leave, but her sister Malenga always talked her out of it. Other observers reported that when she went to stay with her parents, a year into the marriage and after a serious quarrel, Lumumba did not want to take her back. His parents had to enter into tough negotiations with him in order to convince him to let their daughter-in-law rejoin him (Omasombo and Verhaegen 140). No mention is made of her parents in this situation, although, apparently, Lumumba liked his mother-in-law and that was a source of jealousy between Pauline and her mother. Despite the erosion of the influence of the extended family, they continued to play a role, both in arranging Lumumba's marriage and in influencing its course.

Pauline's relationship to motherhood seems to have been complex and ambivalent, perhaps as a result of the couple's "turbulent married life" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 140). We have only Lumumba's side of the story as he reported on her actions in another letter addressed to his friend Emile Luhahi, who was close to Pauline's family. At the

time this letter was written in 1954,[27] the couple had one child, Patrice, born in September 1952. Julienne was born in August 1955. If her husband's account is correct, Pauline would have fallen pregnant three times between March 1951 and the date of the letter.[28]

> Let us return to the business of my wife. So it is an accepted fact that she aborted due to her own negligence since she categorically refused to receive any care. Moreover, she very often announced that she didn't want to have any more children. For the first pregnancy, she provoked the abortion by using washes. (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139)

To this specific complaint, Lumumba adds a more general statement of discontent: "In short, I am at a loss for words for I am very sorry for my wife's unworthy conduct. In addition there are continuous serious shortcomings that I have always endured with a great deal of resignation" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139). At this time, African women knew of remedies that would bring on the menses, but vernacular discourse did not clearly distinguish between "spontaneous abortion," now called miscarriage, and deliberate termination of the pregnancy, to which the term abortion is now confined. Still, her use of "washes," her neglect of prenatal care, and her expressed desire not to have more children indicate that at times she had reservations about maternity.

Whatever Lumumba meant by Pauline's other "manquements" "shortcomings," he was still preoccupied by this matter when he was in prison in January 1961, less than two weeks before his death: "As for her misbehavior, we will take care of that when I am released" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139–40). Would her "misbehavior" ("désordres") at this time have had anything to do with the possibility of being replaced by Alphonsine Masuba, the more educated woman whose companionship with Lumumba was well known?

Around this time, Pauline Opango was also receiving instructions from Lumumba on how to distribute money he was trying to secure for various members of his family. Among the designated recipients we find Pauline Kie (De Witte 60). Madame Lumumba told me that she tried to visit her husband in prison in Thysville but was not able to see him. Pauline Kie, on the other hand, managed to get soldiers to lend her some of their clothes so that she could sneak in to visit Lumumba in his cell.

Describing Pauline Kie, Omasombo Tshonda and Verhaegen tell us: "This young Sakata woman succeeded, in Stanleyville, *in supplanting all the girlfriends* and even the legal spouse at the time, Hortense Sombosia" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 136). Kie herself reports: "I knew he was a sweet talker, and *I saw him go out with others* . . . but

I managed to impose myself, even though I was later supplanted by the other one [Pauline Opango]" (136, emphasis added). One of these "copines," Hélène Bijou, has been immortalized both in Césaire's play and Peck's feature film.

When Pauline Kie met Lumumba in Leopoldville, she was nineteen years old and had a young child, but was still living with her parents, and the young couple was separated when she had to leave the city with them. When she came to Stanleyville in 1948 at the age of twenty, it is not clear whether she came with her parents or by herself. Did she have permission to travel and, if so, from whom? What was her legal status in the city? Kie had left the village at the age of five and had completed three years of primary school in Leopoldville, where her father worked as boatman for the Congolese Office of Transportation. Her father's many transfers led her to abandon her education. By her own admission, she was unusual for her time. Omasombo and Verhaegen comment on her "precociousness": "she is outspoken, often speaks frankly and directly, does not hesitate to contest what she does not accept; she is very different from the other Black women of her time, 'abandoned in the kitchen, leaving all the decision-making to their spouses'" (136).[29] Lumumba never seemed interested in marrying her, but he did not learn about her pregnancy until after the arrangement of his marriage to Pauline Opango.

Although opportunities for instruction were limited, it remains surprising that the women in Lumumba's life tended to have little or no education, until he met Alphonsine Masuba early in 1960. She had received an education that enabled her to fulfill secretarial duties for him.[30] Although secretarial skills are often associated with women, and the Belgians thought shorthand typing a suitable occupation for women, women with these skills were a rarity in the Congo at the time. Knowledge of French was an essential prerequisite. We do not know much about Masuba's life except that she had received secondary education and that many thought that Lumumba was about to find an appropriate spouse. She "could type his letters, arrange his library and understand his numerous absences from home" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 141). Masuba's son, Guy, was born after Lumumba's death; she lived until 1973. Guy's account in his interview with *La Conscience*, which he says is based on information passed on to him by his paternal uncle Louis Richard Omema Lumumba, sheds light on Pauline Opango's outrage at her husband's intentions.[31]

> All the members of the MNC of Leopoldville would gather in her apartment and they had agreed to hold the official marriage celebration of my

> father and mother in October 1960, before my birth. A relative of my father's, Albert ONAWELO, was to accompany Mama Pauline OPANGO to the village, using her father's illness as a pretext. Once in the village, Albert ONAWELO would announce her repudiation.

Omasombo and Verhaegen simply note that Masuba "could have become his wife, had it not been for the precipitation of events after 30 June 1960" (141). What seems to be of interest to all in this affair was that Lumumba was finally "on the verge of finding a wife commensurate with his status" (141).

While the "new man" fell short of his own ideals in his marriage to Pauline Opango and in his other relationships with women, his children attest to the fact that their father embodied the model of male domesticity he had outlined in his writings. Julienne recalled:

> My father was a very affectionate person, when he was with us he always chatted and played. Of course he was very busy and he was often absent, but when he was there, he was *really* there. I remember that when he came back late, he would always come and see me. He was available to us, present. He brought up his children. When I was small I was very close to him. . . . I was often in his office. He worked enormously hard, and I would watch him work, rewriting or practicing a speech. (Zeilig 40–41)

While François, Lumumba's child by Pauline Kie and his firstborn, was still living with his mother before he came to join the household that Lumumba shared with Pauline Opango, his father always maintained contact and provided for him. Kie explains that, despite their separation, she would continue to receive money from Lumumba for the care of the child and that several of his friends came to see her at his request (Omasombo and Verhaegen 137). In a 1954 letter, Lumumba wrote to his friend Emile Luhahi who was about to leave for Leopoldville: "Please pay a visit to my beloved son François Hémery Flory Lumumba, who is three years old . . . He is my first child that I had with a woman from Leopoldville before Opango came to my home" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 137). He implores Luhahi to bring back photographs of François: "It is very important! Don't forget!!! I am looking forward to it!" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 137). François explains that although his father did not have much time to spend with his family, "the little time that he had he tried to make us understand why he was often absent" (Zeilig 41). Interestingly enough, we learn that Lumumba himself wanted only two children because he wanted to be able to provide them with a solid education. But we are told that he welcomed all his children with open arms and he certainly took good care of them (Omasombo and Verhaegen 148).

A Last Word on Patrice and Pauline

At the age of twenty-six, Patrice Lumumba had been married twice and had lived with Pauline Kie. None of the unions had produced offspring. All three women had lived in the city and known other men before entering into their relationships with Lumumba. So, when Lumumba decided to marry, he turned to friends and family to help him find a young wife—and therefore purportedly more fertile—from his region of origin. By 1951, Lumumba had imposed himself enough in Stanleyville, then the fifth-largest labor center in the Belgian Congo (Pons 21), to be elected to the executive committee of the influential *Association des Évolués de Stanleyville* (he became its president in 1954). In addition to his work at the post office, he had applied himself assiduously to complement his limited formal education through evening classes, voracious reading (he volunteered at the library of the *centre extra-coutumier*), and voluminous correspondence with Europeans and other Congolese. Since 1948, he had been a regular contributor to a number of publications such as *La Voix du Congolais* and *La Croix du Congo*.[32] He was an influential and established member of the small urban elite. Paradoxically, he would take a young illiterate wife from the village in a marriage arranged by others. It is she who is immortalized alongside Lumumba in literary and filmic representations. Of the women in Lumumba's life, her situation is also the most representative of women in the Congo: primarily a wife and mother with no access to education despite the fact that she married a man from the small educated elite.

Told as a simple tale, Pauline Opango Onosamba's story might sound like this. Once upon a time there was a girl called Pauline who lived with her parents in a village in the Kasai region of the Congo. When she was still in her teens, she learned that she would marry a handsome, learned man from the city. On the day of her wedding she was wearing an elegant European-style dress. She fled across the street to the neighbors to watch from afar the customary marriage ceremony taking place in her name at her parents' house. Once in the city of Stanleyville, she longed for the lively family life back in the village. Her husband was seldom home, and when he was, he was shut off in his own world, either reading or writing. Because she was illiterate, Pauline could not understand the attraction of this solitary activity. Her strange husband slept little, drank a lot of coffee, and took cold showers. When he was not working, he was volunteering at the library, meeting with a number of organizations, or writing articles for publication. Her husband often entertained. When he arrived with guests without advance warning, she had been instructed to hide in the bedroom until he had had the opportunity to approve of her

appearance and give her instructions for the meals to be served. On many an occasion, she had to make sure that guests who wished to stay the night had a place to sleep. Amazingly enough, given his busy schedule, her husband also had time for women other than Pauline. A close friend of the family would advise her to make herself indispensable and would tell her stories about the previous women in her husband's life, especially about the jealousy that erupted between a former wife and his longtime lover, Pauline Kie. These stories angered Pauline Opango, who found her husband too flighty. Her husband even officially recognized Pauline Kie's son, François, despite his wife's objection. He waited until she had left to spend time with her parents so as to circumvent having to get her agreement; the wife's consent was required by the authorities under normal circumstances. François came to live with them when he was of school-going age. She expressed her frustration with her marriage in two primary ways. She left the household to spend significant periods of time with her parents. Indeed, she often wanted to leave the marriage, but her older sister would always talk her into going back to her husband. She also provoked miscarriages and abortions, either passively through neglect of prenatal care or actively by using traditional herbal remedies. She did bear four children: Patrice, Julienne, Roland, and Marie-Christine (who died a couple of months after her birth). In Leopoldville, where they lived from 1957 onward, François and Patrice went to school with European children, and her husband would object to her village ways, scolding her for wanting to give the children amulets to protect them.

By the time her husband was heading for great political success, Pauline Opango was fed up. As one of many wives of *évolué* men who felt threatened by their husbands' future as government ministers, and who was possibly facing repudiation, she decided to organize a movement of women to protest against the men's conduct. The stresses of being married to a man who was at the helm of the Congo during the crisis led her to give birth to a premature baby while the family was under house arrest. Despite the difficulties of their marriage, she was at her husband's side when he was arrested as he tried to escape to his political stronghold in Stanleyville. His political testament was written in the form of a letter to her, yet she had to enter into legal wrangling with her brother-in-law in order to keep having a say in her children's lives (Omasombo and Verhaegen 149). She was at the head of Patrice's funeral procession in Leopoldville and, while trying to recover her husband's body or to get permission to visit his grave, she was forced to flee with other Lumumbists to a camp for political refugees built by the United Nations (De Witte 150). She moved to Cairo, where President Nasser took care of the family until his death. Then she lived in Belgium,

Figure 2.1 Pauline Opango Lumumba today (Courtesy of Intermediaire Consulting).

France, and Congo. She never wanted to remarry. Her daughter testifies that she felt great love for her husband.

Women as Participants in Decolonization

Exploring the contradictions inherent in both colonial and *évolué* ideals and practices helps us to understand the milieu in which women negotiated their lives. The little we know about Pauline Opango has been cobbled together from interviews and references in texts by Kashamura and others who were witness to the events of the period. As we read this simple tale, we appreciate the complexity of the situation in both its personal and its political dimensions. We must wonder how being the widow of a martyred hero would influence a perspective of the past. How would decades of prying and judgment on the part of others influence her answers to questions?[33] When I asked her to confirm the account by Kashamura of the women protesting their husbands' behavior and her own role in this event, she at first responded with great indignation about the men wanting to take new, more educated wives. But she then also made sure to specify that when the other women took to the streets,

she stayed at home. I got the distinct impression that she considered this appropriate behavior for a woman of her stature. She had been shaped by Lumumba's attempt to impose new models of domesticity and propriety on their marriage. At the same time, Madame Lumumba reacts strongly to representations of her part in history, for example, in Peck's feature film. The dominant versions of Lumumba's arrest in December 1960 do not coincide with her story; she feels that she is portrayed as having been responsible for the arrest. Representations of his life are always representations of her story as well. In upholding her own image as a loving wife who willingly sacrificed herself and accepted her husband's dedication to the nation, she downplays her own initiative, her ties with her kin-group, and her resentment of her husband's public life and personal vagaries. If she admitted that Lumumba was flawed, the blame would fall upon her for petty selfishness; in saying he was worthy of her devotion, she elevates herself as well.

As men and women negotiated their social status and their relationships as the colonial period drew to an end, some women became active participants in efforts to decolonize the continent. Ormerod and Volet remind us of unsung heroines of political engagement in Africa:

> it would be erroneous to think that the political action of African women was limited to the small number of women who have not remained anonymous. Aoua Kéita[34] and Andrée Blouin represent only the tip of the iceberg and thousands of women whose names have been forgotten by History could be mentioned. (429)

Standing in for myriads of untold stories, we have the book-length testimonies of Andrée Blouin and Léonie Abo.

CHAPTER 3

ANDRÉE BLOUIN: A SISTER AMONG BROTHERS IN STRUGGLE

Andrée Blouin was born in Obangui-Chari (today Central African Republic) in 1921 to Josephine Wouassimba, a fourteen-year-old Banziri girl from the Kwango region, and Pierre Gerbillat, a French colonial businessman. She was placed in a Brazzaville orphanage for children of mixed race at the age of three, ran away when she was seventeen, and fell prey to mistreatment by white men, first as concubine and later as wife. Traveling to Guinea in the 1950s with the man from whom she would take her name, she joined Sékou Touré in his revolutionary activities before returning to Central Africa. After mobilizing women for the African Solidarity Party (Parti Solidaire Africain, PSA) in the Kwilu region of Congo, she became the chief of protocol in Patrice Lumumba's government. *My Country, Africa: Autobiography of the Black Pasionaria*, a title that frames her life in terms of race and pan-African allegiance, was published in 1983 in English with the collaboration of Jean MacKellar. Blouin's account of events up to the mid-1960s is followed by a brief epilogue by MacKellar.

Blouin's in-between position relative to colonial racial categories and her position within a male-dominated movement mean that analyzing her perspective—not just her views, but also the points of view that arise from her complex positioning—yields significant insights into the racial and gender dimensions of decolonization. While her interracial relationships expose colonial hypocrisy and exploitation and complement our understanding of women's experiences under Belgian rule, her political engagement explodes dominant models of feminine subordination, domesticity, and exclusion from politics. Yet, her own discourse about decolonization is marked by gender in ways that are shaped by the particularities of her in-between status as a *métisse*. A woman of mixed race

working alongside men, her fluid crossing of boundaries of race and gender unsettles the dichotomies informing the discourses of both colonization and decolonization.

Before analyzing the text, we must consider the questions that arise from the genesis of the work. In the short blurb "About the Collaborator," we learn that MacKellar was a graduate of Stanford University and that she lived in Paris for twelve years "where she was closely associated with Andrée Blouin and many other personalities in the African independence movements." Laura Kempen states that MacKellar appears "to have edited" a series of interviews conducted in French "into the chronological narrative that was published, as well as translating them from the original French" (106). We have no way of knowing how much Blouin's words were transformed in the process of transcription and translation. The presentation of the text is unambiguous: Blouin is designated the author of the autobiography, with MacKellar playing a secondary, collaborative role.[1]

After the interviewing and editing process was complete, Blouin rejected the book and tried to sue MacKellar in order to block publication.[2] According to Herbert Weiss, the work presents Blouin's story in social-psychological terms, while Blouin wanted to leave a political testament. Since MacKellar did not understand the intricacies of the political situation and was more conservative than Blouin, as the epilogue clearly shows, she was unable to give the book the political cast that Blouin would have preferred.[3] Monique Chajmowiez, a good friend of Blouin's who met her two years before her death in 1986 and considers her "une grande dame," someone of considerable "carrure" "caliber," contests the idea that Blouin could leave a convincing political testament. She contends that Blouin's ideas were starkly Manichean, with rudimentary schemas replacing sustained analysis: Lumumba was good; anyone who opposed him was bad. She also emphasizes Blouin's blind devotion to Sékou Touré, even after there was ample evidence of his tyrannical leadership, decades after her own political involvement in Guinea.

In his study of *Le lys et le flamboyant*, a 1997 novel by the Congolese writer Henri Lopes that alludes to Blouin's life story, Richard Watts contends that the autobiographical text "has no *original author* to speak of, as it was dictated by Blouin to MacKellar, who translated and transcribed it directly into English. Reading Blouin's autobiographical text makes this arrangement appear rather improbable, as MacKellar seems to inhabit Blouin's consciousness" (128). While he draws our attention to Lopes's intention of interrogating this text, which presents itself as "unproblematically true" (129), Watts does not provide an analysis of just how

MacKellar inhabits Blouin's consciousness. Most likely, MacKellar's perspective is embedded in the structure of the text. Blouin's reflections on her life were likely presented in a more episodic manner, but the structure of the book is chronological. Ending shortly after Lumumba's death, it focuses on Blouin's suffering as a child and young woman at the hands of institutions and individuals shaped by colonialism, her emerging political consciousness, her activism in Guinea, and finally what is presented as the apogee of her life, her political work in the Congo in 1960. Personal experiences and reactions tend to trump political analysis. We can compare MacKellar's presentation with that of authors who foreground the political. Dolores Ibárruri, the left-wing Republican leader in Spain to whom Blouin has been compared, does not begin her autobiographical text *They Shall Not Pass, The Autobiography of La Pasionaria* by speaking of herself or her family; rather, she describes the area in which she grew up and the exploitation of labor and resources it suffered. When she finally introduces her family, the terms remain fairly impersonal, and she stresses that hers was only one among a myriad of families who were subjected to the same crushing economic forces. Ibárruri's text is, from the outset, a materialist and collective analysis informed by her communist political perspective, while the Blouin/MacKellar text focuses on Blouin's individual experiences within the larger colonial context.[4] Similarly, Aoua Kéita's autobiography emphasizes collective political action. Kéita, who was active in West Africa at the same time as Blouin, fills her text with detailed reports of political meetings and actions. Despite the shortcomings of *My Country, Africa* due to the fact that MacKellar did not share Blouin's cultural environment and political perspective, without her, the story "would have left no trace in people's memories" (Lopes 7).[5]

Although Blouin is largely forgotten today, at the time of independence her name appeared along with Lumumba's in major news publications across the globe. Congruent with his pan-African vision of decolonization as well as his support for women's active participation in politics, Lumumba was an ardent supporter of this extraordinary woman.

The Incomparable Madame Blouin

> Our enemies attack her all the time. Not for what she's done, but simply because she is a woman, and she's there, in the thick of it. (Patrice Lumumba qtd. in Blouin 260)

Andrée Blouin certainly was there, in the thick of it. When Patrice Lumumba spoke these words, she was the chief of protocol in the

government of the newly independent Congo.[6] Evidently her position involved more than arranging official ceremonies that observed all the diplomatic niceties; she was a fine speechwriter and served as a diplomatic liaison to European governments during the transition to independence.[7] By that time, she had already shown her mettle during the grueling weeks on the campaign trail in the rural areas with the PSA and had worked regularly with Lumumba, Gizenga, and Mulele in Leopoldville. In mid-June 1960, the Belgians decided to rid themselves of Blouin by refusing to renew her visa.[8]

But within days after independence, Lumumba contacted her to ask her to return to the Congo. But once Kasavubu had suspended Lumumba in early September, her situation became more and more difficult, since some considered her the "evil genius" of the Lumumba government (266). An order for her expulsion was issued when Mobutu seized power in mid-September, and it was executed in November. Her mother paid a high price for Blouin's political involvement. The authorities did not let her family members leave with her, effectively holding them hostage in order to ensure her good behavior abroad. One day her mother returned from the market with Blouin's four-year-old daughter to find her son-in-law and grandson gone, and soldiers ransacking the house. She was badly beaten with the butt of a gun and, because of inadequate care, later became paralyzed. Even earlier in her career as a political activist, Blouin had faced the "terrible choice" between neglecting her family—for example, leaving her sick six-month-old baby in the care of others—and "failing in [her] duty as a militant" (187).

Like many others, Blouin was maligned for her activities and racked up an impressive list of epithets. While Western critics of Lumumba tried to discredit him with accusations of unbridled sexuality, Blouin was assumed to be entangled in sexual relations with powerful men because she was a woman with clout whose actions were subverting conventional feminine roles. The various historical figures and fictional characters to whom she was likened, in legend if not in life, pursued illicit sexual relations as a means of attaining power and used or promoted violence against their own and/or the men's enemies. When she joined the PSA campaign, she was denounced at Sunday services as "an adventurer in the service of communism" (213); she was said to be teaching women to "revolt against their husbands and homes" (213); and was even considered a "prostitute in disguise" (214). Later, the influence she was reputed to have on Lumumba's actions led journalists to refer to the work of the team "Lumum-Blouin" and they also called her "the prime minister's Eminence Grise," and "the courtesan

of all the African chiefs of state" (258). Dag Hammarsköld, secretary-general of the United Nations, dubbed her the Madame du Barry of the Congo (Dayal qtd. in Drew 214). Lemarchand acknowledges the products of these "evil tongues" and notes that "kinder men saw in her a female African Rastignac, ready to claw her way to the top by whatever means she found appropriate" (541). Herbert Weiss asserts that "her life reads like a chapter out of Balzac" (*Political* 178). A *Time* magazine article (August 15, 1960) captures the gendered and trivializing language used when talking about Blouin: "Madame Blouin had her first flirtation with politics in her native Ubangi-Shari"; "she became . . . a kind of Madame de Staël of [Sékou Touré's] revolutionary movement"; "In time, she shifted her affections to Gizenga and the cause of Congo freedom"; "In expensive Paris frocks she campaigned . . . to help her boy Gizenga" ("Foreign"). Even women journalists could not help focusing on her supposed penchant for finery. Jane Rouch, who at one point calls her "très Pompadour" to Gizenga (160), reports that she was always "enveloped in an aura of Shalimar" (70).

Articles in the press seldom mentioned that she was "an immediate success, especially because she was an accomplished orator" (Weiss 178) and "the most eloquent spokesperson" for the PSA (Lemarchand 541). Most failed to recognize that she made substantive contributions. Weiss, who was in the Congo during the campaign, attests to her influence: "She introduced ideas that had proved eminently successful in Guinea, for instance, the organization of women, *investissement humain* (voluntary work), militancy against traditional beliefs, and something approaching total discipline" (Weiss, *Political* 178). Although many other political players were derided, Lumumba was correct in pointing out that much

Figure 3.1 Blouin addressing a crowd (Photo Herbert Weiss).

Figure 3.2 Blouin with Gizenga (Photo Herbert Weiss).

of the outrage directed against her was fueled by the fact that she was a woman.

The uniqueness of the contribution made by "the incomparable Madame Blouin" (Kanza 105) and the ways in which her actions challenged dominant models of femininity are perhaps best captured by the recollections of Léonie Abo, who was just fifteen years old when she heard Andrée Blouin speak at a meeting organized by the PSA in Kikwit in May 1960: "That's a first. A woman giving orders to thousands of men" (Martens, *Abo* 49).

Abo's reaction indicates how groundbreaking Blouin's accomplishments in the Congo were. But the road that led to this high public profile was a long and often painful one, since her very existence, as a *métisse*, was proof of much-censured intimacies between European men and African women.

Destabilizing Colonial Racial Dichotomies: The "Métis Question"

What scripts were available to Blouin at the time she was wrested from her mother's arms to be placed by her father in an "orphanage" for girls of mixed race? Who could she become? Who held the power to define her identity and her place? An iniquitous combination of racial ideologies and material conditions determined the possibilities. As the child of a white father and a black mother, you would be placed in a boarding school—which Blouin calls an "orphanage-prison" (3)—where you would be separated from black girls; where you would receive only a rudimentary education but be taught to sew and embroider in order to generate income for the institution; where you would receive a religious

education that served as an expiation for the sins of your parents; where you would be served rotten food and hunger would be a constant companion; where you would be abandoned by your father and visits from your mother would depend on your father's permission and his sending her the money to come see you. Over these things, Blouin had no control. But she was supposed to be docile, grateful, and submissive, and this role she could not play. Time and time again she was punished for her "pride" and rebelliousness.

At seventeen, with the next episode of the script looming large, Blouin ran away from the orphanage. What she refused to accept was an arranged marriage to a young man of mixed race who had received a similar education. In order to prevent further "confusion" (57) of the population, which was supposed to be separated along racial lines, these couples would live in a special village as a kind of "third species" (58). In a beautifully astute statement, Blouin acknowledges the challenges of refusing the ready-made life stories laid out by the religious and colonial authorities: "After all these years with the nuns . . . I had no idea what the future of a *métisse* like myself should be, no real image of what to hope for, or aspire to" (60). Blouin's uncertainty echoes the prevailing official and unofficial attitudes expressed in Albert Londres's *Terre d'ébène* (1929): "They are neither black nor white, neither French nor African. . . . The misfortune is that they should all the same be *something*" (O. White 140).

The institution of the "orphanage" embodied the contradictions inherent in the racial ideologies of the Europeans and their ideals of assimilation. Although the colonialists regarded the *métis* as superior to Africans because of the white blood running in their veins, the material conditions and education provided for them were almost as inadequate as those for their black African counterparts, and considerably more controlling. The métis were made aware that they were "different," that they were not "natives," but they found out when they were older that, in the eyes of the law, that was precisely what they were (O. White 90).[9]

The first words of Blouin's book are a powerful refutation of the reputed benevolence that led to the creation of the orphanages so that the *métis* children would not be deprived of their paternal inheritance: "As punishment for the crime of being born of a white father and a black mother I spent my early years in a prison for children" (3). When as an adult Blouin finally confronted her father about the orphanage, he simply replied: "There was no choice. . . . There was nothing else available" (135). She explores the guilt he must have felt toward her African mother, Josephine, his Belgian wife, Henriette, and Andrée herself. "It

was guilt, I think, that required expiation, somewhere, by someone. Burying me in Brazzaville among the nuns charged with dealing with such sins may have seemed to him the way out" (135). The orphanage assuaged the guilt of the negligent father while representing the caring nature of the French administration: the "actions of individual men could be excused by the collective ideals of French colonialism" (O. White 54).

The abysmal conditions to be found in these institutions were justified in self-contradictory ways. The colonial authorities argued that if the "orphans" had a happy childhood but were forced to become mere laborers in adulthood, they would become embittered potential communists (O. White 80). They should "be raised in the conditions of the milieu in which they must evolve": "if their beds are hard and their meals manioc-based, if the most glorious disorder reigns in their dubious and parasite-infested lodgings . . . it is so that they do not lose contact with their milieu of origin, that they find themselves 'at home'" (79). No doubt the girls would have been bewildered by these descriptions of their "homes," no matter how dim their memories of village life were. Blouin recalled: "I dreamed constantly of my enchanted days in the village of my days in the village of my ancestors. Faint memories of my happiness there—days of playing naked in the sun, nights of sleeping close against my mother on the mat—still haunted me" (22).

The *métis* were also seen as an exploitable resource. Their education—in commerce and industry for the gifted boys, manual professions for the others, and domestic science for the girls—would create a pool of skilled workers, or "good servants" (O. White 52). The "third species," as Blouin called it, would constitute from the colonial point of view a useful "intermediate race" that "would understand European civilization while remaining in contact with the local population" (O. White 52).

In actuality, the *métis* did not provide an unproblematic link between the colonials and the local population, especially not with the *évolué* class. The differential treatment reserved for *métis* raised questions of merit versus bloodline as the numbers of the black educated elite grew. Ann Laura Stoler points out that *métis* education was "a risky undertaking. At issue were the means by which European civilization . . . would be disseminated without undercutting the criteria by which European claims to privilege were made" (83). Would this not be all the more true for Black Africans? Etienne Balibar explained that the counterpart to the French idea of a "universal mission to educate the human race" was a concomitant need to "differentiate and rank individuals or groups in terms of their greater or lesser aptitude for—or resistance to—assimilation" (O. White 133).

Lumumba's writings clearly illustrate the challenge posed by the *évolués* to racial hierarchies privileging *métis*. Exposing the contradictions inherent in the colonial ideology and policies, his arguments serve to illustrate that the "mulâtres" are a purely racial category, divorced from any merit. (Lumumba does not mention women in this regard.) Although recognized *métis* were more easily integrated into European society, even those who were not recognized by their fathers sometimes received benefits unavailable to black Africans.[10] In prison, Lumumba points out, even *métis* who are not recognized or educated are eligible, "merely because of their brown skin," for preferential treatment, illustrating that race is the salient feature. They are given proper clothes and shoes, sleep on beds with mattresses and mosquito nets, eat well and even have "boys" at their disposal, while Congolese who are more "evolved" than them are kept in "indescribable conditions far beneath their attained status" (*Congo* 91). This description can be compared with Lumumba's own experience in prison for embezzlement of funds.[11]

Already in 1915 legislation had been passed that would automatically include nonrecognized children of mixed blood as part of the "civilized native population" (Jeurissen, "Femmes" 103), but the lack of time and means resulted in the majority of *métis* being integrated into African familial, socioeconomic, and identity structures, whether in urban or rural areas (104). Although the color bar made it difficult for *métisses* to identify fully with the black *évolués*, marriages were organized among educated young women and former mission students since there was a shortage of Westernized Congolese women (105–6).

In the Belgian Congo, Asians and recognized *métis* were given permission to attend schools for whites in 1948. This privilege became available to black Africans in 1950, provided that they passed a humiliating investigation into their standard of living, personal hygiene, and freedom from disease (Merlier 266). The *évolués*'s rights, based on merit rather than race, came later and more slowly. Blouin recounts being recognized as a French citizen. In 1937 it was announced that citizenship of a kind "would generously be granted to that manageable hybrid, the person of mixed blood" (54). The girls in the orphanage could receive this citizenship on the condition that they renounce the name of the white father. A change or mutilation of the name might be tolerated if the father was not in the government. Blouin insisted on keeping her father's name. She was reprimanded and warned that her citizenship might not be granted. She conceded the "t" of Gerbillat (55).

Many Africans, notably the *évolués*, saw the orphanages for *métis* children as racial favoritism. Black African delegates at the Conseil

Représentatif du Moyen Congo in 1948 "expressed hostility towards special institutions for *métis* when they debated a motion to suppress funds for [a] *métis* orphanage" (O. White 155). These institutions were seen to promote racism, and some even saw *métis* as "a foreign race" who received preferential treatment while black orphans did not receive much-needed assistance (155).

Expressions of hostility to *métis* must have been particularly difficult for Blouin, who ardently wished to embrace "her Africa" after fleeing the orphanage. She had surely internalized some of the racial ideology the nuns inculcated in their wards, which may account for the vehemence of her repeated declarations of loyalty to the continent. She faced many challenges to her sense of belonging. She reports that phrases such as "white of Africa" would "really hurt a métisse's self-esteem" (87). Blouin explains that when a "boy" says "Umbwa Congo" he means "Have no pretentions, just because of the white blood inside you, don't think it will get you anything" (87). Despite Blouin's desire to embrace her African identity and not to flee from it, as many *métisses* (both real and fictional) are said to have done, we see that insults that emphasize her African heritage are painful.[12]

Her early years are heavily marked by racial ideology, as she suffers at the hand of colonial institutions and is alienated from both white and black communities. In the next stage of her life, gender becomes the more salient feature, although profoundly inflected by race. As she reaches womanhood, the parallels between her life and her mother's emerge despite the fact that the ideology says that her life should be different from that of her black African mother.

Of Wives, Mistresses, and "Ménagères"

Although we see through one set of eyes, Blouin's autobiography in effect tells the stories of two women, that of Josephine Wouassimba and that of Andrée Blouin, and by extension that of many others. Focusing on the mother's and the daughters' relationships with men illuminates the ways race and gender intersected in colonial society. Josephine Wouassimba's marriage to the Frenchman Pierre Gerbillat placed their daughter in the difficult in-between situation of a *métisse*. Blouin too became romantically involved with white men.[13] She met the Belgian Roger Serruys, director of the Kasai company, when she was only seventeen. Although he provided Blouin with financial support at times after their separation, he refused to recognize their daughter Rita. Blouin had a son with the Frenchman Charles Greutz before he married her, but he recognized René immediately and is said to have adored Rita. She met André Blouin,

the love of her life whom she characterizes as a nonracist Frenchman, in the late 1940s. They married in Paris in November 1952 and had two children.[14]

From the official point of view, relationships between African women and European men tended to be placed in the context of a "colonial service sector" (O. White 28). In 1922 Robert Delavignette, an influential author and colonial administrator in Cameroon, spoke of "women for our need, prostitutes for a night, or concubines for a tour, sometimes servant-mistresses for a lifetime" (O. White 28). In the Congo the word "ménagère" or "housewife" effectively meant "maîtresse-servante" or "mistress-servant" (O. White 89). Amandine Lauro's *Coloniaux, ménagères et prostituées au Congo belge: 1885–1930* provides an in-depth historical view of relationships between colonial men and African women. She points out that although the "ménagères" may have taken care of domestic tasks, their primary role was that of mistress, and household chores would more often than not be the purview of the "boy" (5–6, 95). In the 1920s, according to Lauro, the "ménagère" became "a full-fledged colonial 'character' " or "a kind of institution, practically unavoidable, of life in the Congo" (193). Whether their experiences were typical or atypical of the Congolese "ménagère," from Blouin's perspective both mother and daughter experienced the humiliations associated with sharing a white man's bed without receiving any official recognition.

Josephine: Marriage "à la mode du pays"

Born to a father who was a powerful chief of the Banziri people in the Kwango who had many wives, and to a mother who was the daughter of an important family of fishermen in the eastern region of the Belgian Congo, Josephine was given in marriage to Pierre Gerbillat, a man who came to equatorial Africa in 1906 at the age of twenty-six as an agent for a large import-export company and later developed a successful transportation business. When he fell for Josephine Wouassimba he was forty years old and she was thirteen.

Blouin tends to romanticize the encounter and offers a positive view of African customs. She is possibly trying to avoid the discourse of moralists such as Jesuit Arthur Vermeersch, who saw nothing but a commercial and sexual exchange in the relationships between European men and African women. Yet she falls into another trap, that of an exoticizing gaze, in part because she focalizes the scene through Gerbillat's eyes. Her attempts to capture Josephine's beauty and Gerbillat's enchantment while he is watching half-naked nubile dancers produce passages such as

this: "She was small and slender with tiny pointed breasts and hundreds of *perles* sewn through her hair. He found her beautiful. And when she smiled, I believe Pierre Gerbillat trembled, for his life was never the same after that.... Charmed, Pierre Gerbillat watched this girl, dancing to please him" (5). She reiterates how much pleasure Josephine gave Pierre Gerbillat and later portrays him gazing at Josephine and her sister as they bathe: "Curious and amused, he would sit on the bank observing them as they splashed and played, the water running over their young black bodies" (8).

Yet, Blouin finds aspects of their marriage disturbing. References to Josephine's youth abound, betraying Blouin's discomfort with both traditional African practices and her father's actions, which were congruent with the behavior of many a colonial: "Josephine was a child then, it was true" (5); she is called a "child-woman" and a "young girl" (7); she is "still a child," "so lively, so innocent, so young!" and nothing but a "frail girl" (8). Félix Éboué, then the governor of Kwango province, had already spoken for her but had agreed to wait, since the "girl was too young to marry—she was only 13" (6). Nevertheless, Gerbillat persisted, offering twice the dowry offered by Éboué, and the marriage was arranged.[15] Josephine became pregnant shortly after the marriage ceremony, and when she was ready to deliver her baby the nuns warned Gerbillat that her delivery would be "difficult, even dangerous for her because she was so young and the baby was very large" (9). Depleted after giving birth, she spent two weeks with the nuns recovering. Since she was so young and frail, she had no milk for her daughter.

Josephine's marriage departed from the common practices enumerated by Delavignette. Gerbillat paid a handsome dowry and African customs were followed for the ceremony: Josephine was instructed in appropriate behavior; she was bathed, massaged, and perfumed; the chief matron arrived at the nuptial hut the following morning for proof of the bride's virginity; and the wedding feast was fittingly extravagant.[16]

This ceremony differs clearly from contracts described in Vermeersch's *La femme congolaise: Ménagère de blanc, femme de polygame, chrétienne* (1914), written a decade earlier. "*Housekeeper*, as our readers know, is the euphemistic term used in the Congo [to] designate the illegitimate companion, leased per month, 25 francs, or taken for an entire stay in the Congo, for a sum, 100 francs, for example" (9). The unabashedly commercial character of the exchange is emphasized by Vermeersch's language: "supplier" (29), "go-between," "the quality of the commodity" (42). He evokes men who having "won good raffles [...] share with their friends, as one would distribute good cigars," or who had "acquired a batch of fifteen women" for his friends (42). We even see a colonial employee "who among the

objects that the new agent has to use to furnish his new lodging, indicates the housekeeper" (52). In contrast, Josephine's marriage was negotiated between Gerbillat and her father and followed more closely the conventions of customary law as they pertain to bride wealth.

