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Journeys in the Postcolonial City:

Re-imagining Spatial Politics in Paris and Brussels

Ellen Davis-Walker

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

University of Edinburgh

2022
Il fallait que ma mère, née dans un milieu dominé, dont elle a voulu sortir, devienne histoire, pour que je me sente moins seule et factice dans le monde dominant des mots et des idées où, selon son désir, je suis passée.

(Annie Ernaux)\(^1\)

In Memory of Maureen Davis

(5th March 1954–23rd December 2012)

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Abstract

This thesis examines how recent artistic and political interventions by activist groups in Paris and Brussels are re-mapping legacies of disavowed colonial crimes, notably the legacy of the 17th October 1961 massacre of Algerian protestors and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba. I suggest that by tending to the haunting nature of these traumatic episodes — by being open to the subjective sensations of grief and the inherited socio-economic and political realities in which they are bound — we can encourage new journeys through postcolonial cities and reckon with the spectres of each country’s often maligned colonial past.

This thesis draws on four case studies that span social movements and static landmarks, including the digital map 17.10.61 and the multi-purpose building La Colonie, both in Paris, and site-specific walking tours, organised by the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale, and the recently inaugurated Place Patrice Lumumba, both in Brussels. By focusing on different forms of space and ideas of movement, both as a mode of social resistance and a form of journeying through the city, this thesis examines the ways in which colonial inequalities linger in everyday spaces and sites, and how they can be part of a wider process of recognising and working through memories of colonial trauma. By triangulating established theoretical interventions in memory and postcolonial studies with an auto-ethnographic analysis drawn from the guided walks tours, protests and ceremonies in specific sites or alongside certain sites, this thesis advocates for a critical shift in the objects of study that fall under the umbrella of Francophone Postcolonial Studies. It calls for a
broader approach to questions of national memory and commemorations that
embrace the role of the spatial and the spectral in cementing colonial pasts to
present-day realities.
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Une Femme, Annie Ernaux writes that:

Il fallait que ma mère, née dans un milieu dominé, dont elle a voulu
sortir, devienne histoire, pour que je me sente moins seule et
factice dans le monde dominant des mots et des idées où, selon son désir, je suis passée.

Even though it is time for me to leave this particular dominant world of ideas that you fought so fiercely for me to have a place in, Mum, I hope you know that this ‘story’ was for you. You were always, and will forever be, my Edmund Hilary.
Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................... 3
Acknowledgements......................................................................................................... 5
List of Figures and Tables ............................................................................................... 10
Introduction: Outlining Focus ........................................................................................ 12
I. Conceptualising Ghosts and Haunting ................................................................. 16
II. Historical Context ................................................................................................. 23
III. Summary of Case Studies .................................................................................... 32
IV. Towards a New Theoretical Approach: Re-Framing Memory ......................... 37
V. Re-positioning Postcolonial Space ......................................................................... 41
VI. Walking as Methodology ...................................................................................... 44
VII. The Walking Tour Landscapes In Paris and Brussels ......................................... 51
VIII. Methodology: Participant Recruitment, Methods and Research Positionality ........................................................................................................................................ 58
IX. Summary of Chapters ............................................................................................ 67

Chapter 1: Spectro (digital) geographies: learning to walk with ghosts in
17.10.61 .......................................................................................................................... 72
I. Spotlight On Spectral Paris: Introducing the 17.10.61 project .......................... 72
II. 17.10.61: New modes of haunting and affective re-mapping of absence .......... 80
III. Guerrilla Memorialisation: Giving A Human Face To History ..................... 87
IV. Spectro-Digital Geographies ................................................................................. 92
V. Subverting Lines of History and Discourse ....................................................... 96
VI. Casting light on forgotten places ......................................................................... 101
VII. Imaginative Geographies and Mindful Walking ............................................ 106
VIII. From Absence to Presence: Learning To Walk With Ghosts ....................... 112

Chapter 2: Examining Paris’s ‘Haunting Economy’ Through Kader Attia’s La Colonie .................................................................................................................. 118
I. La Colonie: Towards a process of social reckoning ........................................... 118
II. Exclusion and Social Haunting ............................................................................. 125
III. La Colonie and Cultural Haunting ..................................................................... 130
List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1 Statue of Leopold II in Parc de La Cinquantierie, Source: Flanders Today ........................................................................................................................................54

Figure 2 Kévi Donat hosting his Paris Noir tour outside the Pantheon, Photo Credits: Paris Noir.fr ................................................................................................................................................56

Figure 3 Still from the opening credits of the 17.10.61 web documentary ....... 80

Figure 4 Still taken from the 17.10.61, Mohammed, <https://raspou.team/1961/> ................................................................................................................................................88

Figure 5 Still from the Raspouteam homepage <https://raspou.team/1961/> ................................................................................................................................................96

Figure 6 Still of the bidonville at Nanterre, taken from 17.10.61 <https://raspou.team/1961/> [Last Accessed: 05/03/2019] ................. 102

Figure 7 Image of Modern-Day Nanterre, taken from 17.10.61 <https://raspou.team/1961/> [Last Accessed: 05/03/2019] ...................... 105

Figure 8 Still taken from 17.10.61 < https://raspou.team/1961/ > [Last Accessed: 02/03/2020] ........................................................................................................................................ 109

Figure 9 Still taken from 17.10.61 < https://raspou.team/1961/ > [Last Accessed: 02/02/2020] ........................................................................................................................................ 111

Figure 10 Photograph taken from the 17th October anniversary ceremony in 2018 [Photo author’s own] ........................................................................................................................................ 113

Figure 11 Exhibit from the Discreet Violence Series, June 2018............. 140

Figure 12 Inside of the MNHI with a view over the galerie des dons, June 2018, (Photo: Author’s Own) ........................................................................................................................................ 154
Figure 13 Frescos from the MNHI. Photo credits: Elsie Dent, La Fabrique Documentaire <http://lafabriquedocumentaire.fr/auteur/elsie-dent/> .......... 156

Figure 14 Photo of one of the core mission values of the Musée National de L’Histoire de l’Immigration . [Photo Author’s Own] .................................. 158

Figure 15 A close up of Matonge. Soure AfrikMali http://afrikamatonge.over-blog.com/article-5510510.html [Last Accessed: 02/02/2020] ............... 177

Figure 16 Kalvin Soiresse Nijal outside the Conservatoire royal de Bruxelles, reproduced with permission................................................................. 191

Figure 17 Photograph of Freddy Tsimba's Au Delà de l'Espoir (2007). Photographed in Matonge, in May 2017 [Photo Author’s Own]............... 196

Figure 18 Close up of the gilded plate on Freddy Tsimba's Au dela de l'Espoir. [Photo Author’s Own] ......................................................................... 197

Figure 19 Brussels attacks: make-shift memorials spring up around city, Source: The Daily Telegraph, 22nd March 2016 [ Photo Credit: Getty Images] ........................................................................................................ 203

Figure 20 Patrice Lumumba is pushed out into the Avenue Louise roundabout [Photo Author’s Own]............................................................ 222

Figure 21 Photo of an explanatory panel, Africa Museum, February 2020 Author’s Own .......................................................................................... 238

Table 1: Timeline of the life of Patrice Lumumba .................................................298

Table 2: Timeline of the CMC/ABL – led campaign to secure a Place Patrice Lumumba ..............................................................................299
Introduction: Outlining Focus

It is night with glaring sunshine. I stand in the woods and look towards my house with its misty blue walls. As though I were recently dead and saw the house from a new angle.

It has stood for more than eighty summers. Its timber has been impregnated, four times with joy and three times with sorrow. When someone who has lived in the house dies it is repainted. The dead person paints it himself, without a brush, from the inside.

It is always so early in here, before the crossroads, before the irrevocable choices. I am grateful for this life, and yet I miss the alternatives. All sketches wish to be real.

A motor far out on the water extends the horizon of the summer night. Both joy and sorrow swell in the magnifying glass of the dew. We do not actually know it, but we sense it: our life has a sister vessel which plies an entirely different route.

While the sun burns behind the islands.

(Thomas Tranströmer)²

This thesis is concerned with the ways in which legacies of colonial history are explored in the cities of Paris and Brussels, and how grassroots level (or community) commemorative practices allow for a more nuanced understanding of physical and virtual space to emerge. As part of this process of re-imagining postcolonial legacies in the present day, I argue that a more nuanced understanding of the historical weight that spaces can hold helps, in turn, to shed light on the complex way that we grieve, and the way

that the spaces around us are changed as a result of that grief. The need to develop the relationship between landscape and forms of loss underpins ‘The Blue House’, by Swedish poet Thomas Tranströmer. Over the course of the poem, he returns to the landscapes of his youth to explore the ties between loss and physical places in a way that directly corroborates my own conception of the ties between grief and space here. He considers, aptly, that:

When someone who has lived in a house dies it is repainted. The dead person paints it himself, without a brush, from the inside. On the other side [of the house] is open terrain. Formerly a garden, now wilderness.\(^3\)

Although Tranströmer draws on the image of a blue house glimpsed from a forest on a dark night, his poem encourages us to think more broadly about how missing people change the material fabric of real or imagined worlds. When the unnamed protagonist looks at his re-painted house with its misty blue walls, it is ‘as if I had just died and was seeing the house from a new angle’.\(^4\) His house does not simply have a new form, or colour, but a completely new way of being seen. This central image of a man in the trees takes on both a lyrical and instructive quality. The poem suggests that there is a transformative power in looking at the supposedly familiar from a new perspective. In the end, the blue house is a reminder that personal insight can only be gained through recognising what cannot necessarily by seen with one’s own eyes. What remains, instead, is the instinctive sense of the unseen, of parallel phantom lives for which we sometimes long and miss: an

\(^3\) Tranströmer, p. 12.

\(^4\) Ibid.
understanding of both the possibility of an alternate reading of history and the indelible marks left behind by loss in the present day.

Whilst Tranströmer’s conceptualisation of grief is rooted in the forests, lakes and proverbs of his native Sweden, his invocation of the invisible traces of absence resonates with something much deeper about how loss is experienced in space, or how spaces can hold hidden meanings. I suggest it can speak to the ways in which half-sensed lives come back to haunt us, drawing on the ways that former colonial capitals or centres of power hold traces of crimes that were committed in or from there, becoming spaces populated with phantom traces that seem to allude directly to what Fiona Barclay calls ‘the function of ghosts within the ex-colonizers society’.⁵

This is the sentiment from which I wish to begin my own intervention into Francophone Postcolonial Studies and which guides much of my thinking across the following pages. In her own conception of loss, Judith Butler writes that part of the potency of grief in an affective and subjective sense is that it can change and re-shape what we thought to be true, as well as how it was possible to live and be in the world. She writes:

I think instead that one mourns when one accepts the fact that the loss one undergoes will be one which changes you, changes you possibly forever, and that mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation the full result of which you cannot know in

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⁵ See: Fiona Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature and the Maghreb*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 153. It should be noted that Barclay’s reference to the spectral is in relation to the way in which France has failed to come to terms with the end of its empire, and is now haunted by the legacy of its colonial relationship with North Africa. My own understanding of ghosts differs somewhat and will be unpacked further in following pages.
advance. So there is losing, and there is the transformative effect of loss, and this latter cannot be charted or planned.

I think you get hit by waves, and that you start out the day, with an aim, a project, a plan, and you find yourself foiled. You find yourself fallen. You’re exhausted, and you don’t know why. Something is larger than your own deliberate plan, your own project, your own knowing. Something takes hold of you, and what sense does this make?\(^6\)

Whilst this thesis is not specifically concerned with theories of grief, I think it is necessary to consider how Butler’s thinking about loss opens up new ways of thinking about loss in the capital cities of the former colonial powers, and how it is relevant to questions of postcolonial memory (or indeed an absence thereof) within Francophone Postcolonial Studies. Why, indeed, should an engagement with grief be central to an analysis of present-day Paris and Brussels at all?

The answer, I believe is two-fold. Firstly, Butler’s poignant evocation of grief invites us to consider the magnitude of loss in all of its totality. Indeed, a common thread between her image of ‘something larger than a deliberate plan’ and Tranströmer’s vision of phantom ships is the clear sense that artistic and socially engaged visions of loss and grief are key to understanding an uncharted world left behind in the wake of loss, and the ways we go about physically navigating grief. This is a key thread that will underpin this thesis. Secondly, by bringing together different models of conceptualising absence, the types of loss held in evocative images of painted houses and waves of grief can start to take on real forms and be

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understood in different ways. I argue that we can take this idea further in the context of Francophone Postcolonial Studies by seeking out new objects of study that seek to bring to light the stories of those whose lives were lost at the hands of state-sanctioned violence, and whose lives are still grieved (and whose absence is still felt) in the present day. By seeking a cross-disciplinary, mixed methods understanding of how violent historical legacies can be worked through in present-day city spaces, researchers and actors in our field can then re-direct attention to legacies of colonial crimes that are being acknowledged (or re-imagined) through art, activism and community or collective projects.

I. Conceptualising Ghosts and Haunting

In order to begin theorising city space as a site of grief — and the role of haunting absences within them — it is necessary to begin by first taking time to unpack what I understand ghosts to look like in the context of this thesis, and to unpack the investigations of ‘spectral traces’ which I see to be a shared point of departure for my intervention in both Paris and Brussels. I see ghosts not simply as an imprint of a departed soul, but as a reminder of injustices that have yet to be redressed, of amnesia surrounding absent people and places, and as a legacy of suffering that has yet to be acknowledged on an official or national level. Ghosts, I argue, can also be emblems of amnesia: a reminder of the way city spaces can hold invisible traces of absence. They become a means by which to extend Butler’s thinking about the unchartered or unknowable dimensions of loss, and they
hold a different affective weight for each individual who moves through them. By expanding this definition of the ghost to encompass questions of postcolonial memory and haunting, this thesis will allow both for a more nuanced spatial reading of Paris and Brussels and propose cross-disciplinary approaches to conceptualising both cities in Francophone Postcolonial Studies.

Before I move on to outline why I chose Paris and Brussels as the basis of this thesis (and go into more detail about the case studies on which I draw and the historical context that underpins them), I believe it is necessary to develop the idea of what haunting means in the context of this thesis, and to draw on a selection of scholarly interventions that help to illustrate this.

In what is arguably the seminal work on haunting and memory within the realm of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, Derrida’s *Spectres de Marx* calls on the reader to endeavour to speak and listen to ghosts, despite the reluctance inherited from our intellectual traditions and because of the challenge it may pose to them. When thinking about what this conversation might look like, he writes:

> Or ce qui paraît presque impossible, c’est toujours de parler *du* spectre, de parler *au* spectre, de parler avec *lui*, donc surtout de *faire* ou de *laisser parler* un esprit.  

In *Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms*, Colin Davis builds directly on Derrida’s vision of the need to dialogue with spectres, positioning it not simply as a process of active conversation (or a literal exchange of words),

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but rather as process of understanding, or dismantling pre-conceived ideas about the past and the impact that this can have on us in the present. He ultimately suggests that:

Conversing with spectres is not undertaken in the expectation that they will reveal some secret, shameful or otherwise. Rather, it may open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know.⁸

Conversing with spectres then, if we follow Davis’s thinking, is less about a pursuit of previously disavowed knowledge (although this can arguably be a secondary product), but more of an openness to a type of dialogue that seeks to challenge. Indeed, Davis goes on to argue that haunting can be seen, in part, as:

The structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future. The secret is not unspeakable because it is taboo, but because it cannot not (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us. The ghost pushes at the boundaries of language and thought.⁹

Over the course of this thesis, I will build on Davis’s understanding of haunting as a process of dialogue with the people and events that have come before us, and as a new way that personal and collective loss can be understood. I will suggest, as Davis argues, that rather than fearing an exposure of our secrets, ‘the process of haunting should also be one of

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⁹ Davis, p. 379.
experiencing the unknown and turning towards the subjective stories of memory and loss that an engagement with the spectral can uncover’.10

In Ghostly Psychoanalysis, Stephen Frosh corroborates Davis’s vision of a need to interrogate our understanding of past events and legacies by explaining that the mysteries of our ghosts must be identified, appeased and laid to rest. This process, he suggests, is not just a matter of naming that which is frightening or haunting, but also of understanding what ‘exactly it is that we are afraid of, or afraid to remember’.11 Through this act of recognition (which, he argues, can take many forms of ‘working through’) our ghost grows in substance ‘and certainty precisely in order that it can be later dissolved’.12

These definitions of haunting and ghosts put forward by Davis and Frosh, respectively, are certainly not absent from, or irrelevant to, long-standing debates surrounding postcolonial memory within a Francophone context. Indeed, Patrick Chamoiseau and Rodolphe Hammadi’s ‘Guyane: Traces-mémoires du bagne’ picks up on this sense of disavowed narratives demanding space to recognised, exploring how official monuments and documents addressing colonial history might have been written differently so that erased narratives and perspectives — forgotten legacies of colonial crimes — might be heard anew.13 Through text and image, Chamoiseau and

10 Davis, p. 378.
13 Max Silverman, ‘Patrick Chamoiseau and Rodolphe Hammadi’s “Guyane: Traces-mémoires du bagne”’, in Nœuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French
Hammadi transform the narrowly circumscribed surface of the ruins of a former penal colony into what Max Silverman would later describe as ‘a complex network of echoes and reverberations across space’ to create ‘a hybrid and multivalent vision of a memory trace’. According to Silverman, a memory trace or la trace mémoire is,

always haunted by a past; they are present but also bear witness to an absence. In the here and now but in the process of sinking into oblivion, they inhabit an in-between state, between past and present, presence and absence, visibility and invisibility.

Maeve McCusker builds on Silverman’s vision on memory traces by suggesting that hidden places of memory take on a ghostly quality throughout Chamoiseau’s writings. She suggests that it is this spectral undertone that, in turn, permeates the reader’s understanding of the locations that are being described. The spaces themselves, she argues, become imbued with the spectral trace of the forgotten legacies or the stories that could have been. She writes: “These places have a peculiarly spectral and uncanny quality in Chamoiseau’s work, at once familiar and unfamiliar, representing what Freud would describe as that which “ought to remain hidden but which has come to light”.”

Leading on from Silverman and McCusker, I argue that by deliberately turning our attention to spectral presences — or memory traces — at work in

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Silverman, p. 228.

Silverman, p. 228.

city spaces, we can move closer to writing the story of what could have been, and move towards a version of history that takes into account that which we prefer not to remember, enriched by a deeper understanding of the links between memory and space. Doing so can allow us to develop alternative models of analysis that elevate legacies and voices that historically have been consigned to silence. In order for new journeys to be carried out in the postcolonial city, be it by researchers or individuals moving through the city, I posit that an awareness of, and a sensitivity to, the haunting quality of colonial history and the affective traces left by those lives that have been lost, represents a crucial juncture for researchers in our field. By challenging or subverting established notions of space (and understanding the way that ‘certain lives are endangered or not honoured’ within it) we can disrupt established national memorial lives, and choices about which lives are commemorated and which lives are consigned to silence.\footnote{Claire Chambers and Graham Huggan, ‘Reevaluating the Postcolonial City: Production, Reconstruction, Representation’, \textit{Interventions}, 17 (2015), 783–88, (p.784).}

By moving closer to the spectral undertones (\textit{traces mémoires}), this thesis will shine a light on activist, artist and walking-based activities that are working to ensure that the stories of those whose lives were lost at the hands of state-sanctioned violence can be brought to light. At the heart of this process is a sense that the haunting quality of colonial memory demands recognition not simply out of a need to redress historical crimes and atone for years of state-backed silence, but out of an innate sense of the closeness between those forgotten stories and our present-day lives. Rather than being
a process to be feared and pushed away, I believe that haunting exposes the porous connections between the living and the dead, between national memory narratives and the *traces mémoires* that are just waiting to be found, if only we know where to look.

I suggest that absence is relational because it is so subjective. In *The Matter of Absence*, Lars Frers reminds us of this innate connectedness that underpins any experience of absence or loss. As he reminds us, absence, by its very nature, ‘must be felt’.\(^{18}\) He goes on to argue that ‘a person, you or I, must miss someone else to register that they are no longer fully present here, now, in this instant. Someone has to be missing, something must not “feel” right’.\(^{19}\) I suggest that by incorporating this relational quality of absence into our present-day experiences, social interactions and social positions can be understood not simply as being abstract blocks of time or succession of facts, but rather as being powered by specific memories and occurrences of absence. As Frers and Sigvardsdotter remind us, this relational character of absence is self-contained and self-evident. It is reflected in the etymology of the word itself, which derives from the Latin roots ‘ab-’ (from, away) and ‘esse’ (to be).\(^{20}\) To be absent, someone or something has to be experienced as being distanced from the place and time that they were experienced.

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\(^{19}\) Frers, p. 423

II. Historical Context

What is it that makes the cities of Paris and Brussels interesting points of departure for this reframing of conversations around spectral traces, memory and city spaces? What are the lessons or forgotten legacies that are hidden within them that make them particularly worthy of attention and scholarly engagement?

McMaster and House’s seminal work *Paris 1961: Algerians, State Terror, and Memory* outlines how, on 17th October 1961, hundreds of unarmed Algerian protestors gathered in various locations across Paris, as part of an anti-curfew demonstration organised by the FLN (*Front de Libération National*), which had been gathering momentum over the course of that month. Entire families had moved across different arrondissements to protest the repressive curfew laws instated by Papon, who had served as the *Préfet Regional* in Constantine up until 1958.\(^2\) Under these new restrictions, any members of the so-called ‘franco-musulman’ or ‘French Muslim’ community were not allowed to leave their homes or use their vehicles between the hours of 8.30pm and 5.00am, and their businesses were required to be closed by 7pm. Although the FLN had explicitly called on protestors to demonstrate peacefully during (and on the days leading up to) the 17th October 1961, their presence was met by disproportionately brutal levels of police violence. Between 6pm and 7pm, protestors were thrown into the

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\(^2\) During World War II, Papon served as a senior police official in the Vichy Régime. He was the second official in the Bordeaux region (the secretary-general of the prefecture of Gironde) and the supervisor of its Service for Jewish Questions.
Seine over the sides of the Pont St Michel, Pont Neuilly and Pont Clichy. Some were rounded up on RATP buses, at Metro stations, or held in centres at Drancy (home of Jewish internment centres during the Second World War). Others were taken to Orly airport to board planes back to Algeria. It is estimated that between 200 to 300 Algerians were detained, and that 70 to 84 additional people drowned after having been thrown into the Seine.\textsuperscript{22}

Despite their differences in location and historical relationships to colonialism and postcolonial migration, I argue that both the 17th October 1961 massacre and the assassination of Lumumba bring to light broader questions of the role played by postcolonial memory in Paris and Brussels. They also present compelling sites from which to re-examine questions of historical haunting, memory and space in new ways. The reasons for this are two-fold. Firstly, the absence of adequate memorialisation of colonial crimes — notably, the 17th October 1961 massacre at the hands of the French police in Paris and the murder of Patrice Lumumba (17th January 1961) by the Belgian authorities — is an obvious common denominator that unites both cities.\textsuperscript{23} The lingering memories of the brutality of Lumumba’s death at the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Similarly, the 2001 Taubira Law saw the State officially qualify slavery as a ‘crime against humanity’ and marked a significant step — in legal terms — to addressing the legacy of France’s imperial rule. Three years later, in April 2004 the (first) loi Taubira was followed by the recommendation of the Comité pour la mémoire de l’esclavage to create a national day of commemoration. See: Doris L. Garraway, ‘Memory as Reparation? The Politics of Remembering Slavery in France from Abolition to the Loi Taubira (2001)’, \textit{International Journal of Francophone Studies}, 11 (2008), 365–86.

  \item \textsuperscript{23} One crucial difference to note is the disparity in present-day migrant population make up. As a result of trade agreements signed between Belgium, Turkey and Morocco in 1964, Belgium (unlike France) continued to offer legal provisions to attract and stabilise Moroccan and Turkish workers up until 2011, when an amendment to the law on family reunification was passed introducing a mandatory income threshold for the Belgian sponsor. See: Milica Petrovic, ‘Belgium: A Country of Permanent Immigration’, \textit{Institute of Migration Policy}, 12 November 2012, https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/belgium-country-permanent-immigration (accessed 1 June 2022). By contrast, the French government officially ended its
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
hands of senior Belgian officers (which included his body being chopped into pieces before being burnt by sulphuric acid), have remained a continuous shadow over relationships between the DRC and Belgium.

Despite the obvious differences and geo-political context, I argue that this unifying thread of state-backed amnesia that stretches from both France and Belgium outwards to their former colonies (including the present-day DRC and Algeria, respectively) can provide us with a compelling point of convergence around the theme of postcolonial memory. More specifically, I argue that the examples of 17th October 1961 and the legacy of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba provide compelling examples of how colonial legacies are tended to in former colonial capitals, while shining a light on the different readings of history that can emerge as a result of artistic or activist interventions.

Secondly, the narratives surrounding each city’s links to colonial violence and legacies have too-often been eclipsed by the shadow of the 2015–16 attacks by the so-called Islamic state that took place in both cities within weeks of each other. Whilst these cities are in many ways bound by European-wide and highly mediatised legacy of terrorist violence, as well as the unequal

ways that certain acts of violence are held up as ‘grievable’ (or not), they crucially have distinctly different relationships to their former colonial territories. When explored in the context of innovative new cultural practices — such as activist movements, interactive art or walking tours — it is therefore of interest to observe what memories of each city’s colonial past are revealed, and to ask what common lessons can these two very different former colonial capitals teach us about the steps needed to commemorate legacies that are largely absent from national memory narratives?

Concerns about what episodes, or types of lives, are enshrined into the national political landscape go back a long way in both the French and Belgian contexts and demand further attention here. They also provide a simultaneous point of convergence, and divergence between the two. In France’s case, Vincent Martigny has noted the willingness under Jacques Chirac’s presidency to make official apologies for the mass round up of Jews at the Vélodrome d’Hiver in 1942 and the Sétif massacre of 1945 during the Algerian war. However, as Charles Forsdick reminds us, this decision proved ‘unpopular with older, conservative voters nostalgic for France’s status as a great colonial power and who saw such concessions as a sign of the country’s weakness and decline.’24 Indeed, Forsdick suggested that former President Sarkozy’s rejection of any critical ‘repentance’ during his term in office ‘was a result of both his desire to differentiate himself from his party

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rival Chirac, and his desire to avoid alienating a key section of his electorate in the same way.’

Barcellini’s consideration of the role of memory in French political life can also help shed some light on the origins of this uneasy relationship with historical crimes, arguing that: ‘L’État républicain est [avant tout] un acteur de mémoire qui masque son interventionnisme derrière une législation administrative diversifiée et foisonnante.’

Key to understanding the climate in which national responses to the 17th October 1961 massacre, and other French colonial legacies emerge from today, is Barcellini’s thinking about the tensions surrounding both the creation of French national narratives, and the construction of a memorial context where certain crimes are not apologised or accounted for. A key part of this, Barcellini argues, comes from ‘L’émergence des victimes comme moteur de la vie mémorielle française’, a process which he suggests has two primary consequences.

La première concerne les héros du temps des « Morts pour la France ». Les résistants et ceux qui furent leurs aiguillons mémorielles, les déportés résistants, sont marginalisés. La Journée de la déportation du dernier dimanche du mois d’avril, consacrée essentiellement aux déportés résistants, devient progressivement un non-événement. Mais surtout la troisième génération du feu, celle de la guerre d’Algérie, qui croyait, à l’imitation des deux

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27 Barcellini, p. 216.
The state’s continued silence and lack of action surrounding the memory of certain legacies — or drawing more attention to certain acts of violence over others — all help to reinforce Barcellini’s vision of a republican memory narrative as something that is both selectively curated and dependent on the political aims of individual presidencies. Understanding the state’s role as a perpetrator of certain crimes is crucial in order to unpick how legacies including the 17th October can be worked through and recognised in French society today.

For those determined to unpick these legacies, historian Jean-Luc Einaudi offers us a glimpse of the scale of the task at hand through the pivotal evidence and research shedding new light on the long-silenced legacy of the 17th October 1961 massacre in Paris. Einaudi’s findings highlight a sustained culture of silence and concealment, which has fed into the understanding of the 17th October 1961.

As Einaudi reminds us, the silence and the suppression around the events of the 17th October 1961 massacre has led to a gap in public understanding, leading to what Lia Brozgal has described as the city becoming ‘illegible’.

With respect to the 17th October 1961 massacre, she writes: ‘The city bears only the faintest traces of the event and its afterlives; few if any signs attest to

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28 Barcellini, p. 216.
the nature of the repression or the lives lost.\textsuperscript{30} This lack of attention she suggests, requires us to see the city as ‘scriptable, insofar as it impels, even requires, the reader’s participation in its creation.’\textsuperscript{31} Brozgal’s thinking about the faint traces of the massacre opens up a natural dialogue of Chamoiseau’s \textit{traces-mémoires} (or what McCusker refers to as ‘memory traces’). Both, I suggest act as a reminder of the porous gaps between the absent horrors of the massacre and the lack of response from the French state, drawing our attention back to the places where recognition for these state crimes should be but aren’t.

Moreover, Brozgal’s insight into the culture of amnesia surrounding the way that the 17th October massacre is physically absent from the materiality of city space, provides an interesting comparative bridge to help us think about the ways in which the murder of Patrice Lumumba has been recognised (or disregarded) by the Belgian state.

This thesis will argue that a key step to understanding how memory plays into a sense of national identity in a Belgian postcolonial context is addressing the imbalances of ignoring these crimes (and choosing, instead to honour the legacy of Leopold II in statues across the country including in Parc de La Cinquantenerie and Place du Trone). I follow on from Sarah Arens who suggests, ‘nation-building’ has to be understood in a very literal sense in the case of Brussels, as the city has always been connected with

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Brozgal} Lia Brozgal, ‘In the Absence of the Archive (Paris, October 17, 1961)’, \textit{South Central Review}, 31 (2014), pp. 34–54 (p. 35).
\bibitem{Brozgal2} Brozgal, p. 36.
\end{thebibliography}
contemporary ideas of modernity and construction, and it continues to be characterised by rapid urban expansion that has been historically tied to its colonial projects in the present-day DRC. She writes:

From the glass and steel constructions of the European Quarter, to the Atomium monument for the 1958 World Exhibition, and the profits gained from rubber extraction and ivory exportation enabled major construction projects not only in Brussels but also in other Belgian cities such as Antwerp.

The result of the rapid expansion and sustained urban development projects under Leopold II, as Arens rightly points out, led to approximately ten million Congolese deaths at the hands of a ‘brutal forced-labour system and subsequent disease’.

The atrocities committed by the Belgian colonisers in the Congo Free State have again been brought to the attention of an international audience by Adam Hochschild’s best-selling text *King Leopold’s Ghost*, exposing the brutal extent of his violence towards Congolese people in the DRC and beyond. The shadow of these legacies was brought back into public

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awareness through the viral 2015 hashtag #LeopoldMustFall documenting the protest events surrounding the 150th anniversary of the enthronement of Leopold II in Brussels. The need to fully come to terms with the extent of the former Belgian King’s crimes has been highlighted by the recent dethroning of statues across Belgium as part of the global Black Lives Matter protests. This is a clear indicator that the need to make public space more inclusive and reflective of the individuals who inhabit it will be an urgent prerogative in coming months and years.

It is important to add, however, that a public coming-to-terms with colonial history and its present-day impact on public space is not only informed by street names and the choice of historical figures memorialised in stone or lauded on plinths. We are also required to take a look at individual curatorial cultures that have historically shaped how colonialism is represented, and how curatorial choices (or an absence of them) have shaped how people engage with colonial artefacts and legacies in Paris and Brussels respectively. When viewed together, I suggest that my chosen case studies can help us to understand how Chamoiseau’s vision of traces mémoires, as well as Colin Davis’s notion of ‘conversing with spectres’ can play out in two distinct European capitals with shared threads of recent geopolitical history.

Doing so, as my case studies will go on to demonstrate, reveals not simply the difficulty inherent to challenging the cultures of state-backed forgetting, but crucially the innovative and creative ways that forgotten legacies can be worked back into city space by grassroots activists and artists from both

36 See: Silverman p. 225; and Davis, p. 38.
Paris and Brussels. These examples of innovation and profound respect for forgotten memories and legacies will, I hope, offer up a series of wider lessons about postcolonial memory in the present day that they can offer researchers (and actors) within the field of Francophone postcolonial studies moving forward.

III. Summary of Case Studies

What lessons, then, can be drawn from looking at the francophone postcolonial world, and how do they apply to broader questions about how we remember violent historical legacies, and set about bringing previously disavowed perspectives into the public sphere? Whilst still inherently tied to the particularities of French and Belgian colonial history, when viewed as an ensemble, the below case studies reveal a tension between dynamic social movements and fixed tangible landscapes, between memory traces of disavowed legacies and the desire to transform this alternate version of history into innovative creative practice. They allow us to gain an active insight into how loss and postcolonial legacies are being worked through in city spaces across both new and traditional media as well as artistic interventions and political movements. They represent the beginnings of new journeys through urban landscapes, demanding to be followed and attended to.

In order to look at how memory traces operate (or are tended to) in Paris and Brussels, I have deliberately chosen case studies that that directly engage with questions of postcolonial haunting or disavowed historical legacies. Each case study represents either a form of tangible space (be it a square or
a building) or a mindful way of traversing city space (such as a structured walking tour or a self-guided exploration of a digital memory map). Some of the examples are reliant on moving through locations in cities, while others engage with groups that have been involved in creating new memorial and cultural sites in overlooked spaces or in new locations. Indeed, by engaging with the idea of movement as both a physical action that helps us to traverse sites with ties to colonial violence, and as an activist tool or social process that seeks recognition or to campaign for an acknowledgement of colonial crimes, my case studies directly look at the different ways these forgotten memories and legacies of injustice are felt in present-day postcolonial city spaces, and the ways that they can inform ongoing conversations in academic as well as activist and artistic spaces.

My initial research for this thesis drew me to the 17.10.61 web documentary and site-specific street art project in Paris, which became my first case study. Curated by the anonymous street art collective Raspouteam, the project was launched to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the 1961 massacre of Algerian protestors by police. In the days leading up to the 50th anniversary, the group hosted a series of projections at key points in the city with historical ties to the massacre. The web documentary, accessible by a series of tiled QR codes placed strategically across Paris, weaves fictionalised accounts of the massacre (that are read and performed by actors) back into the landmarks where the violence was originally committed or witnessed.37 By

drawing on a mixture of archival footage and present-day reconstructions and recovered archives, the project seeks to shed light on its glaring absence from national memory narratives. Passers-by and walkers are invited to become actively immersed in (and familiar with) the events of the massacre.

My work on social justice movements in a Parisian context brought me to the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale in Brussels, which is the second case study to be addressed in this thesis. The CMC has positioned itself as an active player in the move to transform engagements with, and understanding of, Brussels’ public space by hosting a wide range of talks, workshops and debates, as well as quartier-specific walking tours that form the basis of much of my analysis in Chapter 2. The group is a consciously intersectional, Pan-African association, and regularly hosts events and talks around the theme of Pan-Africanism.\(^{38}\) The Collectif’s current intervention draws on the work of several longer-standing grassroots groups and charities active in Brussels, Wallonie and Flandres more broadly. These include Binabi (Étudiants afro-descendants de l’ULB) and Cec de Louvain-la-Neuve (Étudiants congolais de l’UCL).

Through my work with the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale (CMC) I was exposed to — and developed a keen interest in — the ongoing campaign for a Place Patrice Lumumba, which was eventually inaugurated in June 2018 during the

\(^{38}\) The group’s understanding of Pan-Africanism is built on Rita Kiki Edozie’s definition of Pan-Africanism in ‘The Sixth Zone: The African Diaspora and the African Union’s Global Era Pan Africanism’, *Journal of African American Studies*, 16 (2012), 268–99 (p. 268). She writes that: ‘Pan Africanism is defined as a movement which regards Africa, Africans, and African descendants in the African Diaspora as a single sociocultural unit. Pan Africanism seeks to regenerate and unify Africa and promote a feeling of oneness among the people of the African world’.
second year of my PhD research. On 5th January 2011, the CMC launched its first march entitled ‘Pour l’inauguration d’une statue de Patrice Lumumba en Belgique’ to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Patrice Lumumba’s assassination. In September 2013, the Motion for a ‘Place Patrice Lumumba’ was unanimously dismissed by the Conseil Communal d’Ixelles. On the 17th of April 2018, Brussels bourgmestre Philippe Close took to public radio La Première (RTBF) to announce that: ‘Ce 30 juin 2018, Bruxelles aura, pour la première fois, une place Patrice-Lumumba’, which, he informed listeners, would be located by the Porte de Namur metro stop, on the edge of Matonge in the former Place de Baston.39 At the time of writing this introduction, the square has been in public use for over two years with the official street plaque (and a new commemorative statue of Lumumba) still residing in situ.40

My final case study is Kader Attia’s La Colonie, a former textiles factory at 128 rue Fayette in Paris’s 10th arrondissement near the Gare du Nord, which has been turned into a creative multi-purpose space (with its own bar, gallery and projection room).41 It hosts a year-round programme of events dedicated to confronting France’s colonial legacies. The building sits on the edge of the quartiers of Barbès and La Goutte d’Or (between the 18th and 19th arrondissements) in the northeast of Paris. It has been hosting events since

40 As of June 2022, both the square and the information panels were still in place, but the statue of Lumumba has since been removed.
41 It is important to note that in July 2021 — 6 months after the original submission of this thesis — La Colonie was forced to give up its lease on rue La Fayette and begin a process of crowd funding for a new venue. It has continued to host online events and screenings and posts regular updates on its new Facebook page. See: https://www.facebook.com/lacoloniaparis/ (accessed 1 June 2022).
its first inauguration in October 2016 to mark the 50th anniversary of the 17th October massacre. The venue also holds a personal link to the event, as Kader Attia’s parents were survivors of the massacre and are frequently present at commemorative events (including the screening of Yasina Audi’s ‘Ici On Noie Les Algériens’ that I attended in the building in October 2018).

Whilst the differences between (and particularities of) these studies will form the basis of my analysis in subsequent chapters, I shall argue that my cross-discipline and cross-border focus can help bring us back to my original question about what historical weight spaces can hold over us, and the affective traces of grief — and long-forgotten legacies of loss — that can be tapped into if only our understanding and perception of city space can be expanded in the right way. Whilst Paris and Brussels are, in many ways, shaped by distinct and very subjective postcolonial legacies, I suggest that these case studies reveal how both can become a vantage point from which to tap into the spectral traces of ghosts and unrecognised crimes, and to provide us with new ways of imagining and understanding more universal (and ongoing) questions about grief in city space. I also see it as a means to be curious about the hidden traces of those who lives were lost in untimely and unjust circumstances or at the hands of colonial powers, of bridging different modes of analysis including from across the fields of memory studies and postcolonial studies, as a means of moving closer to memory traces and the long-hidden legacies they offer up.

Before moving on to explore the impact of these case studies in more detail, however, it is first necessary to take a step back and pay closer attention to
how questions of memory — whether disavowed or nationally-established — has been historically conceptualised within the field of Francophone postcolonial studies, as well as the new readings of postcolonial space, and a revised definition of walking, that I posit as a departure point for an exploration of the artefacts I have chosen to focus on in this thesis.

IV. Towards a New Theoretical Approach: Re-Framing Memory

In order for these new readings of postcolonial space — and alternate readings of history devoid from the constraints of state amnesia — to emerge, it is first necessary to interrogate how we understand memory in relation to colonial history and how it might operate in the present. In *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, Michael Rothberg suggests that looking at memory’s multidirectional quality can encourage us to think of the public sphere as a malleable discursive space, where new understanding of both memory and physical space can emerge. Doing so, he argues, allows us to understand the public sphere as a space in which:

> Groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction.  

Rothberg’s thinking about memory underpins much of this thesis’ focus — both within Francophone postcolonial studies but also as part of a dialogue with artistic and activist movements — for a challenge and subversion of pre-

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conceived ideas about space. In order to integrate ‘traces mémoires’ and ‘conversation with spectres’ (to paraphrase Davis and Silverman, once again) into the forefront of our understanding of postcolonial space and start to redirect how we think about haunting and the way it can inform how we challenge state led amnesia, we need to think about how those memories might be composed, and might act, in the first place. In short, we need to be mindful of what Rothberg very aptly describes as:

Memory’s anachronistic quality — it’s bringing together of now and then from here and there — is actually the source of its powerful creativity and its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones.\(^{43}\)

Part of the challenge of integrating Rothberg’s vision of the ‘anachronistic’ quality of memory (and, indeed, in calling for a more engaged understanding of what spectral haunting may look like postcolonial studies) requires incorporating new perspectives and historically maligned legacies. As Radstone notes, the increasing focus on the transnational and the transcultural within the field of postcolonial studies implies that ‘memory is not viewed as a cultural product but as a process with constantly evolving nuances; in short, it conjures research projects focused on the locatedness of engagements with memories on the move’\(^{44}\)

Radstone’s thinking echoes much of Rothberg’s thinking that memory ‘refuses the ‘ownership’ of different pasts by different groups’.\(^{45}\) The key, he

\(^{43}\) Rothberg, p. 15.

\(^{44}\) Susanne Radstone, ‘What Place Is This? Transcultural Memory and the Locations of Memory Studies’, *Parallax*, 17 (2011), 109–23 (p.110).