Nevertheless, in other ways Josephine's relationship with Gerbillat followed the pattern of many of her less fortunate African compatriots. Since African marriages were not legally binding for Europeans, Gerbillat showed no compunction in abandoning Josephine to welcome his Belgian fiancée, Henriette. As Irène d'Almeida points out, to be an African wife meant being an "eternal concubine" (57). Blouin's language is quite forgiving of her father: "I am sure my father adored my mother. . . . But . . . he was unable to fulfill his responsibilities toward Josephine" (11). He built a house for her mother in the village and found many pretexts to visit her: "Certainly this was proof that he still cared for her" (11). Later in her text, when Blouin is married to Charles Greutz, she revisits her parents' relationship. During Charles's absence, she invites Pierre Gerbillat to come and live with her and her mother and for the first time lives with both her parents. Now, twenty years later, the "innocent, spirited little black woman" and the "bent, pot-bellied man with the often vacant stare" seem wonderfully happy together. Blouin is astonished by their closeness and harmony (132) and uneasy when they discuss their wedding night in frank terms. They laugh spontaneously at the recollection of the "gluey gumbo" they needed to consummate their marriage (133).

Blouin tells us that Josephine's life was determined by colonialism but that she did not resent the fact and strived to benefit from the opportunities available to her. Whenever Blouin was mistreated, her mother would wonder how the daughter of Gerbillat could be treated in such a manner. When Andrée had fled the orphanage and was trying to eke out a living by working as a seamstress, Josephine could not understand why she did not simply take a "governor" (a title of respect used for an important white businessman) like the majority of other young *métisses* did: "You could be one of the richest girls in Brazzaville. You could have everything you want, a nice house, even a 'boy.' Why are you so perverse? What makes you so obstinate?" (89). Ironically, at this time Josephine was dependent on her daughter's financial support. Her mother continued to hold the belief that it is advantageous to have relations with a white man despite the lived contradictions of her own experience. Blouin acknowledges that many of the young women she knew "had found a much easier way to survive" and that "as the 'housekeeper' of an unmarried man, or the mistress of one who had his own family, these young women lived in comfort and relative security" (91). But she continues to resist this choice.

The text offers glimpses of Blouin's insight into the systemic forces at work for which her individual willpower is no match. "Yet who, really, I had to ask myself, was the fool? Was it, in fact, possible for a young woman to be as proud as I, in a system designed to keep nonwhites on their knees?" (92).

Andrée: Love Meets Racism

Working as a seamstress to support herself and her mother, Blouin toils without respite, walks long distances to the white neighborhoods where her patrons live, receives low pay, and is often mistreated and humiliated by the white women and their domestics. Despite her best efforts, she is not able to maintain her independence for long. Discouraged and thin, she accepts an invitation from an old friend from the orphanage to join her and her steamboat captain husband on the river for a month. There she meets and falls in love with Roger Serruys, the new director of the Belgian Kasai company (93). As they approach Dima where he will assume his position, she is to remain out of sight. "In spite of myself, I was repeating my mother's humiliating story" (96). The life of "an African concubine" consists of having sexual relations with a white man and being the "mistress" in her own house, except that she cannot receive guests and has to hide when white guests come over. Nevertheless, Blouin revels in aspects of her new life with Roger. For example, she knew that "it was rare for a *métisse* to have the right to eat with her white man at his table" (88), but Roger's manservant served them their meals dressed in white livery (100).[17] While Roger would hold her hand on their walks at the end of the workday and would take her on official trips to familiarize himself with the region, she had to remain partially hidden. She concedes: "Within the silly limits of our prescribed positions we were happy" (100). Blouin oscillates between the discourse of romantic love and a critique born out of the lived experience of pain and humiliation.

Blouin's experience reflects the shift that had taken place between the Leopoldian era, during which African mistresses were more likely to be seen in public, and the attempts by the Belgians to rid the colony of unseemly moral behavior, in part by bringing more European women to the Congo. When Vermeersch penned his work on the Congolese woman in 1914, he was trying to shame those who publicly flaunted their "ménagères." Not naïve enough to believe in the possibility of abolishing the practice, he feels that hiding what he considered a shameful practice was better than the "sans-gêne" displayed

by government officials traveling with their companions. Instead of remaining invisible, the "ménagère struts her stuff in broad daylight" (19), as state agents, civil servants, and magistrates go on tour "flanked by their concubines" (19). The ultimate affront: the director of an important industrial enterprise is met by a station agent "in native dress, his concubine by his side" (20). Vermeersch mentions the company that Serruys later worked for.

> [T]he Kasai Company forbids its personnel to bring white women to Africa, but allows its agents to take housekeepers. The instances are foreseen and dealt with in the usual manner. In the records they note: "Took a housekeeper," as they would: "Married." And, as the black lady will require items from the store, the Company estimates the cost of the supplies, and deducts it from its employee's stipend. (Vermeersch 61)

By the time Andrée joined Roger, times had changed. Although Blouin recalls the presence of a number of "stout Belgian matrons" (99), signaling the presence of European women, some aspects of company life had not changed. She goes to the store when goods arrive and, since she is the companion of the director of the company, she gets to choose first:

> "*Oui, Madame*. What does *Madame* wish?"
> And so I chose, liberally, everything I wanted, as became my position. (99)

Although Blouin takes pride in this role, she can never accompany him to dinners and they can never receive visitors. In fact, it is when Roger brings home visitors for the first time and she is forced to remain in the kitchen that the spell is broken. Soon after this incident, she discovers that she is pregnant. She goes to Brazzaville to be with her mother. She eagerly awaits the weekly letters from Roger. Two months before she is to give birth, she sees a headline in *Le Courrier d'Afrique* announcing Roger's engagement to the daughter of a governor (115). Just as Gerbillat had continued to visit Josephine, Roger continues before and after his wedding to see Andrée and the baby in a series of "trysts" (122).

After staying with her father for a while, she married Charles Greutz. With the new man in her life she endures the racist hatred he directs at all, including her beloved *Maman*. "Charles would not permit my mother to come into our home. He would not have a black in his living room, except as a domestic, to serve. Our 'boy' he called *bakuya*, which means 'big chimpanzee'" (126). Even the shifting possessive adjectives, "our

home" versus "his living room," shatter the illusion of a shared life. Her mother was forbidden to visit Blouin's René (whom Charles had recognized) when he lay gravely ill in hospital: " 'She can't go in,' Charles said. 'I don't want her to touch my son. She'll rot his flesh' " (149). Josephine was barred from the funeral, as well as Blouin's wedding to Greutz; the two events occurred in rapid succession in 1946.

After a long period of sadness and depression during which she learns to dissimulate her outrage, Blouin finally comes to understand that witnessing and implicitly accepting this brutal racism makes her complicit in it, but her discourse, even forty years after the fact, still betrays confusion and alienation: "Besides, there were qualities in this man that I admired. He was a hard, hard worker. I had evidence of this from the beginning. He was an attractive man, but cruel. Above all, he was brutally racist. He loved me, I believed that. But he in no way loved my race" (125). Blouin explains that the only time she did not feel Charles's racism was when they were alone (126). The relationship put her in an impossible position, yet she stayed with him since she was able to—or, at least, thought *he* was able to—separate sexual desire and attachment from racial contempt. She tries to understand how it is that the rules of both individual and collective racism are set aside when it comes to sexual intercourse. She understands the white man's attraction for the "magnificent, half-naked black women's bodies" (88). What she cannot comprehend is "why, after he saw us as we were in our great land, he treated us so badly" (89). Here again is the exoticizing gaze that shaped Blouin's evocation of Gerbillat's infatuation with Josephine. Blouin expresses in everyday language the contradictory discourses available to her regarding black women and white men. While she includes all African women in this evocation of the white man's lust, she also focuses on what Stoler calls the "tension between inclusionary rhetorics and exclusionary practices" (84) experienced by *métis*. Blouin adds the dimension of gender. Although they are taught that they are prized above black women—"there was more acceptance of a *métisse* mistress than a black one" (132), they are not in fact treated any differently. "The contradictions between what we *métisses* were taught to believe and what we experienced, as women, in our treatment by white men could, if one dwelt upon them too long, drive us mad" (88).

The emotional toll that living with these contradictions took on Blouin reached crisis point when she lost her son René to malaria because he was refused treatment, based on the color of his skin. It would also propel her into action. But a brief overview of Blouin's nascent politicization before the death of her son is in order, for there had been precedents to her political activism.

The Narrative of Political Awakening

Un jour, j'ai rencontré des frères…
Et tu as eu la révélation, comme saint Paul, ricana Josépha.
C'est ça même, agréa Kolélé avec un sourire malicieux.
[…] Les deux femmes s'esclaffèrent.
One day, I met some brothers…
And you had a revelation, like Saint Paul, sniggered Josépha.
That's it, agreed Kolélé with a mischievous smile.
…The two women burst out laughing. (Lopes 361)

In his novel, Lopes pokes fun at the epiphany that precipitated his character's political involvement. The novelist's irreverence serves as a counterpoint to the way in which Blouin's narrative is framed and draws our attention to the fact that, after they have embarked on a political path, people look back at their earlier life for signs of their dawning awareness of injustice.

Blouin reports having been sensitized to injustice at an early age and wishing for the courage to emulate people who bravely resisted oppression. At the age of eight, she saw a group of chained black men crying out "We want to be French citizens!" (17) while they were being whipped. This show of courage, reported early in her narrative, would be a formative moment in the development of her political imagination. Having slipped out of the chapel of the orphanage to watch the forbidden spectacle on the other side of the gate, she was punished: "And when I received the ten blows of the *chicotte*, I held back my tears and my cries. With all the force of my soul I wanted to be like the brave blacks I had seen earlier" (18). Absent from her discourse is any reference to the emasculating effects on male colonial subjects. In her eyes, despite their obvious suffering, they are already brave, resisting agents.

After escaping from the orphanage, she and her *métisse* companions practiced forms of resistance. For example, they kept returning to white-only cinemas (only to be forced to leave) until their presence was tolerated. In stores they would ask for articles in French, and "the shopkeepers would answer in Lingala or Kikongo to humiliate us" (112).[18] She interprets this as their saying that although Blouin and her friends had French citizenship they had no real right to use the French language. With her heart pounding, Blouin would ask for butter: "It was unthinkable for an African to eat butter" (112). Blouin is correct in her assessment that they were refusing intimidation and proving that "the old rules no longer held" (112) and that they "had to begin somewhere" (112).[18]

Ten years later, while traveling with Roger in the Kasai and Kwilu regions, she is moved by the suffering she observes and pained at the different reactions she and her companion have to what they witness. These travels are "another phase in [her] awakening to the injustices done to the black people in their own land" (100–1). She learns to dissemble her feelings so as not to create conflict with Roger, who "was not an unkind man but…accepted what he had been taught": "that blacks, by their natures, were created to do the work for which the white man was not fit. Occasionally the blacks had to be reminded of this. It was the God-given order of things" (102). She discovers, for example, that the Bapende people had been condemned to twenty to thirty years of hard labor for an uprising against the Belgians (103); she witnesses child labor that benefits the missions (105); and she visits a prison where she discovers that most of the inmates were serving time for offenses against the white man's authority (104). At this point in her life, she explains, she was not yet thinking in political terms of "justice" or "right" but only of pain (103). Nevertheless, the text includes—whether she had come to these conclusions at the time or later—condemnation of the "snug arrangement" between the church and the big companies that facilitated the exploitation of the land and the people (105), as well as eyewitness testimony of the "long lines of men, almost naked, working on the roads" closely watched by members of the Force Publique bearing whips while the prisoners' wives and children worked beside them, "carrying baskets of stones and dirt" (102). But it is the experience of pain that motivates her to interrogate the "truths" that colonial society had inculcated in her.

Blouin continued to tolerate her mother's humiliation and her own, but the death of her son René reveals the naked truth and spurs Blouin into political action. "When I lost my bronzed little boy I saw finally the pattern connecting my own path with that of my countrymen and knew that I must act. I began a campaign against the infamous quinine card law" (153). Kempen rightly observes that Blouin's revolutionary spirit had "been born on a personal level" but that she later learned "to translate this personal rebellion to a political one" and "to transcend the vast internalization of inferiority" (117).

> I understood at last that it was no longer a matter of my own maligned fate but a system of evil whose tentacles reached into every phase of African life. I experienced this evil in the grief particular to a female—in an orphanage for girls, as a repudiated mistress, and most of all, as the mother of a dying child. For men there were other kinds of torment and degradation. (153)

Challenging discourses that use the emasculation of men as representative of colonial oppression, her text foregrounds female pain and humiliation while acknowledging the suffering of both women and men.

Blouin's political life took off once she was in Guinea and married to a nonracist white man. She arrived in Guinea in the late 1940s as political activity and pan-African ideas started spreading in West Africa and the *métis* were increasingly challenged to assert their Africanness. Blouin's work and discourse echo Senghor's call for pan-African unity: "What are we waiting for to be a united people?" (O. White 155).

Women and Politics: From "Madame Blouin" to "Our Sister"

Blouin's experience departs in significant ways from the political activities of other African women organizing at the time. Sékou Touré was widely known for his progressive ideas on women, epitomized in the slogan "Emancipate your husbands!" Blouin already had the support of her white husband. "He did not assume that my role as wife should take precedence over my duties to my people as an African woman" (157). Perhaps more to the point, the idea of marriage Blouin espoused did not confine the woman to the home.

There were two models of female participation in politics in West Africa at that point: that of elite, educated women, and that of uneducated women working in grassroot organizations. Blouin fits in neither category. The women featured in LaRay Denzer's "Gender and Decolonization: A Study of Three Women in West African Public Life" all came from elite families, received the highest education then available to girls, and married political men. Elizabeth Schmidt points out that most "Western-educated Guinean women, whether Muslim or Christian, played little role in the anti-colonial struggle, choosing instead to preserve the few privileges they had acquired," although some joined the movement (283). The bulk of political work was done by nonelite women. After women had demonstrated their worth by providing material assistance and mobilizing communities during a seventy-day general strike in 1953, RDA (Rassemblement Démocratique Africain) leaders recruited them into the nationalist movement. "Their involvement was critical to the anti-colonial struggle" (282). Most of the women leaders had received little, if any, formal schooling, had virtually no contact with Westerners, and were Muslim (283). Schmidt shows that preexisting "cultural systems" such as women's associations and regionally based ethnic organizations shaped the Guinean nationalist movement. Blouin was not connected with these grassroot organizations. Not for her the oral transmission of news at water taps or markets, not for her singing at the market that the colonial authorities had rigged the elections in 1954 (288), not for her the graphic songs putting the men to shame (290).[19]

Blouin started off slowly, in an environment where she was unlikely to find support for her actions. She harshly evaluates her behavior upon her

arrival in Siguiri "on the arm of Monsieur Blouin" (168) to a welcoming French administration: "I enjoyed my new status; it made a coward of me" (169). We can only imagine Blouin's split consciousness as she listens to the officials and their wives talk about the RDA in an environment saturated with Sékou Touré's political discourse: "Each of them had a horror story to tell of how their 'boy' or chauffeur had been found to belong to the party and had been arrested. . . . Still, I did nothing. I dabbled in charity events, enjoying life as Madame Blouin" (172). As the feverish political activity in Siguiri increased, she began contributing money to the RDA to help pay off the judges for all the people being sent to prison.

She reports that her true call to action came in the form of an epiphany when faced with a photo of Sékou Touré in a store in 1957. A decade after her arrival in Guinea, she felt sure that she heard words spoken, "Why are you on the other side, in this struggle?" and cannot help but reply: "No. No, I'm with you. I'm *with* you" (184). At this point she threw herself heart and soul into the RDA's campaign to prepare for the referendum; Guinea was the only country to turn down de Gaulle's offer to be part of the French community. She was now sharing the podium with men and keeping a grueling campaign schedule: "Meetings were held morning, noon, and night, in every town and village, even in the farthest reaches of the scrub and desert" (186). After the 1957 congress of the RDA in Bamako, she became known to all as "our sister" (204). Her narrative offers few details of actual events or the content of political meetings. But for Blouin (or is it MacKellar?), those details are less important than what this new life means to her: "All my combativeness awakened, I hurled myself into this compelling political struggle, proud to be associated, at last, in my people's cause" (186).

Campaigning in the Congo: The Gender of Decolonization

In 1960, after a chance meeting between Blouin and members of the PSA in Conakry, Antoine Gizenga invited Blouin to come and work with women in the Congo, who had not yet been politicized. Sékou Touré supported her, but it was Kwame Nkrumah who asked her "to make a call to Africa's women to help bring the men together, setting aside the old quarrels between peoples" (203).

The account of her work in the Congo no doubt falls short of the political testament Blouin would have liked to leave. Nevertheless, it portrays her considerable political savvy. She may not have grasped the limitations of the situation in the Congo, where political participation was in its infancy, after having functioned within the well-oiled machinery

of the RDA and the centralized leadership of Sékou Touré in Guinea.[20] But she knew how to listen to people, how to sum up what is needed in a particular instance, and how to calibrate her interventions accordingly. Having experienced the iniquities of the colonial system, she was able to discern the machinations of the Belgians and their Congolese supporters and plumb the far-reaching impact of the colonial educational system, particularly on women. Her indefatigable efforts to feed the crew that accompanied her on speaking tours were fueled by her understanding of how important morale was to the success of the campaign.

She arrived in the Congo during the first quarter of 1960 and spent a month on the campaign trail, part of a caravan of fifty or more persons holding two meetings during the day and one at night. The figures tell part of the story: In Kikwit, "between eight o'clock in the morning and two o'clock in the afternoon of April 8th I enrolled 4,325 members in our organization for women" (205). That night the meeting attracted 6,000 women and 3,000 men (205). "By the end of May 1960 I had enrolled 45,000 members in the Feminine Movement for African Solidarity [MFSA]" in the provinces of Kwilu, Kwango, and Kasai (214).

In reading Lopes's novel, whose character Kolélé sometimes resembles Blouin, we get a sense of what may be left out of the Blouin/MacKellar account. The novel offers the textures of lived experience on the campaign trail: dialogue, encounters, reactions, exchanges, disagreements. It stages some of the resistance on the part of women that an outsider might have experienced. For example, in the novel the women, although suitably impressed by Kolélé's command of the white man's language and science, nevertheless talk back: "—Who, heckled a middle-aged woman with loud voice, who told you that polygamy was bad?" (356).[21]

Nevertheless, in *My Country, Africa* we learn that Blouin initially accepted the mission of uniting the men across ethnic lines, but soon discovered the dire situation of the women, which helped her reformulate the job that needed to be done. She saw Congolese women as "crushed between two pitiless stones: the tribal customs in which they were mere chattel to their men, and the education they received from the missions" (208). The immediate work seemed to consist of dealing with social problems such as alcohol, drugs, and prostitution. The MFSA's platform reflected these preoccupations:

To make all women, no matter what age, literate.
To promote an understanding of health and hygiene.
To combat alcoholism.
To work for women's rights.

> To work for the protection of the abandoned woman and child.
> To work for the social progress of the African. (206)[22]

Blouin, who had suffered from the inadequate education she had received from the nuns, was sensitive to the problems created by an education system over which the missions had maintained a monopoly until 1954. In her eyes, this kind of schooling represented a "poisoned present" (209). Taught to read and write only in their ethnic dialect, women "were spared such distractions as geography, history, mathematics, and science, while being apprenticed to such harmless occupations as cooking, housekeeping, and needlework" (209). They were not taught skills that would enable them to earn money.

Ludo Martens reproduces part of his interview with her pertaining to this period, which allows us to hear Blouin's voice unmediated by MacKellar:

> The themes we developed concerned the importance of the Party and the need for the unity of the country and solidarity among Congolese, the sacrifices required if a true independence were to be achieved. To the extremely poor women of the backwoods I explained that they were full-fledged African citizens and that they had to become conscious of their own dignity and responsibility. They signed up for the PSA by the thousands, even Black nuns joined us. (*Mulele* 61)

Despite Blouin's commitment to dealing with the social issues on the MFSA's platform, she placed equal emphasis on the political: citizenship and full independence.

Blouin invited women to join her on the platform and to speak of their problems: "I wanted to learn more about them, and I wanted them to see, by this airing of difficulties, what their common problems were, so they could envisage what was needed to solve them" (205). In a stroke of genius, she used a public relations figure for the Polar Beer firm. The big, flamboyant, exuberant Augustine first applauds Blouin: "This is a *man*, here" (207), and goes on to tell the crowd that she has something new to say: "If I see any of you drinking a bottle of beer before noon, I personally will bust you up" (207).

During the campaign, wherever Blouin went "a few strong women of the district" were appointed in order to continue the work after the caravan's departure. This grassroots activism became "a veritable women's crusade" (208). The provisional leaders created a temporary set of bylaws while waiting for the permanent representatives to be selected democratically (205). For example, in Kikwit a group of women who offered to help her gathered in the home of a Madame Kamitatu.[23] Her husband

Cléophas Kamitatu, a PSA leader, did not have very obliging things to say about Blouin when I met with him in Kinshasa on March 28, 2008.[24] He claimed that when Blouin addressed large crowds she would speak French and the content of what she was saying could be monitored, but that when she spoke to groups of women she needed an interpreter.[25] According to Kamitatu, his wife had reported to him that Blouin's discourse was too revolutionary and she was not following the party line when she was addressing women. She would therefore subvert Blouin's work by pretending to translate her words while she was in fact reproducing the PSA's agenda. He did not offer details.[26] This story is emblematic of perceptions of Blouin as well as of the obstacles she encountered in her work. All too often, women's issues were considered separately from issues of "general" or "universal" interest.[27]

Although Blouin gives the "few strong women of the district" their due, her syntax tends to separate herself from other women. For example, the text recounting the campaign is filled with "my job" and "I." She says at one point: "Even *Le Monde* had written about me as the only African woman who was making a serious contribution regarding the issues of the continent's decolonization" (195). Blouin does not attempt to refute or qualify this statement. Her predicament as she made her way among male leaders explains her strong identification with her "brothers" in struggle. Elleke Boehmer contends that as "author and subject of nationalism, the male is a part of the national community or contiguous with it; his place is alongside that of his brother citizens," while the woman is "placed *outside* the central script of national self-emergence" (29). She notes that "a woman character may be ranked together with her nationalist brothers. Yet, despite, or indeed because of, the cross-dressing, her singularity is totemic: it is at once a product of specialised conditions, and a means of reinforcing the *a priori* construct of the national subject as male" (29). Working primarily with men, even to politicize women and to promote their rights, she appears cut off from the collectivity that for many other women was a vital source of support and strength.

"My Africa, My Josephine" and "My Black Brothers": Mother Africa and her Sons?

This distance from the majority of women, both black and white, is visible in the gendered character of her portrayal of and identification with the continent. The Africa she inherits from and through her mother is the Africa of ancestral customs and the "African personality." The continent is gendered as feminine. On the other hand, in her political work Blouin

identifies with men who are politically active and recognize her own contributions to social and political change. In opposition to a timeless, feminine Africa channeled through her mother, we have the political, historical, and masculine struggle of her "black brothers." The "brothers" include their "sister" in their fraternity, but her relationship with her "sisters" remains tenuous. This gendered configuration corresponds closely to the Mother Africa trope in which the continent as mother depends on her sons to defend her from aggression and exploitation. How does the fact that Blouin is a woman influence the way this dichotomous gender identification with the continent plays out in her text? Let us take a closer look.

The title of her last chapter sets up a parallel between Africa and her mother ("My Africa, My Josephine"), and she develops this conceit in the chapter itself. "It became my lot, when I was a young woman, struggling to survive on my own, to protect my mother, and she gave me strength for my struggle. It became my lot, when I matured politically, to fight for Africa, and Africa gave me the courage for that" (285). In these sentences her mother and Africa occupy the same place linguistically and semantically. Although she presents these relationships as reciprocal, she also infantilizes her mother: "Each morning I call my fragile, child-hearted little mother, in whom I see Africa itself" (179).[28] In this relationship Blouin positions herself as the nationalist subject, the "son" of the soil defending her Mother/Africa. Recalling the original inspiration for Blouin's vision of the fight for justice in Africa, standing at the gate of the orphanage at the age of eight, watching the group of chained Black men being whipped, it seems fitting that when she becomes politically active she is working alongside her "black brothers." Even as she emphasizes her position on the podium with men, she constantly affirms that she is a woman and emphasizes her femininity, perhaps in part to balance perceptions of her as engaged in work considered masculine.

A number of competing discourses are in play here. Africa is beautiful and its customs are humane and wonderful. Africa is a mother whose sons must protect her from colonial and imperial exploitation. African women are crushed by backward customs. African men heroically fight to liberate their continent. African men treat African women like chattel. Blouin both is and is not an African woman.

As Irène d'Almeida points out, Blouin makes two problematic assumptions: that all African women are "docile and long-suffering wives" and that it is "better" to suffer injustice from a white man than a black man (61). Blouin's approach to the dowry system demonstrates both her valorizing approach to Africa and her assumptions about

African women. Early in the book, when describing her parents' marriage according to African customs, she proudly names all that Pierre Gerbillat was willing to pay as dowry for Josephine Wouassimba. But later, when justifying the fact that she was never romantically attracted to an African man, she states, among other reasons: "Nor could I give myself in a life of love and service from the bargained position of a dowry, my mind, body and person marked in the rude terms of material possessions" (157). Blouin overlooks the obvious when asserting that she did not want her marriage to be a material bargain. How did she imagine that a *métisse* was *not* in an unequal material position relative to a white man, even if he paid no bride price or dowry? But perhaps most damning is that Blouin says that her mother was "so unequipped for life, so unconscious of many of its realities. They escaped her, as they do many Africans" (179). Even when Blouin's text itself offers evidence to the contrary, she at times reverts to ill-considered generalizations about the continent and its people.

Blouin expresses her admiration for the continent and its customs in terms that suggest the limits of her comprehension. Even as she speaks Sango, loves the customs passed on from her mother, and reveres her ancestors, she evokes Africa with generalizations and images that are both idealized and frozen in time. She says, for example: "The ways of an African village are beautiful. It has a soul, an African village. In the forests there are wild fruit trees with more fruit than can be gathered. . . . Not far away, game can be found. . . . One never dies of hunger there. And the bounty is for everyone in the village, which lives as a community" (12). Although we appreciate her desire to offer a positive view of the African village, we must ask, which village, when, where? We wonder whether this image was based in her childhood or was generated in juxtaposition to urban, white-dominated areas, where Africans were poor and communal support was absent. She uses singular, totalizing phrases such as "the African," "the true African" (283), and "the African personality" (150, 294). But an important counterweight to these generalizations springs from Blouin's desire to express her love for the continent, which makes the text eminently readable despite its contradictions.

Wrested from her mother's care at the age of three, Blouin nevertheless maintained a very close relationship with Josephine. Her mother played a foundational role in shaping Blouin's spirituality. She reiterates at different points in the text how after her mother's death she continues to start each day by talking to her mother in Sango. "Although I am not religious, the cult of the ancestors is important to me. Each morning when I awaken, my first thought is for my mother. Speaking to her in the language of our

country, I greet her. . . . I tell her my problems, I remember things we have shared, I tell her that I love her" (134). Her connection with African customs was created through her mother's practices, especially those associated with pregnancy and motherhood. When she was expecting her first child and had fled from the shame she experienced as Roger Serruys's mistress, she returns to Brazzaville to await the birth of the baby. "I . . . fell into my mother's arms. Only here, it seemed, was I safe from the pain of prejudice against my race" (107). Upon learning about Blouin's pregnancy, Josephine makes her daughter remove her clothes: "To fulfill an important African ritual, she hastened to the river for a handful of white sand. This she let fall like a gentle rain over my belly, which protruded just a little. Passively I stood there, accepting my mother's loving ministrations, feeling connected through them with my ancestors" (109).

Her mother's affection, which is expressed through a close bodily connection, stands in stark contrast to the corporal punishment Blouin and the other girls at the orphanage received. Soon to be a mother herself, Blouin now savors the mothering, of which she was bereft as a small child. Passages such as this demonstrate the gentle nurturing she receives from her mother and the connection it establishes with the customs of her mother's ancestors. These more concrete passages grounded in lived experience provide images of the Africa that Blouin wants others to get to know and love. Although in her concluding pages she emphasizes gender, it is with her powerful sense of pan-African belonging and allegiance that she leaves the reader.

"If It were My Turn to Speak . . ."

"I chose to be an African." This is the title Herbert Weiss contends Blouin might have elected for her book. As a beautiful mixed-race woman married to a prominent white businessman, she could have chosen to be white. She did not. Perhaps this choice in itself constitutes an important political legacy. The conclusion of the book interweaves her strong identification with the continent, with her reflections on being a woman.

At the end of her story, Blouin evokes an African *fête* during which the chief personage has a chance to speak, to recount the story of his or her life, "a strong and useful device through which the wisdom of the people is shared" (284). She imagines what she would say if it were her turn to speak. The repetitions in the text create an almost invocatory rhythm.

> If it were my turn to speak, I would tell of my sad years in the orphanage. . . .
> If it were my turn, I would speak of my precious children, . . . African paludism and colonial law. . . .

I would speak of finding my true love, . . . And of the call to political action that I received from a photograph of Sekou Touré. . . .
I would speak of the election campaign in the Congo . . . and of the honor of being associated with Patrice Lumumba.
I would speak of those blazing first months after independence . . . (285)

She brings this litany to a close by acknowledging that she has played the role of a chief celebrant at an African *fête*: "In setting down my life here I have, in a sense, made this my celebration. I have taken my turn" (285). The form she chooses reinforces the final words of her book, which reiterate the profound connection she feels to the continent and the ways in which her story is intimately intertwined with that of Africa: "Speaking of my life has been my way of speaking of Africa. . . . I want Africa to be loved. I speak of my country, Africa, because I want her to be known" (286). We notice her repeated references to speaking as opposed to writing. Commonly, African women's autobiographies have tended to mark the woman's entry into the reading public's eye and to document the beginning of the writing process. This is not true for Blouin; the one published text that bears her name has been transcribed and shaped by another. Blouin was a proficient writer, but an author of speeches and radio broadcasts. Her words were always destined to be spoken, and she capitalized on her strengths as an orator. It is fitting for Blouin to present her "taking her turn" as part of an oral sharing in the context of a community gathering.

As Blouin reflects on her life, she acknowledges that she moved in predominantly masculine spaces but expresses the desire to be recognized for her work as a woman. She starts her final chapter with the words "I consider myself very handicapped, being born of the female gender" (277). She explains that when one wants to express admiration for a great leader, one says: "There is a *man*!" Blouin laments that "Society does not yet care to admit that a female can also take risks and impel changes" (277), although her story and that of many others obviously attest to the fact that women do contribute to bringing about change and also pay the price for their involvement. During the PSA campaign she had managed to talk down a group of armed Bakusu warriors looking for blood. She recreates the encounter for us. Trembling at the ferocious appearance of the men, she calls out in Kikongo:

"Hello there!"
"How goes it?" they answered.
"What are you up to?" I asked sociably.
"We're going to kill some people. The ASP."
"Why?"

> "Because they want to make slaves of us, and take our lands," they replied angrily . . .
> "Oh, then you want to kill me? . . . Because I am the ASP."
> At this they laughed heartily. "You? You are a woman! Politics are for men . . ." (219)

This encounter captures Blouin's courage and savvy. It also vividly attests to the gender assumptions that she could use to her advantage—as she does here—but also kept her contributions from being recognized.

Blouin both challenges and reinforces the construction of the national subject as male. The title of *My Country, Africa* makes a strong statement, although it may have been chosen by MacKellar or the publisher. The subtitle, which expressly identifies her as "black" and "female," establishes a link between her story and the continent's in somewhat the same way male political figures do with the nations they have served, for example, Kenneth Kaunda's *Zambia Shall Be Free: An Autobiography* (1962), and *Ghana: The Autobiography of Kwame Nkrumah* (1959).

But how is her text read? In his review of her book, Lemarchand concludes that Blouin's text has nothing new to add to the voluminous scholarship on Congolese independence and the ensuing "crisis." But, given the dearth of accounts of women's involvement, especially accounts in their own voices, it certainly does add something new. By dramatizing for us the special ways in which a woman could suffer under and struggle against a "system of evil whose tentacles reached into every phase of African life" (Blouin 153) and live to tell her story of triumph, it calls into question mainstream accounts of these events. Intent on gleaning "gender-neutral" information, many scholars continue to marginalize women and neglect gender as a term of analysis and are apt to miss the potential of texts such as Blouin's to destabilize dominant masculinist accounts of the period.

The same is true of the reception of Léonie Abo's story, to which we now turn. Readers are split in terms of their responses to the narrative: those interested in the rebellion highlight the fact that she offers an unprecedented account of the armed insurrection as it was lived from the inside; those focused on women's issues and women writers emphasize gender (usually in the sense of gender equals women, rather than relational constructions of masculinity and femininity) and her life story in their analyses. My investigation highlights women's contributions to decolonizing the Congo while exploring how Abo's text contests conventional and revolutionary models of domesticity and the public/private divide.

Blouin describes for us her reaction to Lumumba's death. In her grief, "contemplating what the black world had lost," she finds no words: "All the hot words, the passionate outpouring that had been the substance of my days for so long had been drained from me in this loss" (279). Abo's connection with Lumumba was less visceral and direct, more ideological. It took time for her to learn to appreciate his importance.

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CHAPTER 4

LÉONIE ABO: THE POLITICAL LESSONS OF THE MAQUIS

> A clamor can be heard all over Kikwit: "Lumumba is dead! They've killed Lumumba!" Who is this Lumumba? (Martens, *Abo* 55)

At the time of Lumumba's death, Léonie Abo was an unpoliticized teenager grappling with the vicissitudes of life. Born on the banks of the Kwilu River in 1945, she had already learned midwifery and entered a marriage marred by domestic violence. Her life was enormously influenced by this figure she never knew, and her work contributed to keeping his political legacy alive.

After Lumumba's assassination, rebel groups immediately contested Mobutu's regime.[1] The most significant of these struggles was led by Pierre Mulele, the former minister of education in Lumumba's government, in the Kwilu region from 1963 to 1968. In the maquis, Abo became Mulele's partner in struggle.[2] His name was consistently paired with Lumumba's in the rebellions that rocked the Congo.

Abo's story is told by the left-wing historian Ludo Martens in *Abo: Une Femme du Congo*. Although the text bears Martens's name and is told in the third person, Abo has reiterated that it is her own story. She regards the mediation process as unproblematic and is satisfied that the book adequately represents her point of view. In a June 2009 interview, she stated: "It is the story of what I experienced; it is I who recounted everything that is to be found in the book," adding, "It is I speaking, Ludo can change, nuance the French or improve the style."[3] Her long-term association with Martens began in 1984. Although both she and Martens could refer to her diaries for her immediate impressions and thoughts, much of her telling was retrospective, colored by the way events transpired, how they were perceived by others over time, and her own situation.

Today, it is common for those working on women's life histories, oral testimonies, and autobiographies to provide details on the collaboration, such as the dates of interviews, the relationship between subject and collaborator, the potential influence of the questions posed, and both parties' expectations; these matters are especially salient when the collaborator is a Westerner working in a colonial or postcolonial context. Martens provides none of this helpful information. In his other book, *Pierre Mulele ou la seconde vie de Patrice Lumumba* (*Pierre Mulele, or the second life of Patrice Lumumba*), Martens reproduces quotations from Abo or affirms that he is using her testimony, but does not explain whether he is quoting Abo's maquis diaries or using material drawn from interviews or conversations with her. The materials that frame *Abo, Une Femme du Congo* include a glossary of terms, maps, photographs, and genealogies. In fact, there are two versions of the book: the first (1991) omits Abo's name, while the later one (1995) highlights her name, and her photograph is on the cover.

I refer to Abo as the author, although her voice is usually mediated through Martens. Her story, which conjoins her life as a partisan with her life as a woman, offers rich documentation of women's participation in the struggle to decolonize the Congo. Moreover, it enables us to compare the revolutionary discourse of a rural uprising with that of the urban *évolué* class, which embraced different kinds of modernity in the gender relations they proposed.

Léonie Abo's life was significantly shaped by two events: the education she received despite her grandmother's initial resistance, and her participation in the rebellion. After completing primary school, in 1957 Abo joined thirteen other young girls in the first class of assistant midwives and pediatric nurses at Foreami, a foundation promoting health care for the Congolese, created by Belgium's Queen Elisabeth. She received her diploma shortly before her fourteenth birthday and was married that same year. By the time her brothers tricked her into accompanying them to the maquis so that the partisans could benefit from her medical knowledge, she had experienced severe beatings by her husband and a short stint in prison for showing interest in another man. A timid and reluctant participant to begin with, she soon wholeheartedly embraced the revolutionary cause. Abo stayed with Mulele until the bitter end and devoted much of her later life to educating people about the rebellion whose leader had been branded a bandit, a thief, and a murderer by Mobutu's regime. The story she tells in the book interweaves detailed description of the actions and movements of the rebels with her own coming to consciousness. As she internalizes the political lessons, she also starts asking questions about the rebels' all-too-human failure to carry out the principles they

espoused, specifically as they pertain to conjugal relations. She emphasizes women's participation but maintains in a recent interview that she can only recount what she herself saw or experienced, so many stories remain to be told.

First, however, we must trace the main outlines of the complex and multifarious movements that made up the rebellions of the 1960s, explore the significance of Lumumba to Mulele, and locate Abo in the Kwilu rebellion.

The Lumumbism of the Rebellions

The key political, economic, and ideological factors leading to the rebellions are captured by Manya K'Omalowete a Djonga, a Congolese political scientist:

> The popular indignation caused by Lumumba's death, amplified by the persecution of the Lumumbist partisans as well as by the enrichment of the authoritarian and greedy bourgeoisie, generated, in the long run, the courage and determination to fight against the neo-colonialist and imperialist forces of the West: the insurrections of the Lumumbist and Mulelist Simba freedom fighters, led by two of Lumumba's former ministers, Pierre Mulele and Christophe Gbenye, succeeded in 1964 in conquering more than half of the territory of Congo-Leopoldville. (Manya 164–65)[4]

Although Mulele's politics were more radical than Lumumba's, the martyred prime minister remained a guiding light for the maquis. In the east the connection with Lumumba was more direct because many of the fighters and supporters were card-carrying members of the MNC-Lumumba. But even in the Kwilu, where Mulele led the rebellion, Lumumba's name was invoked on a regular basis. Rebels went into battle crying "Lumumba mai, Mulele mai" ("mai" or water evoking the magic liquid that would make them invulnerable to bullets or turn shells to water). In a political lesson on the difference between "reformism and revolution," Mulele explains how the thwarting of Lumumba's vision led to the need for armed resistance:

> When the suffering became unbearable, Lumumba led us to independence. . . . Today, the Congo is still in the hands of the foreign capitalists who have their dirty work carried about by their boys, the black reactionaries of the government and the army. (Martens, *Abo* 135)

Mobutu's attempt to appropriate Lumumba's legacy by naming him a national hero (November 1966) provoked a discussion in the maquis.

"All of us present here support Lumumba's cause. Now that Mobutu has staged a coup, he speaks of Lumumba. What do you think? Let each of you say your piece" (Martens, *Mulele* 282). The group concluded, "It is Mobutu who had Lumumba assassinated. The assassin cannot adhere to the politics of his victim" (282). This reaffirmation of the struggle came at a time when support for the rebellion was waning in the face of increased deprivation and constant persecution by government soldiers.

The first signs of the rebellion in the Kwango-Kwilu region had surfaced in mid-1963, and the first violent incidents occurred in January 1964. Crawford Young reminds us that, at the height of the rebellion in August 1964, "the complete collapse of the Kinshasa regime appeared a real possibility" (Young, "Rebellion" 969), since the rebels' success had created an impression of unified purpose and revolutionary promise. However, the rebellions were never a unified movement. Benoît Verhaegen's authoritative two-volume work, *Rébellions au Congo* (1966, 1969), examines the uprisings of the Kwilu, Bolobo-Mushie, Uvira-Fizi, North Katanga, and Maniema separately. Young characterizes them as "a series of parallel, partly overlapping dramas, which do not have one history, but several" ("Rebellion" 969). The glory days of the Kwilu rebellion were short-lived. The first attacks took place at the beginning of 1964, and by April the army had already gained the upper hand. It took many more months before administrative reoccupation was accomplished. Meanwhile, the insurrection in the eastern Congo was making spectacular progress. The first armed clashes took place in April 1964. In North Katanga, the leaders of a May uprising received support from rebels coming from the north. On September 5, a revolutionary government was proclaimed in Kisangani (formerly Stanleyville). In late November, the Belgian-American parachute operation ("Dragon Rouge") evacuated some two thousand white hostages and led to the loss of the capital of Lumumbism. It is estimated that the rebellions cost approximately one million lives. Qualitative distinctions concerning the revolutionary character of the rebellion and the participation of women are frequently made between the rebellions in the East and in the Kwilu. The distinctive cast of the Kwilu rebellion can be attributed to the fact that this insurrection was rural and involved youth more than elders, was led not by established local politicians but by revolutionaries, and involved economic grievances related to agriculture rather than mineral resources.[5] Its grassroots character made it especially open to the active participation of women as fighters, officials, and trainers and/or recruiters, rather than merely as informers, spies, and servants.

Women and the Rebellions: The Gender of Fighting for the Nation

Women's participation in the rebellions, when not relegated to the footnotes, receives only occasional mention even in book-length studies. Nevertheless, women played an active part in the rebellions from the outset. Martens contends that they made up between 20 and 35 percent of the teams in the Kwilu and that they included nurses, instructors, and peasants, but most were high school students (Martens, *Mulele* 233).[6]

During the attack on the town of Idiofa at the beginning of 1964, women in the village participated alongside female partisans. Civilians played a crucial role in this offensive. A participant recalled: "January 25 . . . I heard gun shots. Everyone shouted as they ran outside: the attack has begun. The entire population filled the streets and ran towards the soldiers. Many women cried *massa massa!*, which means: it's water, advance, don't be afraid, it's nothing. Some of the women held their pestles in their hands. The soldiers killed a lot of people, but we too managed to kill some soldiers" (Martens, *Mulele* 183). The active participation of civilian women demonstrates the influence of strategies promoting women's mobilization.

In this region, the idea that women should be politicized and could serve as maquis circulated in part through the insurgents' ties to Lumumbist nationalism and in part through Blouin's local influence. Verhaegen compares women's activities in the Mulele camps with the role women played in the rebellions in the eastern part of the country:

> The presence of numerous women in the partisans' camps deserves mention. There were women among the assault teams at Idiofa and Dibaya; a woman served as a judge on the popular tribunal of Yene; women were physical education instructors for young people. The Laba seminary was for a time transformed into a training facility for women. The role of women in the Kwilu rebellion contrasts with the disdain displayed by the simbas of the East and of Orientale province where women were relegated to subaltern tasks (informing, surveillance, preparing meals, etc.). (*Rébellions*, vol. 1, 101)

Verhaegen explains that the prominence of women in the Kwilu rebellion has often been attributed to the Chinese revolutionary ideology embraced by the leaders. He argues that, instead, it was a distant manifestation of Guinean influence: "we must not forget that the PSA had, already in 1960, under the influence of Andrée Blouin organized precisely in the region of Idiofa, an extremely popular women's movement and that the revolutionary role of the woman had already been exalted by certain

leaders of the PSA at the time" (109).[7] Martens agrees: "In 1960 the PSA had undertaken a far-reaching campaign to raise awareness and organize women. All this explains why, from the beginning of the insurrection, they spontaneously joined the maquis in large numbers. . . . During the uprising of the inhabitants of Idiofa, women descended into the street en masse and participated in the battle" (*Mulele* 233).

Although some women joined the maquis voluntarily, there is evidence that many were coerced. Abo herself was taken to the maquis against her will.[8] The balance between choice and coercion depended on individual circumstances, age, ideology, and opportunity. An important factor was the relative safety of the women in the maquis.

> If the Mobutist soldiers killed to amuse themselves, they took no less pleasure in pursuing all the pretty girls that misfortune had placed in their path. . . . the elders were filled with vengeful loathing for them. And if they allowed their daughters to enter the forest, it was notably to put them out of reach of the soldiers. The leaders of the maquis had assured them that their daughters would be respected there. (Martens, *Mulele* 195)[9]

The term "girls" used by Martens is not necessarily a way of diminishing women, for many of the participants were in fact in their teens. Although some came to the maquis on their own accord, their presence also became a symbol of support for the rebellion on the part of the parents. According to Abo, families considered a shame not to have a child fighting with Mulele and mothers would come to the maquis and say: "Take good care of my daughter, she is your wife now" (75). An interview in Kikwit reveals another part of the logic: entrusting the girls to the leader was a way of protecting them from other partisans (Ndande).[10]

Girls as young as thirteen played significant roles in the maquis. Abo reports the testimony of a young girl who at first found it difficult to be admitted because she weighed less than the required minimum. She ended up convincing the members of the Eyene team of her love of the revolution, and they allowed her to stay. After her training, Marie Mukuku is sent back to her village "where she becomes, at fourteen years old, military instructor in a team of fifty partisans" (Martens, *Abo* 104). While girls and women played essential roles in the Kwilu, women's participation in the eastern part of the country is said to have been qualitatively different, but it has not received much attention. Even if women's actions in other parts of the country challenged gender conventions less directly, their participation deserves to be recognized.[11]

In a conference presentation comparing the rebellions of the 1990s to those of the 1960s, Verhaegen shows that women in the eastern part

of the country worked in concert with other groups. He explains that rebels often conquered towns without having to fight because of the preparatory work done by nationalist political networks that had previously suffered anti-Lumumbist repression. These networks included political parties, "Youth" sections, and *Femmes nationalistes* (Nationalist Women). In advance of the Simbas' arrival, these groups "organize underground camps, capture and hide arms, infiltrate the administration and the army." He reiterates women's role as denouncers: "The Simbas killed those who were delivered to them by the 'youth' of the M.N.C. or by the nationalist women" ("Du Congo 1964 au Zaïre 1997").[12] Young comments on the important role played by townswomen in the northeastern Congo. These young women who had fled their villages had few prospects in the urban areas, and their situation may have led them to participate in the rebellion.

> *Femmes nationalistes* formations appeared in a number of places, and in Bunia played a central role in driving the national army out in August 1960. In Isiro, Kisangani, and Kindu, women were in evidence both in the violence and in claiming some share of the power. For example, in Kindu Olenga promised the *femmes nationalistes* a place in the governing council for Maniema shortly after the rebel triumph; women apparently participated, particularly when judgments were being rendered against adversaries of the rebel regime. ("Rebellion" 982)

Another snapshot of female participation can be found in Verhaegen's section on the Uvira-Fizi rebellion. A group of young people progressed to battle singing and dancing, armed with spears and clubs. Beside them, "adults rousing them; a woman is also leading this charge by dancing on the side of the road" (*Rébellions*, vol. 1, 320). These contributions deserve further study.

Some women provided "magical" protection to the men going into battle. The "famous Mama Onema," as Verhaegen calls her, was one of the principal "sorceresses" of the rebellions.[13] She was about sixty years old when the armed insurrection began. Young offers this account of her influence:

> The high priestess of the eastern rebellion, Mama Marie Onema, had a reputation throughout the Maniema-Kisangani area even before the rebellion offered her new opportunities. She was a wizened, one-breasted woman of very short stature whose startling appearance enhanced her effectiveness. . . . General Olenga, after the capture of Kindu, sought her out immediately to enlist her services. She held court in Kisangani during the period of the revolutionary government. ("Rebellion" 999)

Manya offers detailed descriptions of the various forms of protection she provided, including the Simba baptism, amulets, and incisions, and explains that her practices had both spiritual and tactical meaning. If Simbas failed to respect the prohibitions she prescribed, they would lose their magical protection and become vulnerable (118). With these taboos, Mama Onema "was aiming to create a certain social cohesion and military discipline" (116). Her practices were based in local indigenous beliefs. For example, ancestral customs prohibit men from having sexual relations when they are undertaking tasks requiring exceptional physical and mental exertion. When Mama Onema said, "Simba combatants are strictly forbidden to have sexual relations with women," the men understood. Mama Onema was cognizant of the political cost of undisciplined behavior on the part of the partisans, most of whom were unmarried youths between the ages of sixteen and seventeen. "Mama Onema does not underestimate the danger of seeing many Simbas losing track of their primary objective . . . by giving themselves over to rapes and forced marriages if a prohibition of a magical order does not forbid sexual relations with women" (Manya 119–20).[14] Despite Mama Onema's best efforts, sexual discipline waned as time passed.

In the end, she paid a great price for supporting the armed insurrection: "After the fall of the rebel capital, she was captured by forces of the central government. Sûreté chief Victor Nendaka induced her to change her allegiance, and in early 1965 the former rebel zones were saturated with government posters announcing Mama Onema's switch" (Young, "Rebellion" 999). Manya recounts that Mama Onema was treated brutally when she was arrested and then deported to Leopoldville where she was subjected to "harrowing military interrogations." He does not mention her changing sides, but says: "Traumatized and weakened, Mama Onema died in Leopoldville (Kinshasa) in August 1967" (141). Even old women deserving of extra respect according to cultural norms paid the ultimate price for rebellion.[15]

Hardship in the Maquis: The Gender of Suffering

All partisans faced the privations of living exposed to the elements without reliable access to food and medications, the horror of knowing that family members were being targeted by the government troops, and the terrifying possibility of arrest, torture, and death. But women encountered gender-specific hardships.

In some instances, parents felt their children would be less likely to experience sexual violence in the maquis than in the village where they could fall prey to the exactions of the government soldiers. In Abo's

account, while there are abundant examples of rape by government soldiers, there is no mention of rape on the part of partisans. Mulele could keep tight reins on those under his direct leadership, but the lack of political training and discipline had serious consequences in some of the village teams.[16] Martens reports an incident of rape by rebels that was fueled by a conflict between two groups of partisans. Other than one wounded partisan, the victims in the reported incident were village women: "They arrested the village mamas to go and sleep with them in the encampment. They also looted their houses" (Martens, *Mulele* 268). In the French, the use of the neutral term "coucher avec" "sleep with," rather than the more accurate "violer" "rape," or "violate," seems to be characteristic of Congolese discourse at the time. Similarly, Lumumba shied away from the term "rape" in his speech to the UN, using it only for the sake of clarity because the Belgians had used it.

Mulele is credited with maintaining strict sexual discipline. He understood that the partisans depended on the villagers and their chiefs. To promote good relations with them, he assured them that their daughters would be respected. Abo's narrative abounds with visits to the maquis by village chiefs and palavers that last into the early hours of the morning. Reassuring the villagers meant that all extramarital sexual relations were banned and that the partisans entered into customary marriages, informed the parents, and paid dowries. A famous example of Mulele's discipline and integrity in this matter was when his second-in-command, Théodore Bengila, got a young girl pregnant. Mulele punished him by sending him to the village until the birth of the baby, the sentence stipulated by the camp's rules and regulations. Although in this region women could be married at the age of fourteen, Abo's text comments on the youth of the girl Bengila impregnated. Mulele shakes his head: "a small little girl like Nelly . . ." (Martens, *Abo* 117).[17] Perhaps responding to accusations of sexual exploitation in the camps while affirming her own contribution to the struggle, a young woman testifies: "Women were not in the maquis to satisfy men, but to fight for our nation" (Martens, *Mulele* 234).

Women in a male-dominated, well-disciplined armed group might be sexually oppressed even if they were not captured or raped; voluntary political affiliation could be followed by exploitative and to some degree involuntary sexual relations even if the women also made other contributions to the struggle. Both Adelbert Kola and Christian Ndande surprised me by their willingness to answer questions relating to sexual relations and the possibility of sexual violence. Kola, acknowledging women's lack of power in such matters at the time and the extraordinary situation of the maquis, simply said: "Men just imposed themselves." Kola, who professed to having been a "chef de secteur," said that since

men and women could not be together in public, they did so in secret. According to him, women who had had relations with men would have not talked about it after leaving the maquis since they would have been shunned or devalued. After the rebellion, both men and women talked about the hardships they had suffered, but sexual relations remained a taboo subject.

Although pregnancy was undesirable, there is no mention of attempts to prevent or end pregnancies. But one tragic incident suggests that this silence results from the matter not being discussed, rather than not arising. A woman dies in agonizing pain. "Pregnant, she dreaded the birth of a child in the midst of the dangers of war. Without saying anything to anyone, she wanted to provoke an abortion according to recipes vaguely learned in the village" (Martens, *Abo* 137). Too great a quantity of *amon* seeds, one of the ingredients that the woman had included in her concoction, is deadly. Ankawu, the doctor, performs an autopsy: "the intestines of the young woman are glued together, burnt, they look like boiled meat" (Martens, *Abo* 137). Presumably this fate could have been averted if Abo or the doctor, who would have used the correct balance of ingredients, had been consulted. Does the woman's reluctance to turn to them reflect her personal discomfort or the possible objections of her husband, or does it point to a more general attitude toward terminating pregnancies?

As conditions in the maquis deteriorated because the government soldiers were gaining the upper hand, both partisans and villagers suffered. Food production in the villages was disrupted. The partisans had to keep moving and often went without food. The incidence of anemia increased, with devastating effects on the women and by extension on the children. Monique Ilo, Mulele's second wife, who gave birth around mid-July 1965, was distressed because in the villages she had seen "anemic mothers, exhausted, driven by despair, abandon their baby in the bush" (Martens, *Abo* 172). Only in an extreme situation, where infants were not expected to survive, would mothers abandon them.

The account of one birth praises the woman's courage and takes on a triumphalist tone. While the partisans are fleeing government soldiers in August 1966, a young woman gives birth to a baby boy. She is said to be carrying "a rebel son in her big belly" and she is delivered of a "robust boy" who is destined to become "a combatant as formidable as his father." The enemy fire in the distance is interpreted as a salute to the birth of the "little partisan" (Martens, *Abo* 197). Few women are as fortunate. "Marie, seven months pregnant, throws herself into a ditch. The crush, the emotion, the panic cause a premature birth the following day.

The little girl will live only three days" (198). Later, Nelly Labutu gives birth to a baby girl weighing about four and a half pounds. Weakened by the constant moving, worry, and discouragement, Nelly is unable to produce milk. Despite Abo's best efforts, the undernourished and dehydrated infant dies (201).

Women partisans tell harrowing tales of trying to flee with babies on their backs. In early 1966 Monique's son Ibulabit (literally, "in the middle of war") is crying.

> —Make him shut up. The soldiers are going to kill us.
> —Beta ye moto na nzete.
> Hit his head against a tree. Let the baby die before he gets us all killed.
> Monique cries, she trembles, no, we mustn't kill the child. (172)

Later the child's crying again threatens to give their position away. "Beta ye na nzete. Monique on the verge of a nervous breakdown" (183). Abo tries to soothe her, reassuring her that they will find Mulele, from whom they have become separated in the chaos of flight.

Monique Ilo recalls other harrowing moments.[18] When they got to a river, someone agreed to swim across with the baby in his arms. On the other side, after saving their leader's son, they left Monique to her own devices even though she could not swim. Abo relates another incident involving the two women that took place over a year later. Abo and Ilo again find themselves in peril. Running behind Abo, who follows on the heels of Mulele, Monique "makes herself as small as possible so as better to protect her child who is bouncing about on her back" (Martens, *Abo* 209). This time, in November 1967, Monique and her child are arrested by the soldiers (Martens, *Mulele* 235). In early October 1968 Abo hears that they are still in prison in Oshwe (Martens, *Abo* 239). That is the last word we have of the young woman and her child in Abo's text. Today, when asked about the hardships in the maquis, Ilo emphasizes the experience of fleeing with a baby from soldiers. She remained in prison with her baby for two and a half years, sometimes in truly deplorable circumstances. Today she has no contact with the child.

Many perished in the bush. The last pages of Abo's book are filled with the names of the dead, women and men. Among those deeply grieved by the partisans was a woman whose actions in the maquis were unprecedented. Even the toughest men could not withhold their tears when they learned about the death of Godelieve Madinga, "this strong young woman, dark, with a confident voice, the first woman to give political lessons and to command the troops" (Martens, *Abo* 193).

The Discourse of Gender Equality in the Maquis

Extraordinary circumstances open up new spaces for women. In the Kwilu rebellion, the discourse concerning women exalted equality. But long-held conceptions competed with the new ideology and undermined the movement toward equality in the maquis.

Abo quotes Bengila as saying "Women will be men's equals." Developing this theme, he repeats "that women do not even realize that they are men's slaves. They are too compliant" (Martens, *Abo* 83). Mulele insists that "what men can do, women can do too" (Martens, *Abo* 69). The most extensive lesson Mulele gives on women that Abo presents in the book deserves close examination. Mulele is quoted as saying:

> Women know lots of things. They usually think things over, they can give us advice. . . . Women must interest themselves in the fate of the country. . . . There are countries where women have fought alongside men. In China, I have seen women working as engineers, company directors, airplane pilots. (Martens, *Abo* 84)

Yet, Mulele emphasizes women's maternal roles. The very first words of his political lesson are "Women bring children into the world" (83). He continues: "Women are always with the children, they educate them. If the woman is not acquainted with the problems of the country and does not know how to struggle, the children will not learn either" (84). Here we see that the focus of the discourse is on the mothers of partisans, who are coded male despite the fact that many of the partisans were female and some of them were mothers. While women in the maquis undertake activities they have never performed before, Mulele is speaking as if the lesson is meant for the male partisans' mothers.

The parallels with earlier discourses on women are striking. While the wives of *évolués* needed a Western-style education to raise their children appropriately, the rebels sought to make women politically aware so that they could raise their children appropriately. No doubt, Mulele was seeking to combat women's tendency to stand aside from the struggle and try to hold back their children from taking the risks of active participation. Many male revolutionaries tended to think that "mamans" were less likely than adult men to become committed to the struggle and worried about what they saw as their reactionary tendencies. They responded by insisting on politicizing women, as does Mulele here, not by relegating them to the margins.

It is notable that Mulele uses the word "femmes" in this instance, rather than the widely used "mamans" still common in the Congo today. Despite the term's underlying assumption that all women are or should be

mothers, referring to women as "mamans" is considered a sign of respect, as are the masculine equivalents, "papa" or "taat." Although on occasion Abo refers to another man as a "papa" or "taat," these are primarily used as terms of respect for Mulele. These terms coexist with names such as the Grand Léopard (Martens, *Abo* 190). Like today's "fathers of the nation," Mulele is the patriarch of the rebellion. "Mulele keeps an eye on political training. He needs to unite all the revolutionaries, the father of the revolution must be a father to all his children" (Martens, *Abo* 157). This paternalism, along with the contradictions between deeply entrenched cultural and linguistic habits and the new ideology, presented numerous obstacles to women's emancipation.[19]

The customs of the elders, which the partisans respected at least in part because they depended on them for food and news about the soldiers' whereabouts, conflicted with the ideology of equality disseminated in the political lessons.[20] Martens reports that the elders said that the "boys" should not sleep with the "girls." Although the young people protested, they understood that they could not "make revolution by creating problems with the elders" (Martens, *Mulele* 235). Even if the power of the maternal uncle did not pertain in the maquis and the partners chose each other freely, the marriage was still a contract between men: the man (or his envoys) paid the dowry to the family (father or uncle) and the consent of girls and women remained optional.

While the partisans respected the customs of the elders as far as relationships between men and women were concerned, the elders were the ones who received instruction on the new roles women could play in waging guerrilla warfare.

Women as Partisans: Embracing Change

The most striking changes in gender relations that occurred in the maquis came from women breaking taboos and adopting new behaviors. Although some men and women, both partisans and villagers, resisted these changes, there appears to have been more opposition to men adopting women's roles than the reverse. After all, activities customarily assigned to men were most highly valued among the rebels.

Women Can Do What Men Can Do

References to women activists pervade Martens's biography of Mulele, demonstrating their presence as well as the historian's attention to their contributions. Lists of those who held responsible positions in the various bureaus of the Kwilu insurrection show that women were included

in leadership, military, and administrative functions. For example, Pascal Mundelengolo, who was in charge of educating the officers of the movement, "was assisted in this task by Martine Madinga, a remarkable girl endowed with great political consciousness. [She] was finishing her teacher training studies in the humanities in Kisanji when the revolution broke out. She gave political lessons with great competence and led the women's battalion of the Leadership team" (Martens, *Mulele* 209). The two of them prepared "the teachers and other intellectuals for their future responsibility as political 'commisars' " (211). Bernadette Kimbadi, who was charged with the finances of the maquis, was one of Mulele's personal secretaries (209). Although the "filles" made up a company and received military training, they did not participate in combat (210). In the bureau of studies and documentation, "comrade Madeleine Mayimbi, a girl who had completed an eighth grade education," was specially requested because drafting the texts that served as a basis for the political lessons "required a high level of intellectual education" (211). In the information and press bureau, three women fulfilled the duties of the secretariat: Sidonie Ahumari, a former nun; Monique Ilo; and Marie-Jeanne Ntumba (211). In the health department, Abo primarily took care of the women and children and managed the pharmacy (212). She worked with several nurses who had joined the maquis, among them Jeannette Kasiama and Charlotte Ntsamana (212). When they ran out of medicines, Mulele convinced the elders to teach Abo the secrets of the medicinal qualities of various plants even though this knowledge was customarily reserved for men (Martens, *Abo* 191). While Abo explains in detail how they use bullet caps for molds when making pills, Martens reports on Mulele's playful praise for his wife's ingenuity. He gave the remedies names that include "abo": a medicine made from the *Ofuful* (for constipation and worms) is *Abofuge*; the roots of the *quinquiliba* (used for malaria) is *Quinabo* (Martens, *Mulele* 227).

In her account, Abo provides much of the same information but emphasizes the fact that women were departing from the norm and presents the women's reactions to their new responsibilities, giving us more insight into their perspectives. They were often reluctant to embrace new practices, especially those that broke long-honored taboos. Yet women who were supposed to let their uncles speak for them in public spoke in strong, confident voices in the camps in front of gatherings of both men and women (Martens, *Abo* 108). Abo explains that Pascal Mundelengolo had introduced this change by preparing a young girl, Mpits, to give lessons "in front of the amazed women of the village, and their husbands, all astonished, some shocked but not showing their reactions" (105). The villagers chose to abide by the maquis' practices. Mulele made the women

eat crocodile and other kinds of meat, explaining that they were silly to listen to the men, who had imposed the taboo simply to reserve the best meat for themselves (120).

After Godelieve Madinga had been placed in charge of the drill, Mulele declared that he saw no difference between the command of a woman and that of the men in this position (Martens, *Abo* 149). His support affirmed Godelieve's authority. But to consolidate it, "Godelieve will first have to crack down and castigate on her own authority" (149). When she made an error during training and was mocked, she sent the insubordinate partisans to prison for fourteen days. Abo concludes:

> Nobody will any longer risk expressing opposition to women commanders in the revolution. The slightly ethereal idea of the equality between men and women is concretized in a palpable fashion in Godelieve Madinga, small, heavy-set, submachine gun over the shoulder. (149)

Women were also charged with executing traitors (Martens, *Abo* 127). In the explosives department where bombs and mines were handcrafted, Mulele was assisted by Abo and her brother Delphin Mbumpata (Martens, *Mulele* 213).

Figure 4.1 A maquis photo, Nelly Labutu in the center (Courtesy of Ludo Martens and Éditions EPO).

Although many tasks were performed on an equal footing, women were expected, or volunteered, to engage in activities that were clearly gendered. The most striking is the seduction of government soldiers in order to obtain information or weapons. Martens reproduces testimony offered by a young woman of eighteen while she was being interrogated by the police: "In the bivouacs, we were six young girls. They taught us how to confiscate arms from the soldiers. If the moment was ripe, we went to clean up and to join . . . the soldiers to satisfy them and during the night, while they were sleeping, we took their guns and handed them over to our soldiers" (Martens, *Mulele* 234). Most people in Kikwit today emphasize women's support roles and undercover activities and do not recognize that women were combatants and commanded troops. Louis Serge Mulangi reports that while he was engaged in pacifying the region, a young woman who had been arrested demonstrated her familiarity with weapons by expertly dismantling and reassembling a FAL rifle. He speculates that the woman allowed herself to be captured as part of a "psychological mission." If this was the case, it worked; it sowed panic among the government soldiers (Mulangi).

But Do Men Do What Women Can Do?

Although both men and women rotated through the kitchen on a weekly basis, there was more resistance to men taking on women's customary tasks. Many of these tasks were less valorized than those associated with men, and men who engaged in them were stigmatized as unmanly. The main proponent of equality in this regard was the abbot Tara. Tara's voluntarily taking on domestic chores was mocked, for it seemed to call into question men's masculinity and dignity in a way that being led by a strong, capable woman did not. His behavior is presented as "the strangest of phenomena: he can often be found by the river, drawing water, washing his clothes, soaking manioc" (Martens, *Abo* 143). They are astounded by this unfamiliar sight of a man doing household tasks when he has women at his beck and call (143). When Tara insists that what women can do, men can do too, the reaction is powerful. "Good lord, the faces say, this iconoclast abbot intends to reverse the natural order of the universe!" (149). When he asserts that the men are simply being lazy, he is met with "caustic taunts from all of the male sex" (149). With palpable sarcasm, Abo addresses readers directly. "As you are well aware,"

> [n]o man worthy of being called such can suffer such degrading humiliation: carrying wet manioc with its lingering stench of mildew. That's woman's work. . . . And the man will honor his wife by eating well and

> abundantly, an occupation which is basically reserved for him. Such were the ancestors' wishes. Much to the chagrin of abbot Tara. (149–50)

Abo was aware that in villages during peacetime, male privilege rested on women being burdened with labor and a woman's needs being subordinated to serving her husband's needs.

The success of the revolution required women to act in unprecedented ways. But the armed insurrection was a temporary social reordering. When it was over, both men and women would lay down their arms and return to civilian life. If gender relations were transformed in the maquis and new models of equality were promoted as part of revolutionary discourse, changes in conjugal relations would bring about far more radical changes in society as a whole than the temporary changes required by armed struggle. The conscious or unconscious awareness of the power of gender subversion may well have contributed to the greater resistance to change that is visible in matters of marital and sexual relations. Women taking up arms do not challenge male privilege in the same way that promoting women's rights within the family and household does.

Despite the extraordinary circumstances of the maquis, the example of Tara, and the wide range of tasks performed by women, their wifely duties remain conventional. Abo, as the wife of the leader, was sought after by his supporters and targeted by his enemies. She says that Mulele spent time with her in order to perfect her political education and let her read strategic documents. She gained a special reputation, since people believed that she shared in his magic and that medicines received from her hands had a special healing power that could even help them understand the political lessons (Martens, *Abo* 99). At the same time, it is clear that Mulele did not include her in decision-making. The text is filled with moments when she accidentally overhears something, for example: "From snippets of conversation, Abo has learned the Mulele wants to create a revolutionary party" (202). Although Mulele espouses equality not only between men and women but also between spouses (132), their relationship exhibits a substantial degree of continuity with Abo's experiences before the maquis.

Abo's Life Before the Maquis: "The Misfortune of Being Born a Woman"

Like Blouin, who considered herself handicapped for having been born a woman, from an early age Abo laments the fate of the women she sees around her. Although she was just eighteen when she was tricked by her family members into coming to the maquis, she was not inexperienced.

At the age of fourteen she had earned her assistant midwife diploma and was delivering babies unaided. She was also married to a jealous, violent man who beat her regularly. Her description of the day she was married to Gaspar Mumputu (September 14, 1959) is reminiscent of the experience of Pauline Lumumba, who watched her own wedding ceremony from across the road: "Abo has the impression, despite all the dances and songs of the association of young mothers, that she is present at a transaction that has nothing to do with her at all" (Martens, *Abo* 48).

The description of her wedding night is chilling. Her condemnation of the education she received from the nuns is paralleled by a critique of the practice of marrying off young girls too early. She is fourteen years old ("still almost a child") and has been taught that men are impure and debauched beings and that she has to shun the "temptations of the flesh." Without any further preparations, she enters into the marriage bed.

> The wedding night lasts an eternity of physical aggression, nails dug into flesh, cries, screams, tears and terror but mostly blood, blood staining the sheets, blood injecting the eyes and, in the fever and delirium, torrents of blood carrying away a broken dream. (Martens, *Abo* 48)

Her painful initiation into womanhood was immediately followed by beatings inflicted by her jealous husband. "Not a day passes without her husband hitting her in the face, not a day passes without tears" (49). When he beat her so badly that she had to be hospitalized and remained unconscious for three days, her uncle resisted the court's severe sentence and pleaded for leniency for her husband.

Abo, whose mother died shortly after she was born, had learned as a child that domestic violence was a part of life. Her adoptive father beat her adoptive mother "with a large stick until she [fell] to the ground, her arm broken" (Martens, *Abo* 19). Although the punishment meted out by these men did not fall within the norms of "the violence that his status as legitimate spouse authorizes" (Martens, *Mulele* 239), justice for women was in short supply. When Abo met Rémy Makoloni and contemplated running away with a man she loved, her husband took them to court. Rémy paid a fine and was released while Abo spent a month in prison. When she is propositioned in prison, she concludes: "Lo and behold, I have become a plaything" (Martens, *Abo* 62).

Around the time of her incarceration, when she was about to turn seventeen, she reflects on what it means to be a woman, specifically a "black woman in a traditional setting," and concludes: "Labor and suffering are imposed on her just as naturally as obedience to the decisions made by

uncles, nephews and husbands" (Martens, *Abo* 60–61). Looking back on these experiences over twenty years later, she places the beginnings of her insights into gender relations at this moment in her life. Just when she was becoming conscious of oppression and beginning to imagine a different future for herself, she was taken to the maquis.

In the Maquis: The Limits of the Political Lessons

As Abo retells the story, when she arrives in the maquis she is so intimidated by Mulele's purported magical powers that she can hardly say a word. Within a month of her arrival Mulele declares: "You will stay with me in the forest. You will be my wife" (Martens, *Abo* 73).[21] She gradually overcomes her fear of her husband: "When Mulele speaks to her, she dares to utter a response. She fetches water for him" (73). She settles into the role of partisan and the leader's wife and embraces the revolution. Nevertheless, she already notes the discrepancy between the leaders' words and their actions. When her dowry is paid she was still intending to marry Rémy, but nobody consulted her: "She has already learned a few political lessons on the equality of men and women, on her right to choose a husband and to learn a trade like a man. But the meaning of all these revelations has not yet sunk in" (76). Abo's expanding political awareness of her situation as a woman, as a "woman-conscious self" (Boyce Davies 123), is dramatized throughout the book.

Despite the rhetoric lauding the equality between husbands and wives, women have little say. Her first major disappointment in the maquis comes at the end of December 1964, when Mulele announces "a few new arrangements in his private life." In a fine example of the sexual contract, Mulele honors his fraternal relationship with the other partisans while maintaining his patriarchal privileges over his wife: "—I am taking Monique as my second wife, he announces laconically. I speak for all to hear, because I do not like doing things secretively" (Martens, *Abo* 131). This is news to Abo. "Abo had not been asked her opinion when Mulele married her. Her husband did not ask her opinion either, now that he was taking a second wife" (131). The rhetoric of equality in the maquis specified that as a woman she had the right to choose her own husband. She had been in love with Rémy, but her brothers and Mulele had prevented her from pursuing that relationship by bringing her to the maquis. Under the customary rules governing polygamy, the first wife had the right to choose her husband's second wife. The rights she could expect to exert in either of these contexts are being discounted. Abo is filled with impotent rage. "She loves her husband. But from now on, she also belongs to the revolution. She cannot leave her husband without severing her ties to the maquis" (131).

The passage that follows is a poetic evocation of Abo's discovery of a whole new definition and experience of family where danger and nurturing coincide:

> She has become accustomed to the life of danger. The silence of the bush to her seems full of menace; gun shots, on the other hand, make her live to the rhythm of the revolution. Far away from her family, she has found a bigger family: all the girls of the maquis, all the partisans are her sisters and brothers. The forest of the savanna is her house. The village women are her mamas who feed her. (131)

Note that here the "filles" "girls" are distinguished from the "partisans." It is questionable whether this new definition of family would be used by and for a male partisan. Significantly, this text proposes a radical redefinition of family that excludes any reference to a husband and breaks with blood and kin in favor of shared ideology. In the camp, her love for her husband and her commitment to the cause became inseparable, and she came to see that her personal relationship was embedded in a wider circle of support and comradeship. To some degree, indeed, that compensated for her husband's disregard of her in marrying Monique. It seems possible that the maquis modeled itself on extended family ties at the same time that it broke old group allegiances to make ideology and struggle primary.

In Abo's account, unlike Blouin's, her sense of belonging involves close ties to other women as well as to male leaders. This realization, combined with the training she had received in radical doctrine, leads her to draw her own, even more revolutionary, conclusions. Inventing her own political lesson, she concludes that "despite the finest speeches, a man still remains a man." She questions the double standard: "A woman cannot have several husbands, otherwise she is no longer respected, she is no longer a normal woman." She concludes that "it will take a long time before the men properly assimilate their own lessons" (Martens, *Abo* 132). Abo's discourse places the extraordinary maquis experience and the hopes it raised in the context of the broader society, with its normative expectations and structures of male privilege.

The painful moment of Mulele's betrayal is followed by a period of calm on the family front; for example, Abo and Ilo choosing Ilo's son's name together. In January 1967, an extremely difficult period for the partisans, Mulele takes a third wife in an even more startling manner. During a rare evening of dancing, Mulele disappears with Bernadette Kimbadi who, upon her return, bursts into tears as soon

as she approaches Abo. Mulele makes himself scarce. All three women are upset. The next morning, Léonie prepares his water, soap, and toothbrush as she always does. She returns to find them untouched because the "supreme commander" has decided that Bernadette, "the newly chosen one," now has to attend to this morning ritual. "For a few days, Léonie and Monique pout, give dark looks, and don't say a word to their polygamous master" (Martens, *Abo* 204). Here irony—the supreme commander, the chosen one, their polygamous master—expresses Abo's disenchantment and creates distance to mask or ease the pain. Mulele felt a certain amount of discomfort with his own actions. Although Lumumba maintained relationships with more than one woman at a time, it is difficult to imagine him accepting official polygamy; he opted for serial monogamy and unofficial polygyny or adultery. Pauline Opango would not have found herself in the position of senior wife. It seems likely that Lumumba saw repudiation as the only possibility if he wanted to marry Masuba.

In addition to these betrayals, Mulele raises his hand to his wife. Instead of being submissive, as she had been in her earlier life, she fights back. She has been emboldened not only by the political lessons but by her experiences in the maquis.

Women Fight Back

Q: How does one situate the rights of women in the context of a common cause?

A: It is in the maquis that the women gained awareness, thanks to the political and ideological lessons. (Abo, June 2009)

The solidarity among women in the maquis was not simply the sort of friendship and mutual support that sometimes existed among co-wives in the village, but was forged by facing hardship and danger on a daily basis. In Mulele's household an unspoken but powerful bond unites Léonie, Monique, and Bernadette: "The three women are bound by a strange friendship, cemented each night by a haunting thought: maybe tomorrow one of us will perish in enemy fire" (Martens, *Abo* 204–5). When Mulele tries to hit his first wife, he is "assailed" by the two other women who grab him by the arms and around the waist. Mulele jokes that these women could kill him.

The extremely stressful circumstances of the unraveling of the maquis led Mulele to squabble with his wife over anything and everything. At this point in the text, Abo offers her most direct analysis of the process

of growing awareness and empowerment she experienced in the maquis. She outlines the difficulty everyone had in actually believing the lessons that they kept repeating:

> At least, that was the case until the revolution came, until the girls attended the political lessons to learn, with great difficulty, after multiple repetitions since the message seemed so strange if not unbelievable, that men and women are equal. The girls didn't believe it. The political instructors endlessly repeated their lesson. They had as hard a time convincing themselves as they did in getting the girls to accept the idea. (219)

Having presented the general situation, Abo moves to the particular and presents her own case in which experience is pitted against revolutionary ideology and the transformation wrought by living in the maquis.