\(^{45}\) Rothberg, p. 45.
suggests, is instead ‘to draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance’.\footnote{Michael Rothberg, Deberati Sanyal and Maxim Silverman (special eds), \textit{Nœuds de mémoire: Multidirectional Memory in Postwar French and Francophone Culture}, \textit{Yale French Studies}, 118/119 (2010), p.11.} 

Whilst this vision of memory does not (and, I argue, must not) diminish the significance of individual legacies of violence, it confirms my own belief in and ultimate call for a cross-border, multi-disciplinary engagement with postcolonial memory: one, moreover, that prioritises innovative or space-focused acts of commemoration.

By focusing on Rothberg’s vision of the dynamic transfer of memory (and its shared quality) our attention is drawn directed towards an alternative reading of history that is open to all the affective complexity of grief and loss, as well as to a plethora of voices and perspectives. Being open to memory as something that is multi-directional and anachronistic — one bound to movement through space and free of any physical constraints — means that the act of commemoration which emerges does not shy away from the challenge of what Colin Davis describes as the process of ‘unknowing’ that is so central to any process of conversing with spectre. By challenging both, our factual understanding of pre-conceived events and the idea of historical truth and perspective can look radically different if our mind allows it to, allows for an engagement with haunting and haunted to perspectives that uncover new engagements with the past. This process of unknowing, in turn, it is a form of memory that allows for traces and alternate visions of history that deviate
from state-backed narratives (or silences) to spill over into our understanding of present-day space and of the way it can be navigated.

This understanding of memory traces existing outside the realms of state-controlled narratives as a force to foster a unique — and inherently spatial — connection with overlooked episodes in the past, echoes much of Patrizia Violi’s understanding of the link between traumatic episodes in history and specific sites. She writes:

Places maintain a real spatial contiguity with the trauma itself; indeed, they are the very places where the traumatic events in question have occurred, and the demonstration of such a continuity is an essential part of their inherent and constructed meaning, not to say the very reason for their existence.  

She goes on to argue, crucially, that

since the traumatic events happened there, they directly expose some precise material traces of them. In a way, what we have here is a shift from representation to re-presentation, which is a consequence of the unique indexical nature of these places and the direct links they maintain with the actual trauma.

I argue that the creation of multi-directional memorial spaces outside of the remit of state or national governing bodies (such as 17.10.61, La Colonie and the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale tours) a ‘spatial continuity’ is created that echoes much of Violi’s thinking about the ongoing ties between sites of historical (traumatic) significance and memory in the present day. By exposing the ongoing continuity between sites and traumatic episodes, between the present day and the physical space in which an onlooker is

48 Violi, p.38.
standing, my chosen case studies are able to foster a subjective relationship to past events that supersedes the often-limited accounts of (and apologies for) historical crimes offered up by the French and Belgian states. Doing so, this allows for memory to ‘become democratically distributed, making it the shareable property of all’.

In consciously choosing to ‘break with the utilitarian order, habits and protocols that characterize urban experience’, an openness to memory-traces with an inherently multi-directional quality can allow us to begin new journeys into the postcolonial city. By (re)taking to its streets we are learning to be attentive to the signs and symbols that may have previously escaped our attention. We are invited to journey with ghosts in new (and previously unchartered) directions, to re-connect with the traces of overlooked colonial crimes and historical events and the new forms of remembering that they offer us.

V. Re-positioning Postcolonial Space

If we are to follow Rothberg and Silverman in thinking about memory as something which not only changes the feel of space, as a process that can create new connections between different types of spaces and locations, then we need to look in closer detail at the particularities of the spaces this thesis is rooted in. Specifically, I suggest, we need to first look at how

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postcolonial space has been theorised and represented within a Francophone context, before going on to look at what new readings of space should be considered as well as by what means.

In *Postcolonial Hospitality: The Immigrant as Guest*, Mireille Rosello outlines her vision of spectral haunting in postcolonial cities, echoing Silverman’s vision of memory traces that change the feel and perception of a place. She invokes, with wonderfully rich precision, streets that are littered by traces of ‘hosts and guests’, subject to ‘rigidly assigned power differentials,’ but does not stop to linger, at least for long, on the affective impact of their passage.  

I find that her voice is echoed in Rastegar’s poignant descriptions of post-war Beirut - a city I had temporarily hoped to include as one of my case studies in thesis, until visa constraints made this all but impossible. Whilst Rastegar’s vision of Beirut is naturally informed by shadow of the 1982 Lebanese civil war, his vision of the city as a site of ‘ghosts that have not been mourned, and spectres that have not been tried for their crimes’ spills into much of my own understanding, and conception of, Paris and Brussels.

In his description of Algiers in *L’An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, Fanon describes the city with a similarly self-consciously visual eye as Rastegar (albeit in relation to a different city) many years later. He writes that the city is: ‘Un lieu malfamé… une ville accroupie, une ville à genoux, une ville

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vaotrée'. His deliberately visceral imagery itself feels haunted, conjuring the traces of broken bodies and unavenged ghosts. Its qualities return like an ever-lingering body: broken, submissive and kept on its knees. It is precisely because the haunted city constitutes a site of encounters and of difference that it has become what Yeoh refers to as the ‘visual symbol of postcolonialism’: a motif to which researchers and thinkers return to, time and again, when thinking about cities in the present day.

However, in *The Production of Space*, Edward Soja calls on his readers to consider ‘how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life’. That is to say, how ‘human geographies become filled with politics and ideologies’. Soja’s emphasis on the human dimensions of geography posits a challenge both to how we read the space (and the layers of memory within it) but also the humans or individuals themselves who are part of this new understanding of it. In order for the conversations with spectres to be a dialogue that expands pre-established understanding of the past, and for our vision of memory to be truly rooted in Rothberg’s ‘anachronistic multi-directional memory’, then it is necessary to examine Soja’s vision of the ‘human’ within human geography a little more closely. By thinking about who gets to journey under which conditions, we

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56 Soja, *Political Organization of Space*, p. 38.
57 Rothberg, p. 15.
allow spaces of past injustices and forgotten ghosts to be re-framed and re-imagined. By looking at the spatial politics of the cities we traverse (in this case, Paris and Brussels) and the means by which we traverse them we can allow new memories to re-surface, and new engagements with the city to emerge.

VI. Walking as Methodology

Central to the re-framing of the politics of movement and space in this thesis is what I call active or attentive walking. I argue that this is central to creating new journeys within the postcolonial city, and elevating previously overlooked historical legacies as a result. If, as Soja argues, space is constituted by an awareness of (or adherence to) dynamics of power, then our visual and physical attention must be turned towards challenging the exertion of power or ‘visual mastery’ of any one group over another.\(^{58}\) Part of this process requires us to look at the politics of movement within spaces, as well as the steps that are being taken to challenge who can walk through these spaces and under what conditions.\(^{59}\) My interest here lies in the potential of walking to be a conscious, premeditated act, or what I will refer to as attentive or mindful walking. If we allow it, walking can seek to be deliberately attentive to the material dimensions of physical space, and the layers of privilege and the legacies of violence that we find within it. This emphasis on walking as a

\(^{58}\) Soja, *Political Organisation of Space*, p. 12.

\(^{59}\) Anna Louise Milne, *75* (Paris: Gallimard: 2016) which excavates the area’s history and attempts at rehabilitating a small street near there. Whilst it is not directly relevant to the questions of postcolonial haunting discussed in thesis, *75* provides an indispensable — at times highly confronting — account of marginalised perspectives and stories that is able to subvert the privilege of space in a similar way.
mode of analysis can, as Forsdick reminds us in ‘Journeying Now: New Directions in Contemporary Travel Literature in French’, help inform our engagements with questions of postcolonial memory.

Walking as movement is a mechanical, anatomical, and natural activity; the choice of walking as a philosophical, political, spiritual, or aesthetic experience shifts according to cultural and historical context, and its meaning is invariably informed by that context. Whilst I am conscious of Forsdick’s apt assertion that ‘there is at times a risk that the resulting account of the journey becomes nostalgic in an anti-modernist sense,’ as he suggests ‘the rhythms of walking are linked to processes of remembering and forgetting, of loss and recovery’ that tap into a longstanding relationship in Francophone Postcolonial Studies of the relationship between walking and unlocking memory, between movement and new forms of historical discovery.

Walking through the city, understanding the presence of inferred meaning and complex lived realities, becomes a means to re-orientate both how we physically navigate urban space and the awareness we bring about the historical events that happened there, and ‘the untold stories that might reside in specific places and locations.’ Through this process of re-orientation, sites and landmarks can be questioned, dismantled, or re-framed.

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In her vision of the postcolonial city, Herbert draws on the rhetoric of walking to better understand the politics of postcolonial urban space. She positions walking as a way to figuratively and literally ‘transgress prescribed trajectories across urban landscape’.\(^{62}\) This destabilisation of the privilege of movement exposes the gaps and absences that exists in what Murphey described as the ‘formulation of landscapes’ and brings about a way to physically engage with — and unpick — memory traces that emerge, as well as new means of understanding the perspectives of ghosts and guests that linger so close to its surface.\(^{63}\)

De Certeau reinforces this idea that walking can be part of a process of uncovering and creating new meaning within city space. As part of his original conception of *le marcheur*, we are presented with a similarly disruptive quality, further underlining the close link between walking and power. De Certeau writes: ‘Le marcheur transforme en autre chose chaque significant spatial…. il crée ainsi du discontinu.’\(^{64}\)

This creation of something other, or the promise of new spatial possibilities offered up through the act of walking, is significant to any engagement with the postcolonial city. Yet it also seems to point away from the very conception of city as text that De Certeau proposed: one when an urban space is a ‘vital, evolving living product [that] preludes easy reading or

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\(^{62}\) Herbert, p. 21.


understanding’, in which walking into an embodied act.\textsuperscript{65} If space is destabilised, or disarticulated, it is possible to become conscious of how it holds different weight over different people, or restricts the movement of those people at certain times. Doing so opens up new possibilities to understand how we begin to address, and redress, the imbalances and inequalities in space, both with regards to what legacies and lives are commemorated in that space, but also in regard to what kinds of people are free to move in that space with a tacit sense that their experiences and perspectives are represented and tended to. As Forsdick reminds us in ‘\textit{Journeying Now: New Directions in Contemporary Travel Literature in French}’

Walking can, accordingly, be linked to a series of returns that characterise late twentieth-century literature and culture: of experience, of the body, of the subject, of travel, and — since walking is often allied so closely to notions of narrative continuity — of the \textit{récit}. In fact, instead of being an element in a series, it is possible to present walking as a nexus, as the activity in which these other returns are distilled in order to coexist as a working system\textsuperscript{66}.

I follow Solnit’s suggestion that it is the process of walking which allows new, or previously hidden, understandings of city space to emerge. Leading on (brilliantly) from De Certeau, she argues:

\begin{quote}
Walkers are ‘practitioners of the city’, for the city is made to be walked. A city is a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities. Just as language limits what can be said, architecture limits where one can walk, but the walker invents other ways to
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{65} Shade Tours Homepage, https://shades-tours.com/en/home/, (accessed 1\textsuperscript{st} June 2019)
\textsuperscript{66} Forsdick ‘\textit{Journeying Now}’, p. 154.
Solnit’s sensitivity to the closeness between movement and language, and how these conceptions spill over into how we understand space will continue to inform much of my own thinking here. However, I would suggest that this a more nuanced understanding of the differences between De Certeau’s vision of the city as text and the utterances and encounters that can come from engaging with hidden lived experience in space can be gained by challenging traditional ideas of walking and its privilege, meaning, who gets to, or chooses to, move in certain ways and under what conditions. This involves a process of reflection within academic disciplines such as Francophone Postcolonial Studies, or a consideration of the means by which walking can be ‘a means of refiguring the compression of time and space, of opening up spaces of resistance in which time, memory, and the body can be reintroduced.’

A key part of a process of re-examining the privilege attached to certain types of walking, particularly from a Francophone Postcolonial Studies perspective, must involve challenging the idea of the flâneur, that has historically occupied a privileged position in cultural imagination, and on literature in our field. Indeed, as Crickenberger argues, flânerie has become synonymous with a certain form of unconstrained walking. She suggests that Walter Benjamin’s

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introduction of Baudelaire’s *flâneur* into the academy, marking it out as a ‘central trope in the fields of both modernism and urbanism’ saw a significant shift in ‘how the city was conceived in both cultural and critical terms’.70

This view is corroborated by Gleber’s reading of Walter Benjamin’s Arcades Project. He writes:

In his seemingly purposeless approach to seeing and collecting everything that he encounters in public space and culture, the flâneur prefigures the principle and structures of Benjamin’s own seeing and collecting, of his own efforts to record the signifying moments and phenomena of capitalist modernity.71

Crickenger seems to build on Gleber’s assertion, going on to argue that in Baudelaire’s original account of the *flâneur*, he was often assumed to be an observer that was detached from the immediate social surroundings as he strolled through the city space. Understanding the *flâneur* as an actor who aimlessly and without any explicit destination traverses the urban playground, or by applying what de Souza, Silva and Sutko all refer to as a ‘wandering and detracted gaze’, has long informed how the experience of navigating the city space is depicted and written about.72 Solnit corroborates this sense of removal from the realities of spatial politics, by arguing that The flâneur was only ever a type, an ideal, a character in literature’.73

Whilst the *flâneur* might be a conjured presence or simply a fantasy, an idea of how assigned masculine and privileged bodies can move through space,

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70 Crickenberger, ‘The Flaneur’.
its presence in collective imaginings of city space reveals the extent to which it has become a portmanteau of our assumptions about which bodies can move where and under what conditions. Wilson has argued that ‘The flâneur’s freedom to wander at will through the city is essentially a masculine freedom’. Indeed, I suggest that the extent to which flânerie is tied to the question of whiteness, and the permeation of whiteness into visual representations of city spaces, is indicative of how non-white bodies are culturally curtailed by certain sets of assumptions about who has the freedom to move through city space, and in what manner. Breaking away from the trope of the flâneur and re-directing attention to the act of walking in the city space becomes a way of challenging the pervasively white, masculine shadow of flânerie in our discipline, and of providing alternative readings of Lia Brozgal’s vision of ‘illegible’ traces of violent legacies in city spaces. Moreover, by seeking out case studies that require us to move through space in ways that reveal hidden and long-overlooked perspectives, I suggest that we can re-centre engagements with both Paris and Brussels so that scholarship is reflective of the sort of innovative cultural and activist engagements with memory that have emerged in recent years. Similarly, by bringing a scholarly focus to mindful movement through city spaces we can actively consolidate an understanding of haunting as a process of dialogue, and challenging pre-conceived ideas, be it about the impact that spaces can

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75 Brozgal, p. 20.
have on an individual, the ways we move through them, and the kinds of stories that are hidden within them, requiring our attention and care.

VII. The Walking Tour Landscapes In Paris and Brussels

In order to better contextualise the case for mindful for or attentive walking (that is conscious of its own privilege as well as the need to destabilise the masculine freedoms of flânerie) I want to briefly pause to look at some examples of pre-existing walking-centred initiatives in Paris and Brussels. In , I believe it is necessary to have a clearer understanding of what attempts are being made to bring about alternative readings of history to light, and to what extent pre-existing ‘Walking Tour’ formats in both Paris and Brussels respectively are providing new models of resistance to state-backed silence surrounding colonial history.\textsuperscript{76}

At first glance, the walking tour landscape in both Paris and Brussels feel reminiscent of many other major European and global capital cities. Walking tours are readily available, with hop on and off bus tours, app-directed walking tours and group trips listed on the Discover Brussels and Paris tourist page. Culture Trip and Trip Advisor listing vast arrays of themed tours for tourists trying to see different facets of the city on foot, as well as providing online or virtual guides to key sites around the cities.\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{76} Patrizia Violi, \textit{Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Space, History} (Bern: Peter Lang, 2017), p. 61.

\textsuperscript{77} See Discover Brussels Homepage, https://www.discoverbrusselsguide.com/, (accessed 20 February 2023)
Both cities also have a number of specific tours aimed at exposing ‘hidden’ or ‘alternative’ facets to city life. In Brussels, Sandeman’s Alternative Brussels City Tour seeks to actively move beyond the heavily-frequented tourist attractions, and encourage new engagements with city space. On the group’s home page they inform visitors that their tours uncover the:

Brussels you [don't] see on postcards. Forget about chocolate, beer and the European Union, and join us to discover a city where street art represents the voice of the people, and where locals battle against gentrification. We’ll take you through the lively Marolles area, into the LGBT district, and across one of the biggest pedestrian zones in Europe to give you a taste of what makes Brussels truly unique. Experience giant murals dedicated to comic books, and street art remembering terror attacks, all while learning about riots, EU demonstrations, and the reality of Belgium’s recent "NO" policy on cannabis.

In a similar format to the Shade Tours hosted in cities such as Barcelona, Beirut and Berlin, ARAU have been organising ‘Brussels seen by its residents’ tours since 1997. These tours aim to boost the image of the city and to help participants better understand its development, its riches and its changes. The group offers over 20 guided tours, covering various themes, (in French or English), including multiple tailored visits dedicated to art nouveau and art deco history.

My interest in walking tours in the Belgian context, however, came through a notable gap in tourist or artistic walking tours that engage with Belgium’s colonial history. Whilst available historical tours in Brussels provided a

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detailed insight into life under occupation or the formation of the European Union, there are no mainstream tours that allude to Belgian presence in the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda (I go into the specificities of one ‘alternative’ walking tour in a subsequent chapter where I document my observations of walking tour hosted by the Collectif Memoire Coloniale). Moreover, there are no listed historical tours under the history or patrimoine culturel sections of Trip Advisor or Culture Trip (either in English, Flemish or French) which specifically engage with, or address, any element of Belgium’s postcolonial past. Perhaps more worryingly, the Top 10 Brussels Attractions listed on both Trip Advisor and Culture Trip mention Parc de la Cinquantenaire which continues to house a statue of Leopold II, despite mass calls for its removal, and regular site-specific protests held by activist groups in the city, including calls from the Grande Mosquée de Bruxelles located inside the park.80 Although in March 2017 a panel was added to a bust of Leopold II expressing “regret” for the many victims of the Congo Free State (with a similar panel added to a colonial monument in Geraardsbergen in early 2016), the violent legacy of Belgian genocide is strikingly absent from any of the mainstream walking tours, and does not feature in any of the descriptions of the park, or the stature, listed on Visit Brussels, Brussels.info, Trip Advisor, Culture Trip, Bruxelles Ma Belle or Culture Trip.81

It is interesting to note, however, that with the opening of the Africa Museum in 2019, groups such as the *Collectif Memoire Coloniale* as well as established forums like Culture Trip have begun to expand their remit to include visits to the museum and specialised tours to view and learn about its collections (the contents of which, and impact of, I address in greater detail in later chapters).

![Figure 1 Statue of Leopold II in Parc de La Cinquantenerie, Source: Flanders Today](image)

*Figure 1 Statue of Leopold II in Parc de La Cinquantenerie, Source: Flanders Today*

In Paris the tourist walking tour landscape bears a lot of visible similarities to its Belgian capital counterpart. Sites such as Culture Trip and Trip advisor list a number of tours ghost tours of the catacombs and Père Lachaise cemetery available for members of the public. The Local Paris Tour also hosts a ‘*Walk On The Dark Side*’ tour in Paris, taking visitors around the

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82 Culture Trip: Paris Walking Tours.
Conciergerie, Pont Neuf, Le Louvre Museum and Tour Saint-Jacques as a means to, according to the site, ‘dig up every last skeleton in Paris’ closet.’

The tour’s homepage also makes direct reference to the Seine and how it ‘holds a fair share of Paris’s murky stories back in the days where death was just part of everyday life.’ Despite the somewhat striking parallels with the Seine-dumping and the violence surrounding the massacre of Algerians by the French police on the 17th October 1961, the tour does not make any reference to the massacre, or to the wider instances of violence perpetrated towards individuals from France’s former colonies in Paris. Outside of the tours featured on tourist sites, initiatives such as Paris Noir / Black Paris Walks founded by academic Kévi Donat have been profiled by publications such as The Washington Post, and We Are Black And Travel Abroad, demonstrating an urgent need to challenge established visions of French history and what stories are told and elevated within Parisian urban space.

Tickets are billed at €16.50 per person, leading visitors to under-explored parts of the city on 2-3 hour long trips.

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In a similar fashion to the Troubles Walking Tours in Belfast, Black Paris Walks (or ‘Le Paris Noir’) attempts to displace touristic and public gaze beyond central or popular areas of the city outwards to areas and stories who have been overlooked. Indeed, Le Paris Noir focuses on what they describe as ‘three iconic working-class neighbourhoods’ that hold clues to the role of evolution of immigration in the city.\textsuperscript{86} Donat also draws a parallel between Pigalle and Montmartre, with neighbourhoods such as La Goutte d’Or, which Donat labels as a ‘fascinating example of contemporary diversity in Paris: a case study of the emergence of an Afropean culture in France.’\textsuperscript{87} Whilst Le Paris Noir provides a necessary new slant on pre-existing historical walking

\textsuperscript{87} Le Paris Noir
tours — and places legacies of colonialism firmly back in to the public sphere to be traversed and engaged with — there are nonetheless some gaps in scope that I would like to address here. Indeed, despite his exhaustive mapping of black Paris — and references to migration from France’s former Antillean colonies and DTOM — there is notably a lack of engagement of the legacies of colonialism (and the spectres of the 17th October 1961 massacre particularly).

Whilst the emergence of alternative walking tours in Brussels and Le Paris Noir demonstrate a commercial appetite for the hidden ghosts and ‘skeletons’ in closets, I am once again reminded of Judith Butler’s invocation of invisibility and vulnerability in social life or what she describe as ‘the limits of what can appear and circumscribe the domain in which political speech operates and certain kinds of subjects appear as viable or acceptable.’88 By prioritising certain skeletons and spectres over others and by determining which legacies get to be shaped by cultural artefacts and within the tourist economy, we automatically deem certain lives to be more valuable or more grievable than others. My decision to focus on virtual tours such as the 17.10.61 movement, the hidden walking tours of the Collectif Memoire Colonial and the fixed locations such as La Place Patrice Lumumba and La Colonie is a response to these porous gaps in touristic and cultural landscapes. By choosing models that fall outside the scope of structured walking tours and that shed light on historically overlooked episodes in French and Belgian history, I hope to cast new light on modes of practices.

88 Butler, Precarious Life, p. 23.
and different interpretations of overlooked urban spaces and heritage, opening up new avenues of research in Francophone Postcolonial Studies and beyond.89

VIII. Methodology: Participant Recruitment, Methods and Research

Positionality

To ensure that my thesis was able to reflect the nuanced nature of the case studies I examine — and be reflective of my own thinking about — the close links between memory, space, grief and the spectral to look at the way that postcolonial history is tended to (and commemorated) in Paris and Brussels. In order to best do so, I felt it was important to not simply stay focused on what I observed in both cities, but to also incorporate visual analysis of some of the artefacts themselves and monitor online (and particularly the social media) activity of these groups: some of which I mention briefly in later chapters.

This vision of haunting as something that is once emotive, inherently spatial, and tied to the different memories (and collective histories) of individuals in Paris and Brussels cannot be easily captured with theoretical analysis alone. Indeed, due to the cross-border and cross-disciplinary nature of my thesis, I established a mixed-methods methodology - combining theoretical analysis

89 As stated previously, I will focus on specifically on the legacy of the 17th October 1961 massacre (and lack of acknowledgement by the state) in relation to Paris, and the failure by the Belgian state to adequately account for the role played in its assassination of former Congolese president Patrice Lumumba. However, due to the nature of the walking tours I shadowed in Brussels in 2017 (which were organised by a predominantly Belgo-Congolese activist group) some of my analysis touches on the erasure of the experience Congolese second and third generation immigrants in Belgian society (as this was a common thread that was discussed, and alluded to, in conversations that were carried out).
form the field of memory and postcolonial studies, with a mixture of first-hand visual analysis of artefacts, first-hand ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. I believed this would best reflect the nuances of my case studies (which, respectively, draw on work in combination with artistic, activist and community outreach spheres).

Due to the web-based nature of 17.10.61 (and both Le Collectif Memoire Coloniale and La Colonie’s reliance on social media to promote their activities) my methodology was shaped by an acute sensitivity to the importance of digital media in helping to transmit new visions of postcolonial haunting and shed light on new artistic and activist spaces and activities. Similarly, as my research was also supplemented by digital content from the interactive web map of 17.10.61 to promotional social media posts, I have included references to the channels, posted copy and viral hashtags in instances where I have judged that they were directly relevant either to the inception or growth of my case studies.

My intention from the start of this thesis was that the majority of my analysis would be rooted in first-hand observations and directly guided by the spoken words of my participants, and it would not stray into in-depth digital ethnographic analysis at this stage of the project’s research journey. To ensure that my analysis was able to reflect as many different perspectives as possible (and to allow me to draw on first-hand testimony throughout each of my chapters), I used snowball sampling to recruit participants from activist groups in Paris and Brussels. I did so building on the positionality outlined in Ethnography and Modern Languages, which states that:
Ethnographic sensitivity encourages an openness to less hierarchical and hegemonic forms of knowledge, particularly when consciously seeking to invert the traditional colonial ethnographic project and envision instead more participatory and collaborative models of engagement.  

In order for my own research to be informed as many forms of knowledge as possible, I drew on online research to identify relevant events and conferences to attend that focused on the anniversary 17th October and the campaign to secure a statue commemorating the assassination of Patrick Lumumba, and attended conferences at Paris Nanterre, ENS de Paris and Sciences-Po on topics relating to French colonial history and the politics of urbanisation in Paris. Attending these events in person (as well as the networking events) allowed me to identify individuals such as Kalvin Soiresse that I wanted to speak to, which in term permitted me to carry out snowball sampling at a later state to recruit further participants for my interviews. Following a full ethics clearance from the University of Edinburgh — including a specific clearance to work with vulnerable groups — I devised a framework of questions that comprised a mixture of open and closed questions, which were available for participants in both French and English.

Due to the nature of the interviews themselves and the focus on commemoration, I believe the dual use of ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews allowed me to create space where participants were free to bring their own subjective interpretations of what memory and commemoration might look like. In *Resurrecting Slavery*, Crystal Fleming

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defines commemorators as ‘people involved in the production, management, and institutionalization of collective memory’\textsuperscript{91}, which posits commemoration not just as external process but a subjective and individually guided act, a definition that I actively applied when considering the individuals I wanted to speak to as part of this project.

Fleming’s call to prioritise subjective interpretations of memory within an appraisal of what collective or group memory might look like is echoed by Alessandro Portelli’s chapter ‘The Peculiarities of Oral History’ in \textit{The Oral History Reader}. It makes a strong case for the need to centre the testimonies, recollections and accounts of interview participants in research both as means to strengthen analysis but to pay tribute (and accord appropriate respect) to the individuals who have kindly given up their time.\textsuperscript{92} There is also, he suggests, an element of responsibility in making sure that perspectives that have not been historically accounted for- that is to say, written down or publicly displayed- are given the appropriate recourses and recognition that they deserve.

When considering the role that oral testimony (and first-hand accounts) should play in historical accounts of events, Portelli argues that:
Memory is not a passive depository of facts, but rather an active process of creation of meanings, that reveal narrators’ effort to make sense of the past and to give a form to their lives.\textsuperscript{93}

\textsuperscript{93} Portelli, p. 96.
In order to be able to tap into this active creation of meaning, as Portelli argues, it is necessary to centre the accounts of those whose experiences may otherwise have been erased — often violently — from existing historical sources and narratives.

Oral sources [are] therefore a necessary (if not sufficient) condition for a history of the non-hegemonic classes, while they are less necessary for the history of the ruling class who have had control over writing and therefore entrusted most of their collective memory to written records.94

Both of these insights underpin my decision to lead with predominantly participant-directed interviews. This allowed my participants to be active agents in Portelli’s vision of memory creation and for my own thoughts about memory and commemoration to be shaped — and led — by the insights that were offered up in the process.

The testimonies of those who have kindly accepted to be interviewed for the purposes of this thesis, who hail from a wide range of backgrounds and professions, form the main focus of this thesis. I was conscious throughout the research process of what Sarah Ahmed refers to as a ‘self-referential engagement with the colonial past’95 I see the very decision to explore how the memorial and physical fabric of city space is part of a wider process of expanding how memorialisation and the voices and experiences that have the right to be represented and valued in that city space are approached within the fields of Francophone Postcolonial Studies and memory studies as

94 Portelli, p. 97.
a whole. My approach is one which, ultimately, seeks to counteract an absence of testimony by drawing from a diverse range of connections between different forms of representing loss.

However, in doing so there is an important need to balance a subjective analysis of what it means to engage with haunting or memory traces, without imposing a privileged or narrow-minded reading of space, or commemorative practices. There is a need to be conscious of (and vigilant against) the control that is afforded to those of us who have made the decision to incorporate historical accounts (or analysis of history) into our academic research and outputs. As Alessandro Portelli very aptly points out in an analysis of how historians can use oral testimony:

The control of the historical discourse remains firmly in the hands of the historian: it is the historian who selects the people who are to speak; who asks the questions and thus contributes to the shaping of the testimony; who gives the testimony its final published form (if only in terms of montage and transcription).

The weight of the researcher responsibility that Portelli so aptly evokes has preoccupied much of my thinking and lies at the heart of the methodological decisions (including my choice to interview a mixture of academic, activists and group leaders alongside my own field notes and ethnographic observations and theoretical analysis, for example). I also believe that, in many ways, it leads us back to much of Avery Gordon's thinking about haunting that I cited at the start of this introduction. Indeed, I argue that seeking to bring to light forgotten colonial legacies is part of 're-fashioning

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96 Ahmed, p. 35.
97 Portelli, p. 96.
social relationships in which you are located’. By centring the words of the participants with direct ties to the events I have hoped to offset my own positionality and self-preferentiality by giving over space to perspectives that have historically been consigned to silence and allowing them to guide my thinking at every stage of the research process. Yet focusing on the privilege and politics of walking within Paris and Brussels demands an important degree of scholarly and personal accountability. Part of this is my own position as a white cisgendered researcher in an overwhelmingly white discipline and field, where much of my own experience can be found reflected in scholarly accounts and essays around me. There is an immense, and undeniably unjust privilege in having been afforded the financial and cultural ability to be in a position to write these words at a time when hostile border policies are increasingly curtailing academic freedom and possibility for so many. The imbalance of this position is not lost on me. Nonetheless, I see this thesis as part of a move towards addressing our discipline’s imbalance two ways. First, through its conscious decision to engage with artists, activists and modes of study that bring marginalised voices and spaces to the forefront of analysis. Second, through its opening up of a wider conversation concerning the direction that Francophone Postcolonial Studies (and the researchers within it) needs to take to better engage with the nuance of commemorating postcolonial history in Paris and Brussels.

To be mindful of these interlocking journeys, and the traces they leave in space, I suggest that researchers are required to walk and read the visual cues of the city attentively and with care. My vision of attentive walking provides a new way of relating to the city, by ‘emphasising a conscious and connected relationship’ to space.\textsuperscript{99} This approach is one, moreover, that is open to alternate readings of history present in memory traces, that seeks to challenge cultures of state-backed amnesia through the process of unknowing or letting go of prior understandings that I posited as central to any engagement with the spectral.\textsuperscript{100} In order to expose the presence of colonial thought and re-work the barbarous logic that characterises colonial space, it is necessary to re-evaluate the way movement through the urban space has been conventionally theorised.\textsuperscript{101}

This thesis therefore also strongly advocates for the possibility that Social Science and Humanities methods can, and should, be blended together in order to allow for the most expansive dialogue with spectres and acknowledgement of different forms of memory traces to emerge. Ellis proposes that a way to approach ethical quandaries is to openly and repeatedly re-examine and make ethical decisions within each situational context, accepting that often there is no unambiguous solution. Ethical dilemmas necessarily are present, and ethical researchers take responsibility

\textsuperscript{99} Gordon, p. 21.
for their choices to provide ‘a complex portrayal and interpretation of the communities we study, including our place in them.’ She writes:

These decisions are complex in terms of integrating our own moral positions with society’s call for scholarship that contributes to social justice; readers’ demands for truthful and multifaceted accounts; and research participants’ and characters’ desire for privacy, positive representation, and control over the stories of their lives.¹⁰²

I believe that my use of semi-structured interviews and cross disciplinary methodology provides the best vantage point from which to approach questions of disavowed memory, haunting and postcolonial city space. By choosing to focus on two former colonial capitals with distinct histories that are united by the same language and recent waves of global terrorism, my thesis natural positions itself at a point where I can start to unpick the complex points of comparison and divergence between very different cases of state-backed amnesia and grassroots lead remembering. Moreover, by making the decision to highlight case studies that span different disciplines (in this case art and activism), it is possible to see if there are any universal or transferable lessons about how to draw out links between former sites of colonial rule and present-day locations in Paris and Brussels. Finally, by focusing on locations or projects that have important significance for present-day communities with ties to either the 17th October 1961 massacre or Patrice Lumumba, my research has remained literally and figuratively grounded in the perspectives I wish to elevate, both advocating for (and seeking to shed new light on) Max Silverman’s vision of memory ‘a complex

network of echoes and reverberations across space’ demanding new 
readings, and new modes of understanding.

IX. Summary of Chapters

When viewed together, the central question that underpins my case studies 
across Paris and Brussels is how are dialogues with disavowed legacies and 
readings of history embodied in each respective city? What are the lessons 
that we can learn from 17.10.61, the Collectif Memoire Coloniale, Place 
Patrice Lumumba and La Colonie about the sort of memory traces that are 
present in two different former colonial capitals and what alternate readings 
of history, and forgotten legacies of colonial violence, emerge across different 
the different cities and different spheres (such as art, activism or established 
museum collections)? By comparing these different examples over the 
course of the next four chapters my aim is to establish whether there any 
points of consensus or comparison that we can draw out in terms of how 
each city is engaging (or failing to engage) with its own colonial history, and 
what examples or types of memorial work allow for a nuanced and 
emotionally sensitive re-connection with forgotten stories and memory traces 
to emerge. Each of the following chapters will consider these questions by 
examining each case study in further detail.

Chapter One, ‘Learning to walk with ghosts: Spectro-Digital Geographies with 
17.10.61’, follows the street-art collective Raspouteam’s interactive web 
documentary 17.10.61. It asks how the creation of ‘digital spectro-
geographies’ through the web documentary and site-specific installations 
across Paris can allow for new engagements with the memories of the 17th
October 1961 massacre to emerge. This chapter will argue that the stories and voices offered up by the project give a uniquely ‘human face’ to the ghosts of that night, and act as a guide to follow memory traces across the city. Through an examination of key points along the project’s digital map, and in person work (including projections of archive footage and graffiti on the Pont St Germain and Pont St Michel), I will explore the lessons it can offer up for future memorial responses to the 17th October massacre. Through its spatial dispersion of Derrida’s vision of a ‘nouveau politique de memoire’ through its web of QR codes and online digital memory map, this chapter will examine the extent to which 17.10.61 can act as a creative response to the need to live fairly and better with our own, and our inherited, ghosts.\(^{103}\)

Chapter Two, ‘Examining Paris’s ‘haunting economy’ through Kader Attia’s *La Colonie*, will analyse the commemoration of the 17th October massacre in Kader Attia’s multi-purpose space, *La Colonie*, which has been operating since 2017. Drawing a comparison with collections in the *Musée National de l’histoire de l’Immigration* (where Attia’s work is also exhibited), this chapter will expose the complex relationship between creative commemorative practices and what Anne Clerval and Antoine Fleury have dubbed the ‘embourgeoisement de Paris’\(^{104}\). This chapter will also address the progressive gentrification of the quartiers of La Goutte d’Or and La Chappelle

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\(^{103}\) Derrida, p. 12.

that surround the building, exploring how engaging with colonial ghosts
demands a return to, and an engagement with, the present-day politics of
space. By attending to the socio-economic realities (and inequalities) at work
in La Colonie, I will seek to unpack how the memories of the 17th October
1961 have evolved since the 2011 appearance of the 17.10.61 webdoc, and
how they continue to be filtered by (or tied up with) forces of social and
spatial injustice in the city.

Chapter Three, ‘Moving Beyond Molenbeek: Tracing Belgium’s Transnational
Trajectories with the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’ marks a transition from
Paris to Brussels. In this chapter I will explore how the grassroots activist
group ‘Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’ is shedding light on historically significant
landmarks and quartiers in a similar fashion to 17.10.61. This chapter will
draw on my own fieldwork notes and observations following the group on a
guided walking tour around the quartier Matonge. I will analyse the Collectif’s
use of structured walking tours as new forms of resistance to colonial
inequality, arguing that this is particularly significant due to the pervasive
presence of the Molenbeek district across social and national media
platforms in the light of the Brussels bombings (January and November
2015) and the Paris attacks (2015). My analysis of the Collectif’s specific
forms of ‘social remembering’ will lead me to engage with its long-standing
campaigning efforts to secure greater social justice in the city, aiming to
highlight the significance of individual sites, streets, statues and squares in
securing recognition for broader questions of racial and social justice.
Finally, Chapter Four, ‘Place Patrice Lumumba: Towards A New Politics of Postcolonial Public Space’, will explore the Collectif’s longstanding efforts to secure a square for Patrice Lumumba (which was inaugurated in June 2018). Building on field notes, photos and ethnographic observations, I will examine how memorial and cultural events leading up to and surrounding the square inauguration sets in motion the possibilities for new forms of social remembering. A year after the square was first opened to the public, I return to the Square Bastion to ask whether the transition from a social movement to a fixed city landmark has changed the way Lumumba’s ghost is felt and tended to, both in the square and in the collections of the recently re-opened Africa Museum. I will ask whether the square’s ability to mirror or ‘act as a metaphor for trauma’ can help to transform the landscape of Belgian postcolonial politics, and what the legacy of Patrice Lumumba in this square and beyond can teach us about the future of memorialising colonial legacies in present-day Belgium.

In this introduction, I have outlined my vision of what I understand both haunting to look like in the context of the postcolonial city, whilst also outlining how I believe that an engagement with memory and its traces (to echo Chamoiseau and Silverman) in both Paris and Brussels can help frame new engagements with both the 17th October 1961 massacre and the spectre of Patrice Lumumba. As part of this process, I have positioned walking both as a methodological practice and a means to develop understanding of postcolonial theory in relation to city space. I have placed particular emphasis in the latter part of this chapter on the need to revise
established theoretical understanding of memory and space, as well as the ways in which I believe these should be adapted to best reflect the realities of present-day Paris and Brussels. My subsequent chapters will touch on just some of the ways that this attention can transform the act of walking, both alone, or accompanied by virtual ghosts, or as an individual within organised walking tour groups. This thesis will outline some of the ways that these creative interventions can ensure ‘existing political, economic and cultural conditions, past and present, are no longer separated from meta-critical speculations, or culture and discourse from histories that have happened’. By looking at the ways creative initiatives can enable us to move closer to memory traces and undertones in city space, I envisage this thesis to be part of a ‘challenge [to] the contemporary modes of societal organisation in physical space’. In doing so, ultimately, I believe that we can move closer to the stories and legacies demanding recourse to be heard, and to voices still waiting to be heard.

Chapter 1: Spectro (digital) geographies: learning to walk with ghosts in 17.10.61

Ce qui suit s’avance comme un essai dans la nuit - dans l’inconnu de ce qui doit rester à venir.

(Jacques Derrida)\textsuperscript{107}

I. Spotlight On Spectral Paris: Introducing the 17.10.61 project

How do we learn to live with the ghosts of colonial crimes, or learn to speak with them as Colin Davis implores us to do?\textsuperscript{108} Is coming to terms with the un-mourned ghosts of historical injustices something we can learn to do through creative practice, and can this affective engagement with ghosts and the idea of haunting help bring us towards a more nuanced understanding of inequalities at work in postcolonial cities? The answer (or answers) to these questions haunts much of Derrida’s thinking in Spectres de Marx that I referenced as part of my introduction. When outlining my methodology at this, the start of this thesis, I put forward a vision of haunting as not something that was centered on vengeful spirits or apparitions of ghostly figures, but more as a process of being open to, and in dialogue with, hidden legacies of historical injustices. It is with this understanding of haunting, and the shared openness to challenging pre-conceived ideas about colonial legacies and the way they spill over into our engagements with present day

\textsuperscript{107} Derrida, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{108} Davis, p. 373.
space, that I open my analysis of the 17.10.61 project by the street art collective Raspouteam curated by the digital collective Raspouteam to mark the 50\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the 17th October 1961 massacre of Algerian protestors demonstrating the introduction of a curfew, who were massacred at the hands of the French Police.

*Across Spectres de Marx*, haunting remains close to the surface of much of Derrida’s thinking even when the presence of ghosts (or the ghostly) is not explicitly articulated. The closeness to written thought and orality, to the philosophical and the personal, makes itself felt in the hesitant quality of the text and across the work as a whole. The question of what it means to live halts and re-starts, its textual breaks reflecting the motions of spectres who demand space and recognition again and again. ‘Il faut apprendre à vivre’ Derrida says, repeatedly. ‘À vivre autrement et mieux. Non pas mieux, plus justement. Mais avec eux.’\textsuperscript{109}

As part of my introduction, I discussed how Stephen Frosh explains that the mysteries of our ghosts must be identified, appeased and laid to rest if we are to fully understand their impact in the present day, and this is an idea that I would like to develop in relation to spectral Paris and the 17th October massacre in more broadly by way of a beginning. Frosh argues that central to this process of identifying ghosts, or what I understand as Derrida’s process of learning to live with ghosts, is an act of recognition, where a ghost grows in

\textsuperscript{109} Derrida, p. 13.
substance. This can be a loving process, in which something or someone lost is recognised and mourned. Or, he argues,

It can be a deeply traumatic experience, in which something one never knew one had comes back as a plague: a repetitive and destructive inheritance that holds tight with its talons and can only be released with violence and pain.\textsuperscript{110}

Frosh elaborates on this point, explaining that this traumatic manifestation of a ghost can be tied up to individual history (something we have done or has been done to us) or it could be transgenerational, that is to say: ‘something we did not directly encounter, but have always been aware was there.’\textsuperscript{111} He goes on to suggest that the process of understanding individual and collective trauma is itself always:

Telepathically, transferentially infected with these spectres and ghosts such, it will always come back to face itself, tired perhaps, full of something it can never fully lay to rest. \textsuperscript{112}

As part of my introduction, I suggested that ghosts can act as reminder of injustices that have yet to be redressed, and as a legacy of suffering that has yet to be acknowledged on an official or national level. In the context of the 17th October 1961 massacre, a moment in history that still remains largely absent from France’s national memorial narrative, it is important to look at the ways in which hybrid online and site-specific creative response to the massacre becomes a way to tap in forgotten stories of the night and engage more fully Chamoiseau’s vision of traces memoires\textsuperscript{113}. As Lia Brozgal

\textsuperscript{110} Frosh, p. 35.  
\textsuperscript{111} Frosh, p. 34.  
\textsuperscript{112} Frosh, p. 14.  
\textsuperscript{113} Silverman, p. 13.
reminds us in her analysis of the 17th October massacre: ‘The city bears only the faintest traces of the event and its afterlives; few if any signs attest to the nature of the repression or the lives lost.’ This lack of attention she suggests, requires us to see the city as ‘scriptable, insofar as it impels, even requires, the reader’s participation in its creation.’\textsuperscript{114} I suggest that Lia Brozgal’s vision of a new active creation and transference (between present day pedestrians traversing Paris and the memories of the 1961 massacre) lies at the heart of the 17.10.61 project that places audiences as active participants in creating a new script of the city. As such, 17.10.61 becomes part of an unfolding dialogue with the memory traces scattered across the city through the fictional characters of the night represented through the project, as well as means of engaging with forgotten perspectives of that night that have been lost due to inaction, and amnesia, on behalf of the state.

This chapter will therefore go on to examine the ways in which the 17.10.61 project offers up a creative means to re-connect with both an alternate reading of the history of the 17th October 1961 and imagined hologram ghosts of that. Through filling in Lia Brozgal’s vision of an absence of first-person accounts and experiences, the project positions itself in direct opposition to a 50-year culture of silence by its affective re-mapping of memory traces across the city. Through the use of a site-based (and online) interactive web documentary that takes the viewer through the experiences of eight individuals who witnessed the events of that night, I will examine how the use of sensory audio-visual media helps to give a uniquely ‘human face’

\textsuperscript{114} Brozgal, p. 35.
and how this process is able to subvert dominant lines of discourse surrounding the events of that night, rendering alternative versions of what happened on the night ‘scriptable’ and part of Rothberg’s vision of a ‘dynamic transfer of memory.’

This sense of transfer between different periods of history is also particularly pertinent in the case of the 17.10.61 project, which was commissioned to launch on the night of the 50th anniversary of the massacre in 2011. In the weeks leading up to the 17th, the group placed a series of QR codes printed on to tiles in some of the lesser-known locations with historical links to the massacre, which included Pont de Neuilly, Pont de Clichy, Etoile, Grands Boulevards, Palais de Sport, Montreuil and St Michel, where protestors either gathered at the start of the demonstration against the couvre-feu, or were taken as part of the police’s round up of Algerians present on the night. Each QR code corresponded to a red dot on the black and grey interactive map, where a user would be re-directed to a video and hear the (scripted and performed) story of a character present at that location on the night of the 17th October 1961, with each testimony supplemented by a link to additional archival resources and investigative work hosted on ina.fr. In an interview with director David Dumfresne for Omni Magazine, anonymous representatives from Raspouteam commented that:

Paris s’invente une histoire officielle bien propre sur elle. Pour nous Paris c’est un lieu de luttes, de révolutions, de grandes

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115 Rothberg, p. 17.
répressions… Un lieu qui a un sens politique. C’est cet héritage qu’on cherche.  

In this chapter I will go on to examine how the spectral undercurrents present in 17.10.61 (as well as the explorations of the crimes committed by the French state) offer up new perspectives of the 17th October massacre. By providing a physical and digital illustration of what uncovering memory trails might look like, they give us a clear example of the form that overlooked stories and legacies can take in public space. Doing so acts as both a challenge to state-sanctioned silence surrounding the massacre and the cover-up of the state-sanctioned killings by the French police, as well as allowing a more nuanced and affective engagement with the stories of those with first-hand experience of — or ties to — the massacre to emerge.

Furthermore, I will suggest that the stories and voices offered up by the project give a uniquely ‘human face’ to the legacies of state-sanctioned colonial violence, and the victims of a disavowed historical event. With each QR code or point on the interactive map corresponding with the story of a ghostly red and black hologram of a person present on the day of the massacre, the viewer is instantly transported into an immersive, visual space where colonial violence becomes literally humanised. Whilst the project has, for the most part, ceased to physically exist, it remains present and accessible online, and can be accessed directly via a user’s smartphone, providing an important illustration as to how alternate readings of events can

be threaded back into city spaces. 17.10.61 gives us an insight into the ways in which ghosts can be commemorated, or ‘grow in substance and certainty’ by the creation of virtual memory traces or what I refer to as spectro-geographies: allowing the past to be attended to and experienced in new ways. It is a reminder that when the physical erodes, or is lost, strands of ‘wearable, shareable digital memory that is the property of all’ can reverberate through and under our journeys across the postcolonial city. Something of this fluidity of memory is able to match up with the sensory quality of absence so beautifully evoked by Arthur.

This chapter will go on to outline the varied ways that the 17.10.61 project allows previously disavowed memory, like absence, to be threaded invisibly into stones and surfaces, displaying the ways that cannot always be seen, but always acknowledged and always felt. By bridging the affective, the political, the subjective and the spectral 17.10.61 provides a tangible example of how memory traces of the massacre are still felt in the city as well as illustrating the ways in which innovative artistic practice can be deployed to encourage a connection with them. By creating digital and physical paths around Paris 17.10.61 provides an embodiment of a creative response that allows us to appreciate the scope of colonial legacies at work in city space,

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whilst also learning to literally walk alongside the ghosts of the past that are brought to life by the project.\textsuperscript{120}

I will then go on to look at how the 17.10.61 project allows for an engagement with Silverman’s vision of alternative readings of history and how Raspouteam’s work becomes an extension of Frosh’s call to enter into a dialogue with ghosts. Over the course of my analysis, I will examine how Raspouteam’s 17.10.61 project is part of an affective re-mapping of memory traces across Paris, before going on to examine how this leads to the creation of what I call ‘spectro-geographies’, before moving on to assess the possibilities for new forms of commemoration that the project offers up. This chapter will also suggest that an awareness of the affective dimensions of haunting allows for a figurative re-mapping of Parisian city space by teasing out the nuances of the different types of haunting present within city space. Part of this includes bringing the legacies of overlooked figures with the FLN or the Algerian War Of Independence to light, whose faces and snippets of stories are weaved into the streets they traversed or were killed in. By shedding light on disavowed stories or hidden figures in space, 17.10.61 positions itself as a means of actively and affectively re-inscribing meaning back into space, providing new avenues to consider what commemoration of the 17th October massacre — and France’s colonial past more broadly — can look like moving forward.

\textsuperscript{120} Frers, p. 16.
II. 17.10.61: New modes of haunting and affective re-mapping of absence

Though it’s unique combination of site-specific and online memory traces across the city, 17.10.61 provides us with a point of entry to think about how absence and haunting spill over into the materiality of city space. Through its engagement with memory traces and first-hand accounts of the massacre offered up in the form fictionalised testimony, we are reminded how the legacy of forgotten crimes can be part of Rothberg’s vision of a ‘dynamic transfer of memory’. The project thus becomes a means of re-connecting with what happened on that night and challenging Brozgal’s astute overview on France’s ongoing amnesia.

Part of recognising the dynamic transfer at work in 17.10.61, and the way that it opens up a process of dialogue around (and with) memories of the massacre, is to think about how absence is experienced both through the
project itself, and in the present-day places that lack any readable or noticeable acknowledgements of the state’s crimes.

In his own conceptualisation of absence, Lars Frers aptly reminds us, absence revolves ‘around spectres and imaginations, again and again.’

Absence, of people and things, as a result ‘delve into the flesh, it shows the hurt and the pain, the surprise, fear and wonder that enter the corporal field when absences are experienced’.

By engaging with the ghosts of people who once walked among us, who have been taken in cruel, unjust circumstances, requires us to recognise the corporeal complexity of absence. We become conscious of how it lives in our flesh, or our memories and movements. Absence changes the way we relate to space because of the impression it leaves on the skin and the limbs that carry us through spaces. It runs through each step, with each deliberate pressure of feet on the ground, and each loose swing of hands and arms. Frers poignantly observes that: ‘different from a general not-being or not-existing, absence is a not-being-here, a not-existing-now’.

The relational quality of being and not being is what returns in skin and flesh ‘again and again’. It becomes, as Solnit observes, ‘What you can possess, what is immortal’. This sense of absence and a bodily connection to loss, in turn, becomes part of the ‘tangible landscape of memory, the places that

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121 Frers, p. 43.
122 Frers, p. 43.
123 Frers, p. 44.
made you, and in some way, you too become them’.\textsuperscript{125} It is in this state of possession by, in (and because of) loss that I will begin this first foray in a postcolonial urban landscape. Loss is, as Solnit suggests, both ‘memory of an absent richness’ and a set of clues by which to navigate the present. By allowing us to be in a state of ‘être avec les spectres’ and loss (be it a loss of people, places or things), 17.10.61 sets up the possibility of all that we stand to gain clues to navigate our journeys in the present. As Cameron suggests, ‘ghosts have a politics’: a series of messages that need to be incorporated into the ways that we move through the city.\textsuperscript{126} These undertones, in turn, should be translated into the national memorial politics that impact who is remembered where and what prominence this absence takes on a national memorial agenda.

The presence of those who have been excluded, marginalised and expelled (or, as Freud suggests, ghosts that have not been recognised as such) ‘points towards the materiality of colonised and abject bodies;’\textsuperscript{127} She rightly argues that ghosts upset the assumed stability and integrity of western temporalities and spatiality, and seem to embody the ‘mismatch between the ideal and the real, the present and the absent’. Ghosts, as Derrida reminds us, trouble any efforts to finish and close (‘à en finir’); it’s only by living with,

\textsuperscript{125} Solnit, \textit{A Field Guide to Getting Lost}, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{127} Cameron, p. 385.
talking with, and accommodating our ghosts that we might learn to live with them anew.\textsuperscript{128}

As I have outlined in my introduction, haunting need not be about forgetting, avenging, or the lurking presence of literal ghosts. Instead, it can become part of a richer understanding of time, place, and as such, as Cameron argues, geographers might reconsider the political potential of haunting tropes in their accounts of the colonial and postcolonial. This political potential of spectres and ghosts closes the circle of my own line of thinking and brings us back to a Derradian politics of memory and heritage. This political potential of the spaces we walk through should also be considered in the light of everything that stands to be gained, in the richness of Rebecca Solnit's vision of loss. I suggest that absences in landscapes can be felt almost as acutely as the absence of people or things we have loved too. They offer up hurt and pain, the surprise, fear and wonder that enter the corporal field when absences are experienced are relayed to the individual moving through space. In embracing the surprise, the fear and the wonder we learn to enact ‘une politique de la mémoire, de l’héritage et des générations’ to live with it freely, fairly and well.\textsuperscript{129}

This stance feels all the more crucial in the context of Paris, and the layers of memory and history operating under the surface of the city or, to paraphrase the popular Hidden Paris Walking tour, that are hiding in plain sight. Indeed,
In *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, Harvey seems to echo this stance, arguing that:

As an entity in relative space-time, Paris takes on the character of permanence: an evolving receptacle open to the whirling currents of global flows of goods and services, of people, commodities, money, information, cultural values and capital. The inhabitants of the city engage with these flows through “physical, material practices and encounters” locations.\(^{130}\)

He goes on to add, crucially I think, that: ‘The materiality of Paris can often be experienced through the materiality of dominant processes and effect… Paris can be lived as memory, generating sensations of intense pleasure or pain’.\(^{131}\) Raspouteam’s ability to extend this materiality and to transpose it both into physical landmarks and on to smart phone screens reinforces the sense of history being an organically, evolving legacy rather than an ossified or fixed set of memories. By engaging with the history of the 17th October massacre through the web-documentary medium (and combining site specific installations with accessible video material) the 17.10.61 becomes a literal embodiment of the evolution of this historical legacy into a present-day postcolonial reality, revealing the ways that the legacies of these crimes continue to live on, be modified, and creatively re-worked in current climates and as a result of contemporary socio-economic, cultural or emotive forces.\(^{132}\)

Chabal seems to echo this stance through his assertion that:

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\(^{131}\) Harvey, p. 22.  
\(^{132}\) Harvey, p. 22.
Raspouteam’s work constitutes a creative response. It produces a more nuanced answer to the problem of a contemporary society’s collective responsibility.\textsuperscript{133}

The nuance of both the project’s cross-disciplinary format and the multitude of voices that are elevated within it, becomes a means of humanising legacies of colonial history and re-stressing their significance for (and impact on) present-day communities who inhabit the city space. \textit{17.10.61} thus becomes a means of directing or focus beyond the worlds of its imagined characters the areas present-day communities and descendants of the massacre inhabit, and the sanctified spaces in which the massacre took place where perpetrators of violence continue to be immortalised in statues and protected by an absence of a visible or visual state-sanctioned apology for the events of the night of the 17th October 1961. By leading us on a digital or physical journey between significant sites, guided by the stories and perspectives of the individuals with a living connection to the events of that night, Raspouteam’s interactive web documentary becomes a starting point to righting that balance: addressing absences or gaps in the places where the state still refuses to fill or acknowledge.

The emphasis on the projection of past archive footage onto present locations ensures that this is visually embedded into the video testimonies of the survivors throughout the \textit{17.10.61} project. Projected images of protestors processing across the Pont St. Michel or pressed up against the walls of Concorde Métro station create a sense of immersion in lived experiences and

\textsuperscript{133} Emile Chabal, \textit{France since the 1970s: History, Politics and Memory in an Age of Uncertainty} (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 27.
moving bodies. Even if the spectators themselves remains static or still whilst watching the images, the connection to the active experiences of bodies that passed through this space whose absence is not accounted for or marked, creates a different kind of viewing experience. This in turn echoes Frers’ evocation of the affective quality of absence and its propensity to impact the material experience of passers-by that go through space.

I follow Chabal by suggesting that this shift from subjective observer to active participant that is facilitated by the site-specific component of the 17.10.61 is a timely reminded of the new models of engaging with colonial legacies in city space. I suggest that these sort of creative responses must be prioritised by practitioners and given visibility by actors within the field of Modern Languages looking to approach legacies of colonial violence in city space from a completely new angle. The spectator is placed simultaneously as consumer of artistic production and moving image, as well as active, historical detective. They are free to move from landmark to landmark and can learn ways to be with ghosts in ways that are better, and fairer. They become party to a digitally immersive, subjective engagement with history, whose traces resonate in movements, gestures, in the materiality of minds and flesh as we move through space. By opening up this immersive engagement with the legacies and testimonies taken directly from interviews with survivors of the massacre through this affective re-mapping of absence, 17.10.61 acts as a means to redress the absence of scriptable clues of the event by creating new routes through the city that seek to tap directly into the
stories and accounts of those whose voices were never given the opportunity to be heard.

III. Guerrilla Memorialisation: Giving A Human Face To History

This emphasis on a sensory re-mapping of Parisian space draws us closer to the subjective memories of that night, opening up the possibility to attribute what Alan Rice describes as a ‘human face’ of history. This significance of providing a personal ‘human’ face to the night of the massacre serves as a further reminder of the totalising grip of state silence that has rendered the city illegible for those looking for traces of what might have happened.\(^{134}\) By creating a tangible bridge between the silence of national memory narratives and the personal testimonies of those present on the night of the massacre, the 17.10.61 project is able to tap into affective experiences of the night and centre personal testimony in doing so. The prevalence of three-dimensional faces of characters such as Yacine, Leila and Omar at the top of the homepage and on the side of the videos on the page sets up a dialogue between different forms of history, and by extension different voices of history. By emphasising the particularity of the human voice and face (in giving the events of that night such a uniquely subjective slant) history is offered up in a way that encompasses the affective, the factual and the political.

\(^{134}\) See Jean-Luc Einaudi’s references to the difficulties accessing archival material outlined in *Octobre 1961: Un massacre a Paris*, where he outlines how some documents and archives have been destroyed, while others remain classified.
The merging together of archive imagery and present-day footage only serves to further underline the vividness of the images, of their inability to be confined fully to the realm of the archival, the historical or the filmed. We see a clear example of this in the case of Mohammed, where images of dissolving faces of victims are repeatedly projected in a slow, looping fashion on to the doors and windows of a house, as Mohammed recounts how the protestors marched from the bidonvilles on the outskirts of the city into the centre. The fast pace of his prose seems to jar with the languid quality of the images. The ‘uncanny’, haunting quality of the footage moves beyond the realm of the visual or digital merely psychic into cultural and geographical contexts, ‘where dispossession-repossession, locational perceptions and epistemology inform the uncanny’.135

135 Frosh, pp. 15–16.

Figure 4 Still taken from the 17.10.61, Mohammed, <https://raspou.team/1961/>
In aligning itself with this vision of an immersive, sensory approach to commemoration, 17.10.61 thus serves as an effective means of bringing legacies of the night to the surface and a way of physically re-directing — and encouraging — new routes around the city. It is a means of generating an active, engaged, and above all subjective relationship to the undercurrents of the haunted Parisian landscape. A passer-by is free to draw on a body of work from his or her smartphone, to google the project and dedicate time to meticulously looking through the artefacts available, plunging themselves into a digital immersion. Whether they choose to walk between QR codes across the city, or simply use the mobile version of the site on their phones, spectators are offered the possibility to trace a route, or conduct an ordered trajectory in between echoes of traumatic memory allowing new visions, insights and relationships to the streets of Paris to emerge. The project as such is able to create a line, or rather a series of lines (physical, virtual, figurative) that allow for new ways of seeing, and conscious ways of walking, to emerge.

The human faces held in digital vessels of smart phones serve as a reminder of how technological advances in material culture can invoke ‘social transformation precisely because of the ways in which it is interconnected with other areas of life’.\(^{136}\) This connection between the digital and the spectral reminds us that haunting in a postcolonial context need not be about forgetting, avenging, and lurking but rather about gaining richer understandings of time, place, and materiality as I outlined at the start of this

\(^{136}\) Andrew Hoskins, ‘The Mediatisation of Memory’, p. 34.
chapter. 17.10.61’s transformative possibility resists any of the project’s material degeneration in the present, suspended in the digital undercurrents of the city and in the gaps on buildings and corners where some QR codes remain. The richness of affective and shared material and digital memory maps in a certain respect help to safeguard the project from erasure, or at least makes its physical erasure from walls and street corners feel less significant somehow. 17.10.61’s power is that of the human face, of the impression of faces and voices that are given recourse to resonate in physical space. This person was here, in this spot, in this date. If absence can be felt in our flesh, or gestures and movements, then how (as Maddern and Adey remind us) can we ‘just walk over the footsteps and not remember?’ 137

In giving absent history the right to take up presence in the present public space, 17.10.61 changes the memorial and material relationships that can be traversed in our journeys across Paris. Its resistance to the homogenising drive of state control, of what and who can be remembered in what place and under what circumstances, is significant. It is a further reminder of the uncontainable nature of absence and absent people, of absence’s tendency to shift voices and recollections back into the present ‘again and again’. 17.10.61 becomes an example of what Alan Rice dubs ‘guerrilla memorialisation’. 138 Rice’s guerrilla memorials expose the tensions between architectural design, ideological power and national agendas by necessitating

138 Rice, p. 22.
‘a complete rewriting of the imperial cityscape’ in ways that are ‘multivalent and multifarious.’\textsuperscript{139} He writes that:

Dialogising history with other forms, such as biography, folklore, memorials and artistic representation, helps to fill that contested and empirically dry history with the memories and experiences it needs in order to reflect a more accurate and human face.\textsuperscript{140}

This guerrilla movement against state-sanctioned effacement of the 17th October massacre is re-enforced repeatedly through the project, and in the shots of the group’s site-specific interventions in Paris. We see this notably through the character of Lucien who witnessed the widely photographed tagging of ‘Ici on noie les Algériens’ on the side of the quais between Pont St Germain and Pont St Michel, halfway through his account. The camera cuts to a shadowy indistinct member of the collective painting the words on the side of the bridge in the present (the tag was part of just one of the guerrilla actions staged by the group surrounding the 50th anniversary of the massacre in 2011).

The dissolving of present-day ‘guerrilla memorialisation’ into still archive photographs both mirrors and resists the sense of an effacement of history through dominant state discourse.\textsuperscript{141} The camera lingers for a split second on the freshly applied paint, re-enforcing the present-day immediacy of the graffitied words before fading and transitioning into a jump cut where the screen is re-imposed with still black and white photographs. The smooth tempo of the edits and the blurring between past and present images literally

\textsuperscript{139} Rice, p. 23.
\textsuperscript{140} Rice, p. 22.
\textsuperscript{141} Rice, p. 12.
mirrors the back-and-forth motion of sweeping or balayage. Conversely, the co-dependency of past and present images (which are, at instances, virtually indistinguishable) acts as a buffer to the effacement of history. It reminds the spectator of the ripples or undercurrents that act as a permeable bridge between past and present, and of the liquid quality of the memories that keep different spheres of recent history in a state of continued dialogue, and ongoing dependence.

This sentiment is extended through the testimony of Clémence, and FLN ‘Porteuse de Valise’ describing a journey to Concorde Metro on the night of the massacre, and witnessing ‘des dizaines d’Algériens plaqués contre le mur’. As Clémence recounts her experience of exiting the station, present-day brightly light shots of the walls of present-day metro carriages are quickly intercepted with archival photo of Algerians being pushed up against the tiled walls of metro stations, their hands placed on their heads. The photo remains fixed in the centre of the frame in sharp contrast to the previously accelerated oscillation between past and present scenes, before gradually being usurped by blurred lights that sharpen in focus to reveal puddle-covered pavements in the present day, once again grounding the threads of memory and recollections back into material surfaces of present-day Paris.

IV. Spectro-Digital Geographies

By giving such a detailed and emotionally compelling human face to the memories of the 17th October massacre that have been so long consigned to silence, the 17.10.61 project positions itself in direct opposition to national memory narratives surrounding what happened on the night. Moreover, the
convergence of old and new media at the heart of the web-documentary becomes an important point to consider the innovative ways that legacies of loss and absence can be worked back into city space and offer up different versions of history in the process. In the case of 17.10.61, the mixture of online and site-specific dispersal of memory creates a doubly compelling sense of participation, opening up virtual and physical routes for users to re-discover Paris anew. The stories which emerge from the project feel all the more poignant due to the absence of any concrete memorials in the city space, and the active effacement or clearance of history from the geo-cultural memory of France as a whole, I argue that the project is part of the creation of what I have referred to a Spectro-Geographies. Building on from Derrida's vision of spectro-geographies outlined in Spectres du Marx, Dixon suggests that ghostly geographies 'warp perceptions of time and space'.

She goes on to explain that the figure of the ghost is often used as a means of apprehending that which we cannot explain, do not expect, understand, or struggle to represent, and 'is a way of learning to live and cope with the notion of uncertainty'.

By diverting the audience's attention away from well-chartered routes across the centre of the city and inserting the words and accounts of individuals present on the night, it allows both for the presence of spectres to be unpicked or 'more comprehensively understood' and for new historical insights to emerge. By opening up a means by which victims of

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143 Dixon, p. 195.
144 Dixon, p. 196.
the massacre can be remembered and walked with, spectro-geographies remind us the potential of both the ‘multi-directional and dynamic’ nature of memories of colonial crimes, but also the possibility they open up for new, innovative creative practice in the present day. ¹⁴⁵ The project as such is able to create a line, or rather a series of lines (physical, virtual, figurative) that allow for new ways of seeing, and conscious ways of walking, to emerge.

The dependency of the past archive on the architectural structure of the present to make sense, visually alludes to the 17.10.61 project’s re-orientating relationship to city spaces and its innate tie to physical landmarks or places. This impact is enhanced by the project’s multi-sensory, immersive nature, as the images on screen directly implicate passers-by and Parisians in the palimpsest of collective and subjective memory. Through the oscillation between past and present film footage projected onto real city landmarks, 17.10.61 sets up a visceral and unfolding connection between the events of the massacre and the groups work in the present. This, in turn, opens up an alternate reading of history in direct opposition to the notable absence of visual clues that allude to the massacre across the city. As Nora and Agulhon remind us: ‘Ours is an intensely retinal and powerfully televisual memory: How can we fail to read, in the shards of the past, the will to make the history we are reconstructing equal to the history we have lived?’ ¹⁴⁶ These words

¹⁴⁵ Rothberg, p. 23.
seem to echo Adey’s question whether we can just walk over the footsteps of absent people and ‘not remember’.147 Both seem to point towards the power of the visual and visceral qualities of memory, how it interrupts narratives and navigations in the present. Nora and Agulhon’s visions of the shards of the past have a halting quality that permeates defences and subjective feelings in the present can be felt in the flesh.148 By underlining this subjective, viscerally intrusive quality of memory in their re-mapping of the city space, 17.10.61 is a reminder of the possibility to re-imagine both the impact of repressed or hidden memories in the present day, but also of the open-ended and creative ways that memory traces can be re-imagined in the present day, centering the experiences of those whose voices have been long overshadowed. Through its very inception and hybrid form across the city, 17.10.61 reinforces Rothberg’s vision of memory’s dynamic and multi-directional quality in a very literal sense. By refusing to be confined to phone screens and spilling over onto sides of buildings and the streets of present-day Paris, the web-documentary serves as a physical manifestation of the layers and currents of memory that are re-actualised, transferred and ‘deferred between individuals’.149 By positioning itself as an

147 Maddern and Adey, p. 293.
148 It is important to acknowledge, however, that ‘the blind spots in Nora’s Lieux de mémoire are symptomatic of a certain unwillingness, or incapacity, to think through the inherent imbrication of the colonial in the national narrative as well as in the various domains of the French every day, specifically problematic of the ‘lieu’ in order to articulate new readings of signs and sites emblematic of French culture – of its past, its territorial locations and its status in the contemporary moment’. Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick and Lydie Moudileno, ‘As Statues Fall: Rethinking the Blind Spots of French National Memory’, 24 June 2020, https://liverpooluniversitypress.blog/2020/06/24/as-statues-fall-rethinking-the-blindspots-of-french-national-memory/ (accessed 7 February 2023).
149 Rothberg, p. 23.
example of the uncontained and irrepressible nature of massacre, as well as the creative possibilities afforded by an engagement with its hidden stories, 17.10.61 acts as a direct reminder of the process of active learning afforded to those willing to step outside the realms of state-sanctioned amnesia, to engage with the spectral undercurrents that exist beyond it.

V. Subverting Lines of History and Discourse

In *Lines: A Brief History*, Ingold seems to pick up on this causal or relational quality of walking. He asks, ‘What do walking, weaving, observing, singing, storytelling, drawing and writing have in common? The answer is that they all proceed along lines of one kind or another’. It is not just that line-making is as ubiquitous as the use of the voice, hands and feet, respectively in speaking, gesturing and moving around, ‘but rather that it subsumes all these aspects of everyday human activity and, in so doing, brings them together into a

Figure 5 Still from the Raspouteam homepage <https://raspou.team/1961/>
single field of inquiry’. Radley corroborates Ingold by underlining the significance of walking as part of our investigation into memory as well as cultural interventions related to memory. He argues that: ‘As an embodied, and emplaced, activity, walking must always be understood as multisensory’. As I outlined in my introduction, a consideration of walking in arts practice and in (visual) ethnography brings to the fore the interrelatedness of the visual and the other senses. This proximity to the sights, sounds and sensations of city spaces, the way traces of these spaces can be felt and resonate in our journeys through the city, is a reminder of the active quality of memory politics, or of the ways in which memory necessitates multi-directional movements (as Rothberg reminds us) “between objects and people, places and things.”

When thinking about the way in which the 17.10.61 project is able to weave fragments of hidden historical discourse back into city space, it is important to think both about how the project encourages new lines of movement across Paris, as well as disrupting dominant lines of republican discourse that seek to exclude the memories of the 17th October massacre from lives that are publicly accounted for and mourned. In order to best thing about how alternative lines of movement through city space disrupt dominant lines of republican memory narratives, and version of what happened on the night of the 17th October 1961 massacre, I want to explore the material and figurative

151 Andrew Radley, 'Walking across Disciplines: from Ethnography to Arts Practice', *Visual Studies*, 25 (2009), 1-7, (p. 7)
152 Rothberg, p. 28.
use of lines at various instances in the 17.10.61 project in more detail and explore how they encourage new engagements with the script of the city. I follow on from Tim Ingold and suggest that his conception of threads and lines can be applied to the graphics and visual interface of the 17.10.61 project. The two primary types of lines he suggests are threads and traces. Traces can be additive or reductive, or neither (i.e., worn path, chalk on blackboard, stick in sand, snail trail) whilst threads bind and connect. The third type is referred to as a ghostly line, which has no physical manifestation. He notes that the distinction between ghostly lines and real lines is ‘decidedly problematic’. We see this in the visual composition of the project itself: of the nebulous purple and black saturation of present and past images, of the transposition of ghostly grey vein-like lines instead of streets on to the black background. The surface of the digital map seems to reflect a close up of skin, creased by lines and folds marked out in grey, and then bisected by the snaking red line of the Seine. The rich colour palette and tactile feel of the digital map visually alludes to Frers’s vision of a ‘type of absence that is felt in the skin’ and the way it snakes along the lines of skin and along the channels of veins.

The presence of red vein-like lines, of traces that look like skin folds, remind us of the vitality of the memories that underpin the very heart of 17.10.61. Underneath the holograms and red dots lie the traces of what seem clearly to be veins and flesh. These, in turn, are infused with the undercurrents of lived

153 Ingold, p. 10.
154 Frers, p. 34.
stories and memory traces. They are imbued both with Rice’s vision of a human face of history, and with the knowledge that that ‘face’ was once a person or people who lived, breathed and drew oxygen through their veins. This vital richness extends upwards, under the surface of journeys through the city. It invites the web documentary users not simply to follow the lines and acknowledge presence of memory in the present, but to stop and consider the vitality of what that ‘presence’ once was. To be present is to live and take in air, to be conscious of one’s placement within a network of other bodies, challenging the absence of scriptable clues (to follow on from Lia Brozgal) that indicate how their lives were lost at the hands of state-lead violence.

The strength of 17.10.61 lies in its reminder that history is always evolving, unfinished. As Cresswell rightly concludes, landscapes are not finished works, symbolic of something fixed and graspable, but rather sites of potentiality: ‘projects, incorporating past legacies, present circumstances, and possible futures’. Above all, each of these landscapes are inhabited, worked in, and experienced in routine, everyday ways. Cresswell’s intervention also serves as a reminder of the possibility for different types of commemoration that can be afforded outside of the realms of state-sanctioned historical narratives and that are made possible by creative interventions such as the web documentary. Through 17.10.61 Paris is

156 Cresswell, p. 272.
imagined as an evolving space permeated by ‘multi-directional’ movements and flows between periods of history, different bodies, combats, and instances of pain.\textsuperscript{157} This fluidity is only extended outwards by the interactive web-doc medium that necessitates a physical interaction on behalf of the spectator who is required to click, to walk, to choose a path and follow the voices that emerge from it.

Kate Nash rightly observes that this potential for audiences to interact with documentary in various ways is at the heart of what makes these new modes of documentary distinctive. ‘Audiences are potentially able to engage in a range of practices from navigating virtual environments, to choosing video content from a database, taking part in ‘chat’ sessions and creating content.’\textsuperscript{158} The interactive, auto-directed nature of the web documentary (with its emphasis on the visual and the sensory) can thus be seen as a uniquely privileged medium with which to work through and experience the potential of these spectral landscapes. If, as Connerton reminds us, contemporary urban landscapes are made up of- and overlaid- with many other 'scapes' including deathscapes (as I suggested at the beginning of this intervention) then the inflections of these memories can only be accessed through conscious, sensory immersion, through seeking to engage with undercurrents of memory that are not necessarily visible but that are

\textsuperscript{157} Rothberg, p. 14.
nonetheless part of an embodied, careful and attentive navigation of the city.\textsuperscript{159}

VI. Casting light on forgotten places

In addition to the use of innovative web-documentary medium, 17.10.61 draws the attention of the audience back to the overlooked or forgotten parts of the city beyond the state-sanctioned plaque. Through its dispersion of memory traces across the city, 17.10.61 helps to offer up alternate readings of history through the dispersal of new memory traces across the city. By bringing about a reengagement with previously forgotten areas across the city, the project is able to tap into pre-existing memory traces of the event. In doing so it is able to actively highlight the gaping absences of recognition and draw attention to the wide-ranging physical impact of the massacre, displacing engagement away from the single memory plaque and the well-established emblem of the Seine. The navigation of the undercurrents of memory through the web documentary medium should therefore be seen as a means to transform spectator engagement with both the images on screen, and the urban space that is depicted in these images. Manceron suggested:

La mémoire de ces événements peut changer son rapport à l’espace, et à la ville. Certains lieux de cette page de l’histoire ont été détruits, écrasés, rebâties, et ces changements ont contribués à un nettoyage, un balayage, de l’histoire.\textsuperscript{160}


\textsuperscript{160} Interview Ellen Davis-Walker and Giles Manceron, Paris, 14 December 2018.
Manceron’s allusion to the close link between physical and memorial space is a reminder of what Lia Brozgal describes as the lack of scriptable clues or state testimonies to what happened on the night of the 17th October massacre. I also believe it is an example of the ways in which a lack of memorial space dedicated to colonial history shapes the politics of memory and of the city in the present. Manceron’s vision of a ‘balayage’ of urban history is deliberately resisted in 17.10.61, which overlays present-day footage of Paris with archive images of places that no longer exist, notably the former bidonvilles in Nanterre, which housed the majority of the French-Algerian population from the 1930s onwards.¹⁶¹

Figure 6 Still of the bidonville at Nanterre, taken from 17.10.61 <https://raspou.team/1961/> [Last Accessed: 05/03/2019]

By weaving archival footage of the former bidonvilles into its re-mapping of Parisian city space, 17.10.61 once again acts as means of a bringing to light

memories of places and their inhabitants that have progressively been eradicated from physical and memorial landscapes.

In *Figures de l'immigré à Nanterre: d'un habitat stigmatisé à l'autre*, Anne Steiner draws attention to ‘L’éradication progressive des bidonvilles, suivie du relogement de leurs habitants,’ which took place in the 1980s. Although keen to highlight the social fractures that the *bidonvilles* represented, she is careful to point out that, ‘Le bidonville est revendiqué comme part du patrimoine historique de la commune’. By shining new light on this former historically significant neighbourhood (and overlooked period of French history), Steiner and the 17.10.61 seem to resist the effacement of the *bidonvilles* as a sight to be swept away, or to be confined to the shadows of social history, offering a mode of resistance to the absences and ‘lack of script’ surrounding the events of the night (to paraphrase Brozgal). This stance provides an echo of pre-existing traces outside of the confines of the web documentary, reminding us of the web documentary’s extension of Rothberg’s view of the ‘dynamic transfer’ of memory across different places, genres and modes of representation. By rooting the stories from Nanterre from the point of view of the Bidonvilles that no longer exist, 17.10.61 enters into a direct dialogue with a long history of absence, as well as with the legacy of cultural and literary production addressing the 17th October 1961 massacre that exists alongside the official (lack of) memory on the part of the French state. One of the most significant of these is arguably Leila Sebbar’s

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162 Steiner, p. 345.
163 Rothberg, p. 28.
novel *La Seine était rouge*\(^\text{164}\), which remains one of the major literary cultural treatments of the massacre to have emerged in France. Over the course of the novel, much like the audience of the 17.10.61 project, Sebbar’s three characters attempt to uncover repressed memories of the night of the 17\(^\text{th}\) October, looking for traces of Lia Brozgal’s script and any traces of memory that may remain across the city. When examining how the amnesia surrounding the people and places central to the massacre is challenged in the novel, Lewis writes:

> This breaking of the silence has not led to a calm levelling of memory, but to a turbulent surge of memories in which opposing representations of the past clash. Sebbar’s novel underlines this instability, bringing to light a plurality of memories collected from various actors in the events of 17 October 1961.\(^\text{165}\)

The novel is structured around the memorial traces and links between sites of modern-day Paris and their previous function. Whilst Sebbar does not linger excessively on the memory of the *bidonville* spaces, the characters of Nora and Omar are nonetheless drawn back to it, reminded of its importance despite its physical erasure from the landscape they are currently standing on. 17.10.61 seems to respond directly to the repetitive movement of Sebbar’s central protagonists written over ten years previously, firmly establishing itself within a creative tradition of scripting traces of the 17\(^\text{th}\) October massacre in the absence of any official state memorials or

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recognition, drawing the focus of the audience back to the places and sites with affective ties to the state’s long disavowed crimes.

This sense of a return to (and affective remapping of) Nanterre and surrounding banlieue if present is echoed in archival footage of slum developments juxtaposed with high-rise buildings, officers and developments. This oscillation between the present-day modern architecture and the debasing conditions that Algerian occupants of the bidonvilles were forced to endure, creates what Lars Frers has dubbed as:

Different kind of awareness of power relations, and of easily forgotten and overlooked subaltern positions that might be washed into oblivion by the fast-moving current of the contemporary, deeply political distribution of attention.167

166 Frers, p. 23.
167 Lewis, p. 309.
17.10.61 is therefore able to cast light on these power relations, allowing for a crucial re-tracing of that dynamic within public space, allowing audience members a unique insight into the realities of the 17th October massacre. Whilst the group gave very few interviews in the run up to their live projections and interventions in 2011, they did agree to speak with author and director David Dufresne about their work. When asked about their decision to occupy the public space with fragments of narrative (to render memory as something that had to pieced together as a collective ensemble by the public and in the public sphere), the group’s response echoes Frers’ thoughts about the politics of absence. The group’s representative replied: ‘L’espace public c’est celui qu’on partage avec les autres. C’est là où devrait primer l’organisation et l’expression collective. C’est une autre façon d’entretenir le flou entre hier et aujourd’hui’.  

The fluidity or “flou” between past and present that is evoked by Dufrense translates directly onto the fabric of the stories and the lines ‘wonderful as they are unsettling ‘that the project traces out. The public space becomes a means with which to be immersed in history, to be conscious of Harvey’s vision of the ‘swirling sea of goods and sensations’ that generate pleasure and pain for those who choose to step into it. 

VII. Imaginative Geographies and Mindful Walking

168 Raspoeteam, 17.10.61
169 Harvey, p. 2.
By turning the gaze of the spectator on to the spectral undercurrents over the urban landscape, 17.10.61 demands a questioning of the ways in which we trace out the contours of the landscape (through lines, traces, or words). 17.10.61 directly encompasses Catherine Nash’s vision of new ‘Imaginative Geographies’: forms of resistance to ‘colonial, cultural as well as political and material subordination, and new geographies of identity that challenge the fixities of nationalism as well as colonialism’.

I argue that this vision of a new geography is extended by the project’s capacity to bridge and assimilate the digital and the affective. In drawing on a rich body of cultural production surrounding the events of that night, 17.10.61 allows for imagined characters to bring real-life testimony to the surface of the city. The call to engage with, and move through space, be it virtually or literally, transforms the visual and associative relationship with the space. In becoming an active walker, or what I describe in my previous chapter as an ‘attentive reader and walker in space’, the spectator is an active participant in a re-imagining of history and of its re-mapping on to the urban and memorial landscape of the city. He or she becomes part of the challenge to state-perpetrated silence.

The 17.10.61 project thus becomes a means to encompass Nash’s vision of an imaginative geography that provides an active resistance to the homogenising drive of colonial history or the overwhelming presence of colonial narratives in the city. Indeed, by mapping out the traces of the

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171 De Certeau, p. 16.
ghostly and the spectral that run across the city, 17.10.61 is able to challenge geography's concern with the 'rational, the ordered, and the sane'.

Indeed, 17.10.61's emergence as what I refer to as a digital spectro-geography: a means with the possibility to engage with the lessons offered up by the legacies of the 17th October massacre and the forgotten stories and voices it offers up. By creating new routes around the city that seek both to give visual clues to what happened on the night of the massacre and illustrate the ways in which over-looked memories spill over into the everyday spaces and neighbourhoods beyond the centralised state-approved plaque on Pont St. Michel, 17.10.61 sheds light on the power of memory traces and the alternative readings of history they contain. We see this specifically in Raspouteam's videos on the 17.10.61 homepage through the intrusion of iconic Parisian landmarks and strong signifiers of place (such as close ups of iconic and ornate Metro entrances, shining under rain as they would have been on the night of the 17th October 1961).

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172 Harvey, p. 13.
The oscillation between high and low angle shots, coupled with the emergence of past images from newspapers and archives that dissolve into footage from the present day, means 17.10.61 challenges a fixed sense of place and time. As each video jumps to different locations around Paris, and glides between different observations and voices the spectator is forced to relinquish a sense of the ‘rational’, the ‘ordered’, and the ‘sane’. They, too, are buffeted along by the voices and footsteps of entities and people who once walked the same streets of Paris, who demand space and place to be tended to, again and again.