> When she arrived in the maquis, Abo listened without understanding. Her life experience told her: men, fathers, uncles, brothers, husbands, dispose of the life and the future of the woman. A man pays the dowry behind your back and your fate is sealed. At eighteen, custom and the Christian religion together had instilled these truths in her. (219)

If at first the political lessons made no sense, five years of revolution have hardened her ("l'ont trempée") (219).

It is the contradiction between women's lived experiences and their socially and culturally constructed position that propels them to political consciousness. Those experiences of oppression and restriction, which in Abo's case came from indigenous systems of kinship and marriage, Christian missions' socialization, and the patriarchal power that men exercised in the maquis, were called into question by her learning an ideology of equality that was reinforced by actions that were, for her and other women, unprecedented in scope. Women's discovery of their own capacities is as important as their overcoming men's opposition. Although Abo does not use the word patriarchy, she offers a very eloquent description of patriarchal power when she enumerates the men who have control over a woman's life. Abo is able to overcome both traditional and Christian patriarchal doctrine not only because of her exposure to new ideas but also because five years of lived experience have given her confidence in her own strength and capabilities.

Now, tempered like steel, she asks: "And after all these battles, does Mulele . . . truly believe that he can still beat his wife?" (219–20). He hits her on the head. "Abo grips his throat with her powerful hands." A

drama ensues in which a local chief intervenes and makes Mulele pay a fine. Mulele's only excuse: "It's my wife, she's sulking" (220).

Although many women must have developed "political lessons" of their own, the women did not act together in opposition to men. When they did act collectively, it was to demand that they be allowed to fulfill all the roles they had been prepared for so as to contribute most effectively to the revolution. Restricting women's activities does not serve their common cause, they argued. When they were excluded from an attack in June 1964, militarily trained women question the decision. "In the afternoon, a few girls had asked . . . to accompany the expedition. —Otherwise, why were we given twelve caliber guns?" (Martens, *Abo* 114).

Although in the book Abo offers few concrete examples of women initiating change or making demands, in the interview conducted in June 2009, she offers an unequivocal response to the question.

> Q: Were all the changes in the women's behavior initiated by the men?
>
> A: Not at all, we worked together, despite the weight of culture that required that women not speak or take initiative in the presence of men.

In the book Abo explains that "little by little, the young girls of the maquis continue to perfect their education, determined to attain equality with the men" (Martens, *Abo* 130).

The songs of the maquis express the change in how others see women and how women view themselves. Earlier it was believed that women weren't strong. The experience of struggle revealed to all that "women too are strong." (Martens, *Mulele* 156). Other statements endorse women's growing sense of their own capacities. A young female partisan asserts her commitment to the revolution and the future society that it will forge: "The women . . . are full-fledged militants, with nothing distinguishing them from the men. We foresaw that after the victory of our revolution, women would work alongside men in the factories, in the administration and in the army" (Martens, *Mulele* 234). The conditional in this phrase announces that the progressive ideas of the maquis might not survive the defeat of the revolution.

Studies of the status of women under Mobutu suggest that progress was slow and in many instances women suffered setbacks. But we may ask whether the transformations wrought by rebellion continued to mark individual women's post-maquis lives. For Abo, they certainly did. She contends that all those who had effectively internalized the lessons of the

maquis could never return to the subordination and marginalization that had confined them in the past.

After the Maquis: Redefining Family

Abo alone remained with Mulele after he had decided that the only option was to return to Brazzaville in order to meet up with Lumumbists there and to start all over again. After the harrowing months she and Mulele spent on the river on their way to Brazzaville, the rendition of Mulele to Mobutu's people, the incarceration and release of Abo and other women related to Mulele and Bengila, and Mulele's brutal death, Abo has to face the future alone. Not only does she have to resign herself to the fact that they have lost the struggle and she has lost her husband, she also receives a warning that she is about to be arrested. At the family council, her brother does not want to let her leave: "We have no more women in the family" (Martens, *Abo* 245). Mulele's sister Thérèse wants her to stay with the family in Brazzaville. Abo objects: "The family? Those who had not been in the maquis cannot understand" (245). Her new family is that of the revolutionaries. She continues to believe what Pierre had said, that after the defeat there would be a new, stronger struggle.

This is a decisive moment in the text. Abo is now removed from the extraordinary circumstances of the maquis, and the normative pressure of life as it was before comes to bear on her. It is also an important turning point because, for the very first time in the text, we hear Abo speak up for herself: "I have to go and find the family of revolutionaries. In Brazza" (245). From this point in the text the third-person narrative is interspersed with phrases in the first person. It seems clear that Martens dramatizes her assuming her own voice since Mulele is no longer alive: now she will have to fight for herself at the same time that she becomes a spokesperson for Mulele. When Thérèse points out that custom requires a widow to return to her village, Abo offers a scathing description of the self-abnegating behavior and performance of grief expected of a widow (Martens, *Abo* 246). Besides, the soldiers would certainly find her in the village. Her newfound voice comes through loud and strong. She will not go to the village: "There is no longer anyone to wait for me there. . . . Must go to Brazza. There I will meet up with men in order to continue the fight" (246). As she crosses the river to Brazzaville, she takes with her a single photo, sewn into the lining of her bag: "One day, all the Congo's children will know the true story of this man" (246). It is at the very moment she makes her voice heard that she commits to telling Mulele's story. But the story

she tells is also her own and that of the women who were in the maquis with her.

Abo's perspective is especially important because accounts of women's experiences in the maquis are so limited and misconceptions about gender relations in the struggle are so common. Despite ample evidence to the contrary, many people even in Kikwit resist the idea that women were combatants and insist on their roles as messengers, informants, cooks, and preparers of special "salts" that would help men maintain discipline and keep them from sleeping with women. When a woman like Monique Ilo tells her story, she emphasizes the fact that she commanded troops and learned how to manipulate arms. But in her discourse there is no critique of the lack of transformation in marital and sexual relations despite the rhetoric of equality. Indeed, while many assume that gender relations were unaffected by the exigencies of the struggle, others deny that inequalities persisted in the maquis. In response to my question, Marc Katshunga stated bluntly that there had never been any form of gender discrimination, end of story. There is little discussion of whether or how the maquis experience influenced women's lives after the rebellion. Another man responded to my questions about possible changes brought about by the maquis experience by saying that women in this region are still "difficult to bring into line," but he attributed their rebelliousness to the good schooling girls received from the religious rather than to the uprising (Mbuluku).[22] Any attempt to highlight women's experiences is complicated by the fact that the history of the rebellion itself remains contentious.

Bearing Witness

Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch has asked whether Abo was in fact a revolutionary woman or simply a tool of the revolution (184). This question arises from the circumstances under which Abo was brought to the maquis at the age of eighteen and does not take enough account of what she learned there and who she remains today. Abo's testimony is a form of political action that repeats in retrospect her position as a revolutionary woman alongside her leader-husband. She is the epitome of a witness who enables the rebellion's history and its revolutionary message to live on after death and defeat.

Although Abo's entire book bears witness to the Kwilu insurrection led by Mulele, her active engagement with how the past is memorialized is most forcefully expressed in the way she tackles the canonization of a Congolese nun during Pope John Paul the Second's visit to Kinshasa in 1985. Marie-Clémentine Nengapeta was inducted

in 2005, along with two other women, into the Democratic Republic of the Congo's Pantheon of National History.[23] A newspaper article presents the official story: "In 1964, she chose death at the point of a bayonet rather than be raped by followers of Pierre Mulele, a rebel leader active during the 1960s" (Kambale). Compare this account with Abo's interpretation of Nengapeta's sainthood in her epilogue, well ahead of her consecration in the pantheon of heroes. It is presented as part of a series of violent events, including the massacre of one hundred students at Lovanium University in 1969, the killing associated with the Shaba rebellions, and the brutal repression of students in Lubumbashi in 1990. According to Abo, Kinshasa was "in the grip of mystical effervescence" when, in "a skillfully staged duet," Mobutu and the pope beatified Anuarité in order to make of her "a symbol of the viciousness of the rebels." Abo tells her two daughters that the "artificial cult of Anuarité is nothing but a drug administered to the Congolese people so that they forget their true heroes" and the "tens of thousands of villagers killed by white mercenaries pretending to defend the Christian West" (Martens, *Abo* 248). Although the church has not overtly politicized Anuarité's sainthood, it shows how women and their bodies are used in the discourse of nationalism. Had Nengapeta resisted rape by government soldiers, what would her act have signified and to whom would it matter?[24] Countering the version of events that attributes all the violence to the rebels, a section in Abo's text offers a litany of atrocities—"acts of horrible terror"—committed in the name of "pacification" (Martens, *Abo* 193). "What terror means, on the part of those who will be described as the peacemakers in the history books, their history, the only one set down on paper, the partisans learn in snippets and from mouths hesitant to speak" (193).

Although Mulele is still controversial, he has recently received official recognition. In 2003 the newspaper *Le Potentiel* published a special edition devoted to Pierre Mulele; the introductory article was titled "Duty of Remembrance." In 2005 the governor of the city of Kinshasa signed a decree renaming Avenue de la Libération—the very road that in 1968 led Mulele to Camp Kokolo where he was killed—Avenue Pierre Mulele. The text evokes "the historic struggle" led by Mulele and "the martyrdom suffered by this combatant of the revolution for the safeguarding of independence and sovereignty." Abdoulaye Yerodia, who presided over the ceremony, was overcome by emotion: "There are not many people for whom it does something to hear the name of Pierre Mulele. This is not the case for those of us who followed him in his struggle . . . " ("Pierre Mulele").[25]

Abo's Voice

Abo played a major role in bringing about this recognition. While she was still in exile in Brazzaville, in addition to the material that Martens included in the book, she produced two texts, one commemorating the anniversary of Mulele's death ("3 octobre"). In "Un témoignage risqué" "A risky testimony," she objects to all the widows of Mobutism being lumped together. Insisting that all political murders do not mean the same thing and that we must distinguish between true opponents of a regime and those who are vying for power within the same political class, she also makes a distinction between her roles as partisan and as wife: "When I speak of MULELE, I speak more of a companion in struggle than of a spouse. He lived for nothing but the Congo." In this way she positions herself as a citizen in her own right and an outspoken critic of imperialism and capitalism.

Although in the interview Abo repeatedly states "I am the one speaking" and declares that there are no ideological differences between her and Martens, her story is told in the third person, so the subject's first-person testimony is blurred by a third-person narrative perspective. If Abo's words come through in Martens's text, it is most likely in the form of free indirect speech. Ironically, we hear Abo's voice more directly when Martens quotes her in his book on Mulele. A comparison of the depiction of the same event in the two texts illustrates this difference, which arises only from the point of view, since both versions were based on the same interview material. When the partisans learn of Che Guevara's presence in the East, they seek to join up with him. Abo's text:

> Mulele had learned in March 1966 [that] Che Guevara, the great Che himself . . . was approaching Dekese, in the north of the Kwilu . . . ! Mulele had dreamed since that time of joining forces with the revolutionaries of the East. (Martens, *Abo* 202)

Compare Martens's text:

> Why did Mulele decide to withdraw to the north of the Kwilu province? Léonie Abo explains: "Our intention was to go down toward Mangai. We had received information . . . We had heard that . . . " (Martens, *Mulele* 293)

The "we" in this text stands in striking contrast to the "Mulele" in *Abo*. Does Abo herself foreground Mulele's presence in the book? Mulele is so central to Abo's becoming that her self is constituted in relation to him, his ideology, his actions. Perhaps the telling of her own story is enabled by the deflection of focus from the particulars of her own experience to

the presence of Mulele. Nonetheless, Abo is a subject with her own angle of vision.[26]

In Abo's testimony for the twenty-third anniversary of Mulele's death, she offers a brief overview of Mulele's actions. Her discourse clearly situates her politics:

> the enemies of the masses definitively seize power . . . the Conclave of Lovanium . . . consecrates the triumph of the bourgeoisie . . . MULELE decides to resort to popular insurrection to restore legality . . . the insurrectionary action of MULELE ends up being crushed in a bloodbath perpetrated by mercenaries graciously offered to the traitor MOBUTU by the international imperialists. ("3 octobre")[27]

This text confirms the ideological congruence between Abo's voice and Martens's rendition of it.

Léonie Abo Today: The Struggle Continues

In Brazzaville, Abo worked as a nurse in a large hospital. She reports that at one point there were approximately 400 partisans living in Brazzaville

Figure 4.2 Léonie Abo in the 1990s (Courtesy of Ludo Martens and Éditions EPO).

and they met regularly to debate developments in the country, renamed Zaire in the 1970s. During this period she attended conferences and gave interviews in order to educate people about Mulele. Abo stayed with Andrée Blouin in Paris while attending a conference organized by Herbert Weiss. She returned from exile in 1996, after the arrival of Laurent Désiré Kabila.

> I got to work right away. My first undertakings were to bring together the partisans who were still alive in order to help them organize. To do this, I created a political party l'Union des Patriotes Nationalistes Congolais, the acronym is UPNAC. The Party attends to the education of young people, women, in short all the popular masses. (June 2009)

She helped establish women's organizations to aid undernourished children and has been the honorary president and an active member of l'Union des Femmes Congolaises pour le Développement, a nonprofit organization. Along with a handful of sympathizers, she manages a farm in the Maluku area about 100 miles outside of Kinshasa; their produce goes to the impoverished quarters of the city. She hopes to inspire other farmers and young people to devote their efforts to building up the country. Under Laurent Kabila, she worked on rural reconstruction in Abdoulaye Yerodia's cabinet. For the 2006 elections, she was a candidate for UPNAC in the Kikwit region. Tony Busselen reports:

> For her electoral campaign Léonie returned to Kikwit for the first time. It was a truly triumphant journey. At her arrival hundreds of people were waiting for her. In the small town of Kimbinga hundreds of people came pouring in. And suddenly the Internationale could be heard…in Kikongo, the local language. During the following days thousands of people attended her meetings.

All these details of her recent life allow us to recognize the full impact of the maquis experience on Abo and her thinking and give credence to Martens's statement at the beginning of the epilogue that Abo has not left the maquis, that she continues to play her role in the struggle. Mulopo says of Madame Abo: "She has remained true to herself. She has kept her maquis reflexes and her ideology."

Abo, by insisting on her role as Mulele's partner in struggle, validates her own contribution to decolonizing the country while shedding the dependence associated with the role of wife. In the maquis, Mulele had said to his wives, that when he was dead, one of them could say all there is to say about his life in the maquis (Martens, *Abo* 204). In taking up this challenge, Abo made her own voice heard: "Women are standing

tall, they have shouldered more than their share of the burden in this revolution" (219).

Abo challenges the official versions of historical events, "their history, the only one committed to paper" (Martens, *Abo* 193), and pays homage to the figure of Mulele. The writers we examine in the next three chapters undertook a similar project for Lumumba's story. While Abo herself made gender a salient feature of her story, it is my analysis that will foreground Lumumba's masculinity and the feminine identities concomitant to its construction in the works of Aimé Césaire and Raoul Peck. As the playwright and filmmaker draw on historical materials that already register the gendered character of decolonization, do they reinscribe the masculinist bias of the accounts, or do they manage to subvert them?

CHAPTER 5

CÉSAIRE'S LUMUMBA: A SYMBOL OF SEXUAL AND POLITICAL PROWESS

> PAULINE
> I haven't got the name of a country or a river, I've got the name of a woman: Pauline. That's all I have to say.
>
> LUMUMBA
> It can't be helped. In my heart I have always called you Pauline Congo (87)

In this exchange from Aimé Césaire's *A Season in the Congo*, Lumumba actualizes the tendency in nationalist discourse to turn women into symbols of the country. What is striking is that the dialogue features a moment of resistance on the part of Pauline. Critics tend to present Pauline the wife as clinging to the personal or emphasize her materiality and oppose her stance to Lumumba the hero's quest and transcendent spirituality. In a work that presents its protagonist as a "man-symbol" (Houyoux 54), Pauline's refusal prompts us to take a closer look at how the process of turning characters into symbols of struggle and of country and continent is gendered. Keeping this fundamental question in mind, in this chapter I explore Césaire's stated intentions for the play, the gender dynamics associated with the rehabilitating gesture of Negritude, including a feminist analysis of the Mother Africa trope, and women's participation in the mimetic as well as lyrical and mythopoetic registers of the play. I pay special attention at the end of the chapter to the character of Pauline Lumumba, who is figured as the keeper of Lumumba's legacy.

"A Mere Episode of Folklore"?

Césaire wrote his text a few short years after Congolese independence while the events were still fresh in people's minds and African

decolonization was still topical. *Une Saison au Congo* is one of a triptych of Césaire plays (along with *La Tragédie du Roi Christophe* and *Une Tempête*) that focus on the difficulties of decolonization. It was completed in 1966, shortly before Mobutu declared Lumumba a national hero, and was first staged in Paris in October 1967 (Harris 125). It was directed by Jean-Marie Serreau, with whom Césaire worked closely in making revisions. Three versions were published: 1966, which was never staged; 1967; and 1973, considered the definitive version.[1] The action of *A Season* follows Lumumba from the eve of independence (1959), through the trying postindependence months to his assassination (1961), and then, in the final version, jumps ahead to his lionization by Mobutu (1966).

Césaire's most recent publications before *A Season* were *Toussaint Louverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1960), a well-researched historical account of the French revolution in Haiti that centered on the tragic leader of the world's first black-led anticolonial and antislavery rebellion, and *La Tragédie du roi Christophe* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1963, but performed for the first time in Paris in 1965), which centered on the tragicomic ruler who succeeded Dessalines in the north of Haiti. Césaire's intention to focus on the phenomenon of decolonization rather than on the individual is evident in the title, *A Season in the Congo*, which can be contrasted both with the titles of his works on Haiti and with those of Peck's films, both of which feature the hero's name: *Lumumba: Death of a Prophet* (1991) and *Lumumba* (2000).

The initial text was modified in part in response to staging demands and Césaire's ongoing dialogue with Serreau and in part in response to new developments in the Congo, notably Mobutu's consolidation of power. As time passed, Césaire realized that Mobutu was not just "a young colonel" but "a truly political creature" (Dunn 10). The original impetus for the play came from the "Congo crisis"—independence shortly followed by mutiny, rebellions, and secession—he observed from France. He says that "the blacks were quite traumatized by this story, because they did not understand and the whites were sniggering: 'Look at this savagery, the cannibalism and this magic,' etc., etc. During this whole period, this whole episode of the decolonization of the Congo, all the mayhem in the Congo greatly served racist propaganda" (6). Western commentators did not present the "crisis" in historical or political terms, yet it remained for them so mired in its African specificity that it could not be read as a universal story of power. *A Season in the Congo* served as a riposte to the gleeful dissemination of stereotypical images of Africans who were reverting to their primal savagery once the Europeans no longer held the reins. In the last scene of the play, Césaire has a banker

declare: "For my part, I see no ground for political speculation. A mere episode of folklore, as it were, an outcropping of that Bantu mentality which periodically, even in the best of them, bursts through the frail varnish of civilization" (101). Casting the situation in these terms allows the Westerners to abdicate any responsibility for the "crisis": "In any case, and this is my main point, you've seen for yourselves that we had nothing to do with it. Nothing whatever" (101–2).

Césaire repeatedly stated that his intention in writing the play was to make people understand ("faire comprendre") the events in the Congo: "I wanted to show the truth, to help people understand the Congolese drama which is in fact a political drama, a human drama. And that the pain, suffering and barbarity that this tragedy entails are not at all linked to Congolese barbarity" (Dunn 6). He also wanted to show the truth behind "all the lies that had been written about Lumumba" (6). Suzanne Brichaux Houyoux's annotated version of the play shows that the play is deeply rooted in documentation. Countering misconceptions and prejudices about events in the Congo is part of the larger project of the Negritude movement: to valorize Blackness and African cultural values, to rehabilitate the image of black Africans, among them Lumumba who, as one of the main players of the Congolese drama, was receiving widespread attention in the international press at the time.

Despite Césaire's desire to show the truth of the situation, the play mixes historical facts with creative interpretation. While characters like Lumumba, Hammarskjöld, and Pauline keep their names, other characters' names are transposed; for example, Mobutu becomes Mokutu. Although the play is considered the least poetic of Césaire's theatrical works, it includes lyrical passages and a Sanza Player (mbira player) whose function can be compared to the Greek chorus and at one point a Shakespearian fool. Representing the common sense of the people according to Césaire, his interventions, which draw heavily on African proverbs and riddles, comment on or foreshadow developments in the play. The lyrical passages break with the largely mimetic mode of the play—the imitative representation of the Congo in the throes of decolonization—and the characters enter into ritual spaces that stand outside of time and place. In addition to these different registers, Césaire presents his prophet/martyr/hero protagonist as a symbol representing the Congo as well as the continent of Africa trying to throw off the yoke of colonialism.

Sony Labou Tansi succinctly summarizes the imaginary that informs this purpose: "the Cesairian drama . . . is that of man set on regaining verticality" and "the leaven that keeps the Cesairian hero upright remains the major relationship that the latter fosters with dignity and the open hatred he feels for kneeling" (266). It is this construction of the subject of

Negritude as masculine (in its metaphorical relationship with verticality) that has led critics to accuse Césaire of misogyny, charges against which he has attempted to defend himself.[2]

Of Masculine and Feminine

When dealing with gender in Césaire's poetry, critics focus on the coding of objects and elements as masculine and feminine and point out that the feminine components are regularly valued negatively or constitute the second term in the hierarchy of binary oppositions. This set of gendered symbols is drawn from the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, as well as Dogon cosmogony and Caribbean mythology.[3]

In her extensive study *Mythologie du féminin dans l'œuvre poétique d'Aimé Césaire*, Halphen-Bessard shows that in Césaire's imaginary the same element, for example, a tree, can be both masculine and feminine or androgynous. Yet, in the examples she presents—although she does not comment on the fact—the feminine is inevitably the negative or inferior term. For example: "The great feminine archetypes are present: Earth, Sea, Ship, City. But the poet has inflected them. The earth in the feminine, passive, is that of the colonized country, but it is masculine when the poet evokes negritude and the future, or even androgynous when it has to do with the mythical African earth" (Halphen-Bessard 337–38). When Césaire was confronted in an interview with the fact that water, a feminine element, is always negative in his work, he hesitated and said that one must avoid being too systematic. He fails to distinguish real women from conventions associated with works of literature and the gendering of elements of nature. He points to the conventions of the epic: "Yes, there is unquestionably an epic dimension to this poetry. . . . There is also a certain Nietzschism. It is therefore self-evident that if you privilege the hero, you generally privilege masculinity" (Halphen-Bessard 400). Arguing first that in the Caribbean context earth, as well as water, can be feminine, he then evokes actual women as opposed to generic conventions. If it is true that the particularities of the Caribbean context influence his work, do they counter the Western mythical traditions that inform his imaginary? Whether both earth and water can be seen as feminine seems to be beside the point. If women do not and cannot become heroes, the conventions will trump whatever roles women may or may not play. When Césaire praises Caribbean women as founders of lineages, he concludes that a woman who is a "fondatrice" "founder" is "une femme qui est, si je puis dire, un grand homme" "a woman who is, so to speak, a great man" (Halphen-Bessard 401). We recall Andrée Blouin's frustration with this very logic in the final chapter of her autobiography. Whatever he may

say about real women, once they enter into the realm of Césaire's imaginary in which elements are gendered, the weight of the traditions that inform his work tends to outweigh his conceptions of the real women who people his world.

Lest we arrive at a foregone conclusion about the gender and poetic politics in *A Season*, let us take note of Hedy Kalikoff's reading of *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*. She recognizes that while "negritude may be many things to many people, it has surely always been male, from the nearly exclusive maleness of its participants to the supposedly phallic logic of its symbolic order" (502). But she argues that in *Cahier* Césaire upsets this binary order and that this is crucial to the poem's revolutionary power (Kalikoff 504).[4] Can the same be said for *A Season in the Congo?* In the play, the representation of women's social and political identities stands alongside the lyrical passages in which masculine and feminine elements take on highly symbolic meanings.

Michael Hausser argues that "The woman has never, starting with *Cahier*..., played [a] major role in Césaire's poetry...She remains rare and when she shows herself or rather when we catch glimpses of her, she is not herself but rather serves for comparison or as symbol" (Halphen-Bessard 12). All the female characters in *A Season* play minor roles. With the significant exception of Pauline, they tend to represent the milieu—Congo at the time of independence—rather than to be crucial to the action. Figuring almost as types, the female characters include the bar owner Mama Makosi, one of the independent women to be found in Congolese cities, and the "filles" "girls" or "femmes libres" "free women" who frequent her bar; Hélène Bijou, a woman in Lumumba's entourage whom we know nothing about except that she is beautiful and belongs to the Lulua ethnic group; and a Speakerine who makes a brief appearance and whose character may be an allusion to Andrée Blouin since she gives talks on African Moral Rearmament. Mama Makosi does not have a personal name: "Mokonzi" means "chief," and Césaire glosses her name as "a strong woman." Sometimes she is referred to as "la Mama Makosi" "the Mama Makosi," emphasizing her totemic status. The "filles" remain a nameless collective. Hélène Bijou has no family name; instead, the allusion to jewels conjures up exotic enchantment. The Speakerine is identified only by her job as announcer.[5]

Given that Césaire tends to have female characters symbolize something other than themselves and given that the "Mother Africa" trope is largely definitive of Negritude poetry, how do his female characters fare in *A Season* and how do masculine and feminine identities interact in the moment of decolonization depicted in the play?

Negritude and Mother Africa

Critics of Negritude have long focused on idealized and unrealistic representations of Africa and Africans. Feminist critics such as Florence Stratton explain that in Negritude poetry the Mother Africa trope "functions both formally and thematically to valorize African culture. It also operates to refute colonial representations of Africa. . . . a negative image of Africa as savage, [infertile] and treacherous is replaced by a positive one: an image of Africa as warm and sensuous, fruitful and nurturing" (Stratton 40). Martin Munro explains that for Césaire Africa is first of all a mythical space. "At times, the myth functions as a psychological comfort for the ruptured Antillean self, as the mother to which the traumatised subject seeks to return to exorcise the pain of separation" (58). When in *La Tragedie du roi Christophe*, for example, the Haitian revolutionary "seeks a reprieve from the chaos of his situation by returning to a reassuring mother Africa, where all lacunae and uncertainties cease to exist," he asks Africa to carry him like an old child, to undress him, wash him (58).[6] When this image of Africa is projected onto African women, it offers "a mythic concept of supreme motherhood" and ignores "the limited status of the woman who is required to do her husband's bidding in her day-to-day life" (Lloyd Brown qtd. in Stratton 28).

Omofolabo Ajayi, in "Negritude, Feminism, and the quest for identity," explores the dynamic by looking at the relational construction of male and female identities. She asks: "If in the realm of symbolism the woman becomes Mother Africa, what then is the man?" (39). She argues that if the woman is mother, the man is her child, which "contradicts the implicit gender hierarchy of Negritude and its patriarchal construct" (39). "The confusion with the symbolic Mother Africa, the violated victim of colonial imperialism, also identifies the African woman as weak and helpless" (39). A poem by Senghor makes her point. "A l'appel de la race de Saba," written in response to Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia in 1936, represents "the total gender construct of the African identity quest in Negritude literary aesthetics: the male as the 'liberating soldier,' and the female as Mother Africa" (39). The man becomes the spokesperson for new times, with Negritude as the weapon that will be used to free the continent. In contrast, "the woman who has been marginalized from the assimilation process by the French colonial patriarchy is without the resources to free herself, but she becomes the rallying force motivating her male compatriot into action" (39). The trope elaborates a gendered theory of nationhood, with the result being: "Metaphorically [the woman] is of the highest importance, practically she is nothing" (Stratton 51, 52).

In the play, Lumumba sees his wife as "Pauline Congo," a dynamic that mirrors the Mother Africa trope. We will return to Pauline and her resistance to Lumumba's move later in this chapter. But what about Mama Makosi, whose bar has been read as a womb-like space (Bailey 198) where she offers protection to Lumumba? A brief overview of her interventions helps situate her character within the play. In these scenes Césaire also displays his familiarity with the colonial city and the characters that inhabit it.

In the first instance (Act I, scene 2), Lumumba's supporters have learned that he has been jailed and is unable to participate in the Round Table talks. One of the women in the bar suggests mourning for six months, while another recommends a strike accompanied by street demonstrations under the banners of their organizations. These ineffective proposals are met with scorn on the part of Mama Makosi: "Baloney" (18). She emphasizes the need to work, a notion that becomes strongly associated with Lumumba later, when he tells the members of his parliament that they are slaves, "and by slaves I mean men condemned to work without rest" (27). She proposes that they collect funds to pay Lumumba's bail.[7]

Mama Makosi's second appearance (Act II, scene 1) shows her close relationship with Lumumba, now prime minister. She invites him to a "bal de levée de deuil," a *matanga* or celebration with dancing and food marking the end of a period of mourning, in one of the bars. Mokutu finds this inappropriate, but Mama Makosi asserts that "He'll always be the same Patrice for us" (44), and Lumumba thanks Mama Makosi because her bar has allowed him to size up "the bitter truth of our Congo" (45). This exchange occurs after the Sanza Player, disguised as a madman, has lamented the departure of the whites and concluded that "black men are wicked" (45). While the bar can be seen as representing all the ills of Congolese society, including the alienation of the colonized subject, Lumumba's presence there connotes closeness to the people. Mokutu—whom the scenic indications ironically present as having an "allure de maquereau" (16), resembling a pimp—says that if Lumumba keeps frequenting the bars, he will add fuel to the fire of those who see in the Congolese a bunch of "sex-crazed apes" (43) or the Congo as "un grand bordel" "one big brothel" (52). Manheim's rendition is less explicit. Avoiding the word "brothel" he offers: "Hasn't the Congo got a bad enough reputation as it is?" (43). Lumumba, however, values the bar positively. While he sees it as a reflection of the state of the country, he also sees in this lively, sexually charged environment the possibility of germination, of new life: "this dive with its shady mixed fauna is a faithful reflection of our Congo today. . . . But here and there you see something fresh and new sprouting through the compost. And that's ground

for encouragement" (44). Lumumba does not try to distance himself from this environment. He contextualizes the situation of the Congo historically, for his remarks are preceded by his statement that things started to disintegrate in the Congo when the Europeans came. He also compares Mokutu's dislike for the bar to white Americans' response to Harlem (43). When Lumumba next shows up in Mama Makosi's bar (Act III, scene 2), he has escaped from prison and intends to use the bar as his headquarters (83). Mama Makosi, again closely associated with the Congolese people, assures him that here he will be undisturbed: "the house is yours, and the people will protect you" (83). But the promised peace does not last. Mama Makosi announces the ominous news: "Patrice, the paratroopers! They've surrounded the house" (88).[8]

Finally (Act III, scene 8), we see Mama Makosi in the crowd witnessing the "spectacle" prepared by Mobutu on the day he declares Lumumba a national hero: "a national exercise in exorcism! The people love spectacles. We will give them one and after that, sirs, may the ghosts bugger off and leave us in peace" (Bemba 129). While others are shouting "Vive Mokutu," Mama Makosi retorts: "I say what I think. Uhuru Lumumba" (102). She is one of the positive characters who remain true to Lumumba's ideals and stage their opposition to Mobutu's illegitimate power even in the face of death. She inhabits the public space of the bar, a place closely associated with political discussion and mobilization in colonial Congo. Making this space central allows Césaire to include more female characters even though they are not representative of the vast majority of women, who at the time lived in villages rather than cities.

Mama Makosi does not fulfill unproblematically the requirements of the Mother Africa trope, which presents the woman as the pure bearer of tradition and whose domain is confined to home and hearth. But the trope has a flip side, the prostitute, who represents the degradation of the nation. Yet, despite the obvious presence of prostitution, Mama Makosi is a positive figure and does not simply represent the tarnished opposite of the virtuous Mother Africa. The "filles" do, however, sing a song that blames their mothers for sacrificing them for financial gain:

> Listen, friends,
> God gave us mothers,
> Mothers who kill us for money,
> For money and more money. (5)

They complain about older women's collaboration in the patriarchal oppression of younger women. It is very likely that Bonifacedo Mwepu's "La vie des femmes légères, dites 'libres,' au centre extra-coutumier

d'Elisabethville" (1951) served as a source for Césaire. Mwepu emphasizes how difficult it is to make a living in the urban centers (175), stresses how parents expect their daughters to contribute to their income (176), and outlines how mothers serve as go-betweens to arrange their daughters' sexual encounters with men (178–80). There is an implication in Césaire's text that money is corrosive, a colonial medium that corrupts indigenous exchanges, and perhaps also an understanding that for women in towns, who were not embedded in kinship groups, their own status was dependent on wielding authority over daughters and daughters-in-law.

Mama Makosi is not targeted by this song, however. The "Mama" part of her name is an honorific. Indeed, Mama Makosi is, in the literal sense of the word, a "femme libre," a free woman. Overseeing her bar and the younger "femmes libres" who populate it, she answers to neither husband nor father and her biological offspring, if she has any, are nowhere to be seen. She speaks her mind and is politically engaged. She is as independent and assertive as any Congolese man. Although Mama Makosi protects Lumumba, she says it is the people who will protect him. The bar is not a feminine space cut off from the masculine world of politics; it is a very mixed, political space. Gondola, who points out that for the first African political leaders the bar represented a safe haven, agrees that her role is political: "Not only does she provide Patrice Lumumba with a political platform, but she also protects him when his life is threatened, and continues to support his views even after his death" (Gondola, "Popular" 77).

For a 1989 staging of the play, Césaire's daughter Ina collaborated with the director Mehmet Ulusoy and the playwright Néjat Firuz. They introduced elements that emphasized the importance of the Mama Makosi character. The first scene was preceded by a prologue and a poem. "The prologue written by Ina Césaire announces that the play will be presented as a celebration of the memory of Patrice Lumumba by villagers; it is both recited and danced by the character of the Mama Makosi" (Houyoux 41). Although Mama Makosi can be read mythically, I argue that such a reading reduces the vitality and strength of a believable character whom Césaire himself presents in the mimetic as opposed to the lyrical or mythical register.

"Ho, Ho! He's Got What It Takes"

Foregrounding bar life has the advantage of introducing more female characters, but it comes at the cost of presenting the majority of the women in a highly sexually charged environment. While Césaire avoids the more obvious trappings of the Mother Africa trope in Mama Makosi,

the masculinity of Lumumba as subject of the nation is certainly emphasized and the women help emphasize his virility. The opening scenes are characterized by sexually suggestive banter between the Salesman, who later is revealed to be Lumumba, the "filles" of the bar, and the male customers. This exchange is the only explicit reference in the play to women's exploitation under colonization.

> SECOND WOMAN
> . . . I'm losing my *jikita*. Those Belgian waistbands are no good. Rotten cork, that's all they are. Damn Belgians, they cheat us every way they can.
>
> A MAN
> They cheat us, they exploit us; that's right, lady-o, they exploit us. Black people are just too trusting. (5)

This exchange is followed by a woman stripping, saying that from now on she is abandoning the *jikita*, the amulets worn around the waist so as to emphasize a woman's curves, to wear only the *jibula*, a pagne wrapped so as to show a woman's calves. The man says that when the women walk he can see their thighs and a lot more.[9] It is in this environment that Lumumba is shown to be working as director of sales for Polar beer while using the opportunity to do political work. The two breweries, Polar and Primus (associated with supporters of Kasavubu), got into a "war" of mutual accusations that significantly influenced sales. Tournaire and Bouteaud explain that the promoters of Primus beer had successfully tanked the sales of Polar beer by spreading a rumor that it made men impotent. According to them, Lumumba's reputation saved the day. "The director of Brasseries du Bas-Congo had a brilliant idea: he hired Patrice Lumumba as his sales director. . . . This time, the sales of Polar beer breaks all the records because everyone knows that Patrice is one of the most desired seducers" (Houyoux 44). This interpretation is not supported by Lumumba's European counterpart for Primus beer at the time; he simply praises Lumumba's tactics, which consisted of offering free beer in the bars and having other collaborators do the same thing in other bars (Halen and Riesz 92). Césaire does not try to downplay Lumumba's sexual reputation, despite the fact that the Western press would deploy stereotypical images of black hypersexuality in order to discredit him. Rather, since it resonates with the rehabilitation of black masculinity that Césaire includes in Negritude's cultural nationalism, he uses it as a parallel to Lumumba's oratorical and political prowess.

According to Tournaire and Bouteaud, Lumumba's political work benefited from the fact that women were attracted to him. They

conclude: "He obviously has assistants, often fanatical. Lumumba appeals to women. [. . .] Nothing is easier for him than to organize, in sections, young charmers" (qtd. in Houyoux 45). African commentators do not seem preoccupied with Lumumba's virility or sexual appeal. In reference to the "associations féminines," Houyoux states that Lumumba had tried to mobilize "the female masses" (55) and quotes Lumumba's speech in Brussels (February 6, 1960) in which he declared that he had launched L'Union des femmes démocratiques du Congo (*Lumumba Speaks* 151). Reducing his mobilization of women to their seduction by his sexual charisma does a disservice to both Lumumba and the women. Mama Makosi is by no means a young "charmeuse" who becomes politically involved because she is infatuated with Lumumba. Houyoux, through her heavy reliance on Tournaire and Bouteaud, emphasizes Lumumba's powerful hold on women. When Mama Makosi invites Lumumba, now prime minister, to attend a *matanga* with them, a "fille" shows her enthusiasm for the idea: "En tant que prêchante, j'ai découvert une chanson formidable, tu sais" (52). Manheim's translation makes it clear that it had no relation to adulation of Lumumba: "I'm the union song leader, and you know what? We're working up a beautiful song" (44). The word "prêchante," which is not common French, seems to draw on one of the possible meanings of "prêcher," to lead. Yet Houyoux perpetuates Tournaire and Bouteaud's take on Lumumba the seducer. Without explaining the terms, she says: "Concerning the hold that Patrice Lumumba had on women see: 'la prêchante' " (Houyoux 45). The context of the sexualized bar environment created by Césaire is reinforced by sources that highlight Lumumba's seductive charm instead of other, more plausible alternative explanations.