The presence of the human face of memory on phone screens as well as walls and paving stones further underlines the presence of an active undercurrent of memory traces and the alternate readings of history that provide. By journey through present-day Paris accompanied by the faces and testimonies of the ghostly holograms at the heart of the documentary, the memories of the night — and the literal scripted clues produced by Raspouteam — insidiously feed into our paths that are ‘as wonderful as they are unsettling’.173 As David Pinter argues:

> These echoes and whispers filter into the present tense, reminders of previous steps that have been taken this way and of how lives and activities intertwine – and part – through these times and

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spaces. As the city’s fabric changes, so do the spaces through which memories take form.\textsuperscript{174}

I suggest that Pinter’s conception of walking provides a direct point of comparison with Chamoiseau (and also Silverman’s) vision of memory traces that the project is able to disperse across the city. In turn, the echoes and whispers created a connection between spaces and their uses and histories, allowing for these spaces to gain new forms of materiality, or material weight. Spaces become richer through their potential to disrupt temporalities and ways of seeing, by revealing themselves as being unfinished works that are not in any way symbolic ‘of something fixed and graspable’.\textsuperscript{175}

Indeed, by doing so 17.10.61 offers up a memorial landscape that is not restrained or contained by the unjust absence of thousands of protestors who met the end of their lives in the Seine. It is not arrested by absence, but “creatively, carefully, imaginatively open to exploring the potential of it seeking out presence in absence.”\textsuperscript{176} In offering up human faces of history which encompass the material, affective and political qualities of absence, we are reminded once again that loss is anything but a void. Absence will always manifest itself in ‘concrete places, people and things’, precisely because people and things were once present, participating, vocal and alive.\textsuperscript{177} The potential of absence to be lived and represented as presence, reminds us of 17.10.61’s function as a guerrilla memorial that can change our relationship

\textsuperscript{175} Frers, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{176} Nash, p. 219.
\textsuperscript{177} Frers, p. 20.
to national memory. By dialogising history with other forms, such as biography, folklore, memorials and artistic representation, 17.10.61 helps to fill that ‘contested history with the memories and experiences it needs in order to reflect a more accurate and human face’.

Stories from that night become alive in embodied and place-related memories. Their presence on smart phone screens and their resonance in our subsequent trajectories around the city become a reminder of the potentiality of the landscapes that we journey across. It speaks to (and says something about) their unfinished nature, of their potential to be filled with multifarious voices and forms of history. As Frers points out, absences need

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178 Rice, p. 22.
memories to fill them with life, ‘just as they need traces in the socio-material world that can draw them into a present situation’. This central importance of memories, the importance of remembering, is what is carried (poignantly) away from any engagement with the project, and with the landscape(s) it offers up.

VIII. From Absence to Presence: Learning To Walk With Ghosts

Over the course of this chapter, I have sought to highlight the potential of initiatives such as the 17.10.61 to affectively re-map memory back into city spaces is one that extends out beyond the realms of the project itself into activist and artistic responses to the anniversary of the massacre. The ways in which the memory of disavowed events can be worked into city space, and challenge the ways in which we move through it, are helpful for thinking about the ways in which the annual citizen and activist-lead commemorations of the 17th October massacre mirrors the memorial function of the 17.10.61 project though the way it gives recourse to subjective experiences and underlines the symbolic and haunting role of certain key sites across the city.

In the weeks leading up to the anniversary in 2017, 2018 and 2019, calls were put forward on social media by groups such as the collective Sortir du Colonialisme, and SOS Racisme. An Algerian flag was draped across the sides of the bridges and roses tossed over the side into the water,

\[179\] Frers, p. 23.
accompanied on occasion by family members and relatives who walked
along next to the floating lone flowers, for a while.¹⁸⁰

Figure 10 Photograph taken from the 17th October anniversary ceremony in 2018 [Photo author’s own]

For all the stillness and the calm of a slow setting sun, the movements of the
flowers buffeted against the water feels hauntingly symbolic. To paraphrase
Frers, absences point to undercurrents, be they in bodies of water snaking
through the heart of a capital city, or to the fluctuations of memory that
undulate across digital platforms and material surfaces of the urban
landscape. Absences always point to entities that are not there or

¹⁸⁰ It is significant to note that the 2021 ceremony (three years after my original fieldwork)
was attended by French president Emmanuel Macron who officially denounced the horrors
of the massacre, labelling it an ‘inexcusable crime’. See AFP, ‘Massacre du 17 octobre 1961:
Emmanuel Macron dénonce « des crimes inexcusables », « commis sous l’autorité de
Maurice Papon »’, Le Monde, 16 October 2021
https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/10/16/massacre-du-17-octobre-1961-emmanuel-
macron-denonce-des-crimes-inexcusables-commis-sous-l-autorite-du-prefet-de-police-
Seemingly not covered by phenomenological approaches to geography that would confine human perception and presence to living. They are not, therefore, immaterial, nor what Frers describes as ‘a mere thought without an anchor in the corporeal world, sometimes there, sometimes not there’. An absence arises in the experience; it is a relational phenomenon that constitutes itself in corporeal perceptions: in flesh, in feeling, in the weight of footsteps on pavements and hands on the edge of bridges, and fingers releasing long, elegant rose stems into water warmed by an unseasonably warm October sun. Attempts to theorise absence outside the realm of the sensory — thinking about it in terms that do not implicate gestures, or words half-uttered, or sensations that are so deeply felt — is a discredit to absence’s painfully relational quality.

This chapter has focused on these sites of absence, of the techniques, lines, hidden faces and landmarks within the 17.10.61 project that have been lost or are missing. I have suggested that an engagement with these memorial undercurrents present across the postcolonial city (and specifically, in this case, in Paris) can help us to embody and enact Derrida’s politics of memory and heritage. I have demonstrated how this process has been aided through the cultural contribution of the 17.10.61 project and thus, by extension, through the proliferation of new technologies. I have considered how the use of smart phone screens and online platforms allow for what Rice describes as an emergence of guerrilla memorialisation.

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181 Frers, p. 12.
182 Frers, p. 13.
Following spectro-digital maps on foot extends the relational quality of absence outward to encompass those who engage with 17.10.61. It is not simply a map to be followed, but one that is filled with echoes and whispers that demand understanding and consideration. It is a type of haunting that is not about frightening or forgetting, but about the ‘richer understandings of time, place, and materiality that can become available to us’. I follow Meier, Frers and Sigvardsdotter’s thinking that absences demand attention and action because they relate to public and personal narratives or memories. In short, they generate the same consciousness of subjective placement or displacement that we feel with absence.

A change of focus is thus urgently needed to give a different kind of awareness of power relations, and of easily forgotten and overlooked subaltern positions that might be washed into oblivion by the fast-moving current of the contemporary, deeply political distribution of attention.

Those who are not allowed to be physically present might even have to hide, they might have to maintain their absence from the eyes and tracking technologies used by those in power, ‘or aim to put up a struggle for the right to decide about their presence and absence themselves’.

Over the course of this chapter, I have suggested that the creation of spectro-digital geographies — or incorporating more immersive technological practices into our journeys through the postcolonial city — can encourage a

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183 Frers, p. 11.
184 Frers, p. 12.
185 Frers, p. 13.
new and more affective engagement with disavowed historical legacies. Combining an analysis of the moving images projected back on to Parisian streets with a more affective analysis of how the projects visual and visceral representation of hidden voices, I was able to suggest that moving closer to ghosts lost in the swells of the Seine, allowing ourselves to be a receptive presence of ghosts waiting to be mourned and heard, was possible should we want it to be. Through their use of multi-platform technology, moving images and site-specific installations, the project can be seen as a call to take ghosts literally - to sense rather than see, to paraphrase Tranströmer, as we move through the city and around sites of long-silenced crimes.

In *A Field Guild to Getting Lost*, Solnit reminds us that coming to terms with any sense of loss is not about forgetting but letting go. To let go it is necessary to recognise its necessary longevity, the slowness of gestures, the physical difficulty of relinquishing grip, and loosening fingers from around a long rose stem some 50 years later. It is a call to recognise how loss will one day require us to change the subjective ‘powerful narrative’ we had written in our mind, or had used to help us navigate journeys through cities and landscapes ‘implicated in the negotiation of the past and the present’.  

These questions about how the 17th October massacre is challenging narratives of cultural progress and transforming the ways in which communities with ties to the events of that night experience certain localities will be carried over into the next chapter with an analysis of Kader Attia’s La

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Colonie and the varied creative and academic responses to modern day traces of colonial legacies in city space.
Chapter 2: Examining Paris’s ‘Haunting Economy’ Through Kader Attia’s La Colonie

I. La Colonie: Towards a process of social reckoning

In Haneke’s *Caché* (2005)\(^{187}\), the central protagonist Georges is haunted by disturbing visions and unsettling letters, as the legacy of the 17\(^{th}\) October massacre spills into his present-day life and interactions in his day-to-day space. Georges’ obsessive re-calling of images of drowned bodies and the emblem of the Seine are an example of what Schaefer describes as physical markers of long-suppressed crimes: a reminder throughout the film of ‘the bodily markers that French Republican universalism cannot wash away’.\(^{188}\)

Much like the 17.10.61 project analysed in my previous chapter, Haneke’s protagonist comes to discover the ways in which stories and traces of ghosts spill over into present-day subjectivity and spaces and into the way the city is traversed, experienced and attended to. They are a reminder of the traces of colonial inequalities that spill into present day spaces and into the everyday lives of descendants of these massacres, demanding further attention and explanation.

Just as Michael Haneke’s *Caché* ultimately reminds the viewer, an understanding of how violent historical legacies continue to linger — and feed into present-day socio-economic factors in space — is part of a process of acknowledging the impact of memory traces in city space, as well as being

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\(^{187}\) Michael Haneke (dir.), *Caché* (Les Films de Losange, 2005).

open to what present-day power imbalances or power inequalities linger in the area around the venue.

This chapter returns to the traces of these bodies and their legacies, and will continue to explore both the ways in which the legacy of the 17th October massacre was commemorated at Kader Attia’s La Colonie and how legacies of discrimination and inequality attached to that night have become part of wider processes of gentrification and changes in city space. Situated on the edge of the quartiers of Barbès and La Goutte d’Or (between the 18th and 19th arrondissements) in the northeast of Paris, Kader Attia’s creative multi-purpose space (with its own bar, gallery and projection room), hosts a year-round programme of events dedicated to confronting France’s colonial legacies.

Leading on from my analysis of the 17.10.61 web documentary, I am using the example of La Colonie to return to the question of whether an engagement with colonial ghosts demands a return to politics of present-day space, and their socio-economic realities. By combining my analysis of La Colonie’s contribution to the memorialisation of the 17th October massacre with an analysis of national collections, including those displayed at the Musée National de l’Histoire de l’Immigration (MNHI), I hope to explore the different ways in which colonial legacies and the 17th October massacre are represented on both a grassroots and national level, as well as providing insights on the sorts of necessary creative practice needed to
tend to, and honour, disavowed ghosts of that night. I will also go on to ask how legacies of discrimination towards (and unequal access opportunities for) communities historically targeted by state and police violence continue to be perpetrated around (and sometimes as a direct result of) artistic or cultural practices. By shifting from a macro-analysis of a community-specific shared site to national collections carried out with descendants of the 17th October massacre in mind, we turn towards the subjective stories of memory and loss that an engagement with the spectral can uncover as well as expanding our understanding of the complicated — and sometimes fraught — process of commemorating historical injustices. I build on from ‘Postcolonial Activists and European Museums’, in which Katrin Sieg encapsulates this uneasy positionality by suggesting that:

In context where colonial history is not consistently integrated into school curricula and public spheres, museums have become key sites for decolonizing myths of national genius and European superiority. On the one hand, they model newly cooperative modes of storytelling. On the other hand, they help legitimate critical, yet marginalized perspectives long considered threatening to a consensus-oriented museology.

My intention with this analysis is not to add to ongoing scholarly debates about gentrification within Parisian neighbourhoods specifically or to delve too deeply into ongoing debates about decolonising museums and collections. My intention is to shine a light on the complicated ways that

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memory traces invariably intersect with (and are tied to) long standing legacies of socio-economic precarity or state-backed discrimination, even in instances (such as the Musée National de L’Histoire de L’Immigration) where the state is taking steps to centre the experiences of communities that it is has historically discriminated against. 192 In doing so, this chapter seeks to build on Avery Gordon’s thoughts about the ‘transformative power of haunting’ — that is to say its capacity to bring about a process of self-reflection — and sets up an interesting new dynamic from which to return to the city of Paris and the events of the 17th October massacre more specifically. What are some of the ways that La Colonie contributes to what Mary Stevens describes as a “peaceful accommodation” of the area’s ghosts? 193 In what ways does the ‘ambiguity’ of this commemoration process —and specifically the gentrifying qualities of the building in the area — teach us about how legacies of inequality and discrimination impact communities with ties to the massacre? And finally, how can an understanding of the presence of ghosts help inform our engagement with the rapidly shifting face of France’s contemporary memorial landscape and new cultural practices that have emerged?

I will look specifically at the space’s commemoration of the 1961 massacre on the night of the 17th October 2018, and its location within what Avery Gordon describes as a process of social reckoning: a coming to terms with,

192 Davis, p. 378.

approaching towards, and understanding of inherited and half-sensed ghosts, and opening a process of dialogue with them. To do so, I will also make specific reference to Samia Henni’s temporary exhibition housed within La Colonie, entitled ‘Discreet Violence: L’architecture et la guerre française en Algérie’ that addressed the spatial legacies of the 17th October 1961, as well as the anniversary events hosted at the La Colonie in October 2018, which included a screening of Yasmina Audi’s documentary ‘Ici on noie les Algériens’ (2010).¹⁹⁴

I open my analysis with the suggestion that representations of, and responses to, colonial history within present-day Paris remain irrevocably tied to Barclay’s vision of economic haunting in contemporary France. More specifically, I will address some of the representational and ethical challenges that documenting colonial history (and its present-day legacies) can pose to curators, artists and cultural practitioners such as Kader Attia, whose work and outreach are paradoxically contributing to the progressive urban development of traditionally multi-cultural and diverse neighbourhoods such as the 18th and 19th arrondissement that border La Colonie. When outlining her vision of the link between the colonial crimes and the present-day ramifications (both for city spaces and living communities), Fiona Barclay aptly argues:

> France’s ghosts are produced by socio-historical factors, but they cannot be accommodated easily within socio-economic

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¹⁹⁴ This was hosted at La Colonie from 19 June–14 July 2018.
realities. Exclusion is a recurring motif, a marker which regulates the haunting economy of the spectral.\textsuperscript{195} The motif of France’s haunting past and present-day economy will form a vital part of this chapter; a point from which to consider how journeys through the postcolonial city respond to the presence of tangible and enduring clues left behind in the wake of ghosts. I am concerned here with how the transformative presence of spectres in postcolonial landscapes opens up an awareness of the ‘haunting economy’ that is at work. Through the process of following ghosts, we become aware of both the material economic realities that still continue to haunt parts of the city, as well as the affective economy of loss and absence (what Lars Frers describes as the connection to ‘skin and flesh’) that the presence of the dead will stir.\textsuperscript{196}

In light of the enduring haunting quality of legacies of the 17th October massacre for survivors and their relatives, the intersections between present-day spaces feel all the more prescient and visible. The stories told by, or tied to, France’s ghosts offer themselves to the collective imagination, and feed into our trajectories through and around present-day Paris. As Akile Ahmet reminds us:

\begin{quote}
Place and constructions of places are bounded by interactions with class, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and race. Hence the space [of home] is defined and constructed through identity and ultimately can come to mean an unbounded sense of belonging.\textsuperscript{197}
\end{quote}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{195} Barclay, p. 20. \\
\textsuperscript{196} Frers, p. 12. \\
\textsuperscript{197} Akile Ahmet, ‘Home Sites: The Location(s) of “Home” for Young Men’, \textit{Urban Studies}, 50 (2013), 621–34 (p. 621).
\end{flushright}
I suggest that thinking about Akile Ahmet’s assertion of the link between class, race and the material construction of space can help us re-engage with questions of the haunting quality of colonial history. This deliberately dual perspective can thus bring the memory of the 17th October 1961 into contact with Avery Gordon’s vision of a process of self-reflection. Thinking about the literal and affective economic traces left behind by ghosts or haunting legacies of colonial crimes, we can more carefully understand how contact with them ‘changes’ us and ‘refashions social relationships’. By returning to what I shall refer to as the enduring economy of the spectral, we can re-fashion our perspective on how the legacy of the massacre continues to determine experiences of ‘unbounded belonging’ in Paris, both in its streets and across a broader memorial landscape. Being aware of the presence of inequalities within spaces and their sometimes contradictory functions allows us to move beyond what Gordon describes as the fundamental alienation of ‘turning social relations into just the things we know’. It allows us to move closer to our own reckoning with ‘how we are in these stories, with how they change us, with our own ghosts’, and understand how forms of space can echo and respond to traumatic memories. By focusing our attention on the outreach work and exhibits of La Colonie we can form a more complete picture of how these spaces are experienced, and the different legacies of and responses to colonial history that are continuously at work within them.

198 Gordon, p. 22.
199 Ahmet, p. 621.
201 Gordon, p. 22.
Indeed, by attending to the traces of ghosts and the present-day politics they leave in their wake, the venue embodies the complicated positionality of ‘être avec les spectres’, of following their footsteps through certain spaces and locations. David Pinter’s evocation of ‘following the footsteps of ghosts’ reminds us of the proximity between haunting and present-day subjectivity, of the way ghosts require us to account for the ways we move through space, as well as the freedom and positionality that we may or may not occupy in that space. They demand a movement towards our own social reckoning with ghosts, and an understanding of the ways in which they still linger in spaces, challenging our spatial and creative outreach work in the spaces they have inhabited.

II. Exclusion and Social Haunting

The systematic exclusion of the legacy of the 17th October massacre from national monuments and discourses, as I have demonstrated in my previous chapter on the 17.10.61 project, only serves to exacerbate literal and figurative haunting of spaces, both through the gaping absence of monuments and public recognition of guilt, and through the enduring discrimination facing third or fourth generation immigrants descended from survivors or victims of the massacre. Leopold Lambert draws directly on these questions of socio-economic exclusion in Parisian space and uses it to re-frame engagements with the 17th October 1961 massacre providing an important point of re-entry into Paris, to examine the haunting quality of the

202 Gordon, p. 22.
203 Pinder, p. 18.
massacre on present-day Parisian space. Lambert’s work highlights the disparities between the experiences of descendants of the 1961 massacre in Parisian space, and the lack of memorial and commemorative evidence of the events in the space. In his appraisal of the carto-chronology of the 1961 massacre in Paris, he writes:

More than 27% of France’s current population was alive in 1961, and many actors in the October 17 massacre, Algerian demonstrators and French police officers, still carry its memory, its traumatic wounds (for the former) and its immunity to responsibility (for the latter).204

These dynamics, he suggests, are amplified by the material makeup of Paris’s urban and cultural landscapes, dynamics where:

Racialized subjects whose lives are often territorially, socially, and economically segregated from their privileged counterparts. Paris being a city that has not structurally changed since the second part of the 19th century, weaponised spatiality remains fully operative today.205

Lambert’s view of weaponised space is one that needs to be reconciled with the traces of ghosts and the socio-economic inequalities that linger as a result of France’s ongoing ties to its colonial history. Whilst Lambert’s invocation of segregation inherent in present-day Parisian space is one I wish to build on in this chapter, I suggest that the term weaponised spatiality (particularly in the light of the violence shadow of the 2015 terrorist attacks and everyday instances of exclusion that still take place in city space) is one that should be treated with caution. Rather than thinking about the

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205 Lambert, ‘Chrono-Cartology’.
potential violence of space, this chapter will seek to further assess the inclusivity (and socio-economic undertones) of contemporary memory work. I will also ask how the presence of Kader Attia’s multi-purpose building La Colonie can be part of ‘spatial strategies of creating, critiquing and problematizing the city’.  

This is particularly significant in the case of the 17th October 1961, whose legacy remains primarily propelled forward (and carried) by the very grassroots activists and practitioners who are being pushed out of neighbourhoods where cultural initiatives are being championed, but whose legacies and work is still noticeably absent from many national museum collections such as the Musée National de L’Histoire de L’Immigration. By examining the cultural facilities and outreach work hosted by La Colonie, this chapter will ask how they intersect with Clerval and Fleury’s vision of ‘spatial strategies of creating, critiquing and problematizing the city’, which bore the brunt of a damning report published by the Observatoire de la politique de la ville (OPV) in 2018–2019.

This chapter’s engagement with local and national level collections that engage with minority memory aims to build on Clerval and Fleury’s call to critique, and will aim to examine the complex interplay between cultural representation carried out by actors like Kader Atta, and the sometimes uncomfortable socio-economic tensions or fallouts to which this work

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206 Clerval and Fleury, p. 165.
207 OPV Observatoire National de la Politique de la Ville, Rapport 2018: Emploi et développement économique dans les quartiers prioritaires, 8 (2019), 10-11, (p. 10)
I suggest that cultural outreach work and innovative creative practice are central in bringing about a reckoning with a ‘haunted’ and haunting spectral economy present in city space. This becomes particularly significant when addressing culturally disavowed or maligned legacies like the Algerian War of Independence and the 17th October 1961 massacre, which continue to be spatially and culturally excluded from Parisian urban space.\(^\text{209}\)

A 2018 report published by the l’Observatoire national de la politique de la ville (OPV) highlighted the enduring presence of France’s ‘reckoning’ with its socio-economic ghosts in urban space.\(^\text{210}\) Drawing on data obtained from the Grand Paris region from 2017-2018, the report strongly criticised the precarious situation facing residents of Paris’ quartiers populaires, including in the 18th/19th where La Colonie is situated. The report’s findings drew particular attention to the ‘deterioration’ of economic conditions which has left inhabitants twice as likely to be unemployed or employed on precarious short-term contracts (CDD), occupying low-skilled jobs, or in insecure accommodation.\(^\text{211}\)

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\(^\text{209}\) There is currently only one plaque commemorating the 17th October massacre, which is located on the side of the Pont St Michel in Paris, but this does not make reference to the number of victims or the role of the French police and state in perpetrating the violence.

\(^\text{210}\) l’Observatoire national de la politique de la ville (OPV), ‘Emploi et développement économique dans les quartiers prioritaires’, (p. 10)

\(^\text{211}\) ‘La situation au regard de l’emploi et du développement économique est donc détériorée dans les quartiers prioritaires, définis fin 2014 à partir de critères relatifs à la concentration urbaine de pauvreté. Même si une partie de l’amélioration de la situation des habitants n’est pas mesurée du fait de leurs déménagements’, ‘Emploi et développement économique dans les quartiers prioritaires’, (p. 10)
Whilst at the time of writing this thesis no figures were available for the 2019-2020 year, it is clear that these findings will only have been exacerbated all the more acutely in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, it is important to pause and reflect here on the role La Colonie has played in contributing to the wider socio-economic climate of the neighbourhood where it finds itself. Alongside this, there is also a need to take time to unpack the affective and creative contribution its exhibits and broader cultural outreach work make to commemorations of the 17th October massacre. This chapter thus aims to directly build on Freedgood and Schmitt’s call to take ‘literal ghosts figuratively and figurative ghosts literally’.\textsuperscript{212} By turning our attention to the parallel strands of spectral subjectivity and material haunting economy at work in the La Colonie we might come to a dual ‘social reckoning’ (that is to say an understanding and acknowledgement of) the ghosts of the 17th October massacre, and the present-day economic realities left behind in their wake.\textsuperscript{213} By turning our attention to the affective dimension of haunting and ghosts, I want to also stress the need to assess how this intersects with wider economic questions in the locations where the events of that night are commemorated. I am particularly interested in how communities with ties to the legacies of the 17th October 1961 are impacted by the aforementioned urban redevelopment projects in the 18th and 19th arrondissement that border La Colonie and rue LaFayette (most notably in La Goutte d’or and La Chappelle). Being attentive to the spectral undertones and present-day

\textsuperscript{213} Social reckoning is a direct reference to Gordon (2008).
socio-economic exclusion in space allows us to move beyond what Gordon
describes as the fundamental alienation of ‘turning social relations into just
the things we know’. It allows us to move closer to our own reckoning with
‘how we are in these stories, with how they change us, with our own ghosts’
and understand the ways in which the legacies of both the 17th October
massacre and France’s colonial past more broadly, are being elevated
through targeted artistic and cultural interventions.²¹⁴

III.  La Colonie and Cultural Haunting

Before moving on to analyse the collections hosted in the venue, it is
necessary to look at the ways in which La Colonie’s presence on Rue
LaFayette helps to contribute to the haunting quality of French socio-
economic inequalities, and what the hidden ghosts of colonial legacies in and
around the area materially look like.

In ‘Still the family secret? The representation of colonialism in the Cité
Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration’²¹⁵ Mary Stevens argues that

The silence that has long surrounded France's colonial past is not
the product of some uncontrollable collective psychic event but
rather the result of a concatenation of decisions and non-decisions
by active agents.

As Stevens suggests, in exploring the discourse around colonialism in a
particular setting it is possible to ‘shed some light on the particular

²¹⁴ Gordon, p. 22.
²¹⁵ Stevens, p. 246.
interpersonal, institutional and disciplinary mechanisms that authorized or blocked its expression.'

When considering the ways in which Kader Attia’s La Colonie honours and commemorates the legacy of the 17th October massacre on a cultural level, we must also be mindful of Stevens’ thinking about the accommodation of ghosts and legacies - that is to say, the extent to which certain types of lived experience and the socio-economic realities central to Barclay’s vision of France’s haunting economy are enacted or not.\(^{216}\) Re-framing the legacy of the 17th October 1961 thus requires us to return to tangible, fixed points around the city, and to articulate the complex relationships to the material and affective haunting economy, as well to either real or imagined ghosts. On one level, Kader Attia’s La Colonie offers both a celebration of innovative cultural production, and a warning against the danger of innate introspection. The space acts as a specific reminder of the danger in overshadowing complex socio-economic realities with the voices and experiences of one socio group or network. It is also a reminder that any curatorial decisions and non-decisions, as Stevens reminds us, particularly in regard to what voices are included or elevated in a venue, perpetuate or in some cases exacerbate dynamics of privilege that spill over into the space around it. Through its commemoration of ghosts or interest in them La Colonie is caught up in what Gordon describes as a ‘process of social reckoning’ with its own limitations and networks that are necessitated by a confrontation with the spectral.\(^{217}\)

\(^{216}\) Barclay p. 246; and Stevens p. 247.

\(^{217}\) Gordon, p. 29.
Despite this incomplete or fragmented nature of its confrontation with the spectral presence of the 17th October, La Colonie provides an important point of departure with which to examine how cultural institutions that help commemorate colonial crimes can also become engines of gentrification that help to perpetrate unequal systems of power and oppression in the present day. It marks a crucial first step in a reckoning with ghosts whilst serving as an enduring reminder of the fault lines in France’s fractured political and socio-economic landscapes.

Indeed, the venue’s complex relationship with what Anne Clerval and Antoine Fleury have dubbed the ‘embourgeoisement de Paris’ or its role in the progressive gentrification of the quartiers of La Goutte d’Or and La Chappelle which border it, remind us of how commemorating colonial ghosts demands a return to, and an engagement with, the politics of space. By understanding how commemorative artistic practices can help to perpetuate colonial dynamics of power in relation to postcolonial space, we can move closer towards Mary Steven’s vision of ‘peaceful accommodation’ of the complexity and ambiguity surrounding how colonial legacies are remembered in present-day commemorative and cultural spaces.

During an interview held at La Colonie in 2018, Attia was quick to posit the space as an inclusive and accessible venue for visitors and locals alike.\footnote{I have tried on numerous occasions to interview Kader Attia personally, but my requests have been continually denied. Although I have managed to speak to other actors within the venue, my references to Attia’s comments regrettably come from second-hand sources.} He commented:
First of all, we are close to Gare du Nord; there are five bus stops in front of us, and the space faces onto the street, which means a lot. Unlike the Palais de Tokyo or another museum, you do not need to go to a different neighbourhood and pay for a ticket to come here and get the feeling of becoming part of another world that reflects reality. This is an open space that everybody can enter. That is why the coffee on the first floor is so important: it actually attracts a very large audience. In Paris but also elsewhere, coffee shops have since the French Revolution been places of political resistance, and created links within the population in the first place.219

Although La Colonie in many ways upholds this vision of openness and intellectual debate (a point I will return to in more detail later), it is important to stress that a number of key factors problematise the question of its inclusivity that Attia’s interview sets up. My intention is not to be overtly critical or dismissive of the venue’s work, but more to shed more light on Mary Steven’s vision of the complicated process of accommodating ghosts and legacies of a colonial past. Specifically, I am interested here about the extent to which ‘decisions and non-decisions’ made on both a curatorial and promotional level (as I have highlighted with La Colonie) can play a major role in how communities with ties to violent legacies are accommodated and represented. This makes its complicated positionality between the affective and material economy of the 17th October massacre feel even more acute but also all the more interesting to observe. Firstly, there is no indication on the outside of the building or in the environs as to the type of work or events being carried out in the venue (or, indeed, the presence of the coffee shop Attia refers to) which arguably sets up an air of exclusivity or secrecy. This

sentiment is exacerbated by the venue’s almost exclusive use of social media to promote events and to sell tickets.²²⁰

Secondly, the setup of the space and the cost of a number of the events (and indeed, Attia’s reference to transport links) suppose a freedom of movement within space. It is predicated on an unspoken ability to cross Paris to get to Gare du Nord, the economic means to afford public transport, the capacity to move freely without pain, or to feel safe in intellectual, academic spaces. Finally, whilst the venue has hosted an impressive (and diverse) range of events dedicated to experiences of diasporic or migrant populations in France, these have been carried out exclusively in French. No provisions for translators are made available on the website and none of the events on the venue’s homepage or social media platforms mentions accessible material in languages widely spoken by migrant or diasporic communities in France (which include Arabic, Farsi and Urdu).

It is important to stress that La Colonie positions itself at diametric odds to the elitist dynamic these structures set up. In an interview prior to the building’s inauguration, Attia spoke of his desire to create

A place where everyone can re-appropriate their own space of freedom to think and act as they want to. That is also why we don’t want to invite only academics who work critically on the history of colonisation, but also feminists, refugees, architects and activists.²²¹

²²⁰ Both the web page and the social media accounts for La Colonie have been deactivated since this research was conducted.
²²¹ Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and anonymous representative from La Colonie, 17 May 2019 (finalised over email).
Attia’s sentiment was echoed directly in one of my own fieldwork interviews with an anonymous representative from the La Colonie. Over the course of our conversation, which followed the inauguration of the *Discreet Violence* exhibition in July 2018, I was informed that:

La Colonie est un espace dédié à la décolonisation des savoirs. Il a pour but de créer un pont entre des espaces et des communautés différentes mais également de jouer un rôle de médiateur et de sensibilisation autour de thématiques mémorielles, dont notamment précisément la question du 17 octobre 1961 qui touche particulièrement les fondateurs de la Colonie, tous Algériens.\(^{222}\)

Despite the decisions made about the venue’s promotional strategy and its complex position on the edge of two very diverse and progressively more gentrified neighbourhoods, it is important to stress that memorial traces of this massacre lie at the very heart of its inception. As such La Colonie is, through the simple process of existing as well as through its varied events programme, able to create an affective link outwards to clandestine artistic projects and spatial practices dedicated to the legacies of the 17th October massacre. In an interview with an anonymous research participant, La Colonie was described as:

Un pont entre des espaces et des communautés différentes mais également de jouer un rôle de médiateur et de sensibilisation autour de thématiques mémorielles, dont notamment précisément la question du 17 octobre 1961 qui touche particulièrement les fondateurs de la Colonie, tous Algériens. Le concept de la Colonie est calqué sur celui développé par Kader Attia dans son œuvre de réparation: réparation comme acte de couture, de création de liens, de mise en sépulture, de soins, à l'opposée d'un effacement chirurgical.\(^{223}\)

\(^{222}\) Barclay, p. 20.

\(^{223}\) Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and representative from La Colonie, 3 May 2019 (interview conducted via email).
During an interview with Leopold Lambert (invited to speak at La Colonie to present on the colonial cartography of Paris as part of the *Discreet Violence* exhibition series) he was keen to stress that whilst La Colonie was not ‘activism in a pure sense’ its creative inputs were nonetheless to be celebrated because:

> Artistic representations are very much able to part with this idea of objectiveness…[which is significant] because to a certain degree everyone is involved in this event which so much mobilised the history of French Colonialism.¹

Similarly, in an interview with the magazine *Socialite Family* prior to the building’s inauguration, Kadia Attia and his partner Zico Selloum spoke of their desire to use the legacy of the 17th October 1961 as an impetus to secure ‘la décolonisation des peuples comme celle des savoirs, des comportements et des pratiques’.² Attia’s mission statement deliberately situates the project within what he sees a culture of a noticeable social fracture within Paris.

He writes that:

> Ici comme un peu partout ailleurs, les fractures se démultiplient dans un silence criant, avec une violence accrue. La Colonie est une expérience de défragmentation, de démorcellement, de réparations dans laquelle tout le monde est le bienvenu.²²

This process of undoing and de-fragmenting the effects of social fractures that Attia places at the heart of the venue’s mission brings us back to the legacy of the 17th October massacre and the violence of its absence and

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¹ Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and representative from La Colonie, 3 May 2019 (interview conducted via email).
²² This was on the homepage of the La Colonie, although the web page has now closed.
²²² See above.
erasure. To examine the extent to which the venue is part of a process of de-
fragmentation and decolonisation and whether it contributes to what Mary
Stevens describes as a ‘peaceful accommodation’ of ghosts and the
complexities of colonial legacies. It is necessary to return to the legacy of the
17th October, and the complex socio-economic realities of the spaces
surrounding the venue. This chapter will go on to explore the ways in which
the massacre and surrounding legacies of France’s colonial history have
been developed by the venue (paying particular attention to Samia Henni’s
‘Discreet Violence’ exhibition). I will then go on to explore Mary Stevens’
vision of a ‘peaceful accommodation’ of ghosts and legacies in closer detail,
examining the extent to which the ‘decisions and non-decisions’ made at the
venue contributes to underlying socio-economic inequalities in the quartiers
surrounding La Colonie. In the final part of this chapter, I will discuss the
extent to which La Colonie’s creative stance (and engagement with colonial
history more broadly) both echoes and contrasts with the decisions made by
the Musée National de L’Histoire de L’Immigration. In doing so, I hope to
shed further light on the difficulties facing institutions in trying to achieve Mary
Stevens’ vision of a peaceful accommodation, whilst also looking at the
lessons that can be learnt about commemorative practices by comparing a
community-led artistic space with a national collection about how to make
space for ‘alternative readings of history’ to emerge.

IV. Commemorating The 17th Of October Massacre At La Colonie

227 Stevens, p. 246.
228 Silverman, p. 16.
How has the 17th October massacre been embodied within the venue? How and where are its stories told, and by what actors or cultural practitioners? Despite Attia’s emphasis on welcome and inclusivity, it is important to state that the majority of the events related to the 17th October that I have attended in the past (On June 19th, 20th and 21st 2018 and 17th October 2018) have been predominantly frequented by scholars, academics or researchers. Whilst these types of scholarly events are undeniably important, the lack of inclusivity feels striking when compared to the types of public engagement work done by other creative local projects in neighbouring quartiers, and across the city as a whole.

However, as with 17.10.61, La Colonie’s conscious undoing and re-scattering of memory can, and should, be seen both an act of defiance and one of care. This was particularly evident in the detailed and meticulous structuring of the space during the screening of Yasmina Audi’s documentary ‘Ici on noie les Algériens’ (2010). Although no direct reference was made to either 17.10.61 or Leila Sebbar’s 2009 novel La Seine était rouge the room was bathed in red light from a tinted red overhead projector, each table was adorned with a red candle, and red fabric hung from the mezzanine.

This sense of precise attention to detail and use of space was directly mirrored in the ‘Discreet Violence: L’architecture et la guerre française en

229 The motif of the Seine and the colour red are repeatedly deployed across Sebbar’s text as unifying motifs that bind together characters’ accounts of the 17th October massacre. This stylistic choice seemed to be imperceptibly mirrored in the choice of red decor and accessories on the night of the documentary projection.
The Algérie exhibition.

To mark the start of the exhibition, Attia and curator Samia Henni projected images of Algerian protesters and armed police officers onto the wall at various points in the discussion, which the audience were invited to view on the floor above to view the main part of the exhibition.

Set against a black backdrop and magnified well beyond their original size, their visual impact mirrored the multi-sensory, visceral quality of the 17.10.61. They remained present throughout: a reminder of their absence from so much of Paris’s material space and cultural imagination. As the main exhibition panel stated:

L’exposition dévoile les relations intrinsèques entre l’architecture, les mesures militaires, les politiques coloniales et la production et la distribution planifiées d’enregistrements visuels.

This sense of unveiling or ‘dévoilement’ evoked in Henni’s mission statement was directly reflected in the structure of the exhibition space on the floor above, serving as a deliberate nod to recent polemic debates surrounding hijabs and burqinis in public space. Strategic placement of the glass cases and television screens drew an implicit vertical line between the exhibition pieces and a window at the far end of the room. From the entrance to the exhibition, and via the refracted and reflected images documenting traces of France’s colonial control in Algeria, the visitor’s gaze is drawn to a window at the far end of the room. At the same time, the spectators’ eyes were drawn to

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230 This exhibition was presented by Henni in Zurich, Rotterdam, Berlin and Johannesburg prior to its inauguration at La Colonie.

headlines documenting the death of thousands of Algerians in internment camps, mirroring the displacement and refiguring the critical observations on France and Algeria that framed the introductory round table. The motive of the Seine and the colour red is repeatedly deployed across Sebbar’s text as a unifying motif that binds together characters’ accounts of the 17th October massacre. This stylistic choice seemed to be imperceptibly mirrored in the choice of red decor and accessories on the night of the documentary projection.

Figure 11 Exhibit from the Discreet Violence Series, June 2018

The placement of documents and photographs on to walls and material surfaces in the building were amplified through the creative use of glass and reflective surfaces. The liquid quality of fragments of building and written text corresponded with the fluid movement of the footage used in 17.10.61. When looking down at exhibits such as photographs of groups of Algerian camp
inmates, the mirror reflection of the newspaper headlines added an extra visual layer to the objects on display, demanding a more concentrated engagement on behalf of the spectator. This visual disruption was further exacerbated by the sense of continual oscillation between the present-day Parisian exhibition space and images of colonised Algeria. Henni’s use of six continually looping television screens, showing early televised recordings taken in settlement camps or building sites, played a particularly effective role in distorting any sense of fixed time or place. Through its re-purposing of space and cultural artefacts, and its seamlessly fluid movements from Paris to Algeria and back again, this exhibition provided a nuanced creative response to the absence of state-sanctioned memorials or commemoration of France’s colonial activity.

At the end of his interview with SPIKE magazine, Kader Attia returned to the significant tie between art and architecture. Explaining his motivation to create the space:

“In terms of memory, architecture is an archive, and like any other archive it is “authoritarian” because it excludes what it does not show and extols what it does show. But this authority has a vulnerability that art can reveal.”

In an interview prior to the inauguration to his recent exhibition *The Museum Of Emotion* (exhibited at the South Bank Centre and the Hayward Gallery between February-March 2019) Attia invoked a similar interest in architecture’s capacity to reveal hidden strands of memory and emotion in city landscapes. The Museum of Emotion brings together a key group of

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232 SPIKE Magazine, ‘Re-Appropriating The Colony’.
sculptures and theatrically-lit installations that ironically invoke classical ethnology and natural history museums in order to explore how such places have historically misrepresented artefacts from non-Western cultures whilst also presenting fantastical displays of animal life in the West’s former colonies.

Whilst the ‘authority’ exerted by the physical presence of La Colonie on rue Lafayette at a significant crossroads between the Goutte d’Or and La Chappelle cannot be ignored in our appraisal of it, I suggest that its possibility to open up vulnerability (to expose its own fault lines and a variety of perspectives) is an important step in creating fair and inclusive ways of being. Ultimately, as Avery Gordon reminds us, part of the process of social haunting constitutes forcing a confrontation: ‘forking the future and the past’.\textsuperscript{233} It is only when at this meeting point, she suggests, that we might ‘locate a profound and durable practice of thinking and being and acting toward eliminating the conditions that produce the nastiness in the first place’.\textsuperscript{234}

By leading us to this meeting point — the contradictory interface between past and present injustices both in memory and in space — the memorialisation of the 17th October 1961 massacre, La Colonie opens up not simply a confrontation but a possibility for dialogue and change. As Avery Gordon reminds us, to carry out a recognition or reckoning with the spectres of a maligned past, it is necessary for there to be ‘a kind of sympathetic

\textsuperscript{233} Gordon, p. 200.  
\textsuperscript{234} Gordon, p. 201.
magic between us as analysts and the world we encounter’. Through the exposure of points of contradiction of vulnerability, La Colonie is an example of the multitude of different modes of production, as well as knowing and understanding ghosts that can bring about this ‘sympathetic kind of magic’. It is one of a series of crucial steps in commemorative cultural practice that are needed in order to create a genuinely equal and diverse memorial responses to the events of the 17th October 1961 massacre.

V. La Colonie And The *Embourgeoisement* Of Paris

When considering the affective economic spectral traces of Kader Attia’s La Colonie, our analysis cannot be confined to this single story. It demands a movement out, or back: a conscious return to the material economy of the space it finds itself in and the neighbourhoods it borders.

It becomes clear when looking at these factors together that whilst La Colonie has taken to give a platform for cultural recognition of both the legacies of the 17th October 1961 massacre and other key historical events, these contradictions have paradoxically, for now at least, failed to take into account a necessary reckoning with ghosts and their legacies. Although La Colonie in many ways is an emblematic landmark in or on Paris’s tangible memory landscape it must reconcile itself with the intangible or undesirable consequences of its own memory work, and of the practice of cultural production from which it was born.

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235 Gordon, p. 201.
236 Kader Attia’s parents were present on the day of the 17th October massacre and survived.
To do so requires us not simply to consider the steps the venue is taking to memorialise the events of the 17th October, whilst also paying close attention to how the venue perpetrates what Clerval and Fleury describe as the ‘very gaps between rich and poor areas of the capital’ which, in turn are leading to an *embourgeoisement* or gentrification of the surrounding areas. By looking at how La Colonie is part of shifting socio-economic currents in the wider neighbourhood around it, we can start to see how Colin Davis’s vision of the ‘complex relationship between, people, places and things’, as well as between the power held by certain venues and the people whose stories they claim to represent, plays out in present-day city space. Whilst this chapter will go on to look at the work of the MNHI in more detail later on in this chapter, it is important to unpack precisely what socio-economic factors are at work in the areas surrounding La Colonie at the time of writing this thesis. As Clerval and Fleury remind us:

“We must take seriously the combined effects of the increasingly insecure status of wage-earners and the segmentation of space within cities, which have created situations where certain neighbourhoods primarily accommodate certain types of people, some neighbourhoods become poorer, and the built environment of these housing estates declines, often taking living conditions with it.”^237

I argue that It is only by carrying out this dual reckoning with the vestiges of ghosts and the socio-economic factors that curtail their movements through certain locations and spaces, that we might come to a more nuanced understanding of the problematic and often uncomfortable ways that ghosts are intangibly, at times invisibly, manifested in present-day space. It is only

^237 Clerval and Fleury, p. 165.
through a re-appraisal of the social networks and geographical locations that frame how we follow ghosts (and assessing the materiality of the space we move through in their week) that we might create what Hollis describes as ‘a new layer in the urban palimpsest.’

The link between a singular venue and France’s wider colonial narrative requires us to question the broader relationships between urban space and Paris’ affective and material haunting economy. Clerval and Fleury observe that ‘Gentrification possesses a sort of a pioneer fringe that radically transforms the face of urban landscapes and the material makeup of the city’. When considering material, fixed sites such as buildings that materially change the way landscapes are perceived, moved across or through, the question of inclusivity and openness is raised: who is free to move in these places? As Parry poignantly highlights:

> Without moving in a direction where studies of actually existing political, economic and cultural conditions, from histories that have happened or are still in the making… postcolonial studies will remain ensnared in an increasingly repetitive preoccupation with sign systems and the exegetics of representation.

Ultimately, our creative responses to the 17th October massacre must also seek to account for the ways in which space is simultaneously mobilised and ‘weaponised’ to inform the ways passers-by engage with colonial history. Such an appraisal of this multi-faceted nature of urban space in turn

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239 Clerval and Fleury, p. 186.

240 Parry, p. 30.
demands a direct ‘reckoning with our ghosts’ as well as a conscious sensitivity to the socio-economic factors that underpin the places they frequent, and the reckonings they bring about for those they leave behind. It is only by viewing historical anniversaries, events, spatial geographies and cultural ventures as tied together, inter-connected and open to the impact of the other or to acts of violence, which we can work towards sensitive and nuanced memorial practices in the present, reckoning with the ghosts that the 17th October massacre still invokes in sites, and places in the skin and flesh of all those who move through them.

These present-day assumptions (and ‘weaponisation’) of space can be more clearly illustrated by an understanding of the ways in which haunting affects them. The ways in which ghosts linger and the ripples of socio-economic inequality they have left behind, allow us to map the influences of the past on the present, and to observe how communities with close links to the massacre are included in and at the venue, and represented in the collections (or events) it chooses to host. By locating La Colonie’s memorial work on a broader cultural and geographic cartography, we might come to understand the steps that are being taken to memorialise colonial crimes, and the present-day socio-economic factors that keep the living and the dead in enduring conditions of inequality. In ‘Landscape: From Common Good to Human Right’, Gordon suggests that landscapes and human rights are linked together, not only with respect to conflict zones or to native territories, but also:
With respect to everyday landscapes and environments that are threatened and damaged.” It is, therefore, important to consider how thinking about “how landscapes can be transformed”, and how the right to landscapes, even if it is not recognised as a right per se, is implied in many international right laws.\textsuperscript{241}

Lambert’s vision of a ‘weaponised spatiality’ or the punitive use and mobilisation of space must, I suggest, be taken into account in this reading of postcolonial Paris and the enduring presence of colonial inequalities within it.\textsuperscript{242} In addition, the repeated prolongation of the state of emergency, which was eventually crystallised into common law in November 2017 by the Macron administration, solicited much contemporary debate about the disproportionate use of violence towards Franco-Muslim communities, as well as the uncomfortable assumptions that are being made about French citizens on the basis of the spaces they frequent or inhabit.

Re-evaluating the relationships between everyday spaces, the ghosts they contain and the people who have the right to move through them in the present demands sustained attention. It requires us to re-activate associative links between different forms of cultural representation, as well as different locations and phases of recent history, including the Algerian War of Independence, the January and November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks, and recent outbreaks of violence in Cannes and Paris in May 2017 and April 2018. As Isabel Hollis suggests:

\begin{quote}
To return to an event like the Algerian war implies an unravelling of the intimate and collective processes that function to manipulate
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{241} Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and Leopold Lambert, Paris, May 15\textsuperscript{th} 2018. 
memory in order to establish an inclusive historical narrative. This makes it particularly useful to study anniversaries as key moments of facture, division and reconciliation.\footnote{Isabel Hollis-Touré, ‘Introduction: Risk-Assessing Charlie Hebdo’, \textit{French Cultural Studies}, 27 (2016), 219-22, (p. 222).}

Coming to terms with the affective ramifications or literal ghosts of the 17th October massacre through La Colonie also demands us to turn our focus to more abstract or figurative ghosts, to paraphrase Freedgood and Schmitt. Indeed, through its use of the \textit{Discreet Violence Mobile Exhibition} and an anniversary screening of \textit{Ici On Noie Les Algériens}, La Colonie demands a similar reckoning with social relations and local level politics, as well as the impact these can have on the process of remembering itself.\footnote{Taken from the ‘Agenda’ section for ‘Discreet Violence: L’architecture et la guerre française en Algérie’ on La Colonie’s homepage (accessed 27 February 2019).}

As Tilley argues, far from being objective accounts of historical crimes, Monuments are often fundamental to the persistence and direction of social memory, frames for the inscription and reproduction of social values. They can also be means of forgetting and reworking social relations.\footnote{Michael Rowlands, ‘Monuments and Memorials’, in Michael Rowlands and Christopher Tilley (eds), \textit{Handbook of Material Culture} (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), pp. 500-516, (p. 514).}

Whilst it is not a monument, La Colonie visually markets itself as a space which is dedicated to the understanding and unpacking of colonial legacies and testifying to their enduring presence. Therefore, the extent to which La Colonie is ‘re-working’ or challenging legacies of inequality feels particularly prescient in the wake of rapid development and shifting neighbourhood demographics, thanks to the emergence of cultural or communal spaces funded by the Paris Municipality. These include, but are not confined to, Parc de la Villette complex Zénith, the Cité des sciences et le l’industrie, and the
Cité de la musique which came into being over the latter part of the 1990s. Furthermore, over the course of the 2000s, the Paris Municipality has converted a large number of abandoned industrial sites into venues ‘devoted to cultural production and consumption’.246

Behind the laudable objectives of ‘upgrading public space, familiarising people with contemporary art, or providing a beach for those who could not go away on holiday’, Chervel reminds us that these cultural artefacts and operations have contributed to ‘turning the city into a sort of stage set or backdrop’.247 They also draw a large number of citizens to quarters hitherto little frequented except by those living there. The public authorities, by the same token, have contributed to a ‘change in image and in frequentation of

246 La Colonie is a short walk from the open-access multi-media exhibition space, gallery and training academy Centre Quatre in the 19th arrondissement, which also reserves a proportion of its building as office space for start-ups and social enterprises. The project cost the Paris municipality 102M euros, equivalent 14 to almost a quarter of the budget devoted to social housing in 2008-2009, and was the largest project in Delanoës first term of office. I am paraphrasing a section on this matter which can be found in Clerval and Fleury (2012).

247 Chervel develops this hypothesis by drawing on a range of municipality-funded (or commissioned) cultural initiatives, including ‘Paris Plage’ and the annual ‘Nuit Blanche’ which takes place on 4th October across the whole of the city. See ‘Paris Plage' https://en.parisinfo.com/discovering-paris/major-events/paris-plages (accessed 2 February 2023); and ‘Nuit Blanche’, https://en.parisinfo.com/what-to-do-in-paris/info/guides/nuit-blanche-in-paris (accessed 22 August 2023). Her paper also cites several quarter-specific projects from across the north-east (18ème and 19ème arrondissement), including ‘Paris quartier d’été’, http://www.parislete.fr/ (accessed 22 August 2022) and ‘Cinéma au Clair de Lune’, https://www.forumdesimages.fr/les-programmes/cinema-au-clair-de-lune_2 (accessed 22 August 2022). However, she does not address many of the ‘association’ backed projects that take place in the quartiers or municipalities she identifies and that fulfil an almost identical remit, or produce similar cultural outputs. A notable example left out of this paper is the Festival Ciné-Voisins hosted by the Fabrique documentaire and the association Zone Vive that take live outdoor film projections and screenings to a number of locations across Paris and, crucially, its periphery. See: ‘Ciné-Voisins : les portes du 20e font leur cinéma !’, https://www.cine-voisins.fr/ (accessed 2 February 2023) for a full program and list of locations.
these former working-class quarters’. Cultural outreach productions thus become synonymous with socio-economic politics of the city.

Although these cultural and social interventions within the city space (and particularly in the neighbourhoods surrounding La Colonie) are often implemented at a national level, the idea in fact relies much more directly on local policies of both the ‘social networks’ evoked by Avery Gordon but also on individual venues, buildings or quarter-specific initiatives and cultural programs.

In his comprehensive overview in the proliferation of cultural and neighbourhood-level projects of Grand Paris since the beginning of the 2000s, Ribardière echoes Cherval’s sentiments about the correlation between ‘commune’ politics and local spatial and cultural initiatives across the city. He writes:

Comme niveau d’action politique et comme niveau d’organisation sociale, la commune constitue non seulement un échelon fondamental d’observation des disparités sociales et territoriales, mais aussi de reproduction des inégalités.

As Chervel ultimately notes, what is significant about the geography in which these commune-level policies are implemented, is how they invariably act as an accompaniment to gentrification or the exclusion of certain communities from certain areas and localities. The process, she suggests, begins when:

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248 Clerval and Fleury, p. 165.
249 Gordon, p. 22.
‘The working-class Parisian quarters taken over by the middle and upper classes are those that have had the benefit of the largest numbers of creations of green areas, ‘green quarters’, and new sporting and cultural facilities’. However, as Anne Louise Milne has recently argued in a specially commissioned spatial edition of Francosphères, it appears that the most ‘excluded populations do not benefit from these policies’.252

Despite the Mairie de Paris’ apparent emphasis on inclusive quartier projects designed to promote tolerance or vivre-ensemble, initiatives mean that neighbourhood residents are not at liberty to enjoy its benefits. Milne poignantly argues that the communities referred to in the project descriptions in reality:

No longer have the means to remain in the neighbourhood and can hardly make themselves heard in the public space. The pursuit of the objective of social mix relies on the desire to push the problem — that is, poor households — a bit further away, without worrying about the devastating effects on these families, who do not have access to the social housing created in the more affluent neighbourhoods.253

It is important to stress that the presence of La Colonie alone is not (necessarily) objective evidence of gentrification, nor a directly contributing factor to socio-economic shifts in the surrounding quartier. Its presence however cannot be divorced from this wider spatial context. Although La

251 Cherval, p. 56.
252 The aim of the issue was to build on research carried out through the Plural Cultures-Plural Spaces project that was to accompany the ICI’s development into two new buildings, both of which were to include a mosque and spaces for educational and cultural activities. See: Anna-Louise Milne, ‘Plural Cultures and Spatial Politics: Situating the Institut des Cultures d’Islam in the postcolonial landscape of Paris: Editor’s Introduction’, Francosphères, 7 (2018), 141–46 (p. 144).
253 Milne, p. 146.
Colonie is arguably ‘much more a space of ideas and intellectual approach rather than activist organisation’ it is also a fundamental reminder that human right landscapes and human rights are linked together ‘with respect to everyday landscapes and environments that are threatened and damaged’.254 Whilst la Colonie has been celebrated for its excellent ‘propensity to create debates, ask questions, examine histories’ and is a vital step in commemorating events such as the 17th October 1961, we must consider where it sits in relation to other ‘spatial strategies of creating, critiquing and problematizing the postcolonial city’.255 It is therefore crucial to ask how it perpetrates enduring systems of spatial inequality whilst at the same time giving space to the cultural production needed in order to challenge it.

As Avery Gordon reminds us, the stories that we tell about absent people or places tied up to violent chapters in history should not only seek to ‘repair representational mistakes’ but must also ‘strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, towards a counter memory for the future’.256 In order to consider where, and how, La Colonie sits in Avery Gordon’s vision of both a reparatory and constructive ghost story it is necessary to follow other ghosts in other directions. To do so, I will now go on to compare La Colonie with a more centralised, institutional response to France’s colonial legacies, and explore what this ‘dynamic

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255 Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and Leopold Lambert, 14 August 2018.
256 Gordon, p. 22.
transfer of memory’ from community lead initiatives to larger scale commemoratives projects can teach us about the process of “accommodating postcolonial ghosts” (to quote Mary Stevens) and the alternate versions of history they offer up.\footnote{Stevens, p. 246.}

VI. Repairing Representational Mistakes: From La Colonie To The MNHI

The role of cultural and creative practice in bringing about a reckoning with both a material ‘haunted’ economy and the haunting quality of the affective can be clearly illustrated through the Musée National de l'Histoire de L'Immigration (MNHI) dedicated to documenting the legacies of immigration to France, with a particular emphasis on the experience of immigrants from France’s former colonies.
As with Kader Attia’s La Colonie, the MNHI’s inscription of colonial memory into the Parisian urban landscape and its complicated relationship to France’s colonial past prior to the re-inauguration of the building in 2007, once again demands a more complex reckoning with historical and geographical materiality of the space where it finds itself.

I follow on from Patrick Crowley who argues that this visibly colonial site has come to be partly invested by migrant and postcolonial memories that provoke tensions across the political spectrum. The Palais is a distinctly colonial realm of
memory that seeps into the surrounding area, but within it lies a site of memory which, despite a lack of funding and political will, produces a jarring juxtaposition of texts and signs that haunt France’s present.\footnote{Patrick Crowley, ‘Musée National de l’Histoire de l’Immigration’, in Postcolonial Realms of Memory: Sites and Symbols in Modern France ed. by Etienne Achille, Charles Forsdick and Lydie Moudileno (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 204–14, (p. 206).}

Through its location at this confusing site of colonial power and postcolonial, la Colonie exposes the complex process of commemorating historical legacies from former capitals of colonial power. As Mary Stevens has argued, Le Palais de la Porte Dorée was, initially ‘conceived as a vehicle for colonial propaganda and remains inseparable from it’.\footnote{Stevens, p. 246.} Located close to the periphery on the edge of the 12\textsuperscript{th} arrondissement, the building was the former site of the 1931 Colonial Exhibition.\footnote{It is important to state that the MNHI addresses this directly on its website with the following mission statement: ‘L’Établissement public du Palais de la Porte Dorée propose dans son offre de visite un parcours d’interprétation de l’histoire du Palais de la Porte Dorée qui permet de mieux comprendre l’histoire de ce monument unique, témoignage emblématique du style art déco mais également de l’histoire coloniale et de l’immigration en France. Le parcours vise à donner les clés de lecture et de contextualisation de l’idéologie coloniale déclinée sur les fresques, les bas-reliefs et dans les salons. Il propose également des éléments de compréhension et d’appréciation historique, architecturale et artistique du bâtiment. Enfin, le parcours analyse l’articulation entre le Palais de la Porte et la création du Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration. Il constitue, en ce sens, une possible étape préalable à la visite de l’exposition permanente du Musée national de l’histoire de l’immigration.’ I shall return to specific points in this statement in this chapter.} All three sides are covered in a modernist portico by sculptor Alfred Janniot, celebrating what Dominique Jarrassé has described as ‘the economic contributions of the colonies to France’ in which ‘the realities of forced labour are masked by a seductive harmony and plastic beauty of the bodies’.\footnote{Dominique Jarrassé, ‘The former Palace of the Colonies: The Burden of Heritage’, Museum International, 59 (2007), 56–65 (p. 58).}
This material marking of colonised bodies into the foundations of the building creates an uncomfortable juxtaposition between the internal exhibits and external façade, as well as between the museum’s internal contents and the foundation on which the collections externally repose. Indeed, Jarrassé goes on to suggest that the presence of the museum in France’s contemporary landscape has subsequently emerged as nothing more substantive than a: Euphemistic appellation…named for its address rather than its content, in which postcolonial realities emerge as a radical and comprehensive break with the colonial past rather than the working through in a metropolitan context of the colonial legacy.\textsuperscript{262}

The museum’s emphasis on archiving and collecting testimony to shine a light on the subjective lived realities of historical immigration to France offers a new perspective on Stevens’ vision of the metropolitan context of

\textsuperscript{262} Jarrassé, p. 59.
colonial legacy. As Delaplace argues, ‘Le processus de patrimonialisation permet ainsi de sauvegarder la mémoire de l’immigration et renforce son caractère pérenne par la création d’une collection et d’un musée’ and stands as an important example of what Isabel Hollis has described as ‘the extensive re-imaging of France’s cultural heritage’ between 2004 and 2011. Building on from Thomas, Hollis draws particular attention to the 2007 inauguration of the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de l’Immigration. Hollis suggests that on one level the Porte Dorée, despite its significant contribution in working through its own and France’s ties to colonial history actually serves to ‘accentuate an absence for which it can never fully compensate’. Dominic Thomas echoes these sentiments, suggesting, ultimately, that the Palais de la Porte Dorée was a missed opportunity to ‘inscribe the experience of immigration as a chapter in a broader and more pertinent history that would have included slavery, colonialism, and the postcolonial era’.

For all of the problematic affective and memorial associations that are activated by the presence of the museum on the site of the former colonial exhibition centre whose expositions promoted an idea of La Grande France

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264 “namely the lack of a museum that would really take on the necessary but unenviable task of dissecting France’s colonial past.” I suggest that these claims directly echo calls made in the Felwine-Sarr report, The problem arises when the museum no longer becomes the site for the affirmation of national identity, but, as Benoît de L’Estoile indicates, is seen rather as a museum of the Others; when the museum conserves objects procured from somewhere else and assumes the right to speak about these Others (or in the name of the Others) and claims to declare the truth concerning them.

265 Thomas (2013).
and its prowess abroad, I want to pause to consider the agency and the reckoning that is nonetheless enabled through the curation of the collections themselves. In her discussion on commemorative events that preceded the 50th anniversary of the Algerian war of independence, Hollis discusses how an ‘appropriation of crucial French sites of memory’ is needed ‘as monuments to alternative narratives of the past’. A proliferation of new monuments, she suggests, will lead to ‘a more open and crucial narrative of French imperialism and decolonisation will find its place in French history’. 266

Figure 14 Photo of one of the core mission values of the Musée National de L'Histoire de l'Immigration. [Photo Author’s Own]

The necessity of addressing representational nuances and mistakes in both established museums and new sites of memory has been thrown into sharper relief by recent debates surrounding the return of stolen colonial artefacts to formerly colonized countries, as well as the removal of figureheads of colonial power from public plinths and landmarks around the city. Whilst Emmanuel Macron’s recent (and heavily publicised) commitment to returning stolen artefacts does on some level mark a movement ‘towards a counter memory for the future’ it is important to note that these commitments have yet to be honoured and like with the Africa Museum in Belgium, many stolen ceremonial items and statues remain exhibited in French national collections. Whilst the MNHI is not part of this ongoing debate, the commemorative gaps that still remain within its collections, as well as its failure to address the problematic dimensions of other national museum collections that work alongside it, is a reminder of what Frith and Scott have referred to as the “multidimensional nature of reparations and reparatory actions”.

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267 President Emmanuel Macron pledged to give back some of the 90,000 objects from sub-Saharan Africa that are in France’s national collections, mostly in the Quai Branly Museum in Paris. See: AFP, ‘Art Africain: Macron va rendre 26 œuvres au Bénin’, Libération, 23 November 2018, https://www.liberation.fr/france/2018/11/23/art-africain-macron-va-rendre-26-oeuvres-au-benin_1693958 (accessed 30 May 2019). Arguably, Macron’s gesture does initially seem to be aligned with much of Gordon’s conception of social reckoning; that is, ‘a matter of finding a route, access to that which is marginalized, trivialized, denied, disqualified, taxed and aggrieved and a matter of redistributing respect, authority and the right to representability’; Gordon, p. 203.

268 Nicola Frith and Joyce Hope Scott, ‘National and International Perspectives on Movements for Reparations’. The Journal of African American History, 103 (2018), 1–18 (p. 1). It is important to stress that Nicola Frith and Joyce Hope Scott are assessing ‘the struggle for reparations for the enslavement of African, Indian, Malagasy, and other indigenous peoples’ rather than specific political gestures carried out by Emmanuel Macron.
Although the museum’s location on the site of the former colonial exhibition leaves it with a series of complicated memorial questions to navigate, perhaps one of the most original concepts developed at the MNHI is that of the allocation of a space to a ‘galerie des dons’ through a symbolic acknowledgment of Marcel Maus’s influential work on the ‘gift’. The MNHI encourages individuals and families to share with the general public personal symbols of their respective migratory experience, thereby further foregrounding the human and personal dimension. As Fabrice Grognet remarks:

Les objets qui n’étaient jusque-là que des souvenirs de familles, des papiers d’identités, des contrats de travail périmés, des archives personnelles ou d’institutions viennent grossir les rangs des objets "témoins" de l’immigration en France sur les étagères.

Consequently, he argues that: ‘Ce regroupement artificiel d’objets de natures et de provenances différentes trouve alors une unité en devenant collection nationale’.

Through its direct deferral to what Claire Eldridge has described as the ‘authority and the legitimacy to speak on behalf of the past ‘the galerie de dons stands out as a poignant example of the steps that can be taken as part of a process of ‘redistributing respect, authority and the right to

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269 This concept is explored more thoroughly in Marcel Mauss, The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies (London: Cohen & West, 1966) and is referenced in the information panels featured at the beginning of the exhibition and in the secondary material available for visitors in the museum.

representability’ in France’s memory landscape. Its strength undoubtedly lies in its ability to pay attention to individual stories and to the subjectivity that remains absent from many sanctioned state narratives and commemorative gestures dedicated to the history of immigration.

Ultimately, in order to fully address France’s complicity in colonial crimes overseas and within its own borders we must, as Avery Gordon demands, ‘strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place’. Whilst, on some levels, I am looking at two different approaches that cannot be folded together in the sense that one is state-led and the other citizen-led, by looking at the very distinct memory work put into place by the MNHI and La Colonie, we witness a radical possibility for the creation of innovative new cultural memory practices that can combine the best of both. Whilst any ‘reckoning with’ cannot, and must not, be divorced from the historical and present-day socio-economic realities of the locations they occupy, it is only by re-positioning models of commemoration and encouraging a dialogue with grassroots commemorative models, that we may catch a glimpse of the sorts of radical models of resistance needed for a social reckoning with the spectral, to allow them to be recognised and attended to.

VII. From Commemorative Practice to Ghostly Reckoning

271 Claire Eldridge, From Empire to Exile: History and Memory within the Pied-Noir and Harki Communities, 1962–2012 (Manchester University Press, 2016), p. 305.
272 Gordon, p. 130.
If ‘France’s ghosts are produced by socio-historical factors’, then the associative links between waves of exclusion, of movement from banlieue to centre and back (to paraphrase Isabelle McNeill) require us to turn to the restless movement of ghosts and their relationship to urban space, and how their presence in present-day Paris serves as a constant reminder of both an affective and material haunting economy.  

The socio-economic decline identified in the OPV 2018–2019 report provides an interesting point to return to here. Over the 2017–2018 economic year, unemployment rates had generally risen compared to the same figures published in 2017 and current youth employment rates or ‘insertion professionnelle’ remains consistently higher than previous generations. The explanation for this disparity between the politics of local neighbourhood space and national trends provides an interesting point of reflection. According to the report ‘Les processus de changement prennent donc du temps mais semblent porter leurs fruits, en se combinant les uns aux autres, par des politiques initiées nationalement et adaptées localement’. This emphasis on the local implementation of national political agendas — and the potential pitfalls presented by the reckoning with France’s complex postcolonial landscape — brings us back, once again, to ghosts.  

Through my analysis of Kader Attia’s La Colonie I have shed some light on the complex relationship between the venue’s creative commemorative

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274 OPV, Rapport 2018, (p. 10).
practices and what Anne Clerval and Antoine Fleury have dubbed the ‘embourgeoisement de Paris’ or the progressive gentrification of the neighbourhood around it. Through my comparisons with collections in the Centre National de L’histoire de L’Immigration (where Attia’s work is also exhibited), I have also exposed how the memories of the 17th October 1961 have evolved since the 2011 appearance of the *17.10.61* webdoc, and how they continue to be filtered by (or tied up with) forces of social and spatial injustice in the city. This chapter has also drawn closely on Thomas’s thoughts surrounding the unresolved presence of ghosts, or the specific ways that the spectre of French colonial history perniciously ‘continues to haunt the national psyche, inserting itself into concerns pertaining to diversity and multiculturalism, identity, education, religious tolerance, and of course immigration policy.’ These observations, I suggest, serve to further highlight the importance of confronting this colonial legacy, ‘in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of French society today’. Yet with this necessary appraisal of the haunting economy, the way that spaces are both haunted and haunting, we must still be open to the affective dimensions of space, to be still with spectres and the spaces where they linger.

Whilst the affective qualities of absence might often bring about restless repetitive movements in the place where the dead were once present and living, the imposed immobility tied up with socio-economic realities of certain

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276 Thomas, p. 12.
spaces demands a stillness in order to be fully present in a reckoning. This chapter is a reminder how both the presence of ghosts, and the curatorial and structural decisions made by institutions that try to accommodate their legacy, cannot help but open up further questions about socio-economic inequalities in the spaces in which they are set. It also demonstrates the ways that affective spectral traces in cities are tied up in broader national memorial and curatorial decisions that dictate which crimes are commemorated in certain spaces, or are represented in museum or gallery collections.

Moreover, the dual consideration of Paris’ material and affective economy that I have given space to in this chapter signals the need for a creation of spaces for stories to be told and the willingness to account for the sometimes-uncomfortable social reckoning this brings about.

To confront the spectres of France’s colonial past demands a similar stillness in a place of fear and discomfort, a willingness to be present in that frightening place ‘where you wish you were not’. It ultimately demands a reckoning with the realities of space, and the way postcolonial subjects are transformed into ‘living’ ghosts through the spaces they inhabit and the way they stir up the frightening or the fearful, the material or physical manifestations of lost people and places. Ultimately, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the interaction between memory and present-day lived

277 Thomas, p. 12.
experience we are required to draw on the material and the intangible, the fear and the stillness, that co-exist within any given space.

This stance feels particularly relevant in the context of France’s colonial past and the 17th October 1961 massacre whose legacy is stretched between a singular state-sanctioned plaque on the one hand, and the grassroot or community-level cultural productions on the other. By understanding where each of these artefacts sits on a neighbourhood or national level, by exposing the porous connections, inconsistencies, and sometimes problematic secondary impact of these reputations we might come to extend our reckoning with ghosts beyond what ‘we know’ (to follow on from Avery Gordon) to a process of ‘putting a life back in where only a vague memory or bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look’. Unlike the MNHI, and despite the at times conflicting decisions that have affected the building’s accessibility, La Colonie provides a tangible example of what community-run, artistically driven and altogether more creative spaces that seek to tap into the memory traces of forgotten legacies can look like, revealing the possibility for innovate readings of forgotten history to emerge in their wake. Whilst, as both La Colonie and the MNHI ultimately remind us, a tension with external state-perpetrated colonial amnesia or broader dynamics of socio-economic inequality inevitably permeate into some aspects of the creative practice, by providing a space of ‘accommodation’, to paraphrase Mary Stevens, where historical legacies are represented through artistic practices that centre

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278 Gordon, p. 201.
overlooked perspectives, La Colonie is able to open up new possibilities for innovative remembering outside the parameters of state-sanctioned silence.

This sense of operating outside of the remit of the state’s representation, and centering perspectives of communities whose own experience stood in direct opposition to this narrative, became a key thread of my research into La Colonie, and in my consideration of their cultural-outreach program more generally. In one of our discussions regarding the memorial function of the space, our conversation repeatedly came back to the localised efforts needed to secure the recognition of the 17th October 1961 massacre in Parisian public space. As my interview participant commented:

Pour moi, la bataille se joue sur le terrain de la reconnaissance politique, d’une part, qui implique un rapport de force et sur le terrain judiciaire de l’autre. Le travail de la Colonie se situe du côté de la visibilisation, de la sensibilisation, de la réintroduction d’une possible révolte constructive. Savoir c’est déjà se défendre. 279

Part of the battle to secure a recognition for the events of the 1961 massacre, according to the interview participant I met during the 2018 17th October massacre commemoration, is not simply the process of publicly memorialising the past but rather of moving outwards, and of creating ‘Les moyens de partage de ces connaissances en mettant en place un travail d’archivage de long terme’. 280

Whilst this democratisation of memories and events is, as I have previously suggested, hindered by the venue’s exclusivity, the steps towards creating an

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279 Anonymous interview participant from La Colonie, Paris, June 2018.
accessible (visible) memory archive of colonial history must be seized and actively carried forward. With 1 billion euro generated to restore Notre Dame within two days of the inferno from a range of private and public donors, the questions surrounding representation (and legitimacy) in France’s cultural landscape feel all the more prescient. The question of which landmarks are endowed with symbolic national significance (and funds) feels particularly significant in the wake of the Europe-wide moves to remove statues of slave owners or figureheads of colonial violence from public space. This significance feels ever more loaded in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic which has seen thousands of vulnerable residents forced into temporary insecure accommodation without the likelihood of being able to access a permanent home. Since 2017, budget limitations have been cited as a key factor preventing 140,000 Parisians from accessing social housing in the city, and in and around the 18th and 19th arrondissement.

Ultimately, both the MNHI and La Colonie can be viewed as emblematic of just some of the problematic pitfalls facing those of us who try to follow ghosts. They are a reminder of Patrick Crowley’s vision in relation to the MNHI of ‘memory that seeps into the surrounding area’ but that ‘produces a

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281 €200 million (£174 million) was pledged by the cosmetics multinational L’Oréal, which followed a similar donation from the LVMH luxury goods group run by Bernard Arnault. François-Henri Pinault and oil company Total have also pledged €100 million (£87 million) each. See: Another Man, ‘The Owners of Dior and Balenciaga Pledge €300 Million for Notre-Dame’, 16 April 2019, https://www.anothermanmag.com/style-grooming/10789/the-owners-of-dior-and-balenciaga-pledge-300-million-for-notre-dame (accessed 29 May 2019).

jarring juxtaposition of texts and signs that haunt France’s present. Through its ongoing and ever-shifting contact between the living and the dead, La Colonie provides us with a vantage point to observe how power dynamics in individual neighbourhoods and on national cultural agenda play out, how it ultimately transforms certain (arbitrarily) designated living subjects into ghosts, and how it replicates the unequal power dynamics that haunted the dead when they were living. Its response to these enduring socio-economic conditions is imperfect, at times problematic, yet at the same time underpinned by a desire to open up questions that for decades were consigned to silence, and to provide a space for artistic and creative expression.

If we are ever to assess the pitfalls that inhibit progress across France’s postcolonial landscape, I suggest that both La Colonie and the MNHI are a reminder that we need to look at the quartiers and buildings where legacies of colonial history are housed, as well as the social (or political) networks that determine which stories get to be told, in what locations and (most crucially) by whom. As Avery Gordon, leading on from Brogan, reminds us, in coming to a social reckoning with the past, our responses must bring about a degree of self-reflection, a questioning of how we are in these stories, with how they change us, with our own ghosts, and how these social relationships spill into the physical landscapes we occupy and move through.

283 Crowley, p. 204.
When discussing the presence and memorial work of La Colonie on rue La Fayette I evoked Menatti’s assertion of the link between urban landscapes and human rights. Our understanding of the inequalities inherent to material or urban landscapes, she writes, needs to take into account the injustices that might occur in “everyday landscapes and environments that are threatened and damaged”. Part of this reckoning with the present-day socio-economic exclusion and its close ties to colonial power dynamics is a reminder of the republic’s desires to contain certain subjects in certain spaces and locations based on assumptions about a supposed identity, or on the shifting socio-economic politics of the spaces that they might find themselves.

Following ghosts, according to Avery Gordon, is about: ‘Integrating lost portions of the past into a national narrative and bringing to a form of presence the absence of the dead’. Ultimately, he suggests, even when bodies and stories have been lost, ‘the haunting is re-cast in terms which no longer overshadow the present, but become part of it’. Through its desire to provide a home and an environment in which the long-maligned ghosts can inhabit, La Colonie is a reminder of the creative responses necessary to re-frame approaches to colonial history. It is a reminder of Avery Gordon’s invocation of a problematic social reckoning, one which seeps into skin and the self, and that invokes uncomfortable confrontations with lived realities of that self and our reckoning with the hidden and the spectral.

284 Menatti, p. 15.
285 Gordon, p. 205.
Moving closer to the figurative and subjective presence of ghosts in landscapes demands a sensitivity to these shifting sands, and the opening up of a confusing mix of affective and inherited traces left in their wake. Indeed, despite the enduring material and affective haunting economy that its interrogations of the 17th October 1961 massacre expose, La Colonie’s part in the ‘shifting semiotic play’ surrounding France’s colonial past opens up new possibilities to connect with material and affective ghosts. In this sense it is an essential step if France is truly to address a reckoning with its ghosts, to make space for the living and the dead to be exposed to each other in contradictory and often-painful ways; to breathe life into space and the traces they contain. It carries an echo of Colin Davis’s call to be open to the possibilities of being open to the spectral and the possibilities for ‘unknowing’ that they present, to listen to the old wisdom of the ghosts whose stories call out to us, demanding recognition and truth.
Chapter 3: Moving Beyond Molenbeek: Re-tracing Belgium’s Transnational Trajectories with the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale

Cruel duel celui qui oppose Paris névrose et Bruxelles abrutie, et qui se dit que bientôt ce sera fini’
(Dick Annegarn) 

On a peine à s’imaginer que tout est perdu/ puisque l’énergie des cendres est toujours là et souffle de temps en temps/ à travers les décombres.
(Aime Césaire)

I. The Collectif Mémoire Coloniale: Re-engaging with Brussels’ Public Space

At the start of my introduction, I outlined my belief in a need for a more nuanced spatial reading of Paris and Brussels, and for a consideration of the ways in which both cities are, in many ways, shaped by distinct and very subjective postcolonial legacies across Francophone Postcolonial Studies. To understand the haunting at work in each city, I suggest that it is important to be aware of the different ‘dynamic transfers’ at work, as well as the way that present-day spaces are tied up in respective colonial histories and postcolonial realities such as Paris and Brussels. What happens, then, when two cities are united by the spectre of global terrorist violence, or when historical contexts of both cities become merged in popular imagination, and what lessons about the relationship between postcolonial legacies,

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overlooked memories and present-day city space can emerge as a result of further engagement?

Following the shootings at the Jewish Museum (2014), suicide bombs in Zaventem Airport and at Maelbeek station (2016), and in the aftermath of the November 2015 attacks in Paris, the city of Brussels found itself propelled to the forefront of international media attention. As the city reeled from two lethal explosions in a metro carriage and in the arrivals lounge of its most-frequented airport, Brussels-based journalist Laurent Dubois encouraged readers to consider ‘What is Brussels?’ He suggested that the images taken at the scenes of the attacks evoked ‘A city in transit, a crowded metro and a bustling airport, banal sites of everyday movement - now turned into spaces of death’. Dubois argued that the images diffused in the aftermath of the attacks were striking, not only in their depiction of such senseless violence, but also because in many ways ‘Brussels is much less legible and familiar than Paris. We learn of fragments of its geography - an immigrant neighbourhood called Molenbeek and a downtown subway station called Maelbeek - but what connects them?’

I open this chapter with a return to Dubois’s question, asking how structured walking tours hosted by the activist group Collectif Mémoire Coloniale are providing new engagement with Brussels’ public space, and as such

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289 Dubois, ‘What Is Brussels?’.
encouraging engagements with what Silverman describes as the ‘alternate readings of history’ that can be offered up through memory traces dispersed around locations with ties to colonial history. Since its inception in 2015, the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale has positioned itself as an active player in the move to transform engagements with (and understanding of) Brussels’ public space, hosting a wide range of talks, workshops, walking tours and debates. The group is a consciously intersectional, Pan-African association, comprising several longer-standing grassroots groups and charities active in Brussels, as well as Wallonie and Flandres more broadly. The group’s events are predominantly promoted through its Facebook page, which has 4,636 followers, as well as a growing Instagram following.

The Collectif’s choice to underline the ongoing colonial connections between Belgium and its former colonies invites reflection on the haunting quality of Belgium’s colonial legacies, as well as Michael Rothberg’s vision of ‘the dynamic transfers’ of memory between different places and periods of history that I outlined in my introduction. This chapter will suggest that the Collectif’s call for decolonisation of space and marks an important step in moving beyond Molenbeek, and re-tracing the transnational trajectories that continue to disperse active traces between Brussels and its former colonies,

290 Silverman, p. 15.
291 The group recently established a separate ‘cellule afrofeminine’.
292 These include Binabi (Étudiants afro-descendants de l’ULB), Cec de Louvain-la-Neuve (Étudiants congolais de l’UCL), Bana Mboka Asbl, Change Asbl, Ligue Panafricaine Umoja, ONG Coopération Éducation Culture (CEC), Mouvement contre le Racisme, l’Antisémitisme, Centre interfédéral pour l’égalité des Chances, Musée Royal de l’Afrique Centrale.
293 My own understanding of Pan-Africanism is built on Rita Kiki Edozie’s definition of Pan-Africanism, see earlier footnote 38.
and which link different phases of colonial history to the present-day city space.

By bringing to light these ‘intersecting transnational trajectories’ so central to any engagement with the present-day realities of the public sphere, we can come to understand how patterns of movement and vestiges of former colonial powers are worked into city space and are thus able to transform it in the present. As such, The Collectif’s walking tours become an extension of Chamoiseau’s vision of memory traces or an alternative re-writing of different versions of history: an active reminder of how ‘L’histoire s’inscrit partout dans le paysage urbain Bruxellois…à travers les monuments, les noms des rues, les statues’. Moreover, I will argue that, by displacing our engagement with Brussels beyond the haunting and highly mediatised trope of the Molenbeek district, the tours are part of a necessary expansion of the terms of Dubois’ question, and part of a response to it. By bringing tourists and members of the public back to over-looked sites across the city, the Collectif situates the guided walking tours as a means to help re-map overlooked, hidden spectral presences back into the urban landscape. Using literature and promotional materials gathered from the group’s social media, website and conference literature (as well as my own photographs, observations from visits and semi-structured interviews with group members), this chapter will examine how the

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295 Arens, p. 150.
‘decolonial’ walking tours proposed by the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale can help to paint a more accurate picture of the geo-political realities of present-day Brussels, whilst helping to address the complete absence of colonial history in the current walking tour landscape in the city.

This chapter will outline all of the ‘parcours’ that the Collectif offers to members of the public, including routes in Palais Royal, Etterbeek, Cinquantenaire, the ULB and Scharbeek before ending with a closer engagement with its ongoing (recent) work in the quartier de Matonge, historically hailed as Brussel’s ‘Quartier Africain’, and the home to the newly-inaugurated Place Patrice Lumumba which was opened to the public on the 30th of June 2018. In doing so, I will suggest that The Collectif’s past interventions, and ongoing campaigns for recognition of Belgium’s colonial past, can help us come to a closer, more nuanced understanding of the transnational trajectories and hidden memory traces at work in Brussels, and the way these highlight the enduring haunting quality of colonial power in city space. By actively displacing critical focus beyond traditional tourist monuments and routes, these cultural interventions mark a vital step in re-framing visions of postcolonial Brussels that has proven how engagement movements through space (and political movements centred on the politics of space) can achieve the official recognition needed for colonial history to be brought firmly back into public debate.

The first half of this chapter will aim to give an overview of the haunting presence of Molenbeek and explain the need (and means by which) this needs to be offset with a more nuanced understanding of the politics of the
city space. The second half of my exploration will then directly follow on the heels of the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’s (walking) work in the neighbourhood of Matonge, examining the stories and hidden voices it brings to light, before considering its implications for shaping the future of Belgian (and Francophone?) Postcolonial Studies.

II. Returning to Molenbeek

Before I go on to examine the particularities of the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’s walking tours in Matonge, it is important to introduce and contextualise both the quartiers of Molenbeek and Matonge and to outline why I believe the image of Molenbeek has taken on a haunting quality in popular cultural imagination, and why it is important to offset this.