In his desire to valorize the *black* man, Césaire does not hesitate to play up the black *man*'s prowess, both sexual and political. A bystander heckles the Salesman/Lumumba saying: "I've heard that Polar makes a fellow impotent. Takes away your ngolo!" (2).[10] The "smooth talker" responds: "If I wanted to give you a mean answer, I'd tell you to lend me your wife or sister for a few minutes" (2). The onlookers hail his verbal talents and his virility: "Ho! Ho! Celui-là est un mâle!" "Ho, ho! He's got what it takes" (12; 2) or "He's a real man!" When he asks the girls to back up his assertions, they comply and sing a song evoking their own physical beauty: "Women smooth as mirrors . . . / Two ripe and flawless / Papayas for breasts" (2). The crowd applauds. The male gaze reigns in this environment, and the women do not object.

The imagery of the girls' song has parallels with Senghor's famous poem "Femme noire" 'Black Woman.' The naked woman's flesh is

compared to firm, ripe fruit and her skin to mother-of-pearl. (Jones 22–23). Senghor certainly did not have in mind "filles de joie" singing the praises of their own beauty. By including the song about their mothers selling them for money, Césaire makes reference to the social problems associated with colonial cities, particularly prostitution. But does this context change the meaning of the trope? The young women seem the flip side of Mother Africa, a sign of the degraded situation of the Congo. The shame that Europeans want them to feel is part and parcel of their oppression, but so is the economic situation that gives them no alternative to selling their bodily services in towns. Does putting a Senghor-like poem in their mouths suggest that they might redeem their bodies as the nation achieves independence, reclaiming dignity coupled with beauty? What is clear is that the "filles" serve to highlight Lumumba's masculinity.

A Man among Men

Lumumba's virility is also emphasized in his relationships with other men, especially Kala-Lubu (Kasavubu). In a monologue, the president expresses his resentment for people's perceptions of him vis-à-vis Lumumba: "They even dare to write: 'Kala is Lumumba's woman.' . . . 'Kala is Lumumba's wife' " (62).[11] Tournaire and Bouteaud report Lumumba as saying about Kasavubu: "I am faced with a mollusk, a woman" (Houyoux 164), and Lopez Alvarez reiterates that "Kasa-Vubu is so mild-mannered he gives the impression of softness" (Houyoux 164). Emphasizing the confluence of Lumumba's sexual and political prowess, Benimadhu sums up Césaire's Lumumba as "endowed with mythical and mythopoetic powers" (34).

The Independence Day ceremony is central to perceptions of Lumumba's oratory. The speech that Césaire puts in Lumumba's mouth reproduces Lumumba's semantic concerns (struggle, humiliation, the work needed to create a new order), but it uses poetic language and introduces African elements, such as a Kongo ceremony and local place names. Césaire valorizes precolonial Africa and uses birth metaphors to evoke national independence. As Harris says, "Rather than a speech by Lumumba, we now hear a poem by Césaire" (135). For example, Lumumba repeats the phrase "our country" a number of times during his speech and emphasizes that the country is now in the hands of its children. Césaire draws attention to the dispossession of land that is now returned to its rightful heirs, but in his version, inspired by his Negritude

poetics, an enumeration of place names is paired with the anaphoric "nôtre" "ours." He celebrates the African continent and its geography as well as the names that withstood colonial transformation:

> This sky, this river, these lands are ours.
> Ours the lake and the forest,
> Ours Karissimbi, Nyiragongo, Niamuragira,
> Mikeno, Ehu, mountains spring from the word of fire. (19)

Despite these differences between the original and Césaire's version of the speech, they share a masculinist slant. Césaire's Lumumba emphasizes the national subject as a male collectivity and marginalizes women. While women are generally praised for their reproductive potential, they are sidelined once we enter the realm of making history and creating the new national polity.

First, Césaire gives us behind-the-scenes exchanges in the hours leading up to the ceremony that emphasize certain aspects of the speeches that were delivered in Leopoldville on June 30, 1960. Basilio's (Baudouin) infantilization of the Congolese is highlighted in his exchange with Général Massens (General Janssens): "this barbarous people . . . [w]e took them in hand . . . we fed them, cared for them, educated them" (18). For his part, Massens wants Basilio to ensure that the Congolese are made to feel "that you have given them this freedom [. . .] and that they haven't conquered it," that it's a "gift," not a "right" (26; 18). Lumumba tries to refute this notion with his repeated emphasis on the "lutte" "struggle" that led to independence. Van Lierde, commenting on an aspect of Baudouin's speech reproduced by Césaire, succinctly captures the condescension in the king's insinuation that the Congolese are "children that need to be emancipated with prudence" (Houyoux 310). Van Lierde's reading of Kasavubu's actual speech is again right on the money: "Kasa . . . dignified, responds with diplomacy and modesty" (310).[12] But Césaire includes what Kasavubu himself omitted on the day, emphasizing the words of servile deference that were in the written text but which he did not in fact utter: "Sire! Your august Majesty's presence at the ceremonies of this memorable day is new and striking proof of your solicitude for this people that you have loved and protected" (18).[13] Kala is also shown behind the scenes as considering "the proprieties" (17) as the ultimate good. He prepares us for the childbirth imagery in Lumumba's speech, as well as its tenor: "Childbirth is never painless; that's the law of nature. But when the child is born, everyone smiles" (17). Césaire has Kala's speech followed by "uncertain applause" (19).

In opposition to Kala's wordy and obsequious opening sentence, the beginning of Lumumba's speech is terse and bold: "As for me, Sire, my thoughts are for those who have been forgotten" (19). Whereas Lumumba addressed the Congolese people ("Congolais, Congolaises") at the beginning of his speech, Césaire has Lumumba start by addressing the Belgian King. The emphasis "As for me, sire" sets him up in opposition not only to the king but also to the more conciliatory, deferential tone of Kala's response to Basilio's paternalism. He then shifts from the first person singular to the inclusive plural and enumerates the ways in which the Congolese suffered under colonialism. "We are the people who have been dispossessed, beaten, humiliated; the people whom the conquerors treated as inferiors, in whose faces they spat" (19). In three eloquent verbs, he evokes the economic injustice and physical brutality of the colonial enterprise (the *chicotte* is evoked by the verb "beat") and the daily humiliations suffered at the hands of white colonials.

This speech's focus on a nation of "boys" can be compared with an extract from Lumumba's actual speech:

> A people of kitchen boys, house boys, laundry boys, in short, a people of boys, of yes-bwanas, and anyone who wanted to prove that a man is not necessarily a man could take us as an example. (19)
>
> We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon, and evening, because we are Negroes. Who will forget that to a black one said "tu," certainly not as to a friend, but because the more honorable "vous" was reserved for whites alone? (*Lumumba Speaks* 221)

The earlier use of "we" is now exposed as being masculine in its referents: not only does he present a litany of denigrating tasks done by "boys," he also follows it up with the assertion that if anyone doubted that a man could be a man, the person need only look at this nation of "yes-bwana" "boys." Although Lumumba's speech acknowledges the lack of respect, it does not emphasize the emasculation evoked by the word "boy."

Césaire aims to restore the dignity of the Congolese people by denouncing colonial oppression and infantilization, but the exclusively masculine list buries humankind or a rehumanized "homo" under the specificity of the "vir" or male. The language of struggle and victory ("we fought for fifty years" and "we have won") addressed to the "camarades" reinforces this impression. The result of their struggle is the new Congo:

> People of the Congo, this is a great day.
> It is the day when the nations of the world welcome
> Congo our mother,
> and still more Congo our child. (19)

The nation as mother is congruent with the conventions of the Mother Africa trope: the humiliated "boys" have stood up to fight for their mother country. Their masculinity rehabilitated through this gesture of wresting their country from the rapacious hands of the colonizers, they express their creative potency in terms of procreation and parenting. Birthing and mothering have been appropriated by men. The child Congo is "child of our sleepless nights, of our sufferings, of our struggles" (19). Here Césaire echoes the terms of suffering and struggle he evoked at the beginning of the speech and adds the image of the parent sitting up with an ailing child. These acts of birthing, mothering, and nurturing are usually feminine, yet the persons addressed remain masculine: "Comrades and brothers in combat," "it is up to us to transform each of our wounds into a nurturing breast!" (20). In the original French the medical term ("mamelle" "mammary gland") focuses on biological femaleness rather than the figure of a woman, as the "brothers" usurp the mother's role and nurse the child. Now "Kongo" replaces "Congo" and the word is repeated twelve times in twenty-two lines. The baby Kongo, child of the brothers in combat, is welcomed into the world with a traditional African ceremony and receives official recognition: "do you know this child?" is greeted by a unanimous "it's Kongo, our king" (21).

This lyrical embrace of a nation-king through an African cultural tradition is perhaps the greatest deviation from the style of Lumumba's actual speech. Lumumba's only allusion to the African past in his modern, historically grounded speech is a promise to "restore ancient laws," but Césaire's evocation of the kingdom of Kongo (dating back to the fifteenth century) celebrates the greatness of the African past and introduces a valorization of a timeless African culture.[14] The mythical Kongo of past and future stands in contrast to the names given to the country by King Leopold and the Belgians. The speech captures the semantics of Lumumba's actual speech in its reiteration of the need to rebuild, to revisit laws and institutions so as to make them just. Then the moment of "ecstasy" marks the transition back to the social-historical present and the political entity, Congo, being inaugurated through independence. A new order begins, a new season is inaugurated by the solstice.

Van Lierde signals the end of an era of paternalism: "daddy's Congo was dying," thanks to Lumumba's "blistering retort to the colossal servitude of the colonial world" (Houyoux 310). Césaire, capturing the audaciousness of the gesture, has Lumumba explain the importance of his exploit: "a black man has the audacity to give a king a piece of his mind… There was a taboo that needed breaking. I broke it!" (21–22). Through birth imagery, Césaire emphasizes the generative power of this act. But the birth of the new independent nation is soon followed by the death of its primary progenitor.

In the other major lyrical moment of the play, Lumumba dances the drama of his life and prepares for death with Hélène Bijou. The two registers of the play coexist side by side. Before we enter the ritual space of the dance that stands outside of time and place, Césaire situates their dance historically and politically. Lumumba chooses to dance with Hélène Bijou, whose Lulua ethnic identity is emphasized, in the aftermath of the massacre of Baluba in Bakwanga (August 1960), for which Lumumba was held responsible. It is with the Kasai on fire that Lumumba dances with a woman who represents the enemies of the Baluba. Lumumba historicizes the conflict by asking who stirred up the Luluas against the Balubas. He reminds people that they were killing each other while Belgian police officers looked on complacently in 1959 (58). His dancing with a Lulua woman is a way of showing the world that he refuses to succumb to their criticisms and their ahistorical interpretation of the events.

Woman-Symbol or "Her Story Is Transformed Into His Story"

Hélène starts the dance: "I dance things of cavernous darkness" (59). To which Lumumba replies: "I dance the sprouting of man and his saliva, salt!" (59). Bailey offers a convincing reading of the beautifully poetic, sensual text, emphasizing Césaire's staging what he sees as the complementarity of the masculine and the feminine. In this reading, Bijou, "dancer and courtesan," "rhythm and sensuousness," acts as Lumumba's "anima half and renders him whole" (200). As a witness she "will see the meteor, Lumumba, when he reemerges from the hidden passage, as a cinder, as concrete materialized fire, thus phallic potentiality" (201) and will help others remember him. At the end of the dance, Hélène says, "And now our dance has been danced" (60). Despite the complementarity of the roles, Bijou's position remains subordinate. Her role is to prepare Lumumba for his heroic martyrdom, to be the witness to his splendor and transcendent demise. The transition back to the mimetic mode at the end of the dance is marked by Lumumba's statement "We have danced the dance of my life!" (60). She has helped him dance the dance of *his* life. As Stratton phrases it, "her story is transformed into his story" (52). Lumumba's declaration and his invitation to keep dancing clarify Bijou's function, that of shoring him up so that he can face the challenges ahead: "Dance with me till dawn / and give me heart / to go to the end of the night" (60).

Lumumba attributes the same role to his wife Pauline: "I'm prepared to defy the whole world if I know I can count on you" (87). As Lumumba prepares for his martyrdom, Pauline reminds him of his duties to her and their children: "Do you want the people to see me with my head

shaved, following a funeral procession? And the children? Do you want them to be orphans?" (86). Mbom asserts that Césaire not only seems to refuse women both the capacity and the possibility of rising to the revolutionary ideal (228–29) but also renders them as obstacles or ordeals that give the hero the opportunity to realize himself (230). This contention is not applicable to Mama Makosi, and Pauline's character and positioning is more nuanced. For example, in the first version of the play, once Lumumba has died, Pauline speaks a short monologue. Harris points out that Pauline is the first person who, by using the name of the mythological character Lycaon, evokes the murderers who offer to the Gods the victim they have assassinated (111). Harris emphasizes that her cry is both that of the widowed wife and that of the Congo (153–54). Pauline's voice is the last to be heard. The first version of her monologue includes lines that could be associated with a wife's wishful thinking: "Ah! I hear him! / I knew that he would return!... / Look! Hush! Hush! there he is!"(Ruhe 369). But it ends with Pauline echoing the Sanza Player's war cry: "Luma! Luma!" and the scenic indications "The drums of vengeance answer their call well into the night" (Ruhe 367). This ending places Pauline among those who are ready to continue the Lumumbist struggle. However, in subsequent versions, not only does the disembodied "loudspeaker" deliver the "Lycaon" monologue, the war cry is also eliminated, and Pauline is a silent presence in Act III scene 6.

The changes to Pauline's character came as Césaire added scenes that reflect his changing view of Mobutu: in the second version a speech by Mobutu is followed by words from the Sanza Player; the last version adds two more scenes and ends with Mobutu's soldiers shooting into the crowd. Ruhe argues that the changes made to the 1967 version reduced attention to Lumumba's personal life; that if the spectator felt compassion for Pauline and Lumumba as individuals, it would detract from the political message of the play (Ruhe 361). But her war cry was not about a shift from wishing to hold her husband back to defining herself through his martyrdom; rather, it proclaimed a living political legacy. Benimahdu argues that while Lumumba is alive "to the absolute passion of her husband, [Pauline] can only oppose relative human attachments," (40) but after his death she is apparently freed of them. "The Congolese war cry raised by the Sanza Player and by Pauline, which the drums of vengeance answer immediately, show that there remain in the Congo people determined to avenge their leader and to pursue his work" (Benimadhu 41). Bailey, using the later version of the play, agrees: "Pauline's presence on the stage just after the "Haut-parleur" [words initially spoken by Pauline] invokes the soul of the dead Lumumba and seems to suggest her readiness to accomplish a kind of self-overcoming, after he, whom she loved,

is gone" (218). Interestingly, neither critic mentions her children or how her attachment to her children (who are not characters in the play) and fear for their lives would hamper her political engagement. If she is moved to political action, it is at least in part the political interpretation she accords her husband's death and martyrdom rather than purely a question of personal loss.

The new ending takes us well beyond Lumumba's demise in 1961 to 1966, showing that he has triumphed because Mokutu feels compelled to rehabilitate or appropriate his image. His death is replaced by many deaths, those of his supporters, among them the Sanza Player and possibly Mama Makosi. But it also means that Pauline, the wife, gets written out of her previously militant role. The removal of Pauline from the final scenes as well as the suppression of her war cry—"Luma! Luma!"—mean that Lumumba's call to Pauline to "arm" the children loses a good deal of its revolutionary resonance. Once Pauline is written out of the last scene, her last words become those she speaks in response to Lumumba's peremptory: "Go to Brazzaville, try to see Luis. Tell him what's been happening" (87). Slowly exiting in scene two of Act III, she sings:

> Alas, alas, who's seen my husband?
> Nobody's seen my husband.
> A bamboo splinter
> Has pierced my heart. (87)

Her words contain the recognition of the fact that she has lost her husband as a husband. While her removal from the scene focuses our attention on the political, it also depoliticizes her character. It relegates her to her role as widow and mother, not a shaper but a transmitter of the legacy. In his last letter to his companion, Lumumba explicitly asks this of her:

> To my children whom I leave and whom perhaps I will see no more, I wish that they be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that it expects from them, as it expects from each Congolese, to accomplish the sacred task of reconstruction of our independence and our sovereignty. (*Lumumba Speaks* 422)

Césaire's version reads: "If I die, I leave the children a legacy of great struggle. And you will help them, guide them, arm them" (87). In Césaire's phrasing she is directly addressed as "you," rather than positioned as the passive executor of his wishes: "I want them to be told." Yet Pauline, nevertheless, plays a supporting role. Focusing on the struggle that awaits the children, he directs Pauline to support them in that task. The last verb, "arm," is surprising given Lumumba's stated support of nonviolence,

but it may be an allusion to the Lumumbist rebellions of the mid-1960s. Although this phrase remains intact in the final version of the play, Pauline disappears from the stage. Rather than continuing the struggle, it becomes incumbent upon her to bear witness to her husband's struggle, a husband who no longer belongs to her but, as a mythical figure, belongs to all and serves to inspire those fighting for justice the world over.

Man-Symbol, Woman-Symbol

Although Césaire wrote the play to tell the truth about the Congo and counter the lies told about Lumumba, he is less interested in the historical truth about Lumumba than he is in Lumumba's potential as a symbol. Nicole Zand concludes her 1967 interview with his affirmation that he does not write history or imitate it, "he creates a mythical drama by transforming his heroes, the times and the places into archetypes" (Houyoux 13). In an afterword to the play, Césaire himself has stated: "Through this man—Lumumba—whose very stature seems to predestine him for myth, the whole history of a continent and a humanity plays itself out in an exemplary and symbolic fashion" (Houyoux 14). While he says that Lumumba is above all "a man-symbol," he qualifies this symbolic role as "a man who is identified with Congolese reality and with the Africa of decolonization, an individual who represents a collectivity" (Houyoux 54). But what happens when women are turned into or used as symbols? This process has different effects on their representations. Césaire turns Lumumba into myth as a way of universalizing the story. He does not remove its historical and African specificity in order for it to become a universal political drama; the story remains rooted in time and place. Although Césaire emphasizes that it is not Lumumba the individual who is important, the process of mythologizing him and having him represent a collective destiny would be meaningless without his struggle against colonialism and his steadfast allegiance to total independence in the face of intransigent local and international opposition.

On the other hand, what is the content of Pauline Congo, of Pauline as a symbol of her country? Stratton emphasizes that female characters in the works of male authors had been "conscripted" into the role because no woman writer has reproduced what has come to be considered a defining feature of the male African literary tradition (50). Pauline Congo has no content other than "wife of Lumumba" and "mother of Lumumba's children." For all the women turned into Mother Africa figures, it suffices merely to be a woman and a mother.[15] Their activism in the cause of independence and, in the process, their transgressions and critique

of gender conventions disappear. In being reduced to symbol, they are denied subjectivity and agency, indeed, any presence on the stage. They became figments of the (de)colonial imagination. Never do the women seem to be, and speak for, themselves.

Césaire valorizes Pauline in Act II scene 8, which is separated from Lumumba's dance with Bijou by a long monologue by Kala. In their encounter in their home, Pauline meets Lumumba's trusting naiveté with clear-eyed realism. He sees the people as his shield and says, referring to Kala, that never had two men seen more eye to eye. She warns him of filthy plots, points out that the people are weak, disarmed, and credulous, and correctly points out that many of his "friends" are just waiting for a chance to knife him. Although her declaration that she feels it in her bones makes her insights seem more intuitive than politically savvy, Césaire gives credence to her interpretation. In fact, she is right when she says that Kala is jealous of Lumumba. In the monologue preceding this scene Kala had expressed resentment at being treated as a figurehead and regarded as Lumumba's "wife" or "woman." When Pauline is perspicacious enough to see that Lumumba is heading for trouble for being too trusting, he retorts: "Oh, you women. So cynical. Always fearing the worst" (66). Rather than imagining that Pauline may have insights worthy of attention, Césaire's Lumumba reduces her to a fearful woman. Yet the scene ends with Pauline waking up "Poor Patrice" to listen to the news, where he hears Kala deposing him from his position as prime minister. Later Césaire has Pauline state that she has never stood in the way of Lumumba's political work, and this time he does not refute her assertion: "Admit, Patrice, that I never turned you aside from your duty, but Africa's not your wife" (86). A more literal translation of "tu n'as pas charge que d'Afrique" (95) would be: "Africa is not your only responsibility."

It is at this point that Pauline resists her husband's attempt to turn her into a symbol: "I haven't got the name of a country or a river, I've got the name of a woman: Pauline" (86). In her analysis, Bailey does not quote these lines, preferring to reproduce phrases that are more predictable coming from a wife: "Patrice, I'm talking to you. And you look up above me" (Bailey 117; 86). Lumumba admits that he does not see Pauline; above her he sees Africa and below her the Congo "mingled with the muffled drum of [his] blood" (86). In an attempt to bring him back to her, she evokes a concrete memory, the drinking of the *malafu* that sealed their marriage contract: "Do you remember the day we were married, Patrice? My father poured the palm wine, you took a sip, you held out the glass for me, I took a sip, and so we drank together till the glass was empty" (86).[16] Most striking in this exchange is that Césaire stages Pauline's refusal to

be Pauline Congo.[17] Her resistance can be read alongside that of women writers who have the tools to challenge the dominant paradigms despite their own struggles to overcome marginalization:

> it is a problem when men want to call you Mother Africa and put you on a pedestal, because then they want you to stay there forever without asking your opinion—and [they are] unhappy if you want to come down as an equal human being! (Miriam Tlali qtd. in Ajayi 39)

Mariama Bâ's pronouncement has gained iconic status: "We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother who, in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa" (Ajayi 36).

Gender dichotomies pervade Césaire's play. But several elements, including his deployment of different registers, tend to destabilize, subvert, and/or contradict the hierarchical gender order that is embedded in the heroic myth into which he casts his history. If we add to this the fact that Pauline's moment of resistance lends itself to more than one reading, we see chinks in the armor of the dominant ideology of the play. In a work that either repeats tropes or images that marginalize women or codes the feminine as negative or inferior, often in contexts that serve to shore up men's masculinity, we can bring into view the glimpses of female decolonization it nevertheless contains. More nuanced readings allow the inconsistencies in the dominant ideology to surface so that in our critical readings we do not reinscribe the texts' marginalization of women. If we attend to the contradictions and conflicts within the text and listen to the women's silences in relation to their utterances, we gain a more complex understanding of the gendered conflicts within the process of decolonization that cannot be subsumed into any set of gendered symbols of male heroes who found nations and who redeem a feminine continent from colonial degradation.

Césaire relied heavily on documentation from the period itself, yet it is the symbolic meaning of Lumumba that he prizes above all. Peck's consultation and use of much of the same documentation led to very different results, which were influenced by the generic conventions of the documentary and the biopic.

CHAPTER 6

PECK'S PERSONAL LUMUMBA: THE MATERNAL VOICE IN *DEATH OF A PROPHET*

The camera's low angle captures the face of a man distorted by hatred. He raises a rock above his head to strike his victim, who is revealed in a reverse angle shot to be a bare-breasted woman. These African figures sculpted in black rock are still on display at the Royal Museum of Africa in Tervuren outside of Brussels. The woman's nudity exposes the exoticizing gaze of the artist while the subject matter constructs African masculinity as brute savagery, no doubt offering justification for colonial efforts to "protect" African women from African men.[1] These shots, preceded by those of the Congolese fauna on display at the museum and followed by a weather vane sporting the laughing faces of Tintin[2] and his dog Milou, highlight Peck's interrogation of images in *Lumumba: La Mort du Prophète*. By filming persistent icons translating attitudes and ideologies associated with a bygone era, Peck opens "a window onto a different way of thinking about the past" (Rosenstone 63). But Peck made two films about Lumumba. In opposition to this engagement with the past from the standpoint of the present, in his feature film he aims to tell "a true story" that represents only the past, foreclosing the possibility of exploring the construction and dissemination of images of Lumumba and of the process of decolonization. Because the documentary does not "just show the past" but also talks about "how and what it means to the filmmaker (or to us) today" (Rosenstone 61), the insights gained from investigating the dynamics of remembering in the documentary prove invaluable when we analyze the feature film. By elucidating the very process of remembering, whether in official accounts or stories passed on from one generation to another, *Death of a Prophet* makes visible the fact that depictions of the past may perpetuate a legacy of subversion or reinforce the notion that

what was had to be, presenting decolonization as a change in relations among men.

Raoul Peck has reiterated on numerous occasions his commitment to subverting hegemonic Western versions of history. He asserts that as a Haitian he cannot ignore how global forces shape his point of view: "I was always very conscious of being from the Third World. I still have that consciousness today: it's very hard to neglect your background, to neglect your whole history" (Taylor 241). Peck was born in Port-au-Prince in 1953. Fleeing the Duvalier dictatorship, his family moved to the newly independent Congo in 1961. Educated in the Congo, New York, France, and Germany, where he studied industrial engineering and economics, Peck earned his Master's of Fine Arts in Film at the Berlin Film and Television Academy in 1988. While making films (including the documentary on Lumumba), Peck also taught film courses in Germany, France, and in the United States before returning to Haiti to serve as Minister of Culture from 1996 to 1997.[3] Following his resignation (purportedly to protest what he saw as an antidemocratic takeover by former president Jean-Bertrand Aristide), Peck returned to film production.

Peck is acutely aware of the fact that he belongs to a reality shared by many in Third-World nations, that because of unequal access to the means of production of knowledge and images, they are not in control of their collective memory. He believes that film can play a vital role: "I tend to believe that film can try to save what still can be saved, in terms of our histories, our memories" (Reddy, "Lumumba: An interview"). A few examples from his filmography demonstrate these preoccupations: *L'Homme sur les quais* (*The Man by the Shore*, 1993) is set in the Haiti of the Duvaliers; *Corps Plongés* (*It's Not About Love*, 1998) is about a Haitian diplomat exiled in New York during the military coup; *Profit and Nothing But* (2001) militantly critiques rampant capitalism; and in *Sometimes in April* (TV 2005) he tackles the Rwandan genocide. Within this corpus, Patrice Lumumba occupies a central place. Peck's intention was always to make a feature film, but the material about his own family that he discovered while he was doing his research compelled him to make the documentary. Through these films that pay tribute to Lumumba's enduring significance in African history, Peck is responding to the call implicit in Lumumba's last words in his letter to Pauline:

> History will one day have its say, but it will not be the history that is taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or at the United Nations, but the history which will be taught in the countries freed from imperialism and its puppets.

> Africa will write its own history, and to the north and south of the Sahara, it will be a glorious and dignified history. (*Lumumba Speaks* 422–23)

Peck's desire to "lay a modest stone in this grand edifice that we call history" (Baquet 109) manifests itself in various modes. Whereas in the documentary he emphasizes the impossibility of objectivity, in the feature film he underscores in multiple ways the veracity of the story.

Do the possibilities created by Peck's engagement with the present in *Death of a Prophet* help him to avoid reinscribing the masculinism that marked the process of decolonization and the mainstream accounts of the movement? Or, does Lumumba's story remain male-dominated? The photographs and news footage from the period presented in the documentary rarely feature women, with the exception of a short clip toward the end of the film showing Pauline Lumumba looking on helplessly as Mobutu's soldiers manhandle her husband after his arrest. But Peck is able to interview an adult Juliana Lumumba,[4] and the personal and reflexive mode that Peck uses in his documentary creates the opportunity to introduce an important feminine figure, his late mother. Her powerful presence challenges the marginalization of women in representations of the period and contributes to examining the past from multiple perspectives.

In this film Peck uses archival photographs and footage from the colonial period and Congolese independence, interviews with critics and proponents of Lumumba, home movies and photographs from the childhood years he spent in the Congo, and sequences shot in the streets of Brussels today.[5] Peck eschews both the authoritative tone of conventional documentary and strict chronology. He gives us glimpses of the ideology of the period as well as current attitudes to the past while situating all the voices within the personal and poetic style of his story. Confronting the largely negative images of Lumumba produced in the West, Peck does not simply offer a counterimage of Lumumba; with the very form of this film, he questions the creation of hegemonic forms of knowledge. He himself speaks to the viewer in the voice-over but attributes important parts of the narrative to his mother, introduced in each instance (eight times at varying intervals throughout the film) by the phrase "Ma mère raconte . . ." "My mother told me . . ." or "My mother tells . . ." a story.[6]

From *Mater Dolorosa* to Oral Historian

The maternal figure is privileged from the very beginning. The first images of the pre-credit sequence show a rainy evening in Brussels while Peck's voice recites a poem by Henri Lopes in which the hero's presence

is figured metonymically through the name of the place he was slain. In Katanga the waters cry plaintively for the giant that fell in the night and the poet emphatically warns the mother not to believe those who purport to show her the spot where the "lost child" is buried. The sorrowful, suffering mother, like the *mater dolorosa* of Christ's crucifixion, increases the pathos of the poem while reinforcing Lumumba's status as a martyr.

At the point in the poem that refers to the spot where the child lies, the image track consists of a shot of a plaque identifying Brussels' Place des Martyrs, creating the first of many parallels Peck establishes between the Belgians and the Congolese. But Peck quickly makes the transition from the unspecified maternal figure of the poem to his own mother, Gisèle Peck. Super 8 images show her at the home in the Congo where Peck spent part of his childhood after the family had fled "Papa Doc" Duvalier's dictatorship in Haiti. Peck tells us that she is deceased and no longer around to view the images. One of the photographs captures her at her desk in the mayor's office in Kinshasa, a place Peck characterizes in an interview as "a very, very important place" because that was where people obtained authorization to buy land: "A lot of politicians went there. It was a power place" (Zook).

In contrast to the mother figure in the poetic prologue who is warned about the "untruth of official history as recorded in popular media

Figure 6.1 Gisèle Peck in the mayor's office in Leopoldville (Courtesy of Raoul Peck and Velvet Film).

sources" (Goldberg 264), Peck's mother herself provides a powerful corrective to the misinformation circulated in dominant versions of history in the "Ma mère raconte . . . " narrative thread.

"Once upon a time," she begins, as would a mother telling a child a bedtime fairy tale. She tells of the greedy king who made such a fuss at the Berlin conference that "he was offered the Congo in the hope that he would choke trying to swallow such a big cake." The gruesome story of King Leopold's Congo is followed by similar, pithily worded lessons on precolonial Africa, the arrival of missionaries and colonialists, the staggering death toll of the Matadi railroad, the paternalism of Belgian colonial policies, the rise of nationalism, Lumumba's downfall, and the viciousness and corruption of Mobutu's postcolonial regime. A couple of examples capture the tone of Peck's mother's contributions. She explains, for example, the guiding principles of Belgian rule and the dismal failure of their attempt to avoid problems for themselves by preventing the development of a local elite: "Treat the Negroes well, but keep them stupid. But they rebel at this stupidity and become nationalists." Her final intervention marks the moment the Peck family decided to leave the Congo. The horror of the tactics deployed by the new government, ostensibly to create stability, eventually seeps into even simple everyday tasks and she becomes a witness to this normalization of terror:

> The big spring cleaning. Since the second putsch in 1965, my boss is a military governor. One day he asks me to type the following order: rope, black cloth, and some wood. I understood that it was time to leave this office.

Peck explains that the rope would be used to hang four prominent politicians who had been accused of plotting against Mobutu.[7]

While the mother's voice offers the broad historical context, other narrative strands stage the obstacles anyone wishing to revise "official" historical accounts of the period has to face. Conducting the research needed to make his films required Peck "to decode, decipher and burrow through a wall of information and misinformation—the simplistic accounts dictated by Eurocentric clear consciences" ("Hero"). Although Peck was already highly politicized, he had to decolonize knowledge in order to find Lumumba under the layers of texts that often did more to conceal than to reveal him: "At first, troubled by this Lumumba, it took me a while to come to love and understand him, as one must love and understand a character to portray him" ("Hero"). In the documentary, Peck's mother brings home the photograph of Lumumba and first speaks his name, instigating the decolonization of the knowledge contained in the mass of documentation Peck consulted.

Those who first encounter Lumumba in Peck's films have a very different starting point, which he wishes had been available to him as a youngster.

In addition to the biases and distortions of both popular and scholarly accounts, Peck has to confront the suppression or erasure of events and the gaps and silences in the historical records. While Pecks offers a counterweight to negative images of Lumumba, his simultaneous interrogation of image making creates a productive tension throughout the work. The meta-narrative is generally embedded in the structure of the film, but a key moment makes the point in a straightforward manner: a collage of images flashes on a large television screen while Peck's voice rattles off a litany of epithets that journalists have attached to Lumumba's name.

> Some journalists wrote: Lumumba the go-getter dictator. The first negro of the so-called state. Mister Uranium. The Elvis Presley of African politics. The crazy Prime Minister. They wrote: The ambitious manipulator. The bush politician. The negro with the goatee. Lumumba the dwarf. The apprentice dictator. Half charlatan, half missionary.

Through this disjuncture between the visual and audio tracks, Peck draws our attention to the process of creating images and to the question of who has access to the means of shaping and disseminating images. Central to Peck's endeavor is exposing and demystifying the mechanisms of power: "There are images and those who make them."

Images and Those Who Make Them

Peck juxtaposes interviews: a calm, cogent Lumumba is followed by a Belgian characterizing him as overly passionate and lacking in judgment. He pairs a journalist's opinion, that by choosing Mobutu to replace Lumumba (who had to be "neutralized") the Belgians had not made a bad choice, with images of a young Mobutu's rise to power as well as contemporary footage of the pitiless "Marshall." He explains that the footage of Lumumba's arrest cost him $3000 per minute, while the majority of Congolese live on less than one dollar day, thus casting the right to remember itself as an economic privilege (Reddy, "Lumumba: Death").

Reddy offers a compelling analysis of Peck's reliance on representational strategies that destabilize the film's historical narrative. Examining how Lumumba's image and legacy were manipulated by "politicians, the media and time itself," Peck attempts to "give voice to the alternative and differing perspectives that surround a critical moment of history." He problematizes the referential status of photographs and reveals their flaws as evidence, showing that meaning is "imagined, shaped by our own

desires and the critical distances provided by the passing of time," and uses his voice-over to provide "reinterpretations and recontextualizations [that] serve to complicate [the] process of univocal signification, calling attention to the gap between signifier and signified so often disguised in authoritative documentaries." But, the film does not succumb to an endless play of signifiers. At a crucial moment in the narrative, the camera lingers on a poster published after Lumumba's death. Filming vertically, Peck first reveals the word "DEATH" in close-up. The camera then drops to reveal a photograph of Lumumba before allowing us to discover under the photograph the words: "OF THE DEVIL." Peck counters the totalizing affirmation not only by the way he films the poster—we do not see the devil in Lumumba's face, and the words come as a shock—but also with the subtitle of his film: *Death of a Prophet*. Throughout the film, exposing the biases of images or interviews undercuts the validity of the totalizing discourses that demonize Lumumba or justify his elimination. Standing out from all the voices is that of Peck's mother.

Structurally, the repetition of "Ma mère raconte . . . " valorizes the contributions made by his mother even though her narrative is delivered in fragments that are not strictly chronological. In "Who Was Afraid of Patrice Lumumba? Terror and the Ethical Imagination in *Lumumba: La Mort du Prophète*," Elizabeth Goldberg takes issue with Reddy's opinion that Peck does not favor any of the narrative threads. She convincingly argues that the stories recounted by Peck's mother constitute "a cohesive narrative of the transformation of colonial violence into the brutality and betrayal of the post-independence era" that "highlights connections among historical events" (263) and occupies a privileged place in the documentary.

Emphasizing the special status of Peck's mother's voice, Laura Marks in *The Skin of the Film* states that given "the blackout on official information in Zaire and the corruption of European sources, Peck draws heavily on his mother's memory as an alternative historical authority" (36). Since she occupied a government post, she "knew a lot of information that did not make it into official records" (36). But the privileging of the mother's voice in the film should not obscure what the metatextual sources reveal: that his mother's memory is also a construct. Not only does Peck evoke the "wall of misinformation" he had to burrow through while researching his film, but he himself explains the extent to which his documentaries are infused with fictional elements. While he confirms in interviews that the first time he heard Lumumba's name was when his mother brought home a photograph that she had found in a drawer in her office, he asked himself, while preparing his film: "how am I going to tell this serious story without boring people, and how can I succeed, at the same time, in touching people? One of the 'tricks' that

I used was to insert this very personal story of this little boy in it so that it would be easier to accept the political parts" (Taylor 246). Since we recognize Peck's voice and see images of him in the film, it is easy to conflate narrative devices with autobiographical truth. The "fiction" of the little boy and the mother's stories help to maintain a productive tension between challenging univocal ways of signifying and strengthening Peck's voice, ironically through a kind of polyphony. Rachel Gabara asks: "So who is narrating here? Peck's mother tells the story of Lumumba and the Congo, but in Peck's voice. Peck allows Lumumba to speak ('lui redonne la parole'), yet it is Peck who holds the camera, seeks out the remaining images of Lumumba, and edits them together with images from his own life" (144). As Peck speaks for "two dead, if not mute, witnesses" (144), each of these three voices resonates with and strengthens the other. This polyphony represents "voice" as "that which conveys to us a sense of the text's social point of view, of how it is speaking to us and how it is organizing the materials it is presenting to us" (Nichols 18–19).