Positioned at the very edge of Brussels’ city centre with its enduring tributes to Leopold II, Matonge is framed by the municipality of Ixelles in the south, and the exclusivity of the Avenue Louise shopping street in the west. Although its outskirts can be identified as the triangle defined by Chaussée de Wavre, Chaussée d’Ixelles and the Rue de la Paix, its long-standing history of transnational migration — coupled with its reputation as ‘le quartier African’ within Brussels — means that its borders are continuously transposed and expanded outwards, incorporating a diverse population and a wide range of businesses, shops and restaurants. Sarah Demart captures something of this undulating, contradictory character in her reflections on Matonge, where she writes:

Aux côtés des ngandas et restaurants, on y trouve aussi des magasins de pagnes, de chaussures, de sacs, de perruques ou de
tissages. Les salons de coiffure pour hommes, femmes ou enfants, sont pléthores, de même que les call shops, les cybercafés et les bijouteries.  

Figure 15 A close up of Matonge. Source AfrikMali http://afrikamatonge.over-blog.com/article-5510510.html [Last Accessed: 02/02/2020]

Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, by contrast, is a commune comprising two distinct parts, covering a territory of 5.9 square kilometres in total. Following attacks in both capitals, the episodes of violence in Paris and Brussels were read as a tale of two cities, whose narrative outlines and spatial coordinates return, time and again, to Molenbeek. It is the point from which the key perpetrators of the Bataclan shootings, Abdelhamid Abaaoud and Salah Abdeslam, planned the stages of their attacks, and to which Abdeslam was to return in the days following the shootings, evading police capture by escaping over the rooftops.  

Author’s own fieldnotes, Brussels, 20th October 2018.

Whilst it might seem easy to chalk up claims that a 2.27-mile-wide commune is the current ‘European Jihadi Capital’ to nothing more than lazy journalism, it is important to be attentive as readers, researchers and consumers of media to the narrow representation of Molenbeek and the selective mediatisation of Brussels.\textsuperscript{299} By framing our engagements with Brussels in such reductive terms, and by concentrating so much of our focus to a strip of land in a corner of the city, the pervasive influence of the intolerant politics projected on to Molenbeek can, and will, unconsciously feed into our engagements with the city unless sustained efforts are made to look, and think, anew.\textsuperscript{300}

Both quartiers are, in different ways, synonymous of simplistic readings of different layers of history, and tangible examples of multi-directional memory between different places (be it the area in Kinshasa after which the quartier is named, to the suburbs of Paris from which the El Brakouai brothers left to carry out the attacks at Brussels airport). By looking at them together and considering how the Collectif’s organised walking tours are contributing to a more nuanced reading of the different layers of disavowed histories (and legacies of inequalities) in Matonge, it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which memory traces are ‘dynamically


transferred’ from and between different neighbourhoods to sites of former colonial power, and across global waves of terrorism carried out by the so-called Islamic State.

This amalgamation of stories, or preconceptions about the form a story should take, is one of the reasons that the city resists any easy answer to Dubois’s questions, both at the time of the attacks and in the years after. Even in the light of heavily mediatised removal of statues across Belgium as a result of the global Black Lives Matter movement, one of the first automated suggestion when googling the word Brussels is ‘attack’ with 21,300,000 hits, whilst ‘Molenbeek’ generates over 350,000 results with the words ‘ghetto’, ‘terrorism’, ‘Islam’ listed as the top four auto-generated hits. I suggest that this fact alone is arguably indicative of the paradox of present-day Brussels, which continues to be read in monolithic terms, despite representing so many different things to different people. Francoise Vergès warns against the danger of these sorts of reductive, or condensed, readings of violent history, suggesting that:

> The potential immobilization of history into a "knot" of fixed relations is real. The way in which memories perform a role in our lives is connected to the questions we raise at a certain moment, and the connection can be explained through a constellation of causes.³⁰¹

Indeed, this constellation of cultural and ethnic causes that circumscribe our engagement with postcolonial Brussels is precisely what renders it ‘unfinished and imperfect’ which gives it a need to be returned to and

unpacked in the light of re-directed attention on the city, as statues are torn
down and questions about how best to commemorate colonial history
become the topic of popular and academic debate.\textsuperscript{302}

In \textit{Open City}, Teju Cole’s fictional protagonist Julius roams the streets of
Brussels obsessively, in a hapless search for his maternal grandmother. He
describes it as ‘a city of monuments…obdurate reminders to uncomfortable
questions’.\textsuperscript{303} The discomfort of interposing questions so central to Julius’s
confused walking, feeds into some of my own thinking, and reading, of the
city. It is this often contradictory and precisely ‘unfinished’ nature of
postcolonial Brussels that has lead Charles Forsdick, Sarah Demart, Sarah
Arens, and me to call for a more ‘nuanced understanding of Francophone
Postcolonial Studies’ which consciously takes into account the particularity of
the Belgian geo-political context, and can help to frame Belgium’s reckoning
with its own past, as compulsory lessons on colonial history are introduced
into the Belgian secondary school curriculum.\textsuperscript{304}

To do so requires applying a different model that is attentive to the country’s
long-standing history of transnational migration from its former colonies and
beyond that I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, as well as the spatial
and political impact this continues to have on present-day city space,
demanding new forms of resistance to colonial inequality. If we are to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{302} Du Bois, p. 24.
  \item \textsuperscript{304} Charles Forsdick and David Murphy, ‘Introduction: Situating Francophone Postcolonial
    Thought’, in \textit{Postcolonial Thought in the French Speaking World, Postcolonialism across the
\end{itemize}
account for enduring the ‘plural, multi-directional nature of colonial memory’ in the city that De Boehme and de Mul point to, then we must displace our attention beyond the burnt and paint-stained statues, and beyond the boundaries of Molenbeek. Doing so requires an active engagement with cultural and creative manifestations that are casting new light on the ‘intersecting transnational trajectories’ between Belgium and its former colonies, as well as their links to different periods of violence, and different landmarks and locations across the city.305

III. Moving Beyond Molenbeek: Re-Defining Postcolonial Brussels

To move beyond the pervasive presence of Molenbeek in popular imagination, it is important to first consider how the ‘plural, multi-directional nature of colonial memory’ is experienced in Brussels, and in which specific locations or localities. This need for a consciously nuanced engagement with the particularities of the city’s space and postcolonial politics is important when we consider Goddeeris’ assertion that Brussels has a ‘Very one-sided way of dealing with its colonial past in its public space’, a stance that has been exposed (and will need to be re-evaluated) as the country navigates the fallout from the dismantling of effigies of Léopold II, and honours its commitment to elevating postcolonial perspectives in school history lessons.306

305 Goddeeris, ‘Colonial Streets and Statues’, p. 397.
Stephen Frosh suggests that one way we can creatively re-write or re-define our perception of postcolonial history in the present is by “stretching forward” towards the horizon of what cannot be seen with ordinary clarity yet.\textsuperscript{307} To stretch toward and beyond a horizon requires a particular kind of perception where ‘the transparent and the shadowy confront each other, and where the intermingling of fact, fiction, and desire shapes us and the public knowledge we create’.\textsuperscript{308} This stretching forward — that is to say, the process of incorporating postcolonial pasts and presents into urban and cultural landscapes — demands a confrontation of the shadowy or the spectral. I align both with what Cixous dubs as society’s ‘imaginary zone’ that hides everything it wishes to keep invisible, and unspeakable.\textsuperscript{309} Frosh’s emphasis on a transitive verb of motion is interesting here, as it exemplifies the active and subjective dimension to recognising colonial pasts. To stretch or step requires intent, personal implication and a dimension of bodily vulnerability. Part of the difficulty of facing nebulous or culturally maligned histories is the surge of subjective connection that comes with confronting violence or the legacies of colonial trauma. It is therefore important to give space to cultural models that facilitate these sorts of subjective connections to history. This chapter will build on this need, by exploring how the deeply personal act of walking — and the consciously ‘decolonial’ walking tours hosted by the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale in Brussels — can help us reconnect with this

\textsuperscript{307} Frosh, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{308} Frosh, p. 2.
lived dimension to space, opening up ‘contact’ sites to cast new light on postcolonial pasts.

As Rebecca Solnit argues, ‘When walking one occupies the space between [those] interiors in the same way one occupies those interiors. One lives in the whole world rather than in interiors built up against it.’ By embodying Solnit’s expansive vision of walking, I argue that The Collectif’s walking tours and programs can tap into the affective traces of memory through their bodily implications. Walking becomes significant both through the degree of vulnerability it solicits in the walker’s body as they move through internal and external spaces, and through the way it interrupts narratives designed to keep certain memories of historical legacies at bay. Through this process and the active (re) dispersal of multi-directional memories across Brussels, these spatially focused, community-led tours allow us to move beyond Molenbeek, both physically and figuratively, and allow for a more nuanced re-framing of the spatial politics of present-day postcolonial Brussels. They also give us clear examples of the cultural steps needed to engage with the challenging landscape of postcolonial Brussels: one still haunted by vestiges of colonial history even as symbols of it are, latterly, being removed. Against this backdrop of very rapid social change, it is even more vital that the legacies of colonialism and the transnational connection between Belgium and the DRC it has engendered, are contextualised in public space, worked through and understood. Indeed, the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale has pointed on repeated occasions to the lack of clear information about Belgium’s colonial history in

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310 Solnit, Wanderlust, p. 34.
the public sphere throughout the course of my time spent shadowing their events. During one walking tour in March 2017, Kalvin Soirresse asked us:

Pouvez-vous trouver à Bruxelles un panneau directionnel ou descriptif devant un monument ou une infrastructure touristique qui fait référence à la colonisation ? Il y en a très peu au regard de la longueur de cette histoire qui dura près d’un siècle. Savez-vous pourquoi la statue de Léopold II est tournée vers la banque ING ? Pourquoi le roi n’a-t-il jamais mis les pieds au Congo et où était situé le quartier général du pouvoir colonial ? Peu de gens le savent car une véritable politique de déni a été menée en vue d’effacer les traces de cette histoire aussi bien dans l’espace public que dans les têtes.311

Whilst this statement pre-dated (and could not have necessarily predicted) the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the summer of 2020, the removal of statues of Leopold II has only sought to highlight the many years’ worth of state-endorsed silence surrounding Belgium’s colonial past. As the material landscape of the city starts to change (and as the process of removing colonial statues hopefully gathers more traction) there will be an even greater need to bring to light historically forgotten transnational tales of violence. Bringing these hidden stories to light is a vital if we wish to gain a more complete picture of how the city was constituted, and how its legacies will be carried forward into a new era of confronting (or removing) colonial legacies. The transnational trajectories and memory trails that imperceptibly tie present-day Brussels’ public space to its former colonies and to large swathes of North and Sub-Saharan Africa must be teased out and clearly articulated to allow the city to move beyond a culture of colonial amnesia,

and the intense mediatisation of minority populations in Molenbeek, towards a vision of the city space that embraces a plurality of spaces.

IV. Walking Tours with the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale

Nos visites guidées sont un instrument de décolonisation, qui vise à transformer la société dans une perspective culturelle. On ne fait pas que parler de l'architecture des bâtiments…on parle aussi de l'idéologie qu'il y a derrière, on parle aussi de ce que ça signifie d'un point de vue sociétal, d'un point de vue politique, et d'un point de vue citoyen. 312

Through their consciously localised intervention and creative focus, the Collectif’s walking tours offer a tangible example of Baragard’s vision of ‘contact sites’: instances where legacies and stories can be actively engaged with and re-worked through city space. Francoise Vergès suggests that these sorts of contacts of, and with, colonial memory allow us to appreciate ‘how actors instrumentalize or create memories, but also how memory has become an active source of references for re-articulating the present’. 313

Through their emphasis on active movement, be it through the process of walking or through events, seminars or workshops that refer back to the sites and landmarks encountered on these tours, present-day spatial politics becomes actively transformed through the footsteps of new generations and the re-insertion of formerly maligned history into the spaces in which it originally took place. This active transformation, which is contingent on walking, movement and acquired knowledge, is crucial in moving beyond DuBois’s vision of a fragmented city: ‘an immigrant neighbourhood called

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312 Author’s own fieldnotes, Brussels, 20th October 2018.
Molenbeek and a downtown subway station called Maelbeek. Through this contact between memory and active movements through the city, the Collectif’s walking tours reveal not simply the obvious difference of Maelbeek (a quartier with associative ties to the origins of terrorist violence and one still scarred by the bombs detonated by its perpetrators) but also the layered histories of violence that surpass Belgium’s territorial borders, exposing a myriad of connections beyond.

Describing the political function of the quartier-specific walking tour format, representatives from the Collectif were quick to underline this active educative function (‘Le but est déconstruire la propagande coloniale qui est encore bien présente dans l’esprit des citoyens belges.’). We see this specifically in the group’s tour in Cinquantenaire, which, in stark contrast to the Top 10 Brussels attractions and Culture Trip Tour, focuses on

L’intervention des militaires belges et des mercenaires de différentes origines engagés par le roi pour conquérir des territoires de royaumes établis à l’époque sur le territoire de la République Démocratique du Congo actuelle.

Similarly, the newly-updated April 2018 tour in Etterbeek seeks to actively highlight the link between the ‘atrocités et massacres divers’ that were committed by Belgian authorities in their former colonies, and the present-day quartier ‘qui arbore des noms de rue à leur honneur’. The Collectif’s

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314 Dubois, ‘What Is Brussels?’.
315 Examples in Etterbeek alone include: the Rue Charles Tombeur de Tabora, a former administrative general in Katanga in present-day Kinshasa; Rue Major Pétillon, named after Major Léo Pétillon who served as Governor-General of the Belgian Congo (1952–58) and, briefly, as Minister of the Belgian Congo and Ruanda-Urundi (1958); Rue Alphonse Van Gele, named after one of the leading generals in the 1882 occupation of the Congo by the Belgian army. Other slightly vaguer, but arguably no less disturbing, street names include Rue des Pères Blancs, Rue de l’Orient, Rue des Cultivateurs and Place des Acacias.
decision to highlight the particularities of Etterbeek’s postcolonial connections, and ongoing links to colonial violence are significant when we consider the fact that it is bordered by the now infamous Malbeek, connected by the Avenue de Malbeek in the west. This decision to give space and critical attention to the particularities of a space overshadowed by the heavily-mediatised waves of recent violence in its neighbouring quartier, once again highlights the Collectif’s commitment to transforming perceptions of present-day Brussels and unveiling hidden histories within it.

V. From Molenbeek to Matonge: Broadening Postcolonial Horizons

Since its conception in 2015, the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale has used its interventions, including walking tours, seminars and discussions in the quartier of Matonge, to highlight a broader campaign for spatial and social justice (which included, among other demands, securing a square for assassinated Congolese president Patrice Lumumba). Whilst I will go on to discuss this square and its inauguration in greater detail in a subsequent chapter, it is important to outline the wider significance of Matonge in Brussels’s ongoing postcolonial landscape: to continue to circumscribe its geopolitical outline a little longer before beginning a more detailed exploration of (and in) it.

The Collectif’s interventions in Matonge allow for its diverse intersecting transnational trajectories (and layers of migratory history) to be re-engaged
with through the format of the walking tour. On the Collectif’s homepage the neighbourhood is described as a container of:

Plusieurs vestiges de la colonisation [qui] proviennent de plusieurs périodes différentes de la colonisation. Cette visite a la particularité de comporter le lien entre la période coloniale et les premières vagues migratoires congolaises et africaines installées dans ce quartier.

The Collectif’s illusion to the migratory quality (and history of) Matonge feeds into much of its cultural representation. In the opening to his album Hotel Impala, self-described ‘Ex Congo Belge, ex Zaïre’ rapper and spoken word artist Baloji evokes images of Matonge imagined from Kinshasa:

J’viendrai chez vous dès que mes papiers seront fixés
T-shirt à l’effigie de Lumumba et leur faire oublier le Che
J’rêve de jouer au Lotto, boire de cette bière
Visiter votre Matongé, chaussée d’Ixelles.

Baloji’s images of movement between the DRC and Belgium, as well as his use of ‘votre’ Matonge, says much of the quartier’s inherently cross-border history, and of its ongoing ties to colonial history that that the Collectif’s interventions seek to shed light on. When I attended my first visit to Matonge on a CMC tour in May 2017, our tour leader (Kalvin Soiresse) was quick to dispel popular preconceptions about the neighbourhood, whilst also dedicating time to addressing its transnational past. He informed us that

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316 The historical significance of Matonge is also explored by the association Kuumba, whose headquarters were located in the quarter until 2016 and who also host monthly walking tours in French and Dutch.

317 Collectif Mémoire Coloniale, homepage.

Matonge c’est d’abord un quartier de Kinshasa, ce sont les étudiants congolais qui l’avaient baptisé. On appelle ce quartier ‘le quartier africain’, mais il y a seulement 2 ou 3% d’Africains le quartier à cause de la gentrification et les loyers élevés. Il y a beaucoup de Français qui habitent dans le quartier pour éviter les impôts…on espère avec l’élection de Macron qu’ils vont rentrer chez eux ! On ne parle jamais des jeunes blancs des quartiers aisés qui viennent s’installer ici. C’est l’association avec l’Afrique qui fait venir l’argent dans le quartier, car il y a les touristes qui viennent.

This conscious decision to highlight the shifting demographic of Matonge (and the increasingly monolithic racial makeup) is an important one, in the light of what were widely dubbed the ‘North African’ riots in the winter of 2011-2012, as well as ‘Congolese’ demonstrations in 2005: a reputation, as Demart argues, that has come to haunt the quartier’s reputation. As Demart rightly identifies, the racial and racist undercurrents that emerged from these reports, clearly highlight the social invisibility of the Congolese and more generally black people in Belgium, and provide a key for understanding the genesis of postcolonial riots in Brussels and how their origins are also tied to ‘Multiple, criss-crossing histories of violence in the capital of the former Belgium coloniser’. Swyngedouwa, leading on from

320 These riots took place in the winter of 2011 in Brussels. The demonstrations took the form of demands submitted to the Belgian government following remarks by a Socialist Senator who, on her return from an observation mission in the DRC, affirmed that the election process was going about correctly. After this announcement, on 4 December the militants, some holding Belgian citizenship, gathered before the Senator’s party headquarters, demanding an explanation, but were barred from entering. They refused to leave, but were chased away by police water cannons. They then decided to move the demonstration to the DRC Embassy, only to find the street there blocked by patrol cars. Angry, they returned to Matonge and on the way they shattered car windows and overturned rubbish bins. There were also skirmishes with local businesses who would not let the demonstrators throw their tables and chairs. When they reached Matonge and the chaussée d’Ixelles, they began to chanting slogans and singing, in a demonstrators-police face-off. Around 6:30 pm the situation worsened as the group moved towards the chaussée de Wavre. Calm was restored around 10pm after shop windows were shattered, cars damaged and about 30 people arrested. The next day the demonstrators arranged via SMS and social media to meet at 2pm at the exit of the Porte de
Demart suggests that Matonge’s strong symbolic significance lies in that fact that it offers up a view of ‘glocalised’ urban life, one that suggests that identities are continuously ‘refashioned, disassembled and reassembled’ in response to socio-economic and historical pressures. By taking care to articulate the complexities of these pressures through the frame of the walking tour, the Collectif is able to effectively side-step the quartier’s racialised reputation and allow for a more organic and informed image of the area to emerge.

Indeed, the criss-crossing movement, and the diverse and oscillating nature of Demart’s description of the quartier in the opening of her article, is mirrored in the structure of the walking tour. Members of the tour group are lead between key landmarks such as the former Conservatoire Coloniale in the rue Prince Albert 1er where a number of colonial artefacts are still stocked and the Pharmacie Coloniale that sold products from the colonies and symbolic cultural meeting points, including the cinema the Café de l’Horloge and the Mural at Porte de Namur. Visitors move between these points without any sense of a fixed itinerary beforehand; we are not told where we are going next or why. Winding through the back streets, moving behind phone shops, wig shops and restaurants that Demart so poignantly describes, our attention is only demanded at specific points.

Namur metro. Due to the journalists’ late arrival, it was not possible to report on and record a violence that can be considered as the turning point for the outcome of later demonstrations. See: Demart, ‘Riots in Matonge’.
The first stop on the Matonge tour takes us to what is now a present-day Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, also known as the École supérieure des Arts de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, founded in 1832 as an initiative of the roi Albert Premier and used to showcase many artefacts and trophies taken from the DRC. Visitors are informed that inside there are still ‘des poignets des portes en forme de masques coloniale’ as well as a number of portraits dedicated to key figures in the colonising missions in the present-DRC by the Belgian army.\textsuperscript{321}

Turning to face tour members, leaning against the graffiti covered wall next to the delivery entrance to the conservatoire, Kalvin Soiresse informed our group:

La colonisation c'est comme une valise, vous venez avec une mitraillette, vous m'arrachez la valise, vous me donnez votre valise, mais vous ne me donnez pas le code pour l'ouvrir. Aujourd'hui, en Belgique, les jeunes issus des familles immigrées, ou de la colonisation toute courte, n'ont toujours pas les codes qu'il faut pour accéder à l'élite de la société belge. 322

This point on the tour is a reminder of the emblems and traces of colonialisation that are both visible and invisible, that remain simultaneously noticeable and hidden from the public sphere. In aligning the images of the colonial masks and door handles hidden on the inside of the musical conservatoire building, with the social codes to the societal suitcase that are still denied to certain members of Belgian society, we are reminded not simply of the 'intersection of colonial legacies, global migration and the state in twenty-first century' but also of how the memory trails and traces in postcolonial Brussels oscillate between the visible and the invisible, the accessible and the closed-off. 323 By describing objects and tropes to members of the public, whilst reminding them that they will not be able to access or see them, this part of the tour is able to re-inscribe politics of exclusion spatially and figuratively into the landmarks engaged with on the tour. This in turn directly reinforces Soja's assertion that 'Space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are

322 Author’s own fieldnotes, Brussels, 20 October 2018.
inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life'.\textsuperscript{324} Visitors are able to literally and critically engage with how the everyday geographies of the Brussels public sphere become ‘filled with politics and ideologies’.\textsuperscript{325} It is a reminder that our aim within the field of postcolonial scholarship must be to move towards a more inclusive awareness of the ‘plural, multi-directional nature of colonial memory in contemporary francophone societies’, whilst simultaneously ‘bringing to light known patterns of prejudice and inequalities inherent to experience of space’.\textsuperscript{326}

This first point on the tour therefore serves as a poignant reminder of the need to move away from theorisations of postcolonial spatial theory to examine the ways in which it is spatially and materially embodied in the public sphere. It also gives us a clear indication that the work the Collectif is doing is to redirect public attention back to the memory trails and traces at work in the city. In teasing out the etymological and geographical links between Brussels and Kinshasa, this point of the tour is a direct reminder of the ongoing links between Belgium and its former colonies, and of the transnational trajectories that are inherent to any engagements with the Belgian public sphere. This point of the tour also gives us a lived, tangible reminder of Demart’s vision of Matonge as a space that can help us understand the ideologies and tensions at work within Brussels.

\textsuperscript{324} Soja, \textit{Political Organisation of Space}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{325} Soja, \textit{Political Organisation of Space}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{326} Ruba Salih, ‘Transnational Public Spheres from “Above” and from “below”: Feminist Networks across the Middle East and Europe’, \textit{Anthropology of the Middle East}, 5 (2010), 53-70, (p. 55).
The entry into the centre of Matonge by the Café de l'Horloge (a former meeting point for colonial officers and then later for Congolese students) now re-named L'Horloge du Sud and situated just off the Rue du Trone marks the midpoint of the Collectif’s two-hour tour. As Soiresse was quick to underline, it is an interesting point to consider the ways in which colonial power dynamics have endured but also been subverted. This point in the tour also becomes a point to consider the nature of the journey through the quartier more broadly. The Café de L'Horloge is a reminder of Forsdick’s assertion that it is vital to:

Destabilise the term ‘travel’ itself, to question the logic of what it has come to mean. He writes that “substantial numbers of people around the globe travel each day and provide evidence enough of the continued significance of travel as an important culturally shaping phenomenon.”

In the context of the Matonge tour, the process of walking through the city space reveals both the power dynamics at work in space and its permeability, and its potential for collective assimilation and domination. In revealing Matonge as a site of both spatial and socio-political complexity (known for its linkages to Africa, but transformed by broader economic and political forces that are changing the demographic of its inhabitants), the tour does not simply destabilise assumptions about the quartier’s ‘radical’ and racialised nature (to paraphrase Demart), but also reveals how space can be made to hide the consequences of colonial violence, creating what Soja describes as an “innocent spatiality of social life.”

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327 Forsdick and Murphy, p. 13.
328 Soja, Third Space, p. 13.
Leading on from the Café, the tour stops briefly at the Pharmacie Coloniale on the Chausée de Wavre at the axis with Chausée D’Ixelles, which sold plants and products brought back from colonial missions. Passing by the celebrated Cinéma Vendôme in a parallel side street, tour participants are lead down the Chaussée de Wavre to its junction with Rue Longue Vie, where they are directed to stop opposite a statue of a child soldier made entirely from salvaged bullet cases from the DRC, a commissioned piece created by Congolese artist Freddy Tsimba in 2007.

At the inauguration of the statue on 9 October 2007, Mairie d'Ixelles, Pierre Lardot commented that ‘Planté sur la chaussée de Wavre traversant Matonge, ce statue doit marquer l’ancrage de ce quartier à la réalité congolaise’.

Artist Chéri Samba in the same year for reparations, the commissioning of the statue by the Mairie d’Ixelles was seen as an important step in recognising the ongoing presence of the Congo in Brussels, as well as the impact this violence has on Matonge and Brussels more widely. As Soiresse informed our group:

C’est pour que les gens réfléchissent à ce que le Congo vit actuellement. Vous voyez, il y a une mère qui porte un enfant soldat. Au Congo, on sait très bien qu’il y a un système capitaliste d’exploitation qui date de Léopold ; sans le Congo il n’y aurait pas de smartphones et [de] caméras et [de] PCs. Si la guerre s'arrête, vos smartphones seront à 3000 euros, Apple etc. ont intérêt à que ça continue: les soldats vendent les ressources, l'argent des multinationales vient de la mutilation et de la traumatisation de la population pour libérer les terres. Cette statue est donc une statue de sensibilisation: là on est au-delà de l'espoir.

Figure 18 Close up of the gilded plate on Freddy Tsimba's Au dela de l'Espoir. [Photo Author’s Own]

331 Interview with Ellen Davis-Walker and Kalvin Soiresse, Brussels, 15 March 2018.
By highlighting the present-day manifestation of Belgium’s colonial activities and investments in the DRC, the tour is able to ‘draw attention to the dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance’.332 As Bal reminds us, ‘[t]he need for integrating traumatising events forms the understanding of cultural memory.’333 In setting up the affective and figurative bridge between memories of violence and atrocities in the Congo and the everyday space of Brussels, the statue refutes Goddeiris’ vision of the one-sided historical narrative of Belgian colonisation, allowing for new memories and perspectives to ‘take up space’.

Swyngedouwa’s kaleidoscopic vision of Matonge as a plethora of sights and sounds forms the basis of Bragard’s central thesis in Towards a Neerlandaphone Postcolonial Studies. In her depiction of the quartier she suggests that its acts a mediatory space in which it is possible to redefine relations between Congo and Belgium as well as the public and political sphere. In Matonge, she suggests

It is possible to create [a] contact site where Belgians, Congolese and Belgo-Congolese people and memories are brought together, and where new meanings can be imaginatively created.334

Leading on from this vision of Matonge, I argue that the immersive walking tour format put forward by the Collectif is just one of the necessarily creative and innovative engagements with space that we need to be thinking about to

332 Rothberg, Sanyal and Silverman, p. 11.
re-frame relationships between Belgium and its former colonies. As such, the potential of this format far exceeds Matonge’s disputed borders and the one-sided representations of Belgium’s postcolonial past. It offers an insight to the types of cultural models that will be necessary to accompany Belgium’s collective working though of its colonial past, and to supplement the state’s commitment to place colonial legacies on school curricula. Those of us within the field of Modern Languages should be attentive to its potential to bring about active re-engagements with disavowed legacies both within our field as well as in specific city spaces and see it as signal for the sort of site-specific, community-led initiatives that need to be brought to the forefront of our discipline, to address representational and analytical imbalances within our field.

VI. Matonge, Malbeek, Molenbeek: Walking Tours and the future of decolonisation

Towards the end of his debut album, Hotel Impala (a mixture of rap and spoken word poems performed in French and Lingala) the Belgo-Congolese artist Bajoli maps out his journey between Kinshasa and Brussels. Describing his experience of moving through the streets of the Belgian capital, in a piece entitled Liège-Bruxelles-Gand (Point de chute-Capital(e), he writes:

L’histoire est masquée comme à Tervuren
La haine gagne les accords de Schengen
De Boniface à Schuman, ça pue l’amiante
Les parlementaires font des tournantes
Dans ce pays succursale
Même pour la Flandre, BX est capitale.\textsuperscript{335}

Bajoli’s return to Brussels as a capital — his evocation of its prominence in Dutch-speaking territories such as Flanders — seems to echo much of Dubois’s thinking in the aftermath of the attacks. Both writers find themselves consumed by the fragments of its geography, drawn back in different ways to answer the question ‘What is Brussels?’. Bajoli’s invocation of the instability surrounding freedom of movement and the Schengen agreement reflects many of the concerns that dominated (predominantly Molenbeek-focused) media engagement with Brussels between 2015 and 2016. Yet in opening with a reference to the ‘masked history’ present within the city, Bajoli taps into the ‘uncomfortable questions’ that seeped into Julius’s meanderings in \textit{Open City}, and which the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale, too, is seeking to shed light on through its structured walking tours across Ixelles, Cinquantierie, Etterbeek and Matonge.

When I asked an anonymous Collectif representative what they considered the main purpose of the walking tours, particularly in light of securing a Place Patrice Lumumba, they reminded me of the group’s primary goal to deconstruct the continued existence of colonial propaganda

(par ces visites nous expliquons le chapitre de la colonisation sans édulcorants, sans excuses/arguments qui légitimeraient le système colonial comme nous avons l'habitude de l'entendre).\textsuperscript{336}

\textsuperscript{335} Bajoli, ‘Liège-Bruxelles-Gand (Point de chute-Capital(e)-Perdu dans la traduction)’, in 'Hotel Impala' (Brussels: EMI, 2007).
\textsuperscript{336} Author’s own fieldnotes, Brussels, 20\textsuperscript{th} October 2018.
The emphasis on the ongoing, active nature of the decolonisation process says much of the Collectif’s commitment to expanding its cultural outreach work, and of the necessarily spatial role that these engagements have to take; it is a reminder of how certain legacies of violence are excluded from, and denied expression in, public space, and how much of the engagement with present-day Brussels continues to be dominated by the haunting shadow of terrorist violence and the spectre of the quartier of Molenbeek.

On 22nd March 2018, the second anniversary of the airport and metro bombings, numerous streets, landmarks and public spaces across Brussels were mobilised for a day of public mourning. Interestingly, members of the public gathered at the Schumann Memorial, between Rue de la Loi, the Schuman roundabout and at a fountain on the Avenue de la Joyeuse. Hundreds stood in front of the message board in Maelbeek metro station, in front of the Olivier de Benoit van Innis in Maelbeek, at the Place Communale, in Molenbeek, at the bus stop De Lijn where a bomb had failed to be fully detonated, and the Loubna Square. Adverts on public transport across all of the Brussels’s Transport Network (and in Metro stations) were replaced with the names of the victims and were read out all day over the public announcement system. The hashtag #itsallofus went viral on twitter and was picked up by international (anglophone) media outlets across the world. By contrast, the inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba, which seeks to commemorate both the assassinated president and all victims of colonial

violence, on June 30th 2018, received far less media attention and publicity. The Collectif’s campaign to gain recognition for the thousands of victims of colonial genocide in the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi did not receive city-wide and site-specific public commemoration. The longstanding hashtags #UnePlacePatriceLumumba and #BruxellesMaBelleDecoloniseToi have not been picked up in anglophone media.

The disparity between acceptable forms (and days) of commemoration and others, and the systematic exclusion of narratives of violence from Brussels’ public space, point once again to the necessity of interventions like the de-colonial walking tours. By reading Brussels through the singular prism of the so-called Islamic State attacks in 2015 and 2016, without incorporating the much wider framework of Belgium’s history (what Sarah Arens refers to as the ‘intersecting transnational trajectories’) our engagements will continue to stumble over the percussive Ms of Matonge, Malbeek, Molenbeek. If, as Dubois argues, we learn the city the fragments of geography and we can never even begin to answer the question of ‘What is Brussels?’.

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338 The inauguration was publicised by BX1, Jeune Afrique, RTL, BBC Afrique and Le Soir. The Daily Mail was one of the few Anglophone media outlets to cover the story.
Chapter Two ‘Moving Beyond Molenbeek’ picked up on this thread of mindful walking in the search of forgotten historical legacies, but it moved away from an affective invocation of ghosts to a broader analysis of figurative haunting. Through my journey between significant landmarks and quartiers on the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’s walking tour, I explored how structured walking tours as new forms of resistance to colonial inequality, displaced our engagement with Brussels beyond the haunting trope of the Molenbeek district. Whilst the walking tours around quartiers draw on the same active movement as the 17.10.61 project, the Collectif’s decision to align its explorations of colonial history within the problems facing members of the Congolese diaspora (or inhabitants of the quartiers it was exploring) helped to situate spectrality as part of a continuum with the present-day politics and concerns.
During one of my interviews with ULB researcher Véronique Clette-Gakuba on the question of Brussels’s enduring spatial inequalities, she suggested that:

Quand je vois des statues comme celle de Léopold II, en fait, ce que je vois là-dedans…c’est que la ville est faite en sorte que certains gens, certains usages sont incapables de laisser des traces de leur présence, ils sont vites chassés, tandis que d’autres ne font que ça- ils peuvent s’inscrire dans l’espace.339

By re-tracing the transnational trajectories so central to the construction of Brussels’s public space, the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale is ultimately part of a process of re-inscription, one which leaves us able to re-frame the narrative of Brussels’ ongoing past to give space to the ‘shadows that fall like trees, and stories that have fallen in(to) silence for too long’.340

The removal of statues of Léopold II in response to the murder of George Floyd and the re-birth of the global Black Lives Matter movement across the streets of Brussels point to the widening of the space dedicated to such stories: a long-awaited offsetting of silence with stories needing to be told.

339 Interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and Véronique Clette-Gakuba, Brussels, 12th February 2017.
Chapter 4: Place Patrice Lumumba: Towards a New Politics of Postcolonial Public Space

L’histoire dira un jour son mot, mais ce ne sera pas l’histoire qu’on enseignera à Bruxelles, Washington, Paris ou aux Nations Unies, mais celle qu’on enseignera dans les pays affranchis du colonialisme et de ses fantoches. L’Afrique écrira sa propre histoire et elle sera au nord et au sud du Sahara une histoire de gloire et de dignité.

Letter from Patrice Lumumba to his partner Pauline, written three days before his death.


(Aime Césaire)

V. From Matonge To Place Patrice Lumumba

What happens when the idea of haunting (and broader questions of challenging state-backed amnesia) coalesce around a single figure or life? How can spectre of one man — and the wider symbolism of a life cut short at the hands of state-supported violence — play a material role in how public space is shaped in a present-day postcolonial city?

Whilst my previous chapter examined questions of how colonial legacies and global trends of global terrorism has impacted engagement with present-day Brussels, I would like to shift my focus here to the question of haunting and the spectre of Patrice Lumumba, the first prime minister of an independent

Congo, assassinated in a coup led by Colonel Joseph Désiré Mobutu on 17th January 1961. Before moving on to an analysis of the work carried out by the collectif, it is important to expand upon some of the historical context surrounding this particular Belgian postcolonial legacy that I set out in the introduction to this thesis, that I want to develop in more detail here.

On the 15th of January 1961, Patrice Emery Lumumba drafted a lengthy letter from the prison in which he was being held by Belgian captors. Whilst reflecting on his own fate (and that of his country), he wrote to his wife Pauline: ‘L’histoire dira un jour son mot, mais ce ne sera pas l’histoire qu’on enseignera à Bruxelles’.

Just two days later, Lumumba would be transferred to Elizabethville, Katanga, where he was assassinated along with his colleagues Mpolo and Okito. The precise details of the circumstances surrounding his death were to be consigned to silence and speculation for well over 50 years.

The Lumumba commission was set up in federal parliament in the spring of 2000 and in direct reaction to the publication of a book by the sociologist Bobineau and Gieg, p. 13.

I have included a full timeline of the events leading up to Lumumba’s assassination as an appendix to this chapter, as well as an additional timeline outlining key dates in the campaign to secure a commemorative square in his honour in Brussels. Whilst I will refer to specific dates or instances at intervals in my own intervention, this chapter is not intended to be a contribution to historical analysis of Patrice Lumumba’s life, or recent Congolese history. I have chosen to list these dates as an aide-memoire or a guide for readers in order to help them better understand the ‘enjeux’ that have underpinned activist interventions in the Belgian political sphere since 2011, as well as to help situate speeches made on the day of the inauguration in their appropriate historical context.
Ludo De Witte, who accused the Belgian government of being responsible for the murder of Lumumba shortly after Congo gained its independence.\textsuperscript{345} The commission was tasked with coming to a determination on as ‘the extent to which Belgian politicians were implicated in the specific circumstance of the death of Patrice of Lumumba’.\textsuperscript{346} In 2001, four appointed expert historians presented their findings to the commission, describing the extent to which Belgian government assisted in the political elimination of Lumumba as well as his transfer to Katanga.

The final report, however, did not paint an altogether damning picture. It is important to note that the report did conclude that the Belgian state had a ‘moral responsibility’ to acknowledge the death of Lumumba, and that ‘some members of the Belgian government and other Belgian actors bear a moral responsibility for the circumstances that have led to the death of Lumumba’.\textsuperscript{347} However, there was also a deliberate attempt at distancing the actions of the Belgian state, with a somewhat pointed reference to ‘present-day standards concerning public morals’ without taking into account ‘the then prevailing personal moral considerations of the time period’.\textsuperscript{348}

\textsuperscript{345} In order to do this, it had to produce, among other things, an ‘exhaustive inventory’ of the facts which led to the death, define the responsibilities, and give the names of those responsible. The commission could decide to broaden its research perspective if necessary, but it had to appoint a team of scientific experts to assist in that research. A detailed overview is given in Berber Bevernage, History by Parliamentary Vote: Science, Ethics and Politics in the Lumumba Commission, \textit{History Compass} (9, 2011), 300–311. See also Final Report of the Parliamentary Commission, Part I (DOC 50 0312/006)
\textsuperscript{346} Bevernage, p. 301.
\textsuperscript{347} Expression used in the Expert Report which is included in the Final Report of the Parliamentary Commission, Part II (DOC 50 0312/007), p. 605 (as referenced by Bevernage p. 301).
\textsuperscript{348} Bevernage, p. 302.
Whilst this somewhat complex (and ambiguous) ruling on the causes of Lumumba’s death took over 50 years to materialise, it is important to note that cultural and musical tributes to the country’s first independent leader have been united in their determination to speak his name. This was most recently re-incarnated through the Belgo-Congolese artist Bajoli’s best-selling record ‘Indépendence (le jour d’après)’, played at the inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba in 2018, evoked at the closing of my previous chapter. The origins of his track are also directly tied to Franco Luambo Makiadi famous rumba ‘Lumumba: Heroes national’, whose central riff is sampled at several intervals during Bajoli’s track. Makiadi’s Héros National was rapidly to become synonymous with the values of the pan-African movement, described by Carter Grice as ‘The apogee of an African popular music that strove to generate an authentic, postcolonial identity in its audience’. By straying away from French, the ‘literal plurality of voice’ present in Makiadi’s lyrics allowed for an evocation of Lumumba that he envisaged as being entirely removed from any associations with, or ties to, the DRC’s former colonial rulers. In his 1967 hit ‘Héros National’, composed and produced just six years after Lumumba’s assassination, Makiadi evoked a poignant image of the memorial traces of Lumumba, and particularly of the role of the monuments, and physical tributes, that had arisen in Kinshasa to mark his death.

He writes in Lumumba, *Héros National (Franco) - Franco & L'O.K. Jazz*

1967:

Lumumba azui monument na kati ya Kongo  
La Belgique a échoué,  
Contentieux Belgo-Congolais enterré.\(^350\)

Although Makiadi had no way of knowing at the time of writing in 1967, his evocation of spatial tributes to Lumumba’s legacy would continue to dominate activist combats in the DRC and Belgium for many years after the hit was released. In my previous chapter *Moving Beyond Molenbeek*, I discussed how the quartier-specific walking tours hosted by the Brussels-based Collectif Mémoire Coloniale mark an important step in re-tracing the transnational trajectories between Belgium and the DRC, stirring up the memories of Lumumba’s spatial legacies so central to Makiadi’s rallying cry. I suggested that the Collectif’s walking tours, and wider campaigning for recognition of Belgium’s colonial crimes, served as an important reminder of how ‘L’histoire s’inscrit partout dans le paysage urbain Bruxellois….à travers les monuments, les noms des rues, les statues’.\(^351\)

These threads of memory woven into Brussels’ urban landscape — and highlighted by the Collectif’s outreach work across the city — will be returned to, and re-examined, in this chapter. Through my analysis of the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’s campaign for (and inauguration of) a square in memory of Patrice Lumumba I return to one of the over-arching concerns of this thesis. I ask how the Collectif’s resistance to enduring colonial inequalities

\(^{350}\) Translation: The nationalists are delighted as Lumumba now has a monument in Congo.  
\(^{351}\) Author’s own fieldnotes, Brussels, 15\(^{th}\) June 2018.
that have so long kept Lumumba’s ghost un-mourned and unacknowledged, present ‘a challenge to ordered forms of social remembering’.\(^{352}\) Part of the process of acknowledging how Lumumba’s ghost continues to haunt present-day Brussels is through a re-positioning of his legacy within Belgium’s ongoing geo-political landscape, and the combat to challenge the state’s wider amnesia surrounding its colonial past, both within the confines of the square itself and as part of the collections curated by the Africa Museum.