This converging polyphony of voices evoking the past creates a community of memory standing in pan-African solidarity against the hegemonic Western images of a Lumumba whose legacy has been reduced to his name and a number of pejorative epithets. If "a person remembers only by situating himself within the viewpoint of one or several groups and one or several currents of collective thought" (Halbwachs qtd. in Ricoeur 121), Peck remembers by placing himself firmly in the broader Third-World community of memory rather than a narrower, national one. Peck knows well that we do not "remember alone" (121) and that we experience concrete exchanges between personal memory and the public memory of a community through close relations (Ricoeur 131). He introduces the mother who tells the young boy the story and initiates him into a community of memory. But it is Peck who, by reconstructing the story, explicitly includes his parents in a community of memory, a history imbued with a clarity unavailable to those who are caught up in the moment of lived experience.

"We Were Black but We Were White"

Peck explains at the beginning of the film that his family moved to the Congo in the early 1960s as part of a contingent of French-speaking technocrats. The relationships between the Haitians and Congolese were strained.[8] Threatened with extradition by the Canadian government in 1968, Haitian writer Gérard Étienne turned to the Congolese embassy. He received this response from the chargé d'Affaires, Monsieur M'Bila,

in Ottowa: "Professor Etienne, the Haitians treated the people as the Belgians had before them. They behaved like exploitative settlers towards Congolese (young men and women) who moreover took them to court for exploiting and ill-treating them (hitting them, kicking them)." Blouin concurs that the "technicians" who arrived after July 14, 1960—among them "swarms of Haitians"—"behaved more like conquerors in search of fortunes than professionals charged with rebuilding a country" (Blouin 259). She claims that the Congolese did not know that the Haitians "came from Papa Doc by way of New York, and *what that meant*" (emphasis added), suggesting that they were in the service of the United States and the UN, which propped up an undemocratic government in order to ensure that the flow of strategic minerals came their way and to keep the U.S.S.R. out of the region.[9]

We do not know how many women there were among the technocrats. But they inhabited a space that would have been shared with a very small number of Congolese women. Peck's mother's presence in the world of work highlights the sorry state of women's education in the Congo at the time.

About forty minutes into the film, Peck returns to his family's presence in the Congo. "I slowly decipher my memories of the Congo." Home videos shot with Peck's father's new camera show the family's car and Peck riding his bicycle, all indices of a significant level of material well-being. One of the photographs of his stay in Leopoldville included in the film shows the young Peck standing between the legs of the gigantic statue of Henry Morton Stanley. At the beginning of the film he also shows the statue of King Leopold while the whirr of the Super 8 projector identifies his father as the one filming the city of Leopoldville. These images help elucidate the contradictions of the postcolonial racialized social order. The statues—removed during the *authenticité* campaign of the early 1970s—connote the neocolonial character of the new regime; the photograph situates the Peck family, who lived in the neighborhoods abandoned by the Belgians along with the families of the Congolese bourgeoisie, within this postcolonial order. In voice-over, Peck confesses: "They said we came to help our coloured brothers. But we were separated by 200 years of difference. We were black but we were white. We were different. We were the *Mundele*." In both Kikongo and Lingala, "Mundele" means "white" but can also mean "he who rules" or "he who possesses," and whiteness has taken on other characteristics associated with the colonialists, including foreignness and privilege. Peck continues: "With my friends I took advantage of any ambivalence. I was Congolese when it suited me and *Mundele* when it meant getting out of doing a chore."[10] It is to this extent that Peck's film hints at the tensions between

the two communities. By focusing on his own opportunistic behavior, he demonstrates how children, despite their innocence, are implicated in these complex realities, but he does not invite explicit questioning as to what his parents' attitudes or experiences may have been.

Living in the Shadow of a Martyr

The theme of guilt first appears in relation to his family when Peck says that his parents stayed "despite reshuffles, conspiracies and military coups." In the film, Europe, the United States, and the UN are held responsible for supporting Mobutu's illegitimate regime. Peck's parents seem to be held responsible mainly for not asking questions about what was going on behind the façade, for going along as their Congolese coworkers turned aside from the past. In his interview with Reddy, in which he calls the documentary a "very intimate, very personal film," Peck makes the following avowal: "When I started researching, I came up with different *dilemmas* that had to do with my own life, with the life of my parents in Congo. . . . So little by little, I discovered a lot of things, family photos, 8 mm films of my family in the Congo in the 60s" (Reddy, "Lumumba: An interview," emphasis added). Diawara states bluntly what Peck intimates both in his film and in interviews: "We empathize with Peck's guilt for growing up privileged in Congo at a time when it would have been better to be a revolutionary like Lumumba. We empathize with him for wishing that his parents had left Congo before the betrayals and the coups. Why did they stay in Congo for so long? So that they could be among the first black bourgeois to take vacations in Europe?" (318).

Peck, while remaining cognizant of the fact that he was but a child at the time, extrapolates on the malaise associated with the years spent in the Congo:

> My childhood was mostly happy, but *behind this façade* many other things were taking place whose tenor and existence I was unaware of. Except that I recognized the names. My friends at the time were often the children of the actors of this history. It was a work of return to this childhood. As if you had strong, happy memories and at the same time you realize that these memories have a *dramatic foundation* and that there are *questions that you should have asked at the time and that you didn't ask*. (Baquet 106, emphasis added)[11]

One of those questions was undoubtedly related to Lumumba's assassination and what it meant about the legitimacy of the regime in place. Although Peck's parents came to the Congo to provide much-needed

skills in the newly independent nation, they were inevitably implicated in the machinations that put Mobutu in power. But we may also ask to what extent Lumumba, who had been killed in January 1961, was on people's minds in the 1960s. Although in the film Peck's mother's narrative serves to undermine the cult of Mobutu nurtured by the ministry of information, Peck confesses in interviews that, thanks to the success of Mobutu's propaganda machine, he knew little about Lumumba until he started doing his research for the film (Popplewell).[12] The photograph that serves as a pretext to Peck's learning about Lumumba was forgotten in a drawer at his mother's office. As a filmic device, the photo poetically represents the repression of Lumumba's memory in the early postindependence era. It was Mobutu who was a heroic figure in the eyes of children, and perhaps adults with little access to alternative media. Peck recalls: "He was a handsome guy and he used to talk almost every day on TV . . . We'd see him on Sunday when we would go to the cinema to see the local newsreels, and it was always him going here, there, going to some military campaign or jumping in parachutes. For us young kids he was a sort of Rambo-type figure" (Popplewell).

Had the Peck family lived in Lumumba's stronghold, Stanleyville (Kisangani today), would the young Peck have known so little about him? Kinshasa was always fairly hostile to Lumumba, and even partisans may have been wary of celebrating his name at a time when Mobutu's ruthlessness was becoming more and more evident.[13]

Peck himself exploits the theme of guilt fairly extensively in another of the narrative strands of the documentary, that of the ghost of Lumumba the prophet roaming the streets of Brussels tickling the feet of the guilty. The former colonizers, far away in their cold and windy homeland, are oblivious to the fact that their lives are implicated in the history of the Congo, in the crimes committed by their countrymen.[14] At the time of the making of *Death of a Prophet*, the Belgian government had not yet undertaken the parliamentary commission of enquiry into the death of Lumumba, instigated by the publication of Ludo de Witte's *The Assassination of Lumumba* (2001, the original in Flemish appeared in 1999). In 2002 the Belgian government offered its "sincere regrets" over the assassination of Lumumba to his son François Lumumba. The government accepted "moral responsibility" for its role in contributing to the creation of the conditions that lead to Lumumba's death and created a $3 million fund to finance conflict prevention, legal, and youth projects.[15]

Just as Lumumba haunts the streets of Brussels, he also seems to haunt Peck's childhood memories. With "Ma mère raconte . . ." Peck puts Lumumba back where he had been absent, making him present at a time

when he was dead and forgotten by many. The community of memory in which Peck was raised left him with certain lacunae that he now retroactively fills. He helps build a community of memory that unambiguously accords Lumumba a place of honor by allowing us to hear his words.

A Cinematic Act of Mourning

While Peck allows Lumumba's message to be heard again and includes actual recordings of his words, his film equally constitutes an act of burial. Since Lumumba's body was destroyed, there is no place of burial, no tomb or monument, and the ghost of the roaming prophet has yet to find peace. Toward the end of the film, Peck offers images of an elegant party in Brussels while his voice-over offers an account of the destruction of Lumumba's body: disinterred from the African savanna, his body is cut into pieces with a saw before being dissolved in acid. Depriving his supporters of a physical place of pilgrimage was paralleled by the attempts to suppress his memory. Yet Peck assures us that his ghost remains. The camera moves through the room where the well-heeled guests are drinking champagne, taking on the perspective of the spectral presence that has come to seek warmth and company. In this sequence Peck foregrounds the continued relevance of Lumumba's assassination through the juxtaposition of the image and sound tracks, because the elimination of Lumumba allowed neocolonial forces to reign supreme and supported the lifestyle portrayed in Peck's footage. How does the film aim to put this roaming soul to rest?

Writing about films that represent "a memorial to all that was destroyed in the histories of colonial subjugation and official forgetting" (76), Laura Marks points out that in "an overwhelming number of these works, the search for memory images turns out to be a process of collective mourning: of ritual" (74). Peck's mourning of Lumumba is centered on the restoration of orderly relations between the living and the dead. The film establishes memory as a form of revitalizing continuity between past and present but also a means to set the record straight, to contribute to the collective memory of the Third World, to "lay a modest stone in this grand edifice that we call history" (Baquet 109). Peck certainly honors and mourns the "wandering ghost" (Marks 75) of Lumumba. But he equally gives voice to and honors and grieves his mother. Returning to the past and creating the fiction of his mother's authoritative, highly politicized voice, Peck offers the film as a "sepulcher" for his mother. "Ma mère raconte . . ." is ultimately an act of prosopopoeia, an act that belongs "to the art of memory, and of mourning in particular, [and which] confers upon the other, who is a deceased or voiceless entity, the power

of responding *as if* 'in his own name'" (Lambert 56). Weaving together lessons he learned from her with results of his own research, he includes his mother and by extension his family in a community of memory that could not have existed in the same way at the time.

Exposing the Mechanisms of Power

The fact that Peck looks at all the fragments, including what he reconstructs of the meanings of his mother's words (which he had not appreciated at the time, taking the situation in the Congo for granted, as children do), from a retrospective point of view strengthens his exploration of how these images work, not just how they are produced and disseminated but also how pervasive they become over time, tending to marginalize whatever bits of evidence for counter-narratives have not been deliberately erased. Peck's stated purpose is creating "a film that would be of use to the future of Africa and the third world because it showed the mechanism of power" (Taubin). He does so by exposing the cost of remembering, the erasures, biases, and differential access to the creation and dissemination of images as well as the personal cost to those who have to recover and reconstruct histories dear to them and their communities. Women have traditionally been affected by such exclusions. But is gender a decisive factor in Peck's documentary? Would the father's voice not have equally well represented the personal dimension of Peck's memory? Can the mother's voice be said to expose the marginalization of women as makers of images, often resulting in both stereotypical images of women and their unnoticed absence? What is crucial is that, although her voice is the result of Peck's prosopopoeia, she transmits the important lessons to be learned from the history of the Congo. In other renditions of the story (in Césaire's play, in the feature film) the primary female character Pauline is figured as the transmitter of Lumumba's legacy, but she is never represented as actually fulfilling that role. The narrative told in Gisèle Peck's voice in *Death of a Prophet* actualizes the role Lumumba attributed to Pauline. Peck finally allows us to hear—albeit in his voice—a woman responding to Lumumba's call to tell the history of the Congo, of Africa, far from the Western centers of power.

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CHAPTER 7

PECK'S HOLLYWOOD LUMUMBA: A MASCULINE HERO

"This is a true story." These words figure prominently at the beginning of Peck's feature film. In his documentary Peck had questioned the creation and dissemination of images, but he reverses his preoccupations in the feature. Rather than presenting multiple points of view and emphasizing the fact that all knowledge is constructed by people situated in a particular time and place, he contends that the story does not need to be crafted since it is already there, inherent in the events as they unfolded. Playing with ideas of reality, truth, and fiction, of events as mirroring conventions associated with different genres, he says that the story of Lumumba's life "is an incredible thriller with all the characters of traditional crime fiction" and goes on: "I want to extract the cinematic narrative from the reality by remaining as true to the facts as possible" (Zeitgeist).[1] This choice is deliberate, as Peck reveals in an interview: "my documentaries try to be as fictional as possible and my narratives try to be as 'real' as possible." He explains this stance as an attempt to "create an active viewer" (Taylor 246). But it is debatable whether viewers of the Hollywood film would be alerted to the questioning role they are supposed to play, since everything conspires to draw the viewer into the action.

The viewing experience of this slick film hides the dramas that took place behind the scenes, from Peck's fight to make sure that Lumumba was the protagonist of the film to his struggle to maintain his integrity while working in an art form that relies heavily on commercial funding. Peck evokes the challenges faced by filmmakers of color by asking us to imagine "the work involved in retranslating half a century of 'Cowboys and Indians' films through the eyes of a [N]ative American today" (Read 176).

Peck had to fight to keep Lumumba's story front and center. Producers preoccupied with profitability wanted films with a white protagonist. When a producer offered Peck a script set in an African nation in which a European takes a "descent into Hell" (sensationalist "darkest Africa" again?) before being liberated and returning home, he made a counter-proposal.[2] But Peck ventured several other approaches before he chose to make the biopic, emphasizing the obstacles faced by those from the global South who wish to popularize their own heroes:

> I imagined dramatizing the investigations of UN experts in Elisabethville; I imagined a young Congolese man shortly after the independence who falls in love with a European woman who has come to find the body of her brother, . . . There was always the attempt to inject into this story a "white" character as a sort of intermediary. We could not ignore the inevitable realities of making a film about a black lead, and especially a French-speaking one. (Zeitgeist)

Settling on the biopic genre and a smaller budget (four million dollars rather than the ten or fifteen he would have preferred), Peck's challenge became compressing a complex story into a film with a running time of two hours. After eight drafts the final version of the script was written in collaboration with acclaimed French screenwriter Pascal Bonitzer.

The main narrative of *Lumumba* begins in 1958, after Lumumba's return from the pan-African Conference in Accra, with a brief flashback to Lumumba's arrival in Leopoldville, his appointment as sales director for Polar beer, and his certification as an *évolué*. It ends with his death. We see his political activities, his imprisonment, and his release in order to join the Round Table discussions in Brussels in January 1959; the tumultuous months following the brief joy of the declaration of independence, marked by mutiny in the ranks of the Force Publique, secession in Katanga and Kasai, and desperate pacification efforts made by Lumumba and other ministers undermined by General Janssens and the Belgians; Lumumba's suspension by Kasavubu, Mobutu's "pacific" revolution, Lumumba's house arrest, his escape and capture; and his transfer to Katanga and the brutal beatings preceding the death of Lumumba, Maurice Mpolo, and Joseph Okito.

The frame narrative that starts the film shows Lumumba being driven to his place of execution, two Belgians exhuming bodies in order to destroy them, and the 1966 independence day celebration, the day Mobutu declared Lumumba a national hero. When the frame narrative returns at the end of the film, the footage of Lumumba's last minutes is interspersed with Mobutu calling for a minute of silence to honor his memory. The

final images show two young people, representing the future challenge to Mobutu's illegitimate power, followed by the bright flames of revolution erupting from the barrel in which Lumumba's remains are being burnt. Although, as David Moore has pointed out in "Raoul Peck's Lumumba: history or hagiography?" certain events and historical actors are omitted, Peck strives for an accurate depiction of Lumumba's life.

Promoting a Sense of the Real

In interviews Peck insists that he did not invent any characters and made up very little of the dialogue: "the speeches are the real speeches of Lumumba, King Baudouin and the others, the interviews are real, the riots are real, the film is real from beginning to end" (Barlet, "Entretien").

Peck chooses a cinematic style that supports the effect he seeks. Although not all critics agree that Peck embraces the Hollywood style in *Lumumba*, the viewing experience certainly does conform to Rosenstone's characterization of the film language commonly used in Hollywood that promotes a sense of the "real." Peck's film effectively presents the "self-effacing seamless language of shot, editing, and sound designed to make the screen seem no more than a window onto unmediated 'reality'" (Rosenstone 123). A quick checklist proves convincing.

As far as the narrative structure is concerned, the majority of the characteristics of the Hollywood Style or Institutional Mode of Representation are present in Peck's film: the style focuses on creating verisimilitude or the appearance of truth through mise-en-scène and the use of synchronous sound. Peck does not follow to the letter the narrative of order, disorder, and order restored, but his story does offer the promise of revolution, and future order or justice. The narrative follows a basic linear pattern; the framing of the film departs from linearity, but the few flashbacks are clearly articulated. Events are linked by cause and effect. The plot is mostly character-led; indeed, Peck has been criticized for his focus on Lumumba the individual rather than on the larger forces at play at the historical moment. Although Lumumba is not psychologically and individually motivated, he is politically motivated and strives for the attainment of a goal, the complete independence of the Congo. The role of the hero is central; the narrative has closure.[3]

In terms of the codes of narrative cinema, a similar conformity to the norms is discernible: individual shots are ordered according to the temporal sequence of events that make up the story; editing techniques maintain the appearance of "continuity" of space and time and the editing itself is made to seem "invisible"; establishing shots are used; camera movement never exceeds the minimum 30 and maximum 180 degrees;

shot/reverse shot sequences and eye-line matches are typical; and voice-over narration is used to bridge spatial and temporal gaps. For example, after the speech during which Tshombe and Munongo attack him for not representing CONAKAT in Accra, Lumumba acknowledges that he had made mistakes that would have tragic consequences but reminisces that things had, nonetheless, started out well, serving as a clear transition to the flashback. Point-of-view shots are used to engage the spectator through identification with the look of a character. For example, the stature of the actor Eriq Ebouaney creates the effect that Lumumba is always looking down at the other characters, giving the viewer a sense of his moral superiority to those surrounding him who succumb to base and violent impulses.[4]

The sense of the real and the affirmation of truth go hand in hand. Whereas in *Death of the Prophet* Peck interrogates images and faces to demonstrate that their truths and their meanings are not apparent, the opening sequence of the film features archival photographs that eschew ambiguity. Although the meaning of an image is never self-evident, the context in which the images are presented downplays the possibility of multiple interpretations in order to make the central point of the opening sequence: the new era of Mobutu's regime is ushering in the same kind of brutality that had already been experienced in the Congo under King Leopold's rule. The photographs include images of the Force Publique under Leopold; of the 1897 World Fair in Tervuren, when 260 Congolese were taken to Brussels to be put on display; of brutalizing labor; and a group portrait of well-dressed colonials.[5] During the campaign against the abuses in Leopold's Congo, photographs were widely disseminated. These tended to include images of severed hands or people who had been maimed by the practice, Congolese in shackles, and whippings by *chicotte*, the infamous hippo-hide whip.[6] The photographs that Peck includes in his opening sequences show two women in chains guarded by a member of the Force Publique and a prone man being whipped, both also reproduced by Hochschild in *King Leopold's Ghost*. Another photograph's very composition denounces colonial attitudes and the violence of conquest: three colonials in white suits and pith helmets sit at a table sporting bottles of alcohol and two human skulls while a young bare-chested and barefoot African man reclines at their feet. The photographs are part of a montage that alternates black-and-white photographs with colorful footage depicting the lavish celebration during which Mobutu declares Lumumba a national hero. The colonials are to be compared with the laughing and chatting whites present at the party. The camera cuts from their jovial faces to close-ups of champagne glasses and the cheek of a suckling pig being carved off. The table groaning under the weight of a

fancy banquet stands in stark contrast to the suffering depicted in the photographs of the Congolese, suggesting that history is repeating itself and no one seems to care. The photographs that serve as telling examples of the cruelty of conquest and colonialism gain their full meaning from the juxtaposition with Peck's footage by establishing the parallels between Leopold's and Mobutu's Congo.[7] The whole sequence denounces excess, callousness, and deliberate denial of the past.

In another variation related to photographs, Peck reproduces images of Lumumba that have been reproduced so many times that they have become an integral part of his story. Those familiar with the famous images of Lumumba find them scattered throughout Peck's film: his arrival at Brussels airport for the Round Table talks after his release from prison; coming down the stairs of an aircraft after being arrested, wearing a white undershirt and without his glasses; perhaps most famously, a cluster of photographs showing Lumumba being manhandled by Mobutu's soldiers (for example, Lumumba sitting in the back of a truck with other prisoners, his hands tied behind his back; a soldier pulling his hair and trying to force a piece of paper into his mouth, presumably a note destined to communicate his situation to the outside world: he is literally made to eat his words); and a smiling Lumumba, wearing a leopard skin hat and holding flowers in his hand, surrounded by adulating crowds. All of these images have been reproduced almost perfectly in the film, not as archival photographs but as dramatically staged footage. These shots capture with precision the mise-en-scène of the original photographs taken by journalists, authenticating not just those moments but the veracity of the film as a whole. Peck specifies: "Familiar scenes from the photographs and newsreels have also had an emotional force for me. Their dramatic impact is intact" (Zeitgeist). This visual referencing of iconic moments is complemented in the film by inclusion of word-for-word extracts of historical documents, such as Lumumba's independence day speech and press interviews. The voice-over of Lumumba telling his story gains additional authority when it segues into actual extracts of his last letter to his wife Pauline.

The cumulative effect of all these factors is the equation "factuality plus verisimilitude equals veracity" (Paget 162). Barlet concludes: "Cela donne un film qu'on croit sur images" "That makes for a film that one takes at its images" or, as one takes someone at their word ("Raoul Peck").

Critics have pointed out the shortcomings of Peck's claims to truth, usually to identify the absence of significant aspects of the story such as the role of the United Nations. Moore claims, for example, that the film's "focus on and sanctification of Patrice Lumumba tends to hide

deep social forces structuring the agency of all political actors" (227). But what Peck does not do in the feature film—perhaps cannot do, given the constraints of his medium—he had done in his documentary. Given his preoccupation with Lumumba's character (in both senses of the term) in the biopic, Peck acts preemptively to counter the prejudiced and stereotypical notions he encountered in his research. Among the gendered images of Lumumba, Peck responds to the widely disseminated image of Lumumba as a "womanizer." Although this image was in part inspired by Lumumba's polygyny, it was also supported and embellished by the pervasive stereotype of black males as hypersexual.

Hypermasculinity or Hysteria

Any present-day portrayal of Lumumba has to contend with the weight of materials produced over a period of fifty years. A largely positive image such as the one Peck seeks to present necessarily involves an attempt to counterbalance negative perceptions. What do the omissions and transformations that make up this compensatory gesture reveal? In the interstices between historical facts and events, layers upon layers of texts, and current perceptions and politics, there is a complex play of anticipation, preemptive moves, counterweights, and a host of other revisions. To illustrate the challenge of representing Lumumba, Peck had offered in the documentary a list of epithets produced by journalists at the time. Absent from these epithets, except perhaps in "The Elvis Presley of Africa," is "handsome Patrice" (Halen 20), whose good looks are associated with his relationships with women and his image as a womanizer. In a *Washington Post* article from 1961 we read: "While the country disintegrated, Lumumba smoked hashish, drank gin or danced with his fleet of concubines in Leopoldville's noisy dives" (Lemelin 233).[8] Paul Dague's denunciation in part serves as justification for Lumumba's death. He tells us that Lumumba was vicious, corrupt, and incompetent and that there "is not much to mourn" (233). He is as disparaging of the women in Lumumba's life as he is of Lumumba himself, referring to them as a "fleet" as if he were speaking of a collection of Cadillacs.

The racist stereotype of black male hypersexuality that informs these kinds of characterizations has received significant scholarly attention.[9] In representations of Lumumba, however, this image of unbridled sexuality exists alongside the contradictory portrayal of a feminized, hysterical Lumumba. Lumumba's instability is seldom overtly coupled with femininity. But the suppositions that underlie the identification of emotional volatility as feminine have deep roots. The European enlightenment idea was that women's minds are ruled by their fluid, unstable female bodies

and they lack the "will" (which is a mental faculty, not a matter of force of character) to control their impulses; their inability to reason is inherent in their lack of self-rule. That is also a rationale for their subordination to reasonable men for the sake of familial and social stability. The colonial assumption that Africans are childlike and irrational parallels these ideas about women and were projected onto African males, feminizing them even as they assert their hypersexuality, which is also associated with lack of self-rule.

Édouard Vincke highlights the widespread negative impression of Lumumba: "He is regularly depicted as unstable, even emotionally disturbed, with a feminine, hysterical side. Never is the possibility of a virile or courageous habitus evoked" (167).[10] Vincke's study examines Belgian spy novels, but oral and written accounts by critics of Lumumba often express similar preoccupations with instability and hysteria. While in the documentary Peck juxtaposes interviews showing a calm and rational Lumumba with Belgian denunciations of his dangerous volatility, in the feature film his hero's masculinity is affirmed by his self-assured authority. He remains calm in the face of danger, such as armed soldiers barging into a meeting of ministers. When he is shown to lose his composure, it is at the moment that he breaks off diplomatic relations with Belgium, and it is the Belgian ambassador who comments on his outburst. The judgment is placed in the mouth of a Westerner, while the viewer has seen the undue pressure put on the Congolese government and on Lumumba in particular by the mutiny of the Force Publique (if not directly fomented by the Belgian officers, certainly exacerbated by their actions), the Belgian-supported secession of Katanga, and the deployment of Belgian paratroopers without consulting the Congolese government.

While the image of a hysterical Lumumba is countered by his mature and dignified masculinity, the womanizer image is revised in the portrayal of Lumumba's relationships with women, especially in his relationship with his wife Pauline.

Where are the Women?

Peck regularly includes women in his visual frames. I offer this brief overview because, given the male-dominated action of the film, it is easy not to register their presence or absence in various scenes. During political meetings, men and women are present, African women secretaries come up to Lumumba for signatures or feedback both in Leopoldville and during the Round Table meetings in Brussels, men and women crowd around radios to listen to speeches or dance at independence celebrations, and the women laugh at the inebriated Mpolo's rash proposals to

get rid of all the Belgians. Congolese women are seen to act as a group in one very brief scene. After berating the troops for misbehavior, General Janssens explains that independence is for civilians and that in the Force Publique nothing has changed: "before=after" independence. As the soldiers respond with murmurs and a ripple of discontent spreads through the ranks, their wives run up in a group, yelling "No you don't, white man!" and throw down their head scarves in indignation.

White women are represented with an acute awareness of class. The most memorable European woman greets Lumumba as he descends the airplane stairs upon his arrival in Brussels for the Round Table discussions in early 1960. The aged, white-haired woman with a kindly face presents Lumumba with a bouquet of flowers. Peck faithfully reproduces the words McKown quotes her as saying: "I am only one poor woman, but there are millions like myself. In their name I want to salute a fighter for freedom" (78). This gesture would confirm Lumumba's belief that the Belgians in their home country were welcoming in a way that was unimaginable for someone who had become accustomed to the daily racism experienced in the Congo, both at the level of colonial policy and in individual encounters. We see an example of the daily humiliations that are part of life in the Belgian Congo when in an early scene Lumumba's voice-over recounts how his family received their card of "civic merit," certifying them as *évolués*. Peck spares Lumumba and Pauline the mortifying ritual by showing a different couple enduring the paternalistic scrutiny. As the wife in traditional dress (a *pagne* and a headscarf) stands by the table, the scowling Belgian woman, captured in close-up, yells: "Fork on the left! I'm not speaking Flemish, after all!" as the wife stares back with apparent incomprehension.[11]

The white women in the Congo appear mostly as the crisis following independence deepens. Guns are handed to civilians, both men and women. A couple is stopped at a roadblock. Upon seeing a pair of bloodied legs sticking out from behind a car, the woman runs and tries to get back into the vehicle. Her husband crumbles under the butt of a rifle. Her screams and the tearing of her dress foreshadow greater violence and possibly rape. There are no allusions to the sexual victimization of African women in the film. After Lumumba and Kasavubu have been prevented from landing in Katanga, which has seceded, and are returned to Njili airport in Leopoldville against their will, they are awaited by Belgian soldiers as well as a group of Belgian civilians who accuse them of being responsible for the rape and murder of their compatriots. A woman, her face contorted with rage and contempt, spits on the car window. Once again Peck avoids humiliating Lumumba more than necessary while also downplaying the ugly behavior of the Belgians. In his account of the

event, Lumumba tells his colleagues in parliament (on July 15, 1960) that upon their arrival at the airport they had been surrounded by all the Europeans who called them apes, assassins, hoodlums, and thieves while "some of them spat in my face and pulled my beard, and one of them jostled me and took my glasses" (*Lumumba Speaks* 251). He adds that they endured other humiliations while the Belgian soldiers stood by and watched in amusement. Lumumba reflects in voice-over that he finds it hard to believe that in their attempts to maintain control over the Congo's resources the Belgian leaders are willing to go so far as to sacrifice their compatriots.[12]

Lumumba's Domesticity

Pauline is structurally privileged in the film because she is the one to whom Lumumba speaks in the voice-over that constitutes the primary narrative frame of the film. The words Lumumba addresses to Pauline, both in the actual letter and in Peck's expanded version, principally figure her as a good mother and wife, producing in his film the ideal family that Lumumba described in his writings. Unlike the smoking, dancing women we see in the bars, Pauline is seen outside of the Lumumba home only during their attempt to reach Stanleyville in November 1960.

Although the depiction of the Lumumba household serves to counter images of his polygyny, Peck also counters denigrating images of Pauline's supposed backwardness. The jokes that target the Congolese leadership often figure Madame Lumumba's "blunders" (Vincke 161). Here is an egregious joke, presented as typical. "Do you know what happened when Lumumba moved into the governor's house? Well, he called the plumber every day to come and fix the bidet. This is not a dirty story: Madame Lumumba thought the bidet was meant for grinding millet" (161).[13]

Although we do not see much of Pauline in the film, Peck creates a sympathetic character who is always dignified. In a scene where she comes in to find him once again sleeping at his desk, both she and Lumumba dismiss the idea that he manages to keep going because he is smoking marijuana, and Peck has her say, playfully: "You won't believe what the servants tell me." Perhaps an oblique allusion to his affairs, it also puts in her mouth the insight that prominent people tend to be targeted by rumormongers and that not everything one hears is to be believed.

In his critique of the film's lack of biographical truth, Moore says, in a note: "Peck also ignores Lumumba's four wives. His family life is portrayed as 'nuclear' and 'Western.' Would this truth have portrayed Lumumba negatively to a Western audience sympathetic to 'Third World' causes, including 'politically correct' feminists?" (354). While Moore's phrasing

creates the impression that Lumumba may have been polygamous in the traditional sense, it suggests that Lumumba's personal life would be the only question relevant to feminist analysis and elides any consideration of the effects of Lumumba's *évolué* status on his family life. Moore is partially correct: Peck wants to create an image of Lumumba as a good family man. Nevertheless, he also tries to represent Lumumba's polygyny. He does not draw specific attention to the fact, however, so an inattentive viewer may not form a clear picture of Lumumba's relationships with women outside of his marriage to Pauline. Peck subtly acknowledges the fact that Lumumba had more than one woman in his life by showing him dancing with women other than his wife at various celebrations. Two moments in the film stand out. During Lumumba's arrest at his political headquarters near the beginning of the film, the woman who is the most obviously distraught is not Pauline Opango. In a later scene, the camera lingers on this same woman at one of the celebrations after independence. She is never named in the film but the cast list reveals her name. Hélène Bijou, who figures in an important scene in Césaire's play, remains a silent presence here, dancing by herself while Lumumba is drawn into political discussions with both allies and enemies.

Pauline's dress is a marker of her status. Although the men in *Lumumba* invariably wear suits and ties, Peck denotes her position as an *évoluée* by marriage by showing her in domestic settings and in traditional dress. On the morning of the independence day ceremony, we see her in the room where Lumumba is getting dressed while he and his close colleagues debate the risks of his unscheduled speech. She walks back and forth or helps her husband with his tie, in a visual reference to the fact that she herself will not be attending the ceremony. At one point, in the heat of the exchanges between the men, her expression and body language express annoyance and disapproval, presumably at the action her husband is about to undertake.[14] Politics and home life come together in this moment, perhaps more so than in any other in the film. At the beginning of the scene, Peck places Julienne front and center in a shot in which she stands with her back to the audience, observing the conversation among the adults in the room. A large stuffed toy in her hand, with her white dress in stark contrast to the dark suits of the men, she remains a silent witness. The drama that is beginning to unfold will shape the rest of her life.

Lumumba's sons François and Patrice are nowhere to be seen in the film. Peck instead presents Julienne, the only girl. In *Death of the Prophet*, Peck includes actual photographs of François playfully posing for Lumumba's official photograph as prime minister, since the photographers have grown bored waiting for Lumumba who always has more

important matters to take care of. Peck uses this event in *Lumumba* in part to emphasize the poignancy of the fact that the official photograph never got to be used because of the tumultuous series of events ensuing days after Lumumba's investiture, but he replaces Pauline Kie's son, François, with Pauline Opango's daughter. Peck omits any reference to Kie in the film and focuses all of his attention on Lumumba's wife and Julienne. Lumumba is shown feeding his young daughter (who is old enough to be eating by herself) and embracing her when he is exhausted. His forebodings about his own death are amplified by the pregnant Pauline's shocked and pained expression when he asks her to take good care of the children should something happen to him.

Peck chooses to include the death of Lumumba's newborn daughter Marie-Christine while he is under house arrest since it provides added pathos to the fact that Lumumba's world is crumbling around him. His political impotence is echoed by his helplessness in the face of his infant daughter's death. During the risky attempt to reach Stanleyville, Lumumba is shown seated in the back of the car carrying him and his family into the night. He looks down at Pauline sleeping on his shoulder while Julienne in turn sleeps on her lap.[15]

Although Pauline is not turned into a symbol of the Congo, her character does conform to the ideal woman, the dutiful wife and nurturing

Figure 7.1 Patrice and Pauline in Peck's film (Courtesy of JBA Production).

mother charged with reproducing the nation. This portrayal compensates for Western detractors' view of Lumumba as a hypersexual philanderer. Pauline and Julienne help to create the image of a loving husband and father. Nevertheless, Lumumba's relationship with Pauline, in its validation of his proper manhood, is in many ways of secondary importance. For it is imperative that his dignity as a black man be restored. This racialized masculinity is constructed in relation to Europeans, both men and women, and to the nation.

Rehabilitating Black Masculinity

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon insists that the black man's masculinity is a central category of anticolonial thought. It is also central to Peck's project. He says about Fanon, in *The Fact of Blackness*: "he has been instrumental in my whole political development" (Read 177). The analysis that follows defines Peck's approach to masculinity, with occasional references to Fanon's. Both men are commenting on the dynamics inherent in the historical situation, so a brief overview is in order. In depictions of the process of decolonization, African women are displaced in the discourses of both European and African men. White women are portrayed as contributing to black male humiliation, and the rape of their bodies is invoked to justify everything from neocolonial clamoring to control resources, fomenting divisions and even secession among Africans, to military intervention, and sending in troops to protect civilians. While African men vie for power among themselves, the rehabilitation of masculinity is focused on relations between former colonials and colonial subjects, all of whom are male. This masculinist interpretation of the moment of decolonization means that the male experience is considered normative even when there are no "antifemale politics and rhetoric" present (Joy James qtd. in Sharpley-Whiting 11).[16] Commenting on Fanon's masculinism, the black feminist critic bell hooks cogently sums up the dynamics of colonialism and therefore of decolonization:

> The blackness/darkness of the colonized body that marks it as other to the white coloniser is always framed within a gendered context wherein the metaphors of emasculation and castration symbolically articulate the psychic pain of men inflicted upon them by other men. Healing, as Fanon envisions it, takes place only as this conflict between men is resolved. (82)[17]

In Peck's film, rather than imagining an alternative dynamic, the most dramatic moment, the declaration of independence, is portrayed as a male affair.[18]

The independence day speeches of King Baudouin, President Kasavubu, and Lumumba represent a microcosm of the relations between Africans and Europeans and among African men at the historical juncture of decolonization. I focus on the film's depiction of the independence day ceremony since it lends itself ideally to the analysis of masculinism and its implications for women. The sequence of the independence day ceremony is well known. King Baudouin confers independence on the country in a speech that praises King Leopold and Belgium for the great work that they have accomplished in the Congo. President Kasavubu gives a neutral speech that conforms to all the niceties required by protocol. Lumumba, who was not supposed to speak, takes the stage and gives a fiery nationalistic speech that offends the Belgians but has the Congolese and their left-wing supporters rejoicing. Before examining Lumumba's speech and analyzing Peck's portrayal of it, let us examine the perceptions of independence as well as the Congolese and Belgian reactions to the speech, since these are excellent indicators of the shifting power relations and the ideological stances informing the moment.