More broadly speaking, I will suggest that emergence of a Place Patrice Lumumba, as well as the recent toppling of statues of King Léopold II in Brussels and Antwerp, represent a new point from which we can evaluate the changing face and form of Brussels’ postcolonial landscape, and the ways in which ‘the memory of independence and of the nation-building process is physically connected to the [Belgian] capital’.\(^{353}\) Place Patrice Lumumba is not a solution to over a decade’s worth of combat, but a vital departure point from which to observe all of the steps the combat has taken. The square’s inauguration, and the ambiguity surrounding its future in Belgium’s urban and museological landscapes, require us to consider the role of site-specific activism in campaigns for social justice, and the necessary responses needed to allow us to attend to ghosts that are systematically excluded from

\(^{352}\) Tim Edensor, ‘The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space, Environment and Planning’, *Society and Space*, 23 (2005), 829-849, (p. 849)

national narratives or overshadowed by symbols of colonial power that are only just beginning to be removed from the public sphere.

I will also consider how the lack of a contextualised or detailed history of the Place Patrice Lumumba in the recently re-opened Africa Museum collection are indicative of the challenges still impeding progress in Belgium’s wider reckoning- or working through- of its colonial past. By comparing the grassroots-backed campaign for the square to come into existence with the representations of both the square (and the history of Lumumba) represented in the Africa museum, we can start to observe the gaps between state-sanctioned and community-lead readings of history. This is particularly significant in the case of the Africa museum in which referenced to both Lumumba and the CMC’s long campaign for recognition occupy noticeably little space within the collection and are conspicuous in their absence from the museum’s wider response to Belgian colonial history. As with Kader Attia’s La Colonie, these curatorial choices (that ultimately determine what perspectives and stories are elevated within national collections) are an integral part of Mary Stevens' vision of a ‘peaceful accommodation’ of ghosts, or memories of lives lost under colonial rule. I argue that this stance is also significant in the light of ongoing debates about the role of museums in acknowledging and representing colonial history highlighted in the Sarr-Savoy report. The recommendations, commissioned by Emmanuel Macron in 2018, outlined a process of restitution of colonial artefacts from European museums to their home countries, acting as a reminder of what Hassett describes as: ‘the violence with which many objects were assimilated into
collections, and continues to justify their retention of such objects. This question opens up an interesting bridge with my analysis of the MNHI in Paris, and the question of how the ghosts of colonial history are accommodated within national institutions.

This notion of the uneasy power distribution between curators of national collections and communities impacted by the legacies that still lack official state recognition creates a pervasive sense that certain lives and experiences are not worthy of being commemorated in national collections. Indeed, the decision to display or exclude certain objects from collections brings us back to the museological (and ideological) challenge posed by an engagement with the ghosts of colonial history as I outlined in my discussion of Kader Attia’s La Colonie. Leading on from Hassett, Dan Hicks underlines the uncomfortable and unequal power dynamics afforded to spaces like the Africa Museum and the MNHI by suggesting that:

The continued projection of the western notions of ownership onto these objects only furthers the colonial violence and event density that continues to propagate through time.

Against the backdrop of these ongoing questions about the violence of museum collections and its ability to perpetrate western notions of ownership and control over colonial history, I will ask what the ambiguous accommodation of Patrice Lumumba’s ghost in the Africa museum can teach us about the progress that still needs to be made when it comes to

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commemorating colonial history. Similarly, by looking at the ways in which the state’s silence surrounding the assassination of Lumumba (and with regards to its colonial past more broadly) is challenged through a working back of memory traces into public space, I will ask what lessons can be gleaned about the type of commemorative measures that need to be adopted on both a national museum level and on a (public) spatial one.

Whilst my analysis of walking tours in Matonge and Ixelles drew extensively on the power of the walking tour format as a means to divert the attention back to the particularities of space, this chapter offers up a different consideration of the ongoing transfer of memory. By analysing the role played by the square in recent activist past and in Belgium’s urban future, I will examine the extent to which the square can serve as an example of the complex process of the accommodation of ghosts, and what it can teach us about the different ways that colonial legacies in both national, fixed collections and in community-backed campaigns for recognition. I will consider the extent to which the square’s existence (and relationship with the haunting quality of Lumumba’s legacy) is paradoxically contingent on the approval of a former colonial power but which has the ability to disrupt and offset it. This can, in turn, act as a mirror or a metaphor for the trauma it has inflicted both on Lumumba’s descendants and communities with ties to Belgian colonialism more broadly.

Déjà, cette place [dans le quartier] fait face à la grande statue de Léopold II qui trône un peu plus loin donc symboliquement c’est déjà quelque chose: cette place défie donc en quelque sorte la présence coloniale dans l'espace public bruxellois. Ensuite, le fait qu'il y'ait une plaque explicative (un mât tronqué) permet d'éveiller
la curiosité des passants qui peuvent ensuite aller s'informer sur l'assassinat de Lumumba dont la Belgique est responsable, responsabilité que beaucoup aimerai... 

Cette place est donc là aussi pour rappeler cela.\footnote{In order to examine the extent to which the Place Patrice Lumumba presents both an open-ended opportunity to embed an alternative reading of history back into public space, as well as an enduring symbol of further terrain needed to be gained, this chapter will investigate the lead up to the square’s inauguration, paying close attention to the years of sustained grassroots campaigning, and the ways in which the square’s inauguration is a reminder of a shift towards ‘social remembering’ in Belgium and beyond. In the second half, I will go on to examine the question of the square’s future legacy, and examining the place it occupies in the collections of Belgium’s newly-reinaugurated Africa Museum, and how this offers a glimpse into the complicated process of commemorating colonial legacies. By examining the way in which the legacy of Patrice Lumumba is caught between national memory narratives and grass-roots activism, we can come to better understand the way that Lumumba’s legacy is reflected in public space, and the implications this has for Belgium’s wider reckoning with its colonial past, and as well as being part of a wider process of decolonising public space.

VI. Background Of The Campaign For A Place Patrice Lumumba

Before assessing the broader implications of the square for Belgium’s reckoning with its colonial past, it is important to assess the decade-long

\footnote{Interviews between Ellen Davis-Walker and CMC, Brussels, 31 July 2018 and 8 August 2018.}
struggle that led to its inception and the struggle to gain recognition for
Lumumba’s assassination in the first place. Lobbying for a memorial square
for Lumumba played a prolific role in the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale’s
cultural outreach work since its inception. On the 5th January 2011, the CMC
launched its first march entitled ‘Pour l’inauguration d’une statue de Patrice
Lumumba en Belgique’ to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Patrice
Lumumba’s assassination. The event was widely attended by representatives
from across the Belgo-Congolese activist sphere, but received no coverage
on state TV or media. This protest was subsequently followed by a mass
mobilisation of campaigners and lobbying groups from across the city and the
Belgian-Congolese diaspora to demand a commitment from the Belgian
government to officially recognise both their role in Lumumba’s death and his
utter absence from Belgium’s memorial landscape. The protest’s petition
(entitled ‘Vérité, justice, et réparation pour le peuple congolais’) was widely
circulated and eventually picked up by the Belgian branch of the ‘Revue
Marxiste’. 357 These two days of successive protests eventually culminated in
a sit-in in front of the European Parliament three days later, organised by the
CMC, Ludo De Witte, and Patrice Lumumba’s son, Guy, to mark the 50th

357 These actors included: CADTM Lubumbashi, CADTM Belgique, Oasis Ndjili, INTAL, LCR-
SAP, Égalité, Dialoge des Peupes, Organisation Guyanaise des Droits Humains, Cercle des
Amis de Lumumba, FNDP (Forum national contre la dette et la pauvreté – Côte d’Ivoire),
Collectif des militants du Maroc de l’immigration d’Action et de lutte, Collectif “Venezuela 13
Avril”, Mouvement International de la Réconciliation, l’Internationale des Résistant-e-s à la
Guerre, Links Ecologisch Forum, Attac ULB, Respaix, Conscience Musulmane, Réveil des
Consciences, LHAC « Laïcité et Humanisme en Afrique Centrale », Comité pour les droits
humains, Collectif patriotes congolais, Collectif Aurora, Organisation communiste marxiste-
léniniste en Belgique (OCMLB), A.P.P.E.L. (Actions pour la pensée politique de P.E.
LUMUMBA), DIASPOC (diaspora congolaise), A.A.A. (association des artistes africains),
ESPACE francophone, BEPEC (bureau d’études et de développement pour le Congo), Sans
logis international, OK services, OK solutions, A.F.A.F (association des familles
francophones), CERDEC (centre de recherche et de développement du Congo)
anniversary of the assassination. These sit-ins were to continue for a further six years, with members of the CMC gathered in front of the parliament every year with members of the Lumumba family. These actions in strategic sites across the city were coupled with an online petition calling for a Place Patrice Lumumba to be inaugurated behind the église Saint-Boniface in the commune d’Ixelles and at the heart of Matonge, ‘symbole des relations belgo-congolaises’.

On the petition’s homepage, the Collectif highlighted the necessary spatial dimension of its bid for justice for Lumumba, explaining:

Nous estimons qu’un travail de mémoire sur le passé colonial de la Belgique est nécessaire. Si des monuments à Bruxelles ou à Ostende expriment ce passé colonial en en faisant l’éloge, nous regrettons l’absence dans nos rues d’hommage rendu à des figures congolaises qui comme Lumumba ont lutté contre cette colonisation.

Its calls, however, were ignored for another seven years. In September 2013, the Motion for a ‘Place Patrice Lumumba’ was unanimously dismissed by the Conseil Communal d’Ixelles, and debate would not resurface for another five years. Any talk of a square or a memorial dedicated to Lumumba would successively disappear from the attention of both the bourgmestre and the Conseil Communal, until the break-out of the #LeopoldMustFall protests in

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December 2015 (events I shall return to in more detail later in this chapter).\textsuperscript{361}

The mass circulation of images across international media, many of which contained stickers calling for a Place Patrice Lumumba placed by demonstrators on the statues of King Leopold II, was to lead to a flurry of activity within the associative sphere. This included a series of small protests lead by the CMC in front of the Église Boniface, and an Open Letter launched by the group Bruxelles Pantheres (Qui a peur de Lumumba) which listed a Place Patrice Lumumba in their demands.\textsuperscript{362} When asked about the significance of the location during our meeting in June 2018 at an official inauguration ceremony at the hotel de ville on the evening of the 29th, the collective explained that:

\begin{quote}
Déjà, cette place [dans le quartier] fait face à la grande statue de Léopold II qui trône un peu plus loin donc symboliquement c'est déjà quelque chose: cette place Patrice Lumumba défie donc en quelque sorte la présence coloniale dans l'espace public bruxellois.\textsuperscript{363}
\end{quote}

Over the course of my investigation into the Collectif’s recent walking tours in Matonge, Soiresse spoke to me about the spatial activism dedicated to the legacy of Lumumba, emphasising that it was part of a much wider ‘enjeux

\textsuperscript{361} This hashtag was a direct nod to the ongoing #RhodesMustFall campaign, arguably gaining more traction by forming part of a wider decolonial movement.

\textsuperscript{362} Bruxelles Panthères, ‘Qui a peur de / Wie is er bang van Lumumba?’, 24 February 2015, https://bruxelles-panthere.thefreecat.org/?p=2462 (accessed 6 February 2019). The campaign also featured in Goddeeris, ‘Colonial Streets and Statues’ and Arens, ‘From Mobotu to Molenbeek’. This is a point I will develop more substantially later on in this chapter.

\textsuperscript{363} Interviews between Ellen Davis-Walker and CMC, Brussels, 31 July 2018 and 8 August 2018.
memorial, et ce conflit de mémoire dans la société'.\textsuperscript{364} Soisresse’s evocation of the opposing qualities of this ‘enjeux’ seemed to directly mirror Derrida’s vision of the spectral, and particularly of the ‘politique de mémoire et de generations’ that, he argues, can emerge from a collective being with ghosts, of an understanding of their presence amongst us.

Lumumba est un spectre” Soisresse replied in response to my question, “Lumumba est un spectre […] un spectre dont nous ignorons toujours l’existence.”\textsuperscript{365}

In this chapter I argue that the enduring presence of Lumumba’s ghost against a backdrop of intense campaigning speaks to something wider about Belgium’s reluctance to confront its complicity in colonial crimes. Indeed, the inauguration of the square opens up a unique possibility to re-consider the materiality of postcolonial cities, reminding us of the forces and individuals that determine both their composition and curatorial or municipal control. This imbalance of power, in turn, requires us to consider the ways that spectral traces — be they real or imagined — can invoke the violence of colonial past and a more socially just future, all at once.

\textbf{VII. The Inauguration of The Square}

In order to further build on the memorial potential of the Place Patrice Lumumba, and to give a tentative sense of what its future in the city’s memorial landscape might look like, it is also necessary to engage with its moment of inception (or inauguration) in closer detail. To do so, I will use this

\textsuperscript{364} Interviews between Ellen Davis-Walker and CMC, Brussels, 31 July 2018 and 8 August 2018.
\textsuperscript{365} Interviews between Ellen Davis-Walker and CMC, Brussels, 31 July 2018 and 8 August 2018.
part of my chapter to return to the inauguration ceremony which took place in
the early afternoon of the 30th of June 2018, applying a new auto-
ethnographic analytical approach and building directly on my field notes.
Whilst this constitutes something of a break from the theoretical tenets I have
set up in this chapter, it is my belief that by analysing specific ceremonial
events from the day in this way, I can convey a better sense of the vestiges
of memory and public engagement that were present at the square’s
inception, which give us clues to understanding its symbolic role as a ‘mirror
of the trauma of an event’ and its potential public function it might occupy in
the future.366
Indeed, the dispersal of diverse voices and memory traces across different
stages of the inauguration ceremony, as well as the interventions of a
different range of figures from across activist spheres and political parties,
allowed for a plurality of voices to be ritually inscribed into the square. By
examining these acts in more detail, we might catch a glimpse of the forms of
remembering and commemorating that the Place Patrice Lumumba is
cementing back into the memorial landscape of postcolonial Brussels: one
that whilst contingent on authoritarian approval in the first instance comes to
literally stand separately and independently from it.
Writing about the origins of ritual acts in public spaces, Turner argues that
ceremonies steeped in ritual should be understood as ‘that which expresses

366 Nicola Frith, ‘The Art of Reconciliation: The Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery in
Nantes’, in Nicola Frith and Kate Hodgson (eds), At the Limits of Memory: Legacies of
Slavery in the Francophone World (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 68–89
(p. 70).
supposition, desire, and possibility’. They are ‘part of the exhibition of sacra, symbols or a higher reality; of the dramatization of creation stories; of the appearance of masked and monstrous figures; the construction of complicated shrines, and of revelation’. The mixture of simultaneous rituals and processions, the interweaving of words and movement, of the range of actors and discourses present on the day of the inauguration, echoed Turner’s vision of a ‘complicated shrine’. This innate tension between the subjective or the supposed present in Turner’s theorisation of ritual can inform our reading of the events of 30 June 2018, reminding us of the diverse layers of experience and engagement that were present over the course of the day.

The morning of the inauguration fell in the middle of a heat wave, with early morning temperatures creeping up into the low thirties. The ceremony had been publicised as beginning at midday. Having walked to the Porte de Namur seeking shade and respite from sunburn under the trees of the Avenue Louise, I arrived to find a number of chairs lined up outside a rigged stage, positioned just opposite the exit of the metro (to the evident confusion of various members of the public exiting via the turnstiles). The stage itself was covered in red and green awning to protect speakers from the heat. This structure was held up by metal poles which had been draped in typical red and white Kuba cloth. The square itself was empty apart from a couple of bystanders, and several journalists. The momentary sense of peace and

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stillness was almost immediately offset by the sound of drumming that was coming from the other side of the street at the crossroads into the quartier of Matonge.

When I followed the sounds, I came across a procession of dancers and drummers who, according to a member of the Collectif I recognised and spoke to, hailed from Lumumba’s home village. Four drummers were assembled on the left-hand side of the street, in the middle of the road. The dancers were partially obscured by the crowd that had gathered when I arrived on the scene and they began to sing in Lingala as the tempo of their music intensified. As they danced, they also proceeded to sweep members of the crowd to one side to make way for something. Who, or what, was not made initially clear. As the volume of the drumming intensified so did the repetition of one name ‘Lumumba’.

As a chief dancer parted the crowd, a small, ordered brass band came forward playing the opening notes of the La Brabançonne, and a statue of Lumumba (pictured overleaf) was pushed out across the road towards the square.
The road down which the cart was being pushed lead to a busy roundabout leading back towards the Avenue de Louise to the right and the Chausée d’Ixelles to the left. The square was filled with press representatives, film crews, commuters and bystanders, journalists, and bourgmestre, Phillipe Close. Representatives from the Collectif kept close to members of Lumumba’s family as they gathered together at the edge of the stage. As the cart came to a halt next to the newly erected sign Place Patrice Lumumba,
the bourgmestre signalled to the Lumumba family and various representatives from his own office to take to the stage. They were shortly followed by Kalvin Soiresse Njal, and Mireille-Tsuevi Robert and Alex Bande from ABL, who opened an hour’s worth of speeches and reflections to mark the transition into the second part of the ceremony.

This transition from the sensory, somewhat chaotic procession from the fringes of Matonge to the enforced stillness of the square and its ‘official’ ceremony, is a reminder of what Benjamin describes as the distinctions between the involuntary and conscious memory: thoughts that can come to a participant or actor when carrying out a ritualistic ceremony. He suggests that involuntary memories come upon us, rekindling the past through ‘unexpected confrontations with sounds, atmospheres and nonvisual sensual experiences’.368 Unlike our recorded memories (which are organised and stored individually or collectively) involuntary memories surge with vigour but are not categorical precisely because they never were subject to deliberate compilation. These memory traces he suggests, are what come about through ‘lights, colours, vegetation, heat, air, slender explosions of noises... passages, gestures’, all only ‘half-identifiable’, unlike the ‘identifiable’ associates we create with structured or ordered events.369

Two particular instances from this formal ceremony stand out, and I believe require some more detailed unpacking here. The first was the official speech

369 Benjamin, p. 29.
by the Bourgmestre, delivered in French, Flemish and English at the beginning of the ceremony. His allocated time slot appeared to have been pushed back after a member of the public attempted to take to the stage with cries of ‘Assassin! Assassin’. The bourgmestre chose to ignore these comments, and the member of the public in question was physically carried off stage by Alex Bande, who led him away to the shade of some nearby trees. Undeterred by the security presence of the stage behind him, the Bourgmestre quickly turned the focus of his speech to the question of present-day responsibility for colonial crimes, and the role that Belgium had to play in coming to terms with its colonial past. Turning to face the members of the Lumumba family at various intervals, his words seemed to very closely mirror a speech he had given in January 2018 when the statue of Lumumba had been unveiled at the galerie Ravenstein.370 Addressing the crowd, he reminisced that:

La Belgique a commencé son examen de conscience en 2000 avec une commission parlementaire sur l’assassinat du leader congolais. Une commission qui conclut en 2001 à la "responsabilité morale" de la Belgique, sans que l’on puisse expliquer ce qu’on entend clairement par là. Mais malgré ces excuses, on sent que notre pays reste mal à l’aise vis-à-vis de ce passé peu glorieux. C’est pour dissiper ce malaise, pour pouvoir enfin regarder notre passé colonial droit dans les yeux, que la ville de Bruxelles a décidé d’ériger cette place.371

Whether intentional or not, Close’s speech (and the commission’s conclusion) indirectly emphasised a sense of Belgium’s moral obligation to

370 I have explained the context of this unveiling in footnote 344.
act rather than a legal or required one. By replacing the need for a legal response to a criminal act with a moral obligation to act accordingly, there is a subtle shift away from the seriousness of the crime at hand.

However, the speech also echoed many of the words of interviews carried out with members of the Collectif, as well as many of the blog posts that they had published concerning the need for a statue to commemorate Lumumba’s legacy and to acknowledge Belgium’s colonial crimes in the DRC. His mixture of scripted speech and improvised movement (including oscillating between looking at the Lumumba family and the crowd) created a strange mix of the familiar with the formal. His echoing of both the colonial’s own mantra (‘ce qui est fait sans nous est fait contre nous’) and chosen excerpts from Lumumba’s final letter in captivity created a strange selection of associations. They were the types of memory traces that, as Reynarde argues ‘mix bodily memories with recollected overlapping geographies, with their reference points, routes, and networks, and contingently map them onto other spaces, like phantom realms.’

By invoking these phantom realms of geography that keep Belgium and the DRC inextricably bound (as well as his reference to the Collectif’s long-standing combat to gain spatial recognition for Lumumba’s murder) Close’s speech stirred up a number of different reactions, sensations and stories that were, momentarily, held together in the confines of the crowd. This sense of a phantom link felt all the more prescient when Kalvin Soiresse took to the

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stage to give a dramatic reading of Lumumba’s final letter written in captivity, just days before his assassination (which is cited in the opening pages of this chapter).

However, the second, and arguably the most striking element of the ceremony came in the form of a speech given by Patrice Lumumba’s youngest living son, Roland, whose words brought the afternoon’s events to a close. Approaching the lecturn, he addressed the audience with what felt like a consciously reconciliatory tone:

58 ans après on se souvient enfin du désir de Patrice Lumumba, de son désir de réconciliation entre la RDC et la Belgique... C’est une nouvelle amitié qui se crée avec cette place...\(^{373}\)

The image of reconciliation struck by Lumumba’s youngest child was a fitting and poignant note with which to bring an end to the official ceremony (which would rapidly descend to a press scramble to get photos of the sign unveiling, to the accompanying sound of Bajoli’s *Independence*). The presence of Lumumba’s children in the commemorative ceremony, and the bridge of conciliation and hope invoked on his speech, was a reminder of Benjamin’s assertion that:

Successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams. They journey with us.\(^{374}\)

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\(^{373}\) Roland Lumumba’s speech, Brussels, 30th August 2018 (author’s recording).

\(^{374}\) De Certeau, p. 14.
The invocation of connections between Belgium and the DRC, as well as between the spectre of Lumumba and his living children, was an active reminder of Michael Rothberg’s vision of multi-directional memory’s dynamic and anachronistic quality, bridging different spheres of space and time, as well as between the living and the dead. This process of journeying through memory, of movement between places and countries, different sounds, moods and forms of light, all felt present in his words. As Lumumba shook hands with Phillipe Close before being hastily propelled towards the newly unveiled sign, many of the bystanders distanced themselves from the main crowd or broke off into small groups to observe the media entourage from afar. Their gestures reflected the presence of stillness in chaos, the spilling over of reflection into active movement and the possibility for individually guided responses to collective rituals and ceremonies. They were a quiet, yet irrefutable reminder of the square’s openness to being with memories and standing alone, to observe the possibility of what lies ahead, just as the present we find ourselves in, as its open potential begins to crystallise before our very eyes.

**IV. Place Patrice Lumumba and Belgian Social Remembering**

By enacting much of Rothberg’s thinking about multi-directional memory in real time, the square inauguration became an active reminder of the ways that activist campaigns (and social movements more broadly) can challenge seemingly fixed models of state-enforced remembering and forgetting. Through the sustained campaigns of the CMC and the inauguration of the square, Lumumba’s presence is transformed from being an abstract force for
change and a symbol of resistance, to something much more tangible and permanent. The square and accompanying statue, as such, becomes a physical means of extending the bridge first evoked in Guy Lumumba’s speech between Lumumba’s assassination and the formal apology issued by the state, between the origins of the square’s campaign and the physical alternate reading of history that the plaque offers after years of silence on behalf of the Belgian state.

The square’s symbolic placement, as both a material object in city space and a symbol of broader campaigns for justice for colonial crimes, I suggest, becomes a new way to shine new light on Edensor’s theory of ‘social remembering’. Edensor outlines the term in reference to what he sees as a cosmopolitan trend in commemorating historical injustices or crimes. This shift towards spatial recognition of colonial crimes becomes particularly significant, as:

   The democratic nature of shared monuments, statues or memorial sites becomes a means to transcend ethnic and national boundaries as cultures become deterritorialised and are transmitted into the local via the global media.375

Following on from Edensor, I suggest that these sites, quite apart from their democratic or shareable function, act as cornerstones for a commemorative culture that is attuned to the specificities of colonial heritage of a city, and that is committed to tending to and honouring its forgotten ghosts and overlooked voices. During my interview with representatives from the collective several days after the inauguration, their reflections seemed to

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375 Edensor, p. 83.
mirror something of this thinking.

These sentiments were corroborated by one anonymous participant, who told me that:

Ce square, s’il est dénommé aujourd’hui Lumumba, c’est par la lutte qu’il a été obtenu, une lutte de tous les instants, une lutte citoyenne, pour laquelle plusieurs activistes, militants, simples citoyens ont donné de leur temps, de leur argent, de leur énergie physique et intellectuelle. Nous aimerions que cette place Lumumba devienne symboliquement une place de souvenir, d’éducation, mais aussi de revendication contre toutes les formes d’impérialisme (combat de Patrice Lumumba et qui lui a coûté la vie). Nous voulons améliorer la condition et la perception des Africains et Africaines ici en Belgique, promouvoir les cultures africaines, éveiller les esprits sur les questions de citoyenneté responsable.376

By giving a physical form to the legacy of Lumumba’s ghost and the sustained activist combat that demanded his unjust fate be duly recognised, Place Patrice Lumumba comes to embody something of Edensor’s vision of social remembering. By choosing to ground these spectral and political tensions into one tangible space, this square is synonymous with the need to spatialise campaigns for social justice, to create what Nicola Frith describes as ‘other types of space’ where legacies of traumatic memories can be tended to and acknowledged by passers-by.377

This possibility is particular significant in the case of Place Patrice Lumumba, whose position at the fringes of both Matonge and Ixelles means it is constantly open to re-inscription or re-articulation by visitors to the square, by passers-by or ‘everyday practitioners of the city’.378 Its presence also points

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376 Interview with Ellen Davis-Walker and anonymous participant, Brussels, 23rd May 2018.
378 De Certeau, p. 22.
to the possibility of these forms of social remembering to divert our attention
to streets and squares whose potential might as yet remain unknown. It is
also a reminder of Van Dijk’s assertion that:

Contemporary processes of social remembering are becoming
increasingly externalised, staged outside the local through the
intensified mediatisation and commodification of popular sites,
myths, and icons.379

In her introduction to ‘Protest, Property and the Commons’, Lucy Finchett-Maddock evokes a similar image of social combats being externalised or
made visible through site-specific activism in city space. Describing the role
of protestors in the Occupy movement, she writes that:

They explode through the cracks in the system and when they are
crushed – often forcibly – they leave pieces of themselves
everywhere, in the hearts of the people who went there, in new
behaviour, new alliances, and new thoughts. They are a practical
attempt to get free from the state, to be free from the compromises
and creeping obedience of a legal space.380

This image of breaking through, of the dispersal of traces of individuals and
diverse memories into the places and people who pass through, provides a
privileged vantage point with which to view the open-ended potential of these
postcolonial spaces. Through the act of breaking and re-formulating social
memories within space, passers-by who walk through the Place Patrice
Lumumba become part of a re-working of traumatic memory and forgotten
legacies back into space. They are endowed with the possibility of
embodying Vergès’ vision of a contact memory, of linking different strands of

379 Jose Van Dijk, ‘Mediated memories: personal cultural memory as object of cultural
380 Lucy Finchett-Maddock, Protest, Property and the Commons: Performances of Law and
memory and affiliation into this newly-created ‘common space’ whose future role is open to interpretation and to re-inscription across the city. Through its position on the edge of the quartier of Matonge at the fringe of its walking tours, and at a busy crossroad, passers-by (whether consciously or unconsciously) become part of a ritual re-writing, or re-walking, of the space. By offering up different affective and associative memory, the Place Patrice Lumumba becomes a site of re-connection with a colonial past, for those who stop and admire the statue and the information plaque. It is a way of ensuring individual freedom to move, whilst also allowing for the active re-inscription through footsteps and voices, through spectral traces and living encounters.

It is at this unique juncture between the spectral and the living, as well as between civic duty and individual freedom, that the future for the Place Patrice Lumumba might be glimpsed and temporarily proffered as an object of analysis. The act of walking becomes an act of a double inscription; a homage to the marches and protests that lead to the conception of the Place Patrice Lumumba and a symbol of open-ended possibility. This act is loaded with potential of memory traces to offer up alternative readings of history (to follow from Silverman) which reveal the potential for the square to act as a space ‘which is characterised by its openness to the other, for its possibility for an encounter with the other’. It is in this place of open-ended possibility either to encounter alterity, or to ‘leave pieces of [oneself] everywhere’ that we might come to create ‘new behaviour, new alliances, and new

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thoughts.\textsuperscript{382} Through its conception and way of being in present-day public space, Place Patrice Lumumba becomes a moment to be with and without absent figures or strands of history. It is a locus for memories, new and old, to come in to being to take up space.

Between 2000 and 2001, a Belgian parliamentary commission of inquiry had already worked on the assassination on January 17\textsuperscript{th}, 1961 of Patrice Lumumba, former prime minister of Congo. A commission which concluded with the ‘moral responsibility’ for the circumstances that have led to the death of Lumumba’. But they immediately add that they thereby assume the ‘present day standards concerning public morals and without taking into account the then prevailing personal moral considerations’.\textsuperscript{383}

V. Place Patrice Lumumba and the Africa Museum

To help us think about the role that the Place Patrice Lumumba will play in a wider movement of decolonising Belgian public space, I want to move on to consider the role played by the square in the two years that have passed since its inauguration, and the ways in which its presence is felt, or alluded to, in other facets of Belgium’s cultural landscape. Part of this process involves looking at how the square’s presence is acknowledged in the newly re-opened Africa museum, and to think more broadly about Stevens’ vision of the curatorial decisions about a venue that contribute to an accommodation of — and peaceful co-existence with — the venue’s figurative ghosts. I

\textsuperscript{382} Stavrides, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{383} Expression used in the Expert Report which is included in the ‘Final Report of the Parliamentary Commission, Part II’ (DOC 50 0312/007), as referenced by Bevernage, (p. 301).
suggest that these choices about both the artefacts that are displayed in the museum, as well as the ways in which grassroots campaign for recognition of Belgian colonial crimes are referred to, provide a vital place from which to observe how the spectre of Lumumba is acknowledge beyond the site of the square itself. They also provide a clear example of what the Sarr-Savoy report posits as the problem with European museums engaging with colonial history that:

The problem arises when the museum no longer becomes the site for the affirmation of national identity, but, as Benoît de L'Estoile indicates, is seen rather as a museum of the Others; when the museum conserves objects procured from somewhere else and assumes the right to speak about these Others (or in the name of the Others) and claims to declare the truth concerning them.384

Moreover, as the report suggests,

Through these objects and the narratives placed onto these so-called ethnographic collections are ways of controlling representations of societies, often essentializing them, as well as creating a crystallization of categories oftentimes produced by coloniality upon the peoples and African cultures.385

I build on from the that the tension between the site of the Patrice Lumumba and the Africa Museum’s state-funded collections provides a means to open up questions about the differences between local or micro traces of memory and national memory narratives perpetrated by museum collections. This dynamic also opens up an important point of comparison with the Cite Nationale de L’Histoire de L’immigration and site-specific Parisian artefacts

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such as 17.10.61 and La Colonie that I will go on to explore in further detail as part of my conclusion.

In December 2018, the Belgian Africa Museum re-opened in Tervuren, following over eight years of quite extensively publicised restoration.

Originally baptised the ‘Royal Museum for Central Africa’, the collections began as a temporary exhibition in 1897 in Tervuren (home to the King Leopold).386 The United Nations’ definition for international protocols surrounding reparation claims and protocols states ‘reparation includes restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and satisfaction, as well as guarantees of non-repetition’ for affected parties.387 The museum’s advertisement of funding for group placements and internships in various disciplines exclusively for young African scientists, as well as promising a research culture dedicated to the politics of central Africa, point to an outward desire for reconciliation and progress. Furthermore, the updated collections were, according to the museum’s mission statement, curated following consultation with what the museum described as the ‘African diaspora’.388 Nonetheless, the re-opening and re-housing of disputed artefacts following five years of restoration has sparked intense debate in local activist circles,

386 The museum attracted much notoriety for its inclusion of a ‘human zoo’, a mock African village set up in the estate’s woods and ponds, which housed the 267 Congolese men, women and children that Leopold had imported to Tervuren and displayed for members of the public.
388 It is interesting to note, however, that in a press release issued to mark the opening of the museum, the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale lamented the fact that they, and other activist groups, had not been consulted enough.
and in the international press, surrounding the role Belgium should play in displaying stolen colonial artefacts.

In his recent article discussing the re-opening of the Africa Museum (and its troubling inclusion of stolen ceremonial artefacts and statues showing dehumanising representations of enslaved Congolese men, women and children), Donal Hassett has argued that:

The goal of the museum’s “work of decolonization” was not to lay bare the oppressive mechanisms and hierarchies of privilege. It was to provide a supposedly neutral space in which visitors could weigh up the pros and cons of the colonial project, as presented by the museum’s staff, and come to their own conclusion on Belgian rule in Africa. This fetishization of “balance” would come at the cost of a real reckoning with the colonial past not just of Belgium and the former colonies but also of the institution itself.\(^{389}\)

Hassett is also quick to draw attention to the somewhat problematic absence of non-white voices and actors in the curatorial process, as well as the lack of sustained dialogue with members of the Congolese diaspora or activist communities seeking recognition and justice for Belgium colonisation.

He writes:

The marginalization of African voices in the renovation process cannot simply be ascribed to some form of overt racial animus. Rather, it is symptomatic of the divergence between administrators and diasporic activists as to what exactly unmaking/remaking the museum should mean. The museum’s staff, overwhelmingly white and with no specific training on the decolonization process, were to be the sole arbiters of this debate.\(^{390}\)

The conflicting memories and legacies of Belgian colonialism that are embodied by (or exhibited in) the Africa Museum has further underlined the

\(^{389}\) Hassett, p. 31.  
\(^{390}\) Hassett, p. 30.
complexities of what Sarah Arens has described as ‘the lasting connection between the physical landscape of Brussels and the Congo Free State’.\(^{391}\)

The close connection between the inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba and the re-opening of the Africa Museum (only four months apart) once again highlights the ripple effect of grassroots movements and public space, between spatial interventions and transnational connections between Brussels and the DRC. Similarly, the sweeping and non-contextualised reference to the presence of the Place Patrice Lumumba and the erasure of the years of campaigning for official recognition both of Lumumba’s assassination and an incorporation of Belgian colonial past into education and museums reinforce Hasset’s condemnation of the white self-referentiality of the museum’s curatorial process.\(^{392}\)

Lumumba’s assassination, and the campaigning required to secure recognition, occupy one small panel in the entire collection the position of which is obscured somewhat by the entrance to the western part of the museum, tucked away from the main exhibits.

In *The Fight to Decolonise the Museum*, Adam Hochschild underlines the problematic nature of the choices about what was mentioned and omitted in the Africa Museum’s collection, arguing that:

> Whoever chose the *chicottes* and other objects on display had a far different sense of history than whoever compiled the interactive historical timeline on computers in this gallery and several others. It omits several major anti-colonial rebellions and never mentions the large mutinies among black conscripts in King Leopold’s private

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\(^{391}\) Arens ‘Imagining Brussels’, p. 12.

\(^{392}\) Hasset, p. 15.
army. Slave labour gets mentioned only in passing, and the scale of the international protest movement is barely hinted at.\(^{393}\)

These omissions highlighted by Hochschild are mirrored in the museum’s engagement with both Patrice Lumumba and the campaign to secure a memorial square in his honour. As demonstrated in the figure below, the two sentences dedicated to the square’s inauguration — and the failure to elaborate on the community and origins behind the ‘longue campagne’ — provide a visual illustration of the absence of discourse and recognition that the collectif had fought so hard to combat. Moreover, the failure to include any reference to the square’s activist origins and the state’s resistance to approving the motion to erect a square in Lumumba’s name, reveals the institution’s broader failure to adopt the decolonised optic it had so publicly promised.

Indeed, in the weeks after the museum’s official opening, the Collectif released the following statement on its blog:

Le CMCLD trouve que la diaspora n’a pas été suffisamment écoutée et mise à contribution pour ce travail important. Par ailleurs, le musée ayant changé de dénomination et s’appelant désormais Africa Museum, nous estimons que les Africains doivent jouer un rôle significatif à l’intérieur de ce musée et non un rôle subsidiaire. En somme, les Africains doivent se retrouver non plus derrière la vitrine mais devant la vitrine.

Nous, Collectif, resterons vigilants quant au processus de décolonisation effectif et non cosmétique du Musée. Et nous nous
déclarons toutefois disposés à accompagner le musée dans ce travail de décolonisation totale si le besoin nous en est exprimé. 394

The Collectif’s commitment to decolonisation ‘effectif et non cosmétique’ underlines both the problematic nature of the Africa Museum’s collections, as well as the broader questions of how colonial history is memorialised, offered up and attested to in public space. By placing objects or vestiges of colonial memory under public scrutiny in museums or in spaces, the cases of both the Africa Museum and the Place Patrice Lumumba, remind us of the ethnical dimensions underpinning the exhibiting and framing of these memorial traces, and the questions of how (or by whom) they can be accessed.

Moreover, the exclusion of the Collectif’s campaign from the museum’s collection — as well as the failure to acknowledge the role played by the Belgian state in both Lumumba’s assassination and preluding the erection of a square in his memory — paints a troubling picture for the museum’s future in Belgium’s memorial landscape. Similarly, the move towards a spatial acknowledgement of Belgian’s colonial past, be it through the curation of museum collections or a square dedicated to an assassinated president, is once again representative of Van Dijk’s vision of an ‘externalisation’ of social and colonial remembering in a Belgian context, requiring new forms of critical attention and engagement in the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies.395

In this chapter, I have sought to further nuance this interplay between individual ghosts and national debates surrounding commemorative spaces. Building on field notes, photos and ethnographic observations of Place Patrice Lumumba, I explored how the campaigning in the lead up to the inauguration set in motion the possibilities for new forms of social remembering, both within the square itself and through the collections of the newly re-opened Africa Museum. I suggest that the museum’s transient reference to the role of the square — as well as the lack of reference to the grassroots activist groups that were crucial in securing its inception — once again points to an unwillingness to fully engage both with the spectre of Lumumba, as well as Belgian complicity in colonial crimes more broadly. The contrast between the transient, open-ended potential of the unpoliced public space, with the ossification of its legacy in the newly-reopened museum collection, serves as a reminder both of the complexities of social remembering, and the ways in which ghosts of colonial legacies can be acknowledged by former colonial powers. Be it in the confines of the Africa Museum or across the long-fought for place, Lumumba’s ghost continues to linger: acknowledged, but not fully attended to: always demanding recognition and new forms of remembering.
Conclusion

IV. Overview of Position

I opened this thesis with the words of Swedish poet Thomas Tranströmer, who considers how the landscapes of his native Sweden — and an imagined blue house glimpsed in the night — are irrevocably transformed by the spectre of grief and loss. I aligned Tranströmer’s imagery with Judith Butler’s broader vision of ‘the transformative power of loss’ to think about how relationships to landscapes, and particularly cityscapes, are transformed by unchartered undercurrents of absence and legacies of lost lives. These texts provided an entry point from which to explore a sense of how the legacies of colonial history are being worked through in the cities of Paris and Brussels, and specifically how grass-roots level (or community) commemorative practices allow for more nuanced understanding of space to emerge. These are threads that I would like to pick up and return to over the course of this conclusion to examine the points of comparison and consensus that we can draw from Paris and Brussels and ask how former colonial capitals commemorate and come to terms with their colonial past.

Throughout this thesis I have advocated for a re-imagining of postcolonial legacies in the present day, seeking out case studies from across art and activism that offer us a more nuanced understanding of the historical weight that spaces can hold, as well as the types of initiatives needed to shed light on alternative readings of history. Returning to legacies of maligned historical

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events and overlooked locations in the capitals of former colonial powers, I have argued, can help shed light on the complex way that we grieve, on how experiences of grief tend to be overlooked by others, and on the way that the spaces around us are changed as a result of that grief. In this dynamic, I suggest that grief is able to ultimately move beyond the personal to become a process of deeper reflection. It becomes a process of making unknowable to distant experiences more explicit, of rendering generational experiences visible in public space and, as such, of making those heritages accessible to a wider audience. This process opens us up to the ‘we that grieves’, opens up the ‘we’ and takes it to a wider set of people. Haunting exposes a collective loss that, depending on the standpoint, one individual might feel as recent and searing, or another might suddenly sense and tap into. By exposing the shared threads of vulnerability that is able to bring together trans-generation or previously unknown stories to light, that binds communities and passers-by in a shared sense of connection, in the power of stories that have been too-long silenced and are now finding recourse to be heard in space.