Willame examines in detail the days leading up to independence and concludes that Lumumba is "frustrated by the pathetic character of what the Congo, with which he identifies, obtained on June 30: an independence in name only, without any real Africanization, without means and without its own resources" (115). Some cast this predicament as emasculating mortification. Heemelers, spokesperson for the Belgian government, states that "on June 30, the little humiliated Negro was receiving independence like a gratuity" (Willame 113). From this perspective Lumumba, impotent to thwart the granting of this merely token independence, feels personally humiliated, emasculated. His last resort is breaching protocol and making his powerful anticolonial speech. Lumumba does indeed fully grasp the neocolonial trap set by the Belgians. Peck portrays him not as humiliated but as angrily denouncing all the forces that are colluding against him and the new government. As he dresses for the ceremony, he expresses frustration at the fact that he was refused by the Belgians a gesture he considered crucial for the ceremony, a general amnesty for political prisoners.[19]

Although the Congolese response to Lumumba's independence day speech was mixed, the overwhelming majority welcomed it. Thomas Kanza, whom Lumumba appointed Minister Delegate to the United Nations, later questioned not so much the content but the time and place. "It's the kind of speech one could make in a stadium, it's great, that's what the people need on independence day." In a stadium, "he could have harangued the crowd in Lingala, Kikongo, Swahili, French and said all he wanted to" ("Mémoires"). Although he asserts that Lumumba

expressed the true feelings of the Congolese people, he does not believe that the terms were appropriate for the occasion ("Mémoires"). In the film Thomas Kanza is shown warning Lumumba of the potential negative repercussions. Joseph Mabolia, a student at the time, who heard the speech on the radio, talks of the "outmoded paternalism" of Baudouin's speech and reports on the reactions of his fellow students and even their Belgian teachers: "And Lumumba's reply, we thought at the time, was really what the moment required" and significantly adds: "We told ourselves: 'we have been rehabilitated'" ("Mémoires"). The cheers of the Congolese punctuating Lumumba's speech demonstrate the importance of breaking the silence. Several recounted their amazement: "finally, we said, someone dared to speak" or "we really got those Whites!" (Willame 113). In Peck's film this sentiment is primarily expressed in the explosion of applause that greets Lumumba's speech.

The White Man's Emasculation

Mainstream Belgian reactions characterize the speech as an "incartade," a prank, an escapade, an expression that once more translates their paternalism. For example, the historian Jean Stengers sees two opposing mythologies, expressed in a dialogue that he qualifies as "almost infantile": "To the words of the King, 'How good we were! What beautiful things we accomplished!' replied the complaint: 'How we were oppressed! How we suffered!'" He accuses Lumumba of inventing a struggle "of tears, fire and blood" and of letting the psychological needs of nationalism prevail over the concern for truth: "is the conquest of independence not, for a young nation, a title of absolute necessity?" (269). Although he initially seems to place the speeches of Lumumba and Baudouin on an even footing, he is unable to see that the Belgian choices also represent psychological needs and goes on to dismiss Lumumba's speech as "utterly unfair" (269). Even Belgians who are able to understand the humiliation suffered by the Congolese are not so clear-sighted when it comes to the ways in which they themselves might feel threatened, humiliated, and even emasculated when they lose their territory, their only prize, almost eighty times the size of Belgium. While the black man strives for rehabilitation from the past and present through the massive imbalance in power, the threat of neocolonialism, the insulting proposition of offering formal autonomy while continuing to control the organs of economic, military, and administrative power, the white man fears loss of access to resources and metaphorically experiences Congolese independence as a loss of manhood. Is the white man's fear not part of the black man's rehabilitation?

The most telling suggestion of symbolic emasculation omitted from the film is the snatching of King Baudouin's sword by a man watching the parade featuring the king and the president the day before the ceremony. The sword was quickly recovered. Robin McKown comments on the puzzlement of the Congolese who had witnessed the incident. "By African thinking, a chief who lets his weapon be taken is dishonored" (98). She contends that the Congolese earnestly discussed the affront and found it strange that the king had responded to the event so passively. *The Bearded Lion Who Roars*, a personal narrative by Elise Dallemagne-Cookson, records that the report received from Radio Leopoldville asserted that it was Lumumba who had seized the king's sword: "to the concerted horror of all attending dignitaries from around the world, to the great mortification of the King himself, Lumumba waved it about and began to glorify his people's hard won struggle for freedom" (79). She recounts that her father shook his head, "troubled by Lumumba's speech. Especially if it was indeed he who had dared seize the sword of the King" (80).

Pierre Halen focuses on "The white man's lost virility" in his essay, "Lumumba dans la littérature post-métropolitaine en Belgique: Une spectographie." Although his examples are literary, they shed light on certain dynamics. In *Chasses*, a novel published in 1984, Jef Geeraerts, a former territorial administrator, creates a white protagonist who has a relationship with a Congolese woman at the time of independence. He tells her about a dream he had: "I am taken prisoner. By Lumumba's soldiers. Mistreated. While they rape you one after the other right in front of me. Then a soldier approaches me. With a machete. To castrate me" (Halen 181). This fear is provoked in part by the mutiny of the Force Publique within days after independence. Some soldiers went on the rampage and there were instances of attacks on Belgians. Halen explains that this fantasy of rape and castration can be found in other works, but presented as reality rather than as dream. The supreme irony is that African women had been raped by white men and it was African men who had been metaphorically castrated. Who can forget the fact that agents of King Leopold's Congo held chiefs and their wives hostage in order to extract the maximum labor out of the men of villages and that many women were raped? Who can forget the sexual exploitation of "ménagères" under colonialism? Geeraerts's statement betrays the colonial mind-set that purports the necessity of protecting African women from their men. Since the woman is being raped by Lumumba's soldiers, independence comes to be associated with rape both of white and of African women. Although representing an unsubtle reversal of what had historically been the case, if not literally then figuratively, this fantasy of

rape and castration presented in *Chasses* succeeds in drawing our attention to the trope and fear of emasculation and the ways in which the actors try to defend their masculinity.

On the part of the Belgians, the ultimate fear and transgression seems to be the rape of a white woman by an African. Rape figures "as a violation of national boundaries, a violation of national autonomy and national sovereignty" (Mayer 18) and, we might well add, a violation of masculinity. In the context of the newly independent Congo, the rape of white women still functions in a similar way. In Peck's film, General Janssens berates Force Publique members who had been caught harassing Belgian civilians and adds that elsewhere: "They even raped a white woman." Their fate? "Executed!" However exaggerated the reports may have been (significantly, Peck has Janssens refer to a single white woman), Lumumba himself would be held accountable by many for the rapes of white women, which drew considerable international attention.[20] When commenting on Lumumba's trip to the United States (omitted from the film), a journalist for the conservative Catholic newspaper *La Libre Belgique* states in reference to the woman who takes care of guests at Blair House: "She's white. Let's hope nothing happens to her" (Halen and Riesz 196). He projects reports of rapes in the Congo onto the person of Lumumba himself and imagines that the visiting head of state would not observe the most basic of protocols. For this journalist, the final emasculation comes with the loss of the Congo and represents lost nationhood, as his peevish concluding remarks show: "No more Belgian Congo, therefore no more Belgium." He contends that "Belgianness" has been reduced to a "little patch of green on the map of Europe," since the great expanse in the middle of Africa will no longer be associated with it. He laments that one has to get used to the idea that "Belgium has become a worn-out subprefecture, in full menopause" and for Belgians all that remains are the trivial pastimes of old women: "the joys of knitting and decorative trimming" (Halen and Riesz 196–97). Not only is Belgium feminized now that it has lost the Congo, it is also beyond its prime childbearing years, no longer able to reproduce itself and its former splendor.

The Speech: A Discursive Gesture of Virility

Following this masculinist logic, Peck not only presents Lumumba's retort to Baudouin, which deeply offended the king, he also reinforces the differences between Lumumba and Kasavubu as Césaire had done. In the documentary, Peck's voice-over sums up the event by saying that the king spoke and said what he had to say, then the president said what he was supposed to say and thanked the king, and then Lumumba said

what was better left unsaid. The documentary presents part of Baudouin's speech and several extracts of Lumumba's speech but no part of Kasavubu's speech. In the archival footage, the camera capturing Lumumba's speech is at a slight high angle and a little to Lumumba's left. In the feature film, Peck shoots Lumumba at a low angle in frontal medium close-up in order to aggrandize his stature. In the documentary, Peck focuses less on the character of Lumumba in order to emphasize the consequences of the gesture within the larger context. In the feature, the focus is firmly centered on the hero.

Peck reinforces Lumumba's bold move by showing Kasavubu bowing deferentially to Baudouin when he addresses him ("Sire") and by consistently placing Kasavubu and Baudouin in the same medium shot frame. In the feature film, the dialectical montage Peck uses to capture the speeches lends itself to reading this moment as a showdown among the men and the constituencies they represent. Lumumba's speech was interpreted, and Peck seems to agree, as what Jean Van Lierde called "a gesture of virility" (Halen and Riesz 272) or, in Fanon's parlance, as a moment of rehabilitation of masculinity, a step considered essential in the struggle for national sovereignty (Seshadri-Crooks 196). The stakes of this standoff among men are very high. Many believe that Lumumba practically signed his own death warrant that day despite the fact that he delivered a conciliatory toast later that evening, an event rarely mentioned in nationalistic circles and that Peck too omits, perhaps because it would provide ammunition for those alleging Lumumba's instability and also because it would diminish the "geste de virilité." Peck acknowledges the fatefulness of this moment in the sound track accompanying Lumumba's speech. Silence falls as Lumumba approaches the podium. He then solemnly addresses the Congolese. As he starts mentioning the struggle it took to overcome colonial oppression and the suffering of the Congolese, referring to guns and prison, the ominous strains of the theme associated with Lumumba's death start softly emerging. As his speech turns to the happy occasion of the day, the music becomes more melodious. A quiet moment of suspense punctuates the end of Lumumba's speech and then the sound track explodes, along with the exuberant applause of the Congolese, into the refrain associated with the promise of greatness and hope for the Congo.

The actual words that evoked such a wide range of reactions must be analyzed in the context of the rehabilitation of masculinity while keeping in mind their potential implications for women. A central feature of the speech is that Lumumba divides it by the forms of address. At the beginning he addresses himself only to his compatriots: "Congolese men and women, . . . combatants for independence who are today victorious"

(*Lumumba Speaks* 220). The first section of the speech is devoted to the suffering and humiliation that the Africans endured under colonialism, while it refutes the assertion that independence was given to the Congolese as a gesture of magnanimity. Lumumba uses the word "lutte" "fight" eight times in the first three paragraphs, lists injustices and exactions, and explicitly evokes the racism and paternalism characteristic of Belgian colonial rule. When Lumumba reads the words referring to taunts, insults, and blows suffered by the Congolese and to the use of the familiar "tu," Peck echoes Césaire's evocation of a nation of "boys" by showing an image of a black man in short pants carrying a white woman's groceries to her car, emphasizing the special humiliation presented by African men's subordination to white women.

Note that the plight of Congolese women is not evoked in any of these images. Peck reinforces the idea that the nation has been constructed as a male project emerging from "masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation and masculinized hope" (Enloe 44). "Nowhere in the iconography of nations is there space for women *as* sisters, *as* a sisterhood" (Eisenstein 41). Despite Lumumba's form of address that includes the "Congolaises" "Congolese women," he uses the language of fraternal solidarity, "frères de race, frères de lutte" "my black brothers, my brothers in the struggle," when he evokes the shared suffering and the common struggle through which the new nation will be built. Lumumba continues to take on the paternal figure in his speech. When he says that Belgium was at last accepting the flow of history and had not tried to oppose Congolese independence, he casts the colonial power in a passive role. He stresses that the two countries are "equal and independent," rejecting notions of continuing tutelage. Only at the very end of his speech does Lumumba address the non-Congolese audience, and once again he employs the nationalistic discourse of struggle:

> Your Majesty, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, my dear compatriots, my black brothers, my brothers in the struggle, that is what I wanted to say to you in the name of the government on this magnificent day of our complete and sovereign independence. (224)

Peck manages to capture all these main elements in his brief filmic rendition of the moment, reinforcing visually the import of Lumumba's words. Lumumba deliberately excludes the Belgians who are present in his initial form of address, casting them in the role of bystanders listening to a conversation among Africans. He usurps from them their central and paternal role. Although he does not address them directly at this point, the words are also meant for them. Depriving the colonialists of the rosy

glasses of benevolent paternalism, he forces them to see colonialism from the Congolese perspective. Only then does he turn to the Belgians in order to ask them to join in the rejoicing for a Congo that is now being wrested from their hands. The first part of the speech serves to level the playing field, a preparatory gesture necessary in order for this black African man to be able to speak to this white king on an equal footing.

Although on this august occasion it is the words of King Baudouin that are performative, because he has the power to proclaim the independence of the Congo and make it a legal reality, it is the words of Lumumba that are treated as if they carry real power. He has discursively created equality between the two nations (at the cost of diplomacy), but the truly performative value of Lumumba's pronouncements is shown in the consequences of the speech. Despite other actions taken by Lumumba, the focus always comes back to his words, almost as if his words constituted the ultimate transgression and threatening act. This is certainly the way Peck sees it: "In fact, Lumumba 'did' nothing, he never had the time. Why kill him then? In the film, his voice says: 'I had only expressed out loud a dream of freedom and brotherhood. Words they couldn't stand to hear. Just words' " ("Hero").

Would Lumumba's words have had the same effect if spoken in a stadium, in a place appropriate for haranguing crowds of Africans? Peck emphasizes the power of those words by showing us the effects they have. In the film, whites' growing fear is shown by the nervous glances of two women in a restaurant while a black waiter looks on. These women's apprehension foreshadows the rapes that are associated with independence in many people's minds. Peck's image reminds us of how a threat to the nation is mediated as a threat to the bodies of women. We also see white officers moving away from radios while black soldiers move closer, signaling not only disapproval and approval, but already a reversal in the relations of power. Lumumba's discursive move becomes a powerful gesture of rehabilitation for the Congolese of 1960 and for their descendants to whom he bequeathed it as a legacy.

At the very beginning of the speech he entreats the Congolese:

> I ask all my friends . . . to make this June 30, 1960 . . . a date . . . whose meaning you will teach your children with pride, so that they in turn will tell their children and their children's children the glorious story of our struggle for freedom. (221)

In the original French there is a transition from the gender-neutral "enfants" "children" to "fils" "sons" and "petits-fils" "grandsons." Perhaps intended to be universal, it nevertheless has the effect of focusing

on male offspring and presents women as mothers of sons. Although having a daughter present in the film in the family scenes allows Peck to portray Lumumba more easily as a nurturing father and to increase the pathos when we anticipate Lumumba's death, it could also be argued that her presence serves to counter the suggestion that the legacy is meant to be passed on exclusively to the male offspring.

The utmost importance to Lumumba of the transmission of the legacy is dramatized by Peck, who shows Lumumba and Kanza offstage, engaged in a dialogue while Kasavubu is giving his speech. In the film, when Kanza warns Lumumba that his unscheduled speech is too dangerous, Lumumba retorts: "You heard him. We must reply! What will our children retain?" Contrary to popular belief, it seems that at this point Lumumba's indignation is directed more at Kasavubu than at King Baudouin. In response to Baudouin's paternalism, Kasavubu, like a good son, vows not to disappoint the Congolese people, the international community, or the Belgians. Scholars have pointed out that Kasavubu, to the astonishment of the journalists who had received a copy of his speech in advance, ended his speech here. In the last, omitted part of the speech Kasavubu evokes the solicitude of the king for the populations he has "loved and protected," and he thanks the king and his "illustrious predecessors" for the "blessings" that they had generously bestowed upon the Congolese (Kanza 160).

If we were to transpose what Kasavubu said into more frank language, we would see that his message is not one of servile deference. It is in fact a tribute to the struggle of the Congolese people, although he for the most part carefully avoids using the word "lutte." He expresses "recognition" or "gratitude" for the "the obscure or heroic artisans of national emancipation [who] gave selflessly their strength, their hardships, their suffering and *even their lives* so that their audacious dream of a free and independent Congo could be realized" (Houyoux 275, emphasis added). His acknowledgement of the contributions made by all Congolese is expressed in an inclusive enumeration that lists workers in industrial complexes and rural agricultural areas, the young and the old, all "who felt rising in their hearts an irresistible idea of freedom and who, *no matter what the consequences*, remained loyal to this ideal" (275, emphasis added). Twice Kasavubu honors those who were willing to give everything, including their lives, to make the dream of independence become a reality. He also devotes a sentence to women. He primarily sees them in their traditional roles as mothers (of sons) and wives, but he acknowledges that women did not shy away from the fray of political struggle: "I think also of our women who, without faltering for a single moment, comforted their sons and husbands in their *magnificent struggles*, and often even found themselves by

their sides *in the heat of battle*" (275, emphasis added). Although he finally does use the terms "luttes" and "combats," what remains absent from a speech that recognizes unflagging struggle are the specifics of the hardships and humiliations endured and naming the agents of the oppression. Peck emphasizes the differences between the two men and on several occasions depicts Kasavubu as wholly surpassed by events. Significantly, Peck reinserts into the president's speech what Kasavubu had chosen to omit, giving more éclat to Lumumba's "geste de virilité."[21]

Decolonized Minds

By focusing on Lumumba's objection to Kasavubu's response to Baudouin's paternalism, Peck foregrounds the legacy to be passed on, which will help those remaining to stand up and fight for true freedom. We know that Lumumba addressed his final letter and political testament to Pauline. Peck decides to use this letter as a conceit with which to frame his whole film. Our first image of Lumumba shows him being driven to the forest where he will be shot. Badly beaten and without his glasses, he seems to be looking at realities beyond our grasp. Speaking from the grave, as it were, his voice says to Pauline: "You never knew anything about that night in Katanga. Nobody was supposed to know anything" and then "You won't tell the children everything. They would not understand." At the end of the film, Peck concludes the long letter with words from Lumumba's actual letter to Pauline, expressing his wish that the children learn that it is up to them to accomplish the sacred task of rebuilding the country. Both the documentary and the feature film constitute in part an accomplishment of Lumumba's prophecy about the history of Africa no longer being written by westerners. Although Pauline will pass down the legacy to the children, she will presumably not participate in the writing of the history of the continent.

At the end of the film a young woman is presented to serve as a counterpoint to Pauline, though we might argue that her appearance is too fleeting to make a substantial contribution to the film. As those who were "duped" (to use Fanon's term) applaud Mobutu's insidious cooptation of Lumumba as a national hero at the celebration that is part of the frame narrative, a young woman and a young man stand out from the crowd. Moore describes the end of Peck's film: "Flames erupt from the barrel of acid that has been decomposing Lumumba's body. We are to imagine the revolutionary impact inspired by a truly African history. The two young and glowering soldiers who in the previous scene refuse to clap for Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za Banga (the all powerful warrior who goes from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake)

are, we suppose, the bearers of this new history" (225). Moore is correct that there are two scenes, but in the first we see only the woman, not the soldier. She is not wearing a uniform in either scene, so she is not immediately recognizable as a soldier. For those who know the history of the participation of women in the rebellions, it may seem plausible or even obvious that the man and the woman are combatants. Yet, even though they are sharing the glowering frown and standing together, the average viewer would not necessarily draw this conclusion. Armed resistance was perhaps the only logical way to fight Mobutu's military regime, but how does Peck's choice of the soldier position the woman? What will her role be, both in reality and symbolically, in the highly masculine militarized regimes that were still flourishing in the Congo at the time that Peck was making his film?[22]

Nevertheless, these figures represent the decolonized minds of those determined to gain true independence. Their resistance is portrayed in their silent presence, not through their voices. Peck too is a bearer "of this new history." How does he do it in his feature film, considering the fact that he has used a mainstream medium? Here is how Peck himself talks about practicing the art of film as a person of color:

> Sometimes I feel like a slave trying to evade slavery and find ways to deal with the master.... They [the slaves] say "yes" at first, but in the back of their minds they are already thinking of a way to get rid of them [the masters]. This permanent *marronage* or subversion is an attitude I also have to use in my work today. We are in it and out of it at the same time. [Since I practice a commercial art where hundreds of people are involved in producing the product and I must stay aware of what the public wants,] through *marronage* I can try to fulfill all these expectations up to a point and try by the same token to break these expectations and find my own originality. (Read 176)[23]

Can we discern elements of subversion even in *Lumumba*? Peck mentions one aspect among many: "We have not only to create and recreate something that we never had but we also have to de-create or deconstruct it.... I have to decide how to direct my actors after so many years of ideas imposed by 'black' Hollywood. I have to decide how I am going to fight the existing clichés" (173). Peck's characters certainly always seem dignified, even those controlled by westerners and their interests, and there are no obsequious "oui bwana" types.

As he does in *Death of the Prophet*, Peck develops parallels between the Africans and the Europeans. A good example is his cross-cutting between the deliberations going on in adjacent rooms during the Round Table talks. Although their ideologies are diametrically opposed, Peck

emphasizes similarities between the Congolese and Belgian delegates and places them on an equal footing by filming them in the same way. Peck also emphasizes Lumumba's humanity by almost immediately showing Lumumba in conflict with politicians from Katanga. In the voice-over Lumumba admits to his mistakes. Peck insists from the very beginning that Lumumba, although a hero and a national and international martyr, is also a man of flesh and blood. He extends this approach to the easily demonized character of Mobutu. Barlet emphasizes Peck's resistance to Manichaeism in his depictions of unsympathetic characters such as Mobutu, Tshombe, and Munongo. Peck confirms: "As for Mobutu, it was out of the question to turn him into a typical puppet typical dictator, a 'cunning and cruel black king.' He made a choice and he was not alone in this decision: he is neither a monster nor 'pathologically evil' " (Barlet, "Entretien").

Finally, Peck's use of the voice-over allows the viewer to feel more intimately engaged with Lumumba. His last words, addressed to his wife and by extension the viewer, because of the use of the second person, creates an experience of unmediated access to his thoughts. For all audiences, but perhaps especially for audiences of color, whether in Africa, the rest of the Third World, or the West, his words represent a decolonized voice. It is this liberating kind of voice that the two young people at the end of the film represent, which is manifested by their willingness to fight for revolution in a corrupt Congo. We identify with the position of the young woman and the soldier in the film and perhaps even feel called to action by their brave example. At the very least we are roused to feel hopeful about the future, represented by the flames of freedom that close the film. *Lumumba* profoundly moves viewers hungry for cultural images that represent their histories, hungry for voices that speak truth to power.

For all these reasons we recognize the importance of Peck's film in a cultural landscape shaped by Western hegemonies. But, given the illusion that carries a sense of the real and the ways it sets up a masculinist position of which viewers may remain unaware, it is imperative to approach the film as a "resisting reader," weighing the full implications of Peck's work for women. The feminist and gendered reading offered in this chapter acknowledges Peck's contribution to the collective struggle of the peoples of the Third World to be in charge of their collective memory and to participate in the writing of their history, a struggle that is of particularly vital importance to women.

Released almost a decade earlier, Peck's documentary *Lumumba: Death of a Prophet* stages both hegemonic images and ways of interrogating them and introduces an important decolonized female voice. The film itself

contains the resistance that the viewer is obliged to provide when watching the feature film. In this very personal documentary, Peck addresses his emotional investment in Lumumba's story, an affective underpinning that intimately links the two films. Peck emphasizes the continuity between the two when he expresses his need to return to the feature film after eighteen months as Minister of Culture in Haiti in the late 1990s, years after the completion of the documentary: "I decided to return to Lumumba and set the record straight, 37 years after the fact, about a murder-cum-sacrifice. It's also a matter of transcending my own griefs, regrets, and still-burning anger" (Holloway). Both films answer Lumumba's call for a history written, geographically and ideologically, far from the centers of power of the first world. Peck and Lumumba share a preoccupation with what each generation leaves for the next. In the feature film, Lumumba, as he listens to Kasavubu's speech on independence day, asks Thomas Kanza, "What will the children remember?" Peck says in an interview: "The 1992 documentary is, in fact, the story of my family. And of the Haitians who went to Congo. And how a young boy learned through oral history. And what I, myself, give back to my own daughter as a filmmaker" (Zook). While delving into his family's history in the Congo, Peck interrogates the images with which he and many others grew up: images created by westerners with vested interests, journalistic and historical accounts oblivious to their own biases disseminated as the truth. He counters these images in different ways in the two films.

In my view, we should read Peck's two films dialectically. Not only does Peck unsettle our expectations by engaging in a play between the truth of fiction and the fiction of truth from one film to the other, neither film represents his final word. In the documentary, a genre traditionally associated with truth and objectivity, Peck chooses to interrogate those very assumptions and to introduce his personal story and his mother's voice. In a fictionalized historical drama, he insists that "This is a true story." From the documentary, we can better understand what prompts Peck's preemptive moves in the feature film and see more clearly the limitations imposed by the choice of genre, especially as it pertains to the representation of women and Lumumba's masculinity.

CONCLUSION: LEGACIES

Many have strived to go beyond the "idéologème," a kind of shorthand reference evoking heroic struggle and martyrdom in the name of freedom and sovereignty represented by the name "Lumumba," and to bring to life the words and actions of the legendary nationalist. They have re-presented Lumumba's political testament in his letter to Pauline and have attempted to rise to his call to struggle for emancipation, dignity, and justice. Yet most discussions of Lumumba's legacy take place at a level of abstraction that brackets the consequences of this struggle for the people who shared his life. This conclusion explores the gendered politics of transmitting and defending legacies.

Pauline Opango Lumumba is very upset with Raoul Peck, not for his portrayal of her husband, but for his depiction of her at a crucial moment. Unable to regard with indulgence what the rest of us see as understandable poetic license in the feature film *Lumumba*, she is no doubt expressing frustration at having her life constantly scrutinized by scholars, filmmakers, and muckrakers of all stripes. What disturbs her in Peck's film is the scene in which Lumumba has the dugout canoe turned around because the soldiers have started harassing Pauline on the shoreline. According to her, Lumumba was met by soldiers when he reached the other side of the Sankuru River. Peck's rendition repeats the "romantic" version, which, as Robin McKown has pointed out, has been circulated repeatedly. When I raised Madame Lumumba's version during my visit to the Congo, it was dismissed with a wave of the hand in favor of the dominant version. This account makes Madame Lumumba feel that she is considered to be responsible for her husband's death, since he was called back to the shore by her cries.[1]

Her sensitivity to these interpretations is probably reinforced by the outrage that one of her actions sparked. In 1966, when Lumumba was recognized as a national hero, she is said to have attended the ceremony after having been invited back to the Congo by Mobutu. Andrée Blouin criticized her harshly, calling this act "a travesty against her husband's name" (288). Similar anger and resentment was expressed by others

among Lumumba's supporters. People are prone to judging others in the light of history, but we all live amidst contingencies. Perhaps Pauline wishes she could undo what she did. Certainly, after thirty-two years of Mobutu's rule, many individuals would like to rewrite the history of their lives as they coped with a brutal dictatorship and were influenced by its all-pervasive propaganda machine. Perhaps now some can recognize her humanity, not just regard her as a symbol of the legacy to be upheld.

Madame Lumumba's frustration is matched by Blouin's profound disappointment at not being able to have her story told the way she would have preferred. Lumumba's story has been recounted so many times from so many ideological perspectives, all of which claim to be faithful representations of the same events but portray them in a vastly different manner, that we realize how profoundly a particular point of view shapes interpretations of the past. Blouin's frustration comes from the fact that the one version of her life story that saw the light does not correspond to her vision. Although she had learned to let go of all the negative epithets attached to her name when she was in the Congo, she was deeply disturbed that Jean MacKellar, with whom she had spent countless hours as she allowed her story to be recorded, constructed a version that erased what she considered her fundamental contribution, a political legacy, by framing her life in psychosocial terms. The autobiographical form is quite different from a political testament. We do not know what MacKellar, who worked in good faith and is said to have reproduced Blouin's actual words, thought about her subject's sharply negative reaction to the way she shaped the story. Perhaps, had she been given the chance, Blouin would have realized that any and every form would be unable to represent lived experience in its immediacy, its uncertainty, and its rich diversity. No account could fully correspond to her image of herself. What is recounted is a composite portrait that emerges from the successive episodes of her life in the imaginations of others.

Léonie Abo and Ludo Martens had a happier collaboration. Even if they differed over matters of emphasis and interpretation, it is likely that they would have been smoothed over because of their shared left-wing ideology and the controversial character of the legacy they were trying to preserve. The rebellion left deep wounds in the region where the armed insurrection was waged, on the bodies of the participants, on community relations, in the psyches of mothers who lost children, and on those children who, however they may interpret that historical moment, have abandoned their parents and are pursuing their own lives burdened with whatever their experiences engraved on them. Monique Ilo finds community with former combatants, but her son with Pierre Mulele is lost to her. When Abo's daughters listen to their mother's testimony, what does

it mean to them? The final chapter of *Abo: Une Femme du Congo* represents the presumably successful transmission of this legacy to the next generation as represented by Abo's daughters. But a question posed to her during the interview about the relationship between the generations prompted a much more disillusioned response: "There is no relationship between the generations because the ideals are not the same. At the time of the maquis, we were attracted by ideas. But today, it is money, political posts that are on people's minds." Although progress has been made in rehabilitating the image of Mulele, there is an equally strong sense that the transmission of the legacy is being interrupted or reaching a dead end. A few groups still embrace these values and try to apply them to solving the country's problems, but often their words fall on deaf ears. Perhaps they are considered to be a vestige of the past. When Madame Abo was asked a follow-up question about what influence the parents' participation in the maquis had on their children, she immediately returned to the past, noting that the parents came to the maquis with their children in order to help them discover the revolution that was going to free them from servitude.

Certainly Lumumba's children would have felt, along with their mother, the weight of a legacy to be lived up to.[2] As they were being harassed on their way to school before being sent to Egypt, they must already have had a sense of their being marked for an uncommon destiny. To varying degrees and at different times, they have remained engaged with the plight of the Congo even though for the most part they grew up abroad. They were among the candidates in the 2006 elections, the first democratic elections since 1960, when their father's party won the majority of the votes.[3] Juliana served as Minister of Culture in Laurent Kabila's government. Despite the fact that the Belgian government dealt with François during the parliamentary enquiry, Juliana has become a veritable spokesperson for the family. It is she who speaks to Peck in his documentary and has also been interviewed in another film dealing with the Congo's history.[4]

Lumumba's daughter has played a role that was unavailable to most women in her mother's generation. Some of the daughters of Lumumba's mortal enemies are defending the men they knew as fathers and not as politicians. Justine M'Poyo Kasa-Vubu, in addition to being politically active, has written a book about the man who is often maligned when compared to Lumumba. She has engaged in public debate, asking whether the Congo has truly been decolonized. Moïse Tshombe, who led the secession of Katanga, also has a daughter pleading to have his memory rehabilitated ("Congo-Kinshasa"). For Lumumba supporters, Godefroid Munongo will always remain the man who is said to have dealt

Lumumba the deathblow. His legacy continues to foster lively debate. In a Congolese online forum, someone recently told his family members: "As a political figure, Munongo no longer belonged to you" (Mandala). All involved in the Congo's decolonization are obliged to accept the fact that the legacies of the actors of that time, as much as it matters personally to their families, are now public property.

Yet, through all the contradictory versions of events that have been recounted, through the many layers of interpretation that have come to cover their images, we are still moved and inspired by the stories of Lumumba, Blouin, Abo, and others. We still feel that we can hear Lumumba, that his voice is still calling us to action. Do some, when they discover his story, in a book or a film, respond as the African American feminist critic bell hooks did when she first read Fanon? "When I first read *The Wretched of the Earth* I heard a new history spoken—the voice of the decolonised subject raised in resistance. That voice . . . articulated a yearning for freedom that was so intense and a quality of emotional hunger that was so fierce that it was overwhelming. Dying into the text, I abandoned and forgot myself. The lust for freedom in those pages awakened and resurrected me" (Read 81). In that moment of recognition, gender had no meaning, but the emotional yearning for freedom was to be tempered by critical analysis. Rereading Fanon twenty years later, bell hooks recognizes a fundamental shortcoming: he cannot imagine relations between black females and black males as a possible site of oppression and resistance (84). By practicing feminist analysis, hooks can continue to value Fanon without "forgetting" or "abandoning" herself. This approach is congruent with Lumumba's thinking. During the truncated period of his political development, his thinking was transformed. Though his views were shaped by his training and position as an *évolué*, he continued to educate himself and analyzed the situations he confronted with all the information he had at his disposal.

Women in the Congo have made enormous strides despite the many obstacles they have had to face. Mobutu gave only lip service to women's emancipation, the objectification of women was rife, the sexual exploitation of young women flourished, and legally women remained minors unable to represent themselves. Women activists won an important victory when in 2006 they managed to bring about significant changes in the Penal Code, integrating into the code international human rights law regarding sexual violence. Broadening the definition of sexual violence and increasing penalties for perpetrators, the law now covers sexual harassment, sexual slavery, forced marriage, sexual mutilation, deliberate transmission of incurable diseases, forced pregnancy, and involuntary sterilization. Systematic or mass rapes have been defined as crimes against

humanity. Yet the catastrophic situation in the eastern part of the country still affects women disproportionately, demonstrating that the issues of peacemaking and of women's bodily autonomy are closely interrelated. Devastated by over a decade of war, the region is marked by rampant militarization and a culture of impunity arising from the destruction of all the institutions, governmental and civil. Innocent civilians have been displaced by various armed groups, including government soldiers, rebels, and irregular militias, and unspeakably cruel acts of rape and sexual mutilation have been visited on women, men, and even children.

Although Lumumba has been claimed by people the world over, the Congolese remain the inheritors of Lumumba's legacy. His vision of a Congo free of external interference continues to elude them. As the world turns once again to the areas of the country where the rich deposits of mineral resources needed to fuel new technologies are to be found, many of the same challenges that he faced arise again. Despite the ongoing efforts of women and men of goodwill all over the continent, Lumumba's prophecy of a glorious history of "true independence" for Africa still remains to be fulfilled.

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NOTES

Introduction: The Gender of Decolonization

1. Given the context, "elle organise un mouvement des femmes" can also be translated as "she organizes a movement of the wives."
2. My sincere thanks to Father Bernard Muhigirwa, S.J., for translating Madame Lumumba's answers.
3. For the importance of leaders' wives in international diplomacy, see Enloe.
4. As Luise White points out in *Men and Masculinities in Modern Africa*, "masculinity" and "femininity" are not commensurate terms. They are both gendered categories, but their gendering takes markedly different forms (Lindsay and Miescher 249). For lack of a better alternative, they are used here as parallel terms in order to overcome the tendency to equate the term *gender* with women.
5. I use the term "masculinist" to refer to social theories, political movements, and moral philosophies based primarily on the experiences of men; I do not mean a belief in the superiority of men or the masculine, although that is sometimes implied as well.
6. Those who competed in the 2006 elections, a milestone in Congolese history, include the current president Joseph Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD); Antoine Gizenga's Unified Lumumbist Party (PALU) (Gizenga served as prime minister from December 30, 2006 to October 10, 2008); the Mouvement National Congolais-Lumumba (MNC-L), led since 1992 by Lumumba's son François; and the Mouvement Lumumbiste (MLP). Lumumba's youngest son, Guy-Patrice, born six months after his father's death, was an independent presidential candidate.
7. Joseph Désiré Mobutu seized power in 1965 and ruled the country until 1997. In the 1970s, during an Africanization campaign of cultural "authenticity" and economic nationalization, he changed the name of the country, the river, and the currency to Zaire. Mobutu Sese Seko's ruinous reign, which survived with significant support from the West, was dubbed a "kleptocracy."
8. Laurent-Désiré Kabila came to power in 1997 with support from Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. He was assassinated in January 2001. His son

Joseph Kabila took his place. After serving as president in a transitional government instituted by the 2002 peace accords (in which two of the four vice-presidents were leaders of former rebel groups), Joseph Kabila won the 2006 elections.

9. For Lumumba's presence in popular pictorial representations in the Congo, see Jewsiewicki and also Fabian.
10. Unless a source is provided, translations are my own.
11. In this logic "potency and masculinity are often seen to be synonymous" (Yuval-Davis 60). See also Edwards, especially "Ain't I a man? The emasculation thesis" (65–74).
12. I use the term polygyny because, although it can be used in the same sense of polygamy, it does not presuppose marriage.
13. Customary law was not "immutable tradition" as some Europeans thought, but "evolved out of the interplay between African societies and European colonialism" (Roberts and Mann 4).
14. These kinds of contradictions continued to plague Congolese legislation. In 1988 the Family Code, supposedly reconciling the demands of modern life with Zairian authenticity, represented a serious setback for women. Any legal recourse the code provided women was undercut by the fact that the man was considered the head of the household, to whom the woman owed obedience (article 444). Women remained minors, requiring male authorization in all legal and employment matters.
15. The Third World denotes states considered to be underdeveloped in terms of their economy or level of industrialization, standard of living, health, and education. I use it in Mohanty's expanded sense, which covers geographical and sociohistorical conjunctures and therefore includes "black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous peoples in the United States, Europe, and Australia, some of whom have historic links with the geographically defined Third World, [and who] also refer to themselves as Third World peoples" (Mohanty 47).

1 Lumumba on Women: From Domesticity to Political Mobilization

1. Fierlafyn points out the limitations of having access only to French and written sources (194).
2. After an initial attempt to publish the collection of essays, Lumumba did not pursue publication. It nevertheless remains an invaluable resource because Lumumba offers analysis and concrete examples of the contradictions contained in colonial rhetoric and practices.
3. While some use the word "évoluant" descriptively, as Mudimbe does, many colonial agents were said to prefer it because it better captured their belief that full evolution toward civilization by Africans was impossible.

4. Today, Spaas observes that although "the *évolués* have long ceased to exist, the term continues to elicit a feeling of embarrassment." Yet in Kinshasa there is still a large square called "Place des Évolués" (58).
5. I use Young's translation here. In the rest of the chapter, I use my own translations of *Le Congo*.
6. The Alliance des Bakongo, led by Joseph Kasavubu (who became the first president of independent Congo), promoted Kongo culture before becoming a political organization.
7. For example, in 1954 he paid homage to Henry Morton Stanley in a text considered "an extravagant eulogy" by Omasombo and Verhaegen (173–75).
8. At the same time, the Europeans were creating circumstances that led to situations they deplored: overcrowding and inadequate services.
9. See Ramirez and Rolot, especially 129–84. Compare this emphasis on small families with colonial efforts to reduce birth spacing in order to meet labor needs.
10. Other forms of masculinity were developing at the time, as recent publications dealing with youth in Leopoldville demonstrate. While Filip de Boeck and Katrien Pype look at the DRC today, Didier Gondola's study of the "Tropical Cowboys" shows forms of masculinity shaped by the same colonial system that produced the *évolués* and the contribution of these young men to the emancipation of the Congo.
11. Lumumba reproduced these same ideas, some of them word for word, in April 1958 for the Batetela cultural society of Leopoldville (Omasombo and Verhaegen 142–44) during a period when his political ideas were changing.
12. While this custom is said to cement the bonds between the families, many feminist anthropologists agree with Lumumba in regarding it as a matter of exchange in which women are treated as objects rather than agents of their own lives.
13. Lumumba was born into a group that defined kinship patrilineally. The law against polygamy and the system of patrilineal succession adopted by the colonial administration legitimated the Western conception of marriage and the family (154).
14. *Musenji* was glossed at the time as "a backward person, a *savage*" (Mianda, "Colonialism" 148). "Mu" is the singular prefix (person, individual), "ba" the plural (people, group). In the context of the time marriage represented the primary form of social advancement for women.
15. In Lumumba's speeches, the question of women's work is never raised.
16. Although this statement comes after Lumumba has scolded women for spending extended periods of time with their family, it is congruent with his views of women's roles at the time, certainly of the women of his wife's generation.
17. The March 1960 legislation stipulated that only men were allowed to vote. "How can a process of decolonization, a fundamentally emancipatory movement, quietly leave out half of the population? Clear pleas for

political equality between men and women did come from the Congolese side. Did this represent a minority point of view or was the question of women's voting rights never strongly promoted by the Congolese participants in the political negotiations?" (Creve 151).

18. During the Round Table meetings held in Brussels in January and February 1960 the Belgians and Congolese representatives set the stage for the elections in the Congo.
19. Presumably Lumumba also fears being accused of mistreating women.
20. The development of a feminine form of the word during the colonial period ("boyesse"), indicating the extent to which the term came to denote a type of employment, does not obviate the need to analyze the word's connotations.
21. D'Lynn Waldron, who reported from the Congo in mid-1960, claims that "there were always many more men than women at the public events." This would make it all the more likely for Lumumba to acknowledge their presence.
22. Simon Kimbangu, a Baptist mission catechist, founded the Kimbanguist church in 1921 and died in prison in 1951. Officially recognized in 1959, today it is a large, independent African Initiated Church. Introduced in 1925 by Nyirenda, who claimed to be the Son of God and who was executed by the British in Northern Rhodesia in 1926, Kitawala was an indigenous interpretation of the American Watchtower movement.

2 Lumumba and Women: The Personal Meets the Political

1. In the original French they characterize Lumumba as someone who "trace de la femme un modèle à mesure" [tracer = to draw; à sa mesure = commensurate with]. This language evokes Lumumba's desire to help women "evolve" so that their statuses can be commensurate. This quotation also raises the question of nomenclature. A count of four wives would include Pauline Kie, whom Lumumba never married but with whom he maintained a relationship until his death. If she were called his wife, that would make Lumumba polygamous, albeit not officially.
2. Zeilig points out that "Lumumba was anxious to make his household, despite the evident difficulties, a model for the community in which he was a rising star" (40).
3. Anyone working on Lumumba's biography is obliged to rely heavily on Omasombo and Verhaegen's *Patrice Lumumba: Jeunesse et apprentissage politique, 1925–1956* (1998). See also: McKown's biography (1969), Kashamura (1966), and Kanza (1972) (although their focus is not simply biographical), Jean-Claude Willame (1990), and Zeilig (2008), a welcome addition in English.
4. Lumumba came from a small ethnic group to be found in the northern part of Kasai-Oriental. Although the names of ethnic groups are usually preceded by the prefix Ba-, Omasombo and Verhaegen use the term Atetela.

5. The debate raged in *La Voix du Congo* in the late 1940s. Submissions included pieces such as "Prostitution et polygamie," "La polygamie et ses méfaits sociaux," and "La polygamie était-elle la règle des mariages africains" (Hunt, "Noise" 478).
6. See Lumumba's writings on the rural exodus (*Congo* 99–104).
7. Hunt explains that these "supplémentaires" are called "deuxièmes bureaux" (literally, second offices) today ("Noise" 480). See also Mianda, "Dans l'ombre de la 'démocratie au Zaïre."
8. Created in 1906, Union Minière du Haut Katanga (UMHK) was owned jointly by L'Union Minière, Belgium's largest holding company, which controlled 70 percent of the Congolese economy.
9. The colonial administration introduced the first agricultural zones around Kinshasa in order to keep the African women from being idle (Mianda, *Femmes* 30).
10. Compare this definition of a good man with Lumumba's views. The authority a husband had over his wife in Congolese societies was reinforced in the colonial situation not only because of economic and judicial privileges but also because it was seen as a sign of "civilization" (Mianda, *Femmes* 27).
11. "All through school-age, the proportion of undernourished children is frightening. One principal estimated it more than half—a very conservative figure" (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Food* 52).
12. Gary Stewart traces this trend to the musician Franco's use of the term (77).
13. Another example of the power of the UMHK is that "malonda," members of its private police force, would scour the city to identity "femmes libres" to ensure that they registered and had regular medical checkups. "The men in the bars, when they wanted to take a woman, politely asked her for her booklet in order to know if the woman presented any danger" (Sizaire 21).
14. Compare this profitable ownership with Lumumba's own struggles to obtain the necessary funds to build and furnish a house, despite the fact that he was a "commis de troisième classe" (Omasombo and Verhaegen 129–34).
15. "Concubine" is used here to refer to women who form temporary unions with men that include living with the man and often fulfilling tasks associated with wives, such as cooking meals and doing housework.
16. The Catholic church dominated education in the Belgian Congo; in 1948, Christian missions controlled 99.6 percent of educational facilities. The church's institutional presence and influence over curricula continued after independence.
17. For a systematic description, see George (1966), Comhaire-Sylvain (1968), and Yates (1982).
18. After independence, Congolese women start trickling into the University of Lovanium. In the academic year 1963–1964, forty-nine of the

1,087 students were women, but only four were Congolese. The next year there were six Congolese women (Comhaire-Sylvain, *Femmes* 249). Among the 266 recipients of scholarships for study abroad in 1965–1966, only twenty-three were women (250).

19. For calculations of the financial needs of an *évolué* family compared to the salaries that Congolese workers earn, see Lumumba's section "Intégration économique" (*Congo* 23–37).
20. Lumumba points out the reluctance of many worthy candidates to go through this ordeal (*Congo* 75–76).
21. Lumumba's first application for "immatriculation" in 1952 was denied on the grounds of "immaturity" but was granted upon appeal in 1954 (McKown 38).
22. All the other *évolués* had left their wives at home, as they were wont to do.
23. Unfortunately, there is no information available on Hélène Bijou, other than that she was part of Lumumba's entourage.
24. Zeilig says Pauline refused to go because her husband's hair was a mess. Despite the ambiguity in French of the possessive adjective ("ses cheveux" can be either "his hair" or "her hair"), attention to the larger context makes it more probable that it was the reverse. Omasombo and Verhaegen suggest that Pauline was angry at Lumumba at the time, so she may have made this choice, regardless of whose hair was a mess.
25. De Witte calls her Lumumba's third wife.
26. Guy Lumumba also gives her name as Alphonsine BATAMBA.
27. Unfortunately, the month and date of this letter are not available.
28. When Pauline left for Wembo-Nyama in March 1956, it was because of the death of her mother. She was unable to leave earlier. Her health was fragile because of an abortion, or miscarriage, followed by another pregnancy (Omasombo and Verhaegen 140).
29. Kie, unlike Opango, is said to have argued with Lumumba in public (Omasombo and Verhaegen 139).
30. Guy Lumumba suggests that they had met earlier. "It is during his stay in Stanleyville (Kisangani) that my father met Alphonsine Batamba, my mother . . . who had been crowned Miss Kisangani in 1956. Finding my mother educated and intelligent, my father sent her to Brazzaville to study with a promise to her family that they would get married as soon as she has finished her studies."
31. Louis Richard Onema Lumumba died in France on June 14, 2009.
32. See Omasombo and Verhaegen, "Lumumba écrivain" (151–97), and Mutamba-Mukombo, *Patrice Lumumba, correspondant de presse, 1948–1956*.
33. Blouin comments on Pauline Lumumba's return to the Congo in the 1960s: "To further legitimize his position [Mobutu] brought Madame Lumumba back from Cairo where she had been living with her children since the murder of her husband. And Pauline Lumumba agreed to this travesty against her husband's name and the Congolese people, opening a

ball on Mobutu's arm, posing regally for photographers, that all the world might see" (288).

34. Aoua Kéita was a militant in the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (RDA), details of which can be found in her autobiography. In 1958 she was the first woman elected to political office in the Malian Union of the RDA and played a major political role until the overthrow of Modibo Kéita.

3 Andrée Blouin: A Sister among Brothers in Struggle

1. As this book was going to press, I received from Herbert Weiss the "second two thirds of the manuscript translated from the French by Jean MacKellar in 1973." The manuscript at that time was titled "Options" and the author's name was given as Andrée Gerbillat Blouin. A comparison of MacKellar's final version with these pages will be the focus of a future study.
2. I am indebted to Professor Herbert Weiss for this crucial information, which was corroborated by Monique Chajmowiez, a close friend of Blouin's and editor at L'Harmattan. Weiss said that Blouin had prevented an earlier attempt in Italy to tell her story, but did not know what her objections were.
3. Numerous errors may indicate larger gaps in MacKellar's knowledge of geography and local languages. Her stance in the epilogue is conventionally anticommunist and critical of the ruling party in Angola.
4. Ludo Martens, whose ideology is distinctly revolutionary, makes a number of complimentary references to Blouin in *Pierre Mulele ou la seconde vie de Patrice Lumumba* (42, 50–62, 74, 90, 132, 319). Weiss, who met the son of Pierre Mulele at Blouin's in Paris, confirms that she had access to important Conseil National de Libération documents, proving that she was an insider and a supporter of the rebellion. Yet in her epilogue MacKellar presents the 1980s Blouin as a great "entrepreneur" working toward the development of the continent.
5. Even a quick glance at the manuscript "Options" shows greater attention to various political parties as well as the backgrounds of political leaders such as Sékou Touré and Lumumba.
6. Weiss was present during the PSA campaign. In conversations with people in Kinshasa and Kikwit, I found that they either had no recollection of Blouin or remembered something iconic, for example, that she wore pants.
7. In a series of radio broadcasts called "The African Moral Rearmament" she sought to counter the Moral Rearmament campaign "that described itself as anticommunist but that in fact was designed to subvert Lumumba's regime" (260).
8. Weiss reports that it was the doing of Kamitatu and other Congolese politicians, who disapproved of the influence she had on Mulele and Gizenga (*Political* 179).

9. Jeurissen specifies that nonrecognized *métis* could fall either under "l'indigénat traditionnel," which meant being subject to customary law, or under the legal logic applied to "civilized" Africans ("Femmes" 103). See also Jeurissen (2003).
10. For details, see *Congo terre d'avenir*, 57–58, 69–71, 78, and 91.
11. McKown explains that Lumumba's *évolué* status meant that he was not flogged, did not have to work on the roads or in the parks, and that his friends brought him his books, typewriter, and paper (48).
12. O. White points out that some *métisses* in Senegal live "à l'indigène" (160). Blouin had been removed from that milieu. For example, when her mother first comes to see her, the language barrier inhibits their communication. Blouin then started to learn Sango. Later, in Brazzaville and Kinshasa, she learned Kikongo and Lingala. Sango, mother tongue to the Ubangi along the river in the Central African Republic, is also a trade language derived from Ngbandi, which borrows from French and serves as an important vehicular language in the C.A.R. as well as in border areas of the D.R.C. and Chad.
13. Despite rumors that she was the "courtesan" of many an African leader, Blouin herself says that she was never romantically involved with a black man (157).
14. The birth dates for Blouin's children are: Rita, c. 1939; René, 1942; Patrick, 1952; Sylviane (who was six months old when Blouin was campaigning in Guinea), c. 1957.
15. Félix Adolphe Éboué (1884–1944), born in Guiana, was the first Black man to be appointed to the senior post of governor in the French colonies. Blouin uses the term "dowry" (from the French "dot" common at the time, the money, goods, or estate that a woman brings to her husband in marriage); the more accurate term would be "bride wealth" (payment made by a groom or his kin to the kin of the bride in order to ratify a marriage).
16. See Lauro, for the shift in attitudes toward African mistresses over time and for examples of affection between couples, despite the official discourse treating the *ménagères* as interchangeable (127–30).
17. Here "métisse" may stand in for "lover of color" or "concubine."
18. Blouin does not mention organizations for *métis*. Perhaps these groups reproduced an ideology from which she was trying to flee, "a form of mulatto ethnicity…strongly marked by Belgian colonial discourse (racialization of social relations and the affirmation of an in-between identity)" (Jeurissen, "Femmes" 105).
19. Drew notes that there is no indication that Blouin worked specifically for the women's wing of the Parti Démocratique de Guinée (PDG) (209).
20. Weiss corroborates Kamitatu's assertion that Blouin had a divisive effect on the PSA. Kamitatu said that she embraced the concept of the great leader and wanted Gizenga to play this role, while others tried to develop a more democratic model of leadership. She supported national

leaders who had been abroad while the provincial leaders had built up the party. As opposed to the RDA PDG, the PSA was a fledgling organization.

21. Marc Katshunga, who was governor of Bandundu in 1997, said about men and women in the PSA. "All our women were behind us. We held meetings. They too held meetings." It is certainly likely that the women felt more solidarity with their husbands than with an outsider like Blouin who brought to the rural area feminist notions that did not resonate in their environment. Mr. Katshunga died in September 2009.
22. From the outset the PSA was progressive in terms of women's issues, according them full membership in the party, voting rights, and supporting education of girls in all fields (Weiss and Verhaegen 12, 18, 19).
23. Madame Kamitatu became the vice-minister of national education in 1970–1971.
24. He passed away in October 2008.
25. Weiss says that her "brilliance was in the eyes of many attested to by the fact that although coming from Guinea she spoke the local language after having been in the country for only a few days!" (*Political* 178). Blouin reports using Kikongo and Lingala in the campaign and chooses Augustine to help since she can speak the "*patois* of the people" (207).
26. Blouin, as an outsider and woman with more radical ideas than some members of the party, was at least in part a scapegoat for internal wrangling in the PSA.
27. Separate meetings for women can be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of women could not understand speeches delivered in French.
28. Blouin's own testimony suggests that Josephine was not quite so fragile. References to her "little Josephine," which strike us as rather awkward in English, are terms of endearment in French. Chajmowiez said that Josephine was very short. The Banziri are part of the Pygmy family, perhaps explaining Blouin's emphasis on her mother's small stature.

4 Léonie Abo: The Political Lessons of the Maquis

1. I use the word "rebellion" interchangeably with armed uprising or armed insurrection. Abo called this movement a "revolution." Verhaegen argues that the Kwilu uprising was the only rebellion that was revolutionary: it sought to transform the bases of social, economic, and political organization (*Mulele* 267). For a brief overview in English, see Young's "Rebellion and the Congo" (1970). The authoritative work remains the two-volume study by Verhaegen (1966 and 1969); recently, in collaboration with others, he published a biography of Mulele (2006). See also Coquery-Vidrovitch, Forest, and Weiss (1987).
2. "Maquis" refers to a guerrilla fighter or band in the French underground during the Second World War. The name has been adopted by a variety of guerilla movements in francophone countries.

3. This interview was conducted by Jean Lambert Mulopo Pemba using questions that I had prepared.
4. Pierre Davister (the journalist who first called Blouin "the Black Pasionaria") reported on the repression of Lumumbists while Lumumba was still in prison. He estimates that in December 1960 at least 7,000 rebels were killed in North Katanga (Martens, *Mulele* 81).
5. See Fox, de Craemer, and Ribeaucourt; Welch; and Traugott.
6. Weiss and Fulco comment on the problems of studying women's participation. Despite the limitations of the documents, they concede that oral sources confirm that women played an important role in many "équipes" or teams (172–73).
7. Fox De Craemer, and Ribeaucourt point out that membership in the PSA was often a determining factor for joining the maquis (103).
8. In his novel *Between Tides* Mudimbe presents most women as having been forcibly abducted (51; 47). Seeking to understand the Maoist-inspired popular movement, he spent three "seasons" in 1963–1964 teaching at the seminary in Kalonda "at the border of the region consumed by the flames of revolution" (*Corps* 149).
9. Mudimbe, on the other hand, said that "In the Kwilu, Mulele's troops hardly differed, in terms of their ideals, from the government soldiers supported and trained by international mercenaries" (*Corps* 149).
10. In our interview, Ndande contended that all the women and girls were "kidnapped." Yet, giving a glimpse into the complex relationships between partisans and villagers, Ndande described how his family fled to the forest and was fearful of the rebels, but his parents, because of his family's ties with Gizenga, introduced the rebels to him as his "grandparents."
11. Women who supported the secession of Katanga and attacked UN troops to show their frustration at the soldiers who were "charged with stifling everything that had been undertaken for the salvation of and in the interest of Katanga" (Sizaire 169) have expressed their disappointment at the lack of recognition of their contribution. Their "fight" lasted all day and left a small number of dead and injured on both sides (171). A street has been renamed "Avenue des Femmes Katangaises" in their honor (172).
12. Girls as well as boys joined the "Jeunesse" [youth wing] of the MNC/Lumumba. Manya claims that in Lumumba's region of origin, the Sankuru, about 80 percent of young people between the ages of ten and twenty were adherents (71).
13. The participation of "sorceresses" in this and other armed insurrections was well known across Africa, not only to postindependence armies but also to colonial governments, who sought to repress them because they would convince rebels that they were invulnerable and facilitated communication among insurgents.
14. Although many of the Kwilu partisans shared the beliefs of the rebels of the east, Mulele did his best to demystify magical thinking. Abo quotes Mulele as saying that military tactics were their fetishes (Martens, *Abo* 79).

15. Mulele's mother was murdered more than a decade later (Martens, *Abo* 253). For an account of the rise of the mythico-religious movements that played a role in provoking the attack on Mulele's family, see Kibari Nsanga and Mundala Mpangande. Mulele's first wife, Clémentine, was killed in a car accident in 1965 that many believed was a camouflaged assassination (Martens, *Mulele* 140).
16. Records show at least 1,628 teams with an average of 53 members each, bringing the total number of partisans to between 90,000 and 100,000 (Weiss and Fulco 169–70).
17. When I visited the Katshunga household in April 2008, Nelly Labutu (also Labut) was too ill to be part of the conversation; she died in July. The generation of women who participated in the rebellion is passing away and with them their stories. Abo emphasized in her interview that there were things that she did not witness or experience and could therefore not include in her book. Rufin Kibari Nsanga has interviewed a number of these women; they focused on their role as combatants, contradicting the common perception that they did not fight. These interviews have not been published.
18. I had the privilege of hearing Monique Ilo's testimony during my visit to Marc Katshunga's house. Everyone listened attentively, offering help with a place name or echoing her words almost like a chorus. My sincere thanks to Sister Pauline Lukolongo for translating Ilo's Kikongo for me and later, with the help of Sister Xavierine Lele, revising and correcting my notes.
19. Indigenous culture was strongly age-graded, so that elders of both sexes were respected, and there was also a degree of spillover between terms of respect awarded to elders and leaders.
20. Government authorities, functionaries, merchants, businessmen, teachers, and missionaries were targeted by the rebels for their perceived opposition to progress and revolution. The doctrinal ideas, addressed primarily to village people, were disseminated using African and Congolese proverbs (Fox et al. 94–97).
21. Although some men brought their wives to the maquis, Mulele and his wife Clémentine decided to separate.
22. The high school now known as Lycée Siama, founded in 1950 as L'Institut Saint André de Kikwit, provided an excellent education and produced many women who have gone on to prestigious careers.
23. Béatrice Ndona Kimpa Vita (1684–1706) was recognized for her contribution to the fight against the slave trade during precolonial times; she was burned alive at the stake by Portuguese slave traders. See Thornton (1998) and Dadié (1970). Sophie Lihau-Kanza (1940–1999), the first female high school graduate who had an illustrious political career, was paralyzed in a car accident and became an ardent campaigner for the rights of the disabled.
24. Because the rebellions were closely linked to Mulele's name even though he had no direct contact with groups outside of the Kwilu, many people speak of the nun's death as if Mulele himself were directly responsible.

25. Yerodia, who was one of the four vice-presidents in the transitional government, has been accused of inciting racial hatred in the DRC during the 1998 war.
26. For an analysis of this dynamic, see Mason.
27. The Conclave of Lovanium was a parliamentary session intended to bring a new government to power in 1961.

5 Césaire's Lumumba: A Symbol of Sexual and Political Prowess

1. See Ernstpeter Ruhe's "Mokutu et le coq divinatoire" for a detailed comparison.
2. See Halphen-Bessard 12, 14, 153, and 400, for examples.
3. Although some references can clearly be traced to specific Western traditions, African scholars have studied parallels between Césaire's works and African value and thought systems. See also Kubayanda (1990) and Munro (1999).
4. "Césaire's poem with its eruptive, disruptive, denunciatory power aims to explode colonial discourse, the phallogocentric system on the other side of which lies a new map of the world, a different Imaginary" (Kalikoff 502).
5. Hélène Bijou's name is similar to that of *femmes libres* called Marie Chantal la Charmante, and so on. In Houyoux's study she is described as "Young Lulua woman of great beauty who was part of Patrice Lumumba's entourage" (262). Peck includes her in his list of characters for the feature film.
6. "When I speak of the deepest deposits, for me, it's beyond all the strata of European civilization, in the African layer, fundamental and ancestral, where it seems to me that my secret self resides" (Leiner 130).
7. Mbom incorrectly attributes the suggestions and uses his error to paint a negative image of Mama Makosi. He makes the sexist assumption that a woman reacts emotionally rather than on the basis of the political position she holds (232).
8. Ankumah, although she is correct in stating that she is inconsequential to the plot (as are all the female characters), reads her very natural reaction as unjustified panic (308). She ignores Mama Makosi's defiance of Mobutu's soldiers.
9. Césaire's source for this segment seems to have been Bonifacedo Mwepu's article on *femmes libres* in Elisabethville. In his section titled "De l'art de séduire" [The Art of Seduction], we read that the "jibula" allows a woman to show her thighs (and even more) while walking to "trouble" men and seduce them. The "jikita," made of pieces of cork that came in the bottle caps of "samba" beer, add bulk to a woman's hips, again in order to excite and seduce (180).
10. "N'golo" means strength or power in Kikongo.

11. "Kala est une femme devant Lumumba" can also be more literally translated as "Compared to Lumumba Kala is a woman."
12. I agree with Simon Ndombele when he states about Kasavubu that "Césaire transforms his diplomatic tone into sordid servility" (59).
13. The first sentence is taken word for word from the text Kasavubu did not read.
14. How does this reference to the ancient kingdom of Kongo—no doubt intended to unite the people of the Congo in their pride—function in the climate where the Bakongo (through ABAKO and their "king" Kasavubu) supported at first an independent political entity and then a federalist model of statehood?
15. A few women, such as Miriam Makeba, were known for their own contributions to the movement. But even Winnie Mandela, a powerful political figure in her own right, could not escape having her name yoked to and subordinated to that of her famous husband.
16. Césaire's valorization of African culture here can be compared with Pauline Opango's recollection of the day.
17. It is worth noting that she is not Mother or Maman Congo, but keeps her own name.

6 Peck's Personal Lumumba: The Maternal Voice in *Death of a Prophet*

1. In response to Hochschild's *King Leopold's Ghost* and the parliamentary enquiry into Lumumba's death conducted in 2001, the museum has undertaken to revise some of the exhibits.
2. Tintin figures can be found for sale on the streets of Kinshasa.
3. In 1998 Peck published a book about his experiences in the government. Many admirers of his films are confounded by his anti-Aristide politics.
4. When talking to Peck, Juliana (as she is also known) Lumumba attests to her father's integrity and she insists that he was targeted because he meant the words that others were using as empty slogans and reports that Lumumba knew he was going to die and would be forced to "abandon" his children.
5. Despite the urgings of his producers, Peck was unable to visit Zaire. Correspondence received from Mobutu's secret service made him abandon his planned visit to the country.
6. The subtitles in the film translate the phrase as "My mother says," which loses the connotation of storytelling.
7. The Pentecost hangings, as they came to be known, shocked the people and made them realize that Mobutu would stop at nothing.
8. This was confirmed in personal correspondence by both Gérard Étienne and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith.
9. Tom Turner reports that it was rumored that the CIA recruited Haitians and even provided some of them with needed diplomas.

10. The subtitle reads "and 'Mundele' when I found myself in a group."
11. Note in this passage the shift from the first to the second person, a distancing and a generalizing device.
12. In *Mobutu, Roi du Zaïre*, Mobutu's minister of information, Sakombe Inongo, explains how he thought up the famous daily TV images of Mobutu emerging from the clouds, which, with the slogans, the songs, the dances, created the godlike aura so cherished by the head of state.
13. In Stanleyville, Lumumba's party had won 90 percent of the votes, while in Leopoldville the African Solidarity Party had gained a narrow margin of victory over ABAKO.
14. In a chapter devoted to *Death of a Prophet* in her dissertation, Lauten analyzes Peck's references to the Holocaust as a means of effecting a transference of guilt (136–38).
15. See Raxhon (2002), and Braeckman (2002).

7 Peck's Hollywood Lumumba: A Masculine Hero

1. Much of the information included in the press kit was also available in Peck's "A Hero Betrayed."
2. A recent version of the "descent into hell" plot is Kevin MacDonald's *The Last King of Scotland* (2006).
3. Although the film has no narrative closure in the sense that order is in actuality restored, it leaves the viewer with a feeling of closure. First, the viewer feels that the truth has finally been told. Additionally, the last minutes of the film, although they have been harrowing, end with an image of hope (the flame of freedom or revolution) and rousing music that create a sense of finality. The resolution has been transposed onto the emotional plane.
4. Although Peck focuses on Lumumba as an individual, viewers tend to assume that Lumumba is speaking for the Congo, as in the "pervasive myth of African nationalism [that] merges one political man and the masses" (Moore 229).
5. There are several photographs of large numbers of Force Publique members (formed by King Leopold in 1885), which foregrounds the central role they played after independence. The soldiers were African, the officers European. While for the African population the Force Publique held connotations of subjugation, the soldiers themselves had been indoctrinated not to trust Congolese politicians, whose demonstrations they had at times violently interrupted. The name was soon changed to l'Armée Nationale Congolaise.
6. The *chicotte* became a symbol of colonial power in the Congo. See Dembour.
7. A recent example of this commonplace is Michaela Wrong's *In the Footsteps of Mr. Kurtz*, whose very title asserts this continuity.

8. In Sallie Pisani's fiction, *Lumumba Lost*, two Americans comment on Lumumba's amorous exploits during his U.S. visit: "With the frequency and duration of his disappearances, it can't be the men's room. Besides, I've noticed certain comings and goings among our fair ladies" (50). Their language subsequently becomes vulgar.
9. See, for example, Arthur F. Saint-Aubin's "A Grammar of Black Masculinity: A Body of Science" in Ouzgane and Morrell 23–42.
10. O'Brien's *Murderous Angels* presents just such a hysterical Lumumba.
11. A *pagne* is a wraparound skirt.
12. Peck captures racial and class inequities under colonialism simultaneously. When the director of Polar beer hires Lumumba, he informs him that he will receive the same salary as the director's assistant who is forced to acquiesce, despite his obvious reluctance, that his salary is very good. As this takes place just after we have learned that the sellers of Primus beer have accused Polar beer of causing impotence, the role played by class and power in constructions of masculinity is highlighted.
13. Vincke points out that the author has erroneously transferred a West African staple to the Congo.
14. This brief image of her reaction to the discussion stands in contrast to the pettiness of whoever's hair was a mess and how that determined Pauline Opango's absence from the ceremony.
15. In reality it was three-year-old Roland who was with his parents. Madame Lumumba explained that because of frequent harassment on their way to school, the other children had been sent abroad. At this time the older sons, François and Patrice, were in Egypt and Julienne was with family friends, while Roland accompanied his mother and Lumumba. McKown reports: "There is a romantic story, printed and reprinted, that Lumumba saw the soldiers from the other bank and returned to give himself up to save his wife and child. The truth seems to be that he did not see them until he stepped ashore again," returning with the ferrymen in the dead of night (168). Peck's rendition repeats the "romantic" version. In our last image of Pauline, she is decisive, firmly telling Lumumba to go ahead without her since she has nothing to lose.
16. These men also have access to "the patriarchal dividend, the power that being a man gives them to choose to exercise power over women" (Bob Connell qtd. in Ouzgane and Morrell 7).
17. hooks asserts that Fanon never engages in a critique of the reduction of female identity to the world of the corporeal and claims that he refuses to recognize the presence of the female in struggle "because it would require a surrender of the fraternal bond" (84).
18. Both in actuality and in Peck's film, there were only a small handful of women present at the ceremony. But most Congolese had to follow the proceedings on the radio; only the lucky few could attend.
19. See Willame for details (105–7).

20. McKown gives detailed accounts of the incidents at various military camps where Europeans were beaten and humiliated days after the declaration of independence (113). "The stories they told spread quickly over the European community, exaggerated and expanded with each telling. Many white people convinced themselves that there were raping and looting in the capital, which was not true" (114). In *Death of the Prophet* Van Lierde emphasizes the role of the press in fueling panic. Rouch agrees: "Where are these nasty raping, pillaging, ill-bred Blacks that scared the European readership so? Certainly not in Leo" (37).
21. Earlier, the Belgians had feared Kasavubu more since his ABAKO had been the first to call for immediate independence in 1956.
22. Pateman contends that the fraternal contract "also hides the figure of the armed man in the shadows behind the civil individual" ("Fraternal" 121).
23. The term comes from the word used for escaped slaves in the Americas. Eventually, whole communities of "marrons" sprung up and generations lived outside of the bounds of slavery.

Conclusion: Legacies

1. I was confounded by her fear of this event being interpreted in this way until a colleague of mine reported that after a screening of *Lumumba* the first thing one of her students said was it was Pauline's fault that Lumumba had been arrested. Apparently Madame Lumumba has faced similar criticism before.
2. I say mother instead of mothers since it is not clear that Pauline Kie has felt the same pressure as Pauline Opango. Even though she has always been recognized as François Lumumba's mother, she has not been scrutinized in the same way as the official widow.
3. Female presidential candidates in 2006 included: Catherine Nzuzi wa Mbombo, Justine Kasa Vubu M'Poyo, Wivine N'Guz N'landu Kavidi, Marie-Thérèse N'landu Mpolo, and Princess Antoinette Ngongyombe Tosimiaka M'Fumfu. See "Female Presidential Candidates" for their relationships to well-known political figures.
4. *King Leopold's Ghost* (2006).

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TIMELINE

1908 Belgian Parliament gains control of the Congo Free State, previously privately owned by King Leopold II of Belgium, and renames it the Belgian Congo (November).

1909 Hygiene legislation requires the registration of prostitutes, who are examined for venereal disease on a regular basis and quarantined when infected.

1910 Plural wife tax imposed to uplift women and favor monogamy. Men with more than one wife are obliged to pay a supplementary tax for each wife.

1921 Andrée Blouin born on December 16 in the village of Bessou in the Central African Republic.

1925 Patrice Lumumba born on July 2 in Onalua, a town in the Katakokombe region of the Kasai province of the Belgian Congo.

1926 *Union des Femmes Coloniales* establishes the first lay-operated *foyers sociaux* to teach home economics and maternal hygiene to women living in urban centers.

1929 Three levels of schooling recognized: village schools, primary schools, and postprimary vocational schools. Boys are offered French as an elective. Girls are taught only in Congolese languages, and their postprimary opportunities are limited to elementary school teaching, home economics, and agriculture.

1933 Wives of employees of the Union Minière du Haut Katanga, the Belgian mining company in Katanga province, expected to supplement the weekly rations provided by the employer.

1935 Registers introduced to keep track of "femmes seules" or "femmes libres," unmarried women in major cities. Between 1939 and 1943, over 30 percent of women in Stanleyville are registered as *femmes libres*. Taxes imposed on them represent the second-highest source of revenue for the city.

1945 Léonie Abo born on August 15 in Malungu on the banks of the Kwilu River.

1945 Lumumba marries Henriette Maletaua on October 21.

1948 Education Code establishes the first six-year academic secondary school for black males as preparation for university studies.

"Carte de mérite civique" (civic merit card) introduced to reward "evolués" who show themselves sufficiently Westernized.

1947 Lumumba and Maletaua are divorced.

Lumumba marries Hortense Sombosia on June 25.

Lumumba begins a relationship with Pauline Kie.

1951 Lumumba and Sombosia are divorced on February 9.

On March 15, Lumumba and Pauline Opango are married.

Lumumba's first son, François Lumumba, born to Pauline Kie on September 20.

1951 Anti-polygamy law forbids the legal recognition of any new polygamous marriages, obliges all existing polygamous marriages to be registered, and prevents any polygamously married persons from moving to *centres extra-coutumiers*, urban and industrial areas outside the jurisdiction of customary rule.

1952 *Immatriculation* legislation designed to reward educated Congolese who adopt a Western lifestyle and values.

1952 Lumumba's second son, Patrice, born to Pauline Opango on September 18.

1954 Catholic-run Lovanium University opens with an all-male Congolese student body. Secular education introduced, with coeducational primary schools and single-sex secondary schools for Congolese. Girls receive an education in French, but secondary facilities for them remain scarce.

1955 Factories in Stanleyville open their doors to female workers, the beginning of women's formal employment.

Lumumba arrested on charges of embezzling post office funds. After he returns the money, his two-year sentence is reduced to twelve months.

1955 Julienne born to Patrice Lumumba and Pauline Opango Lumumba on August 23.

1956 Madame Thomas Nkumu (born Joséphine Siongo) becomes the first Congolese woman to sit on the Leopoldville city council.

1958 In Guinea, Andrée Blouin campaigns with Ahmed Sékou-Touré's RDA to refuse France's offer to be part of the French Community.

Lumumba cofounds the *Mouvement National Congolais* (MNC).

Roland-Gilbert born to Patrice Lumumba and Pauline Opango Lumumba.

Lumumba attends All-African Peoples Congress held in Accra in December.

1959 Lumumba, now President of the MNC, arrested in October for allegedly inciting an anticolonial riot in Stanleyville that results in the death of thirty people and sentenced to six months in prison.

The MNC wins a majority in local elections in the Congo in December.

1960 In January, roundtable negotiations begin in Belgium on the future of the Congo. Because of pressure from delegates, Lumumba is released from prison to attend the talks.

Lumumba begins a relationship with his secretary, Alphonsine Masuba. Their son, Guy Lumumba, is born after Lumumba's death.

June 30 is Congolese Independence Day. Lumumba becomes the Congo's first prime minister, with Joseph Kasavubu as president. Andrée Blouin appointed chief of protocol in Lumumba's cabinet.

On July 11, the province of Katanga declares its secession from the Congo under regional premier Moïse Tshombe, with support from the Belgian government and mining companies such as Union Minière du Haut Katanga.

In September, Kasavubu dismisses Lumumba from government and appoints Joseph Iléo as prime minister. Lumumba then deposes Kasavubu and wins a vote of confidence from the Senate.

On September 14, Colonel Joseph Mobutu leads a CIA-endorsed coup that overthrows both Lumumba and Kasavubu. Lumumba is placed under house arrest.

Marie-Christine born to Patrice Lumumba and Pauline Opango Lumumba while they are under house arrest. The child dies within a few months.

In November, Andrée Blouin is expelled from the Congo.

On December 1, Lumumba, who had escaped house arrest with the intention of rousing his supporters, is recaptured and imprisoned.

1961 On January 17, Lumumba is transferred to Katanga and assassinated. Lumumba's death is kept secret for three weeks. On January 18, frightened by rumors that Lumumba's burial had been observed,

the Belgian police commissioner and his brother dig up the body, cut it up with a hacksaw, and burn the pieces in sulfuric acid.

In June, Sophie Kanza becomes the first Congolese female to receive a high school diploma.

1963 Preparations begin for the Kwilu rebellion led by Pierre Mulele, former minister of education in Lumumba's government.

In August, Léonie Abo is taken to the maquis by her brothers under false pretenses. She soon becomes Pierre Mulele's wife.

1964 Beginning of Maoist-inspired insurrection in Kwilu province.

1965 In November, after numerous conflicts between Kasavubu and rotating prime ministers, Mobutu again seizes power and appoints himself president. He outlaws political activity, blaming five years of turmoil on "the politicians."

1966 Mobutu declares Patrice Lumumba a "national hero."

1967 Universal suffrage granted in the Congo.

1968 With the rebellion effectively dead, Mulele and Abo go to Brazzaville to meet up with Lumumbists. Mulele is sent to Kinshasa where he is tortured and murdered.

1969 In January, Abo flees to Brazzaville.

1985 Andrée Blouin dies in Paris in June.

1988 Introduction of the Family Code in Zaire. Young girls come of age at fifteen, the legal age for marriage; however, any legal recourse the code provided women was undercut by the fact that the man was considered the head of the household, to whom the woman owed obedience (article 444).

1992 François Lumumba returns from exile to challenge Mobutu. He later leads the *Mouvement National Congolais Lumumba*, his father's party.

1997 Julienne Lumumba becomes deputy minister of information.

1998 Julienne Lumumba becomes deputy minister of culture and art.

2006 Democratic elections in the Congo. More than twelve political parties invoke Lumumba's legacy. The new constitution formalizes women's equality and includes an article recognizing their right to protection against sexual violence (Article 15). Significant changes made in the Penal Code to integrate international human rights law regarding sexual violence. Francois Lumumba and Roland Lumumba are candidates for parliament, while their brother Guy-Patrice runs for president. Léonie Abo (Wassis) is a candidate in the Kikwit region.

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