I have also set out the means by which stories and perspectives, or what Tranströmer refers to in the Blue House as ‘phantom ships’ can be channelled in order to bring about greater awareness of colonial history and overlooked perspectives that we might sense but never explicitly see represented.³⁹⁷

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³⁹⁷ Tranströmer, p. 12.
Throughout each of my four chapters, my analysis has explored the ways in which 17.10.61, La Colonie, the walking tours organised by the Collectif MemoireColoniale and the Place Lumumba offer up new readings of postcolonial cities, allowing insights into colonial history that exist outside of the remit of state-backed amnesia to emerge in the gaps left by what Lia Brozgal has referenced (in relation to the 17th October massacre) as a ‘lack of scriptable clues’ testifying to state-backed violence.\footnote{Brozgal, p. 34.} Central to this re-engagement with postcolonial spatiality is a new vision of haunting and a conscious re-engagement with forgotten voices, and spectres of long-overlooked state violence. At the start of this thesis, I posited a vision of haunting as something that is at once emotive whilst at the same time inherently spatial and tied to the different memories (and collective histories) of my two chosen cities, Paris and Brussels. Alongside this, I have advocated for ghosts to be understood not simply as the legacy of a departed person left upon the earth but as a reminder of injustices that have yet to be redressed, and of voices that are demanding recognition and acknowledgement. Ghosts, I have argued, must therefore be understood as symbols of state-sanctioned forgetting surrounding certain crimes, and of the gaps left on a spatial level where memorials, recognition or official acknowledgements should be found but aren’t. I have suggested that my chosen case studies create an affective bridge between past colonial crimes and their haunting socio-economic or political ramifications in the present. In doing so they are able to underline both the inherently politicised and political nature of walking and cast light on
how enduring legacies of inequality shape where is safe to move through, as well as how having ‘the right skin colour and passport’ influence who has the freedom to move where, and under what conditions.\textsuperscript{399}

This analysis has been underpinned by my chosen cross-border and cross-disciplinary mixed-methods approach. Over the course of my four chapters I have combined theoretical analysis from the fields of memory and postcolonial studies, with a mixture of close textual and visual analysis of artefacts, first-hand ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews. I believe that this methodology has shone new light on the affective traces of grief — and long-forgotten legacies of loss — that can be tapped in to if only our understanding and perception of city space can be expanded in the right way. Whilst Paris and Brussels are, in many ways, shaped by distinct postcolonial legacies, my case studies have sought to bring to life the hidden traces of those who lives were lost in untimely and unjust circumstances at the hands of colonial powers, showing how a more universal understanding about the nature of memory and loss can be teased out through a cross-border, comparative analytical approach. In this conclusion I will build on this approach, setting out my vision of what we can learn from each of my case studies about the importance of engaging with haunting, as well as the directions and possibilities that I think it can offer up to researchers in the field of Francophone Postcolonial studies: threads I have touched on across each of my four chapters.

\textsuperscript{399} Edward Soja, \textit{Seeking Spatial Justice} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 12.
As a departure point, I would like to return to the question of how we can go about responding to (and representing) legacies that a former colonial power has largely failed to acknowledge, and whether there are any universal lessons that can be drawn from looking at former sites of colonial rule in my chosen countries. Whilst my intervention has been confined to France and Belgium, what can these case studies teach us about how to go about commemorating crimes in ways that centre the right kind of experiences, and is informed by what Mary Stevens describes as the ‘decisions and non-decisions’ that centre individuals whose perspectives have been excluded from national discourse? By juxtaposing the impact of community and group-led artistic projects with the collections and curatorial decisions in national institutions, I will look at the contrasting ways that haunting legacies of France and Belgium’s separate colonial history are tended to and represented, and what different lessons can be gleaned from opposing forms of commemoration. I will also set out what I see as necessary questions for researchers in the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies in the light of the findings of this thesis, and the further opportunities for research and cross-disciplinary collaboration that I believe are opened up by this thesis.

In Chapter 1, Learning to walk with ghosts: Spectro-Digital Geographies with 17.10.61, I followed the street-art collective Raspouteam’s interactive web documentary 17.10.61. Across my chapter, I explored how the creation of ‘digital spectro-geographies’ through the web documentary and site-specific

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400 Stevens, p. 23.
installations across Paris can allow for new engagements with the memories of the 17th October 1961 massacre to emerge. In Chapter 2, I went on to examine the work of La Colonie particularly in relation to commemorating the anniversaries of the 17th October 1961 massacre, before comparing its work to the collections housed at the MNHI. In doing so, I was able to examine the extent to which the venue contributes to what Clerval and Fleury have described as the ‘embellishment of the city’ and the means to which La Colonie becomes caught up in a complicated accommodation of ghosts. Chapter 3 examined the extent to which the walking tours hosted by the Collectif Memoire Coloniale galvanised greater public engagement and awareness of Belgium’s colonial past, whilst helping to address the complete absence of colonial history in the current walking tour landscape in the city. Finally, in Chapter 4, I examined the Collectif Memoire Coloniale’s campaign for the Place Patrice Lumumba in more detail and I asked how the group’s resistance to enduring colonial inequalities that have so long kept Lumumba’s ghost un-mourned and unacknowledged, present ‘a challenge to ordered forms of social remembering’. I also considered how a lack of a contextualised or detailed history of the Place Patrice Lumumba in the Africa Museum collection are indicative of the challenges still impeding progress in Belgium’s wider reckoning — or working through — of its colonial past.

V. Why do we need to understand haunting?

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401 Edensor, p. 12.
Before moving on to look at the impact of these case studies and future directions for research within Francophone Postcolonial Studies in greater detail, I believe it is important to return to the vision of haunting that I set out at the start of this thesis. In order to effectively ascertain what lessons can be gleaned from adopting a cross-border (or cross-discipline) approach within the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies, it is important to outline what aspects of my vision of haunting should be carried forward, and the ways that I believe it can inform future research. At the start of this thesis, I drew on Derrida’s *Spectres de Marx*, which calls on the reader to endeavour to speak to and listen to ghosts, despite the reluctance inherited from our intellectual traditions and because of the challenge it may pose to them. When thinking about what this conversation with inherited ghosts might look like, Derrida writes:

> Or ce qui paraît presque impossible, c'est toujours de parler du spectre, de parler au spectre, de parler avec lui, donc surtout de faire ou de laisser parler un esprit

Building on from Derrida’s vision of haunting, I went on to explore Colin Davis’s understanding of the spectral. As part of a more expansive re-engagement with hauntology, Davis positions an understanding of haunting not simply as a means of taking part in an active conversation (or a literal exchange of words) but rather as a process of understanding, or dismantling, pre-conceived ideas. He suggests:

> Conversing with spectres is not undertaken in the expectation that they will reveal some secret, shameful or otherwise. Rather, it may

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402 Derrida, p. 32 (emphasis in original).
open us up to the experience of secrecy as such: an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know.  

Davis’s dismissal of an idea of shame, or fear, in relation to haunting is something that has steered much of my understanding (and analysis) of the spectral throughout my analysis. Similarly, in his consideration of Marx’s *Purloined Letter*, Fredric Jameson posits a novel means of understanding spectral haunting that synthesises the perspectives put forward by both Derrida and Davis respectively. His vision of spectrality — and by extension haunting — is one that moves away from an image of ghosts as autonomous spirits in search of vengeance. Crucially, instead, Jameson posits a nuanced understanding of what it means to be haunted that seeks to consciously break away from a rigid or monolithic view of ghosts. Haunting, in this instance, becomes a means of destabilising the permanence of the present or of introducing new perspectives into it. To be haunted, as he suggests, is therefore not so much about ghosts individually but a present that carries a trace of unrest: a sense that the crimes of the past cannot be severed or separated from a present-day lived reality. He writes:

Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might, under exceptional circumstances, betray us.  

Jameson’s thinking about the role that spectral haunting can play in our present day lives reinforces much of my understanding about how we need

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403 Davis, p. 375.  
to re-frame our engagement with colonial history in future research projects and beyond. By understanding haunting as a process of challenging understanding and events in the living present as he implores us to, I argue that we can consequently be more open to alternative understandings of history and voices that have been excluded from cultural narratives or deliberately silenced by state powers. Ghosts, then, are not so much a proof of individuals who are no longer alive (although the traces of those lives are no less significant or worthy of attention), but rather an enduring reminder of lessons to be harnessed from lost lives that can help us directly engage with Derrida’s ‘politique de memoire’. From this perspective, haunting is less about fear or vengeance but a symbol of open-ended and unwritten potential. Ghosts are therefore of a reminder of the presence of alternative versions of history that exist outside the confines of state-backed narratives, as well as the need for overlooked voices and communities to be at the forefront of how that history is commemorated moving forward.

This thesis has attempted to honour and tend to these ghosts, by consistently looking at how creative responses help us shed light on, and amplify, their stories. I have consistently suggested that we might move closer to an understanding of the haunted and haunting realities of postcolonial cites by thinking about what kind of creative responses are needed to live fairly and better with our own, and our inherited, ghosts. To expand this idea of haunting, and to engage with a variety of cultural artefacts in Paris and Brussels, I have followed Judith Butler’s thinking in my own invocation of

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405 Derrida, p. 22.
what it means to be haunted or to engage with haunting. Whilst we might find traces of ancestral ghosts and tap into legacies of injustices committed against our own or other communities, I fundamentally suggest that haunting in postcolonial cities must be both about a restoration of justice for historical crimes, and a conscious awareness of our own shared vulnerability. In 'Violence, Mourning, Politics', Butler explains that by undergoing loss and by coming to understand our own grief, our insights into our own vulnerability are paradoxically expanded beyond ourselves. She writes:

Something about who we are is revealed, something which delineates the ties we have to others, that shows us that the ties are what we are, what we are composed of, and that when we lose them, especially some of them, we do not know who we are, or what to do.\footnote{Judith Butler 'Violence, Mourning, Politics', Studies in Gender and Sexuality, 4 (2003), 9–37 (p. 15).}

Bringing an awareness of this vulnerability, and of the need to further delineate our shared ties to the legacies of colonial crimes (and their impact on present-day urban space) has been one of the central tenets of this thesis. By engaging with community-led projects from across art and activism that are concerned with, or are centred on, mindful journeys across urban landscapes we can come to fully appreciate how present-day postcolonial space continues to be haunted and how we, as consumers of those projects, are haunted at the same time. Doing so allows us to become conscious of the various ways (and means) that we can incorporate an understanding of the spectral into our journeys through city space, and how postcolonial cities can become repositories of un-tapped memory traces that offer clues into
colonial legacies that have yet to be fully recognised or even openly acknowledged by the state and former colonisers.

I have made the case that ghosts, whether we believe in them or not, can and should come to symbolise social vulnerability of the ways that lives can be expunged at will or be subject to pervasive acts of discrimination. They are a reminder of the way lives are continually impacted by the violence of the erasure of historical trauma from national memory narratives and institutional collections. In incorporating an awareness of this vulnerability into my selection of case studies and theoretical arguments, this thesis encourages a more affective understanding of haunting and ghosts into our daily lives. Whether we see them as real or imagined, I suggest that ghosts and haunting can simply be about questioning the ‘conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control’.407

Understanding the possibility of haunting to be more than just an interaction with ghosts, or the idea of them, is thus a means of challenging pre-conceived ideas about the present and memory traces hidden within it. This openness to flexibility of thought (or new modes of understanding) must be incorporated into wider conversations about acknowledging colonial history, encouraging institutional (and disciplinary) focus on traditionally excluded readings of the colonial past and understandings of the present. Doing so can ultimately allow a unique vantage point to observe how postcolonial

memory politics unfold in the capitals of former centres of colonial power. Through my dual engagement with Paris and Brussels as well as their unique historical legacies, I have hoped to glean what aspects of postcolonial memory and commemorative practice can be understood by comparing both cities. I have also drawn on both cities to explore the sorts of artistic and activist initiatives that are unfolding in both cities, where there is (or has been) a historical absence of acknowledgement of the behalf of the state. Through their observation of, and receptiveness to, the stories and perspectives dispersed in memory traces across each of the cities, my case studies testify to the innovative possibilities facing future researchers entering the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies. Indeed, through the unique engagements with present-day urban space, the 17.10.61 project, La Colonie, the campaigning work of the Collectif Memoire Coloniale and the Place Patrice Lumumba act as a reminder of how an engagement with haunting can open up new avenues to engage with history and centre overlooked perspectives and voices across different cities and locations. I suggest that this openness (and renewed engagement with the idea of haunting) also sets a precedent for the direction of, and objects of study that fall within, the umbrellas of Modern Languages and Francophone Postcolonial Studies respectively.

VI. Specificities of France and Belgium: an overview of current postcolonial politics
An engagement with my case studies reveals a keen sense of the difficulty of accommodating ghosts and legacies (to paraphrase Mary Stevens).\textsuperscript{408} It also gives us a point from which to consider the shared ties between the sorts of creative models we can use to engage with a postcolonial present.\textsuperscript{409} It is, however, equally important to consider the ways in which subjective colonial legacies are being worked through in France and Belgium respectively, and to consider what lessons (and best practice) can be drawn from the work this thesis has undertaken. My introduction provided an overview of other walking tours or walking based cultural practices for each city — including \textit{Le Paris Noir Tour}, \textit{Troubles Memory Walks} in Brussels, and walking tours in Beirut and Guadeloupe — that are using mindful walking both as means of reflecting on colonial pasts and postcolonial realities. Through their emphasis on a spectral continuum between past colonial crimes and their haunting socio-economic or political ramifications in the present, these tours place an important emphasis on the politicised and political nature of walking, and how enduring legacies of inequality shape where is safe to move through, and how having ‘the right skin colour and passport’ influences who has the freedom to move where, and under what conditions.\textsuperscript{410} I suggested that the proliferation of these walking tours in Paris and Brussels is indicative of a need for scholars within postcolonial studies to dedicate closer attention to

\textsuperscript{408} Stevens, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{409} Stevens, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{410} Soja, \textit{Seeking Spatial Justice}, p. 12.
the role of walking and practical site-based interventions. This thread was developed across each of my chapters.

In *Postcolonial Activists and European Museums*, Katrin Sieg considers the progress that has been made in Belgium on the anniversary of the inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba. She considers that:

> In context where colonial history is not consistently integrated into school curricula and public spheres, museums have become key sites for decolonising myths of national genius and European superiority. On the one hand, they model newly cooperative modes of storytelling. On the other hand, they help legitimate critical, yet marginalized perspectives long considered threatening to a consensus-oriented museology.\(^\text{411}\)

In an interview with the Guardian in 2019, Jeroen Robbe, of the anti-racism group the LABO vzw said that despite the inauguration of the square, too many Belgian municipal leaders were still failing to show moral leadership around how colonial history should be recognised and memorialised across the city. He explained that: ‘The fact they are taking this so lightly indicates a blind spot that we have in our own history.’\(^\text{412}\) He continued by suggesting that ‘the difference is not the size of the horror, but the skin colour of the victims. You have to change the street names and add an explanation to it, so that we don’t hide away the past.’\(^\text{413}\)

Despite Robbe’s very valid invocation of a Belgian blind spot, it is nonetheless important to note that since 2019, there has been a renewed

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\(^{411}\) Sieg, p. 215.


\(^{413}\) Boffey, p. 2.
focus on the importance of providing educational frameworks to re-examine colonial history. New history standards are being gradually implemented in secondary school education in Flanders, requiring the colonial past to be addressed from multiple (non-Western) perspectives. In so doing, they aim to ‘counter a purely Eurocentric perspective, and to foster postcolonial reflection.’ In Francophone Belgium, an educational reform is also in preparation with the view to put key historical concepts such as colonialism, imperialism, decolonisation and neo-colonialism explicitly to the fore. This is a stance that the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale has been advocating for since its inception. In order to transcend a Eurocentric approach, the collectif follow on from the recommendations of the 2018 Sarr-Savoy report which requires that non-Western societies be centered and their concerns directly addressed. In so doing, they aim to acknowledge the experience of migrant communities who have loudly raised their voices lately, counter a ‘purely Eurocentric perspective.’ As such, the view of these reforms aims

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415 Van Nieuwenhuyse, ‘The colonial past.’

416 The Sarr-Savoy Report drew on the work of from academics and researchers Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr to implement the return of thousands of artworks. See: Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, *The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics* (Paris: Ministère de la Culture, 2018), http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf (accessed 16 May 2022). The document is a 252-page bilateral agreement between France and certain African countries. The document is divided into three main parts: 1. To Restitute; 2. Restitutions and Collections; and 3. Accompanying Returns. The second part, ‘Restitutions and Collections’, draws a three-step process towards effective restitutions. The first phase was launched on the report’s publication date and asks French public museums to create thorough inventories of all the Sub-Saharan artworks they possess, in the hopes of reaching as much transparency as possible. These lists will then be sent to the relevant African countries. A lack of response from one of these countries will be read as an unwillingness to collaborate. By Spring 2019, these inventories should be completed and publicly accessible online. Then, from November 2022, France will be returning all claimed artworks.

417 Van Nieuwenhuyse.
to foster among students a nuanced understanding of the colonial past, and a critical reflection on the complex relationship between the colonial past and the postcolonial world.\textsuperscript{418}

Similar reforms have also been in place in a French context. For instance, in 2011 the publication of a new batch of schoolbooks focused on the Algerian War and the slave trade and contains an obligatory module on the ‘Memory of the Algerian War’. The Sarr-Savoy report, commissioned in 2018 under the instruction of French President Emmanuel Macron, focuses strongly on the restitution of colonial-era artefacts, rather than educating the general population about the origins of those artefacts or the context in which they were illegally obtained.\textsuperscript{419} Instead, the report focuses in on the return of property to its legitimate owners, which allows nations to appropriate their own history, with the view ‘not to annihilate colonial history, but to allow these nations, deprived of around 90% of their heritage, to reconstruct a discourse on themselves through these objects.’\textsuperscript{420}

In May 2022, the French senate announced the Creation of a National Reflection Council on the circulation and return of non-European cultural goods, with the specific aim to create a competent body for reflection and consultation on issues relating to the circulation and return of non-European cultural property kept in public collections. The proposed chapter was set up with the view to ‘Encadrer la procédure de restitution afin de la rendre plus

\textsuperscript{418} Van Nieuwenhuyse.
\textsuperscript{419} Van Nieuwenhuyse.
\textsuperscript{420} Sarr and Savoy, p. 252.
transparente et de garantir que les demandes de restitution soient avant tout examinées avec rigueur historique et scientifique’ as well as to
doter la France d’un outil lui permettant d'engager une réflexion et un travail de fond sur les enjeux associés au retour des biens culturels vers leur pays d'origine, qui soient moins susceptibles de fluctuer au gré des alternances politiques.\textsuperscript{421}

I suggest that this sensitivity to ‘alternances politiques’ — and setting a universal precedent for long term strategy regarding the restitution of colonial artefacts — is nonetheless an important part of securing a consistent culture of acknowledgement and accountability on behalf of the state.\textsuperscript{422}

On the 9\textsuperscript{th} November 2021, Emmanuel Macron took a significant step towards advancing restitution processes when he met with his Benin counterpart Patrice Talon at the Musée du quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris to mark the departure of 26 statues and ceremonial objects to Benin. The objects were taken in 1892 by French troops from the royal palace of Abomey, which was set ablaze by King Behanzin, the fleeing ruler of the West African kingdom of Dahomey.\textsuperscript{423} Whilst the emphasis was on establishing a new page in French-African relations — a theme that was reiterated in the France-Afrique summit held in Montpellier in June 2021 — the stance of full restitution put forward in the Farr-Savoy report seemed

\textsuperscript{421} See: ‘Proposition de loi relative à la circulation et au retour des biens culturels appartenant aux collections publiques’, 10 January 2022, https://www.senat.fr/leg/tas21-066.html (accessed 7 February 2023). It is worth noting that this ruling followed the adoption of the bill put forward by Senators Catherine Morin-Desailly, Max Brisson and Pierre Ouzoulias on 10 January 2022 to set up a national expert commission that would be consulted on any future non-European restitution cases.

\textsuperscript{422} ‘Proposition de loi’, 10 January 2022.

have been lost, or slowed down, in the two years that had elapsed since its publication. Macron told reporters that: ‘le but n’est pas de renationaliser les patrimoines et de se débarrasser de toutes les œuvres venues de l’étranger’ leaving a degree of ambiguity as to what objects might be returned and under what sort of time frame.\textsuperscript{424}

Although the politics (and scale of) restitutions remain open-ended, the emphasis on reconciliation and repair seems to be key cornerstone in recent state politics. In June 2021, the inaugural ‘Nouveau Sommet Afrique-France was hosted in Montpellier, bringing together ‘Des centaines de jeunes entrepreneurs, artistes, chercheurs, athlètes, étudiants, personnalités engagées d’Afrique et de France’ alongside President Macron and Achille Mbembe.\textsuperscript{425} By bringing together different actors from across sectors (and creating financial support for innovation and collaboration in a similar fashion to the Place Patrice Lumumba artist’s call-out), I believe that the steps that have been taken by both the French and Belgian states have (indirectly and in the case of the Lumumba square, explicitly) confirmed my hypothesis that an engagement with colonial legacies cannot be contained within single sectors, institutions or locations. Acknowledging the legacy of colonial crimes requires an incorporation of multiple perspectives and points of view, in order that historically maligned narratives and voices are acknowledged and platformed wherever possible. Doing so, I suggest, is the surest way of

\textsuperscript{424} ‘La France finalise solennellement’.
honouring the vision of restitution outlined in the Sarr-Savoy report that argues:

Can we, then, envision the happy and consented restitution, motivated by the dual interest of both peoples and objects? Can we thus think of restitutions as being something more than a mere strategic manoeuvre — neither merely an economic or political strategy — but rather something truly cultural in the sense of the Latin verb colere, to “inhabit”, “cultivate”, and “honour”? 426

To think of restitution and remembering as something that is honour-bound and collaborative as the Sarr-Savoy report suggests, then it must be accompanied by an understanding that our engagement with the haunting colonial histories of postcolonial France and Belgium’s past (or indeed that of any postcolonial capital) will vary depending on the space we occupy in the city, and the privilege we have been afforded within it. Our proximity to (and understanding of) an event will differ depending on whether we are static in front of an information plaque about Patrice Lumumba, visiting a photo exhibition about internment camps in La Colonie, or following the 17.10.61 map or Collectif Mémoire Coloniale guides along unknown streets in the search of overlooked or hidden sites of colonial crimes. The political undertones of those spaces — the sense of what lives we are allowed to speak of or not — influence whether ghosts are connected with viscerally or considered in a more abstract sense. Moreover, I have suggested that part of understanding ghosts (and haunting more broadly) demands a receptivity to the socio-economic constraints that see descendants of colonial crimes displaced from certain areas, as well as the decisions from local authorities

426 Sarr and Savoy, p. 40.
that dictate which sites will take on a commemorative function in a particular part of the city. I argue that challenging what kind of lives can be officially remembered there must become a vital component in our understanding of how city spaces come to, and continue to be, haunted. Turning attention to the specificities of these spaces will allow for city-specific engagement with colonial history to emerge, and for long-hidden perspectives to be given the attention and space they deserve. An understanding of this complexity of colonial memory and the care that is needed on behalf of both the French and Belgian state: something that can only achieved by a conscious engagement with grass-roots level initiatives, and perspectives that are still too-easily dismissed.

VII. How the case studies converge and diverge

Before I go on to examine the particularities of my case studies in more detail, it is important to return to the legacies of the 17th October and the assassination of Lumumba and how they fit into national narratives surrounding colonial history in France and Belgium respectively. Despite the significance strides that have been made into obtaining the Place Patrice Lumumba (and, indeed, in acknowledging Lumumba’s murder at the hands of the Belgian state) in recent years, the legacy of his assignation remains largely contained within the parameters of the square itself (and, as I argued in Chapter 4, is still not clearly represented in the Africa Museum). I suggest that Lumumba’s absence within what I see as a relatively new conversation around Belgian Colonial history, or what Goddeeris has dubbed as a historical lack engagement the colonial past. After Congolese independence,
Goddeeris argues that Belgium never developed a strong collective memory of its colonial past.\footnote{Goddeeris, ‘Colonial Streets and Statues’ and Goddeeris, ‘Postcolonial Belgium’}. This contrasted with neighbouring countries like the Netherlands, France or Great Britain, where legacies of colonialism continue to remain highly visible in the public domain, provoking frequent domestic debates on the contested imperial past in these countries.\footnote{Georgi Verbeeck, ‘Coming to terms with the (post-)colonial past in Belgium. The inquiry into the assassination of Patrice Lumumba’, in Contemporary History on Trial. Europe since 1989 and the role of the Expert Historian, ed. by Harriet Jones, Kjell Östberg and Nico Randaad (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 46–61 (p. 46).} Belgium was largely regarded as a ‘latecomer’, both as a former colonial power and as a postcolonial society critically looking back at its history.\footnote{Goddeeris, ‘Colonial Streets and Statues’ and Goddeeris, ‘Postcolonial Belgium’}. Goddeeris argues that there are a variety of historical conditions that can explain the absence of engagement in Belgium with a critical reappraisal of its colonial past. He writes that:

It was obvious, for one thing, that the public memories of colonialism could never compete with the apparently more traumatic episodes of World War 1 and World War 2. In addition, it needs to be noted that the country acted as a colonial power for less than eight decades, during which the demographic impact of colonialism continued to be fairly marginal at home. Similarly, as Goddeeris reminds us, the Congolese community in Belgium had always been small, compared to postcolonial migration communities in neighbouring countries such as France. Whilst the absence of acknowledgement of both Lumumba’s murder and colonial history more broadly has taken years to (literally) filter into public space, the creative potential surrounding the Place Lumumba and the large gains that have been
made by the Congolese diaspora and activist networks in the five years I have been researching this thesis alone indicate a sense of receptivity or openness on behalf of the Belgian state to working and engaging with communities they have historically excluded.

Indeed, the rapidly accelerating activist movement for recognition of colonial history in a relative nascent Belgium context echoes Barcellini’s thinking a memorial context in France in the 90s and early 2000s that saw ‘L’émergence des victimes comme moteur de la vie mémorielle française’.  

The shifts in French memorial politics point to a similar shift towards acknowledging violent legacies of colonial crimes, but with less of an explicit engagement with activist demands (as is evidenced by the continued exclusion of the 17th October massacre). In January 2021 the French historian Benjamin Stora delivered a report commissioned by President Emmanuel Macron that is aimed at “reconciling memories’ between France and its former colony Algeria. The French head of state said he would follow a recommendation in the report and establish a ‘memories and truth’ commission to address the history of France’s colonial past in Algeria, but he stopped short of issuing an official apology. With the approach of the 60th anniversary of the independence of Algeria (July 5, 1962), French President Emmanuel Macron has undertaken in recent months a series of ‘Symbolic

430 Barcellini, p. 25.
acts’ in order to ‘Reconcile memories’ between French and Algerians.  

These symbolic gestures, however, still do not include an official apology for the 17th October massacre or plans to introduce or erect more prominent memorialisation of the massacre in Parisian city space.

With the 17th October massacre and the assassination of Patrice Lumumba still remaining largely absent in the French case and only recently acknowledged in the Belgian context, what are the ways that spatially-specific, creative projects can inform the future of how we engage with colonial legacies? When viewed as an ensemble, despite their noticeable differences in form and in location, my case studies reveal a tension between dynamic social movements and tangible landscapes, and the ways in which the voices of communities tied to historical crimes can often be left outside of the walls of state-funded institutions or locations. They are a reminder of the memory traces that are left behind in the wake of disavowed legacies in spite of years’ worth of state silence, and they are testament to a desire to transform this alternate version of history into innovative creative practice.

Furthermore, they allow us to gain an active insight into how loss and

432 It is important to note that Stora’s report received widespread backlash for neglecting a major demand, which is France’s apology for its horrendous crimes during the colonial period in Algeria, and its focus on marginal aspects, such as organising joint celebrations and honouring historical figures from the two countries. The Algerian Minister of Communication and the government’s official spokesman, Ammar Belhimer, said that Stora’s report on the memory file was ‘below expectations and subjective’. See: ‘Macron Defends Stora’s Questionable Report On Memory’, Echoroukonline, 22 February 2022, https://www.echoroukonline.com/macron-defends-storas-questionable-report-on-memory (accessed 1 June 21).

postcolonial legacies are being worked through in city spaces across both
new and traditional media as well as artistic interventions and political
movements.

This tacit link between haunting and overlooked (or peripheral) urban spaces
unites Place Patrice Lumumba, La Colonie, 17.10.61 and the Collectif
Mémoire Coloniale. Their existence is determined by a particular
geographical and historical placement in centres of former colonial powers
and cannot be severed from it. Their presence in both digital and site-specific
realms allows for the spectral to encroach on the permanence of the present:
destabilising any assumed sense of chronological continuity that assigns the
cri mes of the colonial era to a different time and place. This vision of spectral
haunting thus becomes a thread or the fil d’ariane that can tie a digital map, a
square, an artistic venue and community-led walking tours together in that all
of these initiatives are concerned with who feels safe in certain types of
spaces and is able to see their story reflected back to them there. The
individual ghosts of Patrice Lumumba and the victims of the 17th October
1961 massacre become part of much wider phantom swell of ghosts and
guests, of invisible traces always present beneath the surface of postcolonial
present.

Through 17.10.61 we witness the possibility for self-directed engagement
with Rothberg’s vision of ‘multi directional memory’ allowing for individual,
immersive journeys walking alongside the imagined characters whose
testimony draws on first-hand accounts of what happened on the night.
Whilst the physical QR codes that were erected to coincide with the 50th
anniversary of the 17th October 1961 massacre, and some of the contextual information about the history of the night is not instantly available to access (and requires navigation to a separate page hosted on third-party sites), the project is characterised by an enduring legacy and relevance for scholars interested in the 17th October massacre. By creating a space for viewers to journey across literal memory traces, immersed in the stories of individuals whose words are still lacking from national and cultural debate, it provides a clear example of the utility and importance of the State embracing initiatives that come from the grass-roots level, rather than ones which are imposed top-down from the political centre.

This ability to elevate voices of individuals with personal ties to historical legacies is also directly mirrored in walking tours hosted by the Collectif Memoire Coloniale in and around Brussels. By choosing to consciously elevate the perspectives of the Congolese diaspora through the individuals that lead the tours and through the written outputs and press releases put out by the committee, the Collectif Memoire Coloniale are able to balance spatial engagements with the city with first-hand accounts of activists and community leaders in the present. In doing so the walking tours help to reveal the potential of both mindful and pre-meditated movements as well as sustained activist campaigning to provide a different kind of immersive journey to the 17.10.61 project. Whilst the subjective engagement with the voices and stories of individuals with ties to historically significant parts of the city echoes some of the immersive quality of Raspouteam’s work, the collective’s walking tours provide a more structured engagement with
postcolonial politics as opposed to a freer, more ambulatory kind of journey that can be accessed in 17.10.61. Moreover, by tying their tours back to the campaign to secure a square for Patrice Lumumba (as I witnessed during the walking tours I shadowed in 2018), the tours are able to create a physical link between activist movements and moving through city space. When viewed together, 17.10.61 and the Collectif Memoire Coloniale walking tours allow us to appreciate the potential of different types of walking activities (and tours) to provide different forms of reflection on the ongoing impact of colonial history in present-day space, and they foster different kinds of awareness of the alternative versions of history that can be accessed through the routes by case studies provided across respective cities.\(^{434}\)

Moreover, the 17.10.61 and Collectif Memoire Coloniale tours also provide us with examples of what walking tours can look like as well as the different tones that they set. Firstly, the obvious difference in form between a hybrid memory map and an in-person walking tour allow for very different types of experiences, with (as I have previously discussed) 17.10.61 allowing more scope for self-directed ambulatory walking with less of a pre-defined structure. Whilst the haunting testimony of Lucien provides a detailed account of police violence towards Algerian protestors on the night of the 17th October (including corroborating descriptions of police involvement), there is less of a sense of overt criticism of the present-day French state or authorities, or indeed the ongoing impact of these examples of colonial

\(^{434}\) See: The Brussels Municipality Webpage and social media where the call has been launched, https://www.brussels.be/square-lumumba (accessed 22 May 2020).
violence on descendants of the massacre. This is directly contrasted in the walking tours led by the Collectif Memoire Coloniale (and the specific tour hosted by second generation Congolese immigrant Kalvin Soiresse Njiall) who, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3, explicitly integrated the ongoing impacts of colonialism on present-day Congolese Belgians into his walking tour commentary.\textsuperscript{435} Indeed, by adding an overtly critical and more obviously political dimension to his commentary, Soirresse was able to re-orient focus away from the state-sanctioned versions of colonial history - and expand on typically condensed version of historical events such as those found in the Africa Museum. As outlined in Chapter 2, this decision of re-telling colonial history ‘sans édulcorants, sans excuses/arguments qui légitimeraient le système colonial comme nous avons l'habitude de l'entendre’ means the walking tours are able to offset the maligned reading of history in a manner that — both due to the content and the lack of political representation of Congolese interests — is framed as being very consciously opposed to present day municipal (and political) choices about how colonial history is remembered.

Conversely, the cases of both La Colonie and the Place Patrice Lumumba Square reveal how the ‘multidirectional’ nature of memory (to paraphrase Rothberg) seems to resist attempts to be contained in fixed places or

\textsuperscript{435} The wording from my original walking tour carried out with the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale in Brussels in 20th October 2018 is as follows: ‘La colonisation c’est comme une valise, vous venez avec une mitraillette, vous m’arrachez la valise, vous me donnez votre valise, mais vous ne me donnez pas le code pour l’ouvrir. Les jeunes issus des familles immigrées, ou de la colonisation toute courte, n’ont toujours pas les codes qu’il faut pour accéder à l’élite de la société belge’ (Kalvin Soiresse Njiall, from author’s own fieldnotes, interview between Ellen Davis-Walker and Kalvin Soiresse Njiall, Brussels, 20th October 2018).
locations, and requires a dialogue with external groups or different forms of
cultural production.\footnote{Rothberg, p. 25.} Since completing my fieldwork in 2018, La Colonie has
lost its fixed premises on Rue Lafayette, due to a combination of high rent
prices and the pressures of the coronavirus pandemic. Speaking to
journalists from \textit{Le Monde} in 2020, Attia confirmed that:

\begin{quote}
On avait trop de dettes, plus de 130 000 euros, et le coronavirus a
asséché notre trésorerie [...] Le modèle économique, sans
subvention aucune, était fragile. « Les recettes du bar permettaient
de payer les loyers et une dizaine de salaires ainsi que l’activité
culturelle qui représentait de 10 à 20 % du chiffre d’affaire. On a un
budget entre 70 000 et 80 000 euros par mois, c’est lourd. On a dû
payer la location du lieu pendant les quatre mois et demi de
fermeture. Ce n’était plus tenable.\footnote{Roxana Azimi, ‘La Colonie, l’agora de l’artiste Kader Attia, met la clé sous la porte’, \textit{Le
2020).} \end{quote}

At the time of closure, La Colonie put out a crowd funder on their Facebook
page urging supporters to help the finance (and finance) a new venue.\footnote{The Facebook Post reads as follows: ‘Aidez-nous à retrouver un lieu pour, tous
ensemble, continuer les débats, les expositions, les projections de films et les sorties de
livres, afin de sauver l'indépendance de votre pensée en la partageant avec d'autres’. Source: La Colonie Facebook, July 2020, https://www.facebook.com/lacolonieaparis/
(accessed 14 May 2022).}

Since July 2020, the venue has been streaming and cooperating on a series
of online events and gives sporadic updates about the future of its work. In
March 2021, the venue announced via Facebook that it was taking part in a
hybrid initiative \textit{Fragments of Repair}, organised in collaboration with BAK,
and with the support of La Dynamo de Banlieues Blues, located in Pantin.\footnote{It is important to note that the event was hybrid and La Colonie is not, at the time of
writing, using the premises in Pantin to host their own events.}

The post confirmed that this hybrid arrangement was part of an ongoing re-
structuring and re-birth process (‘La Colonie renaît sous une forme nomade et virtuelle’).\textsuperscript{440} However, there have been no social media updates on Facebook or Twitter since September 2021 and at the time of writing this conclusion the fate of the venue and any future projects remains unknown.

The current function of La Place Patrice Lumumba remains equally open-ended, but much less adversely impacted by financial pressure or, indeed, the Covid-19 pandemic. In May 2022 The City of Brussels announced a call for projects for an artistic intervention (temporary or permanent) at the Square Lumumba as part of an ongoing decolonisation of public space. The call, which stipulates that it is open to ‘artist or artist collective that performs visual arts, performances and/or installations in situ’ reiterates the dynamism of Rothberg’s thinking that:

\begin{quote}
Memory’s anachronistic quality — its bringing together of now and then from here and there — is actually the source of its powerful creativity and its ability to build new worlds out of the materials of older ones.\textsuperscript{441}
\end{quote}

By drawing on movement-based performances and site-specific art to bring the significance of the square to life for audience members, the decision by the City of Brussels commune offers a fascinating insight into the way that fixed, state sanctioned commemorative practice can draw on creative practice and artistic practice to bring together diverse groups of people. Whilst it remains to see whether the City of Brussels will use the opportunity to platform Belgo-Congolese artists (or groups with personal ties to migration


\textsuperscript{441} Rothberg, p. 15.
from the DRC to Belgium), the move represents a significant possibility to promote new engagement with Lumumba’s legacy and to bring new and diverse audiences to visit the square. Whilst this movement on behalf of the municipality is the first public event the City of Brussels has taken since the inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba in 2018, the possibility it presents to facilitate more social cohesion and understanding cannot be underestimated. As Michael Rothberg aptly reminds us:

Groups do not simply articulate established positions but actually come into being through their dialogical interactions with others; both the subjects and spaces of the public are open to continual reconstruction.  

442

What remains after looking at the examples of both of these case studies is how the accommodation of ghosts (whether peaceful or not) requires active effort and an incorporation of new creative practices in order for postcolonial memory to be fully integrated back into public space. Moreover, spaces like La Colonie and the Place Patrice Lumumba have to work to combat the weight of external forces and enduring socio-economic inequalities — such as high rent prices or the pressure of a global pandemic — that make the processes of commemorating colonial crimes (and centering the right perspectives and voices) inherently complicated. Through their transition to (or incorporation of) hybrid and cross-disciplinary approaches to remembering colonial history, the fate of both of these fixed locations at the time of writing seem to point to an inevitable breaking away from fixed, static commemorative locations. The fate of La Colonie and La Place Patrice

442 Rothberg, p. 15.
Lumumba at the time of writing this conclusion is one that seems to be defined by a need to embrace and encompass more hybrid formats and means of working that have been accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The fate (and, indeed, the eventual function) of both of these spaces remain open-ended whilst at the same time clearly subject to memory’s constantly evolving, dynamic quality. It remains a testament of the need to embrace techniques and possibility for expression that the thesis sought to open up through a conscious engagement with art and activist projects.

Furthermore, by centring research methods that place the subjective experience of communities who have been long excluded from debates around colonial history at the forefront of analysis, this thesis has embodied the collaborative and nuanced approach I have advocated for throughout my analysis of the work of the Africa Museum and the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de L'Immigration. It is my hope that this approach will open up multiple avenues for exploration within Francophone Postcolonial Studies and beyond.

Leading on from this, I suggest that the uneasy interaction between historical legacies and fixed space (as has been exposed by the fate of La Colonie and La Place Patrice Lumumba) needs to act as a clear reminder to evaluate the role played by state-sponsored institutions — including, but not limited to, the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de L'Immigration and the Africa Museum — that seek to actively engage with colonial history. The failure of the recently re-opened Africa Museum to adequately reference or contextualise the long campaign for the Place Patrice Lumumba is just one example of the difficulty
in the peaceful accommodation of ghosts in fixed locations that both La Colonie and the square have provided us a point of entry into thinking about. The museum’s decision to exhibit a number of dehumanising statues in a side enclave (including ones featuring a European missionary with an African boy above a plaque reading ‘Belgium brings civilization to the Congo’), point to a lack of sensitivity and active decolonisation of the museum’s all European and predominantly white curatorial team. In a similar fashion to the highly criticised 2018 ‘Paintings from Afar’ exhibition at the quai Branly, which showcased among other works, George Catlin’s portraits of Native Americans, Emile Bernard’s scenes of quotidian life in Cairo and Paul Gauguin’s drawings of Tahiti, different modes of representing and seeing sit side by side.\(^{443}\)

Moreover, the inclusion of these artefacts and the lack of consultation with the Belgian Congolese diaspora point to a need to radically question curatorial and museums’ practice, as well as the ways in which colonialism continues to shape the ways we experience and understand the world today. As Donal Hassett reminds us, the public at large and postcolonial minority groups in particular ‘must be at the heart of future discussions about what to do with decolonized cultural spaces. It is they who should decide what form the decolonized museum should take.’\(^{444}\)


\(^{444}\) Hassett, p. 38.
The ‘work of decolonization’ in the case of the Africa Museum and in certain instances the Cité Nationale de l’Histoire de L’Immigration (through its failure to adequately contextualise the building’s history in its present day spaces) was not to lay bare the oppressive mechanisms and hierarchies of privilege on which colonialism relied and through which it continues to shape the contemporary world. Whilst it can be argued that the concerns surrounding these collections contained within the walls and collections of national museums and galleries do not impact the mechanisms of the society beyond it, the implications of these decisions spill out beyond museums to the cities and communities that surround them. They once again force us to turn our attention back to the ways in which both fixed locations and individuals continue to be haunted by the spectre of colonial history. Whether this haunting is tied to a lack of recognition or acknowledgement from the state, an exclusion of perspectives from existing commemorative practice or a lack of awareness of Judith Butler’s vision of vulnerability (that is to say how an engagement with grief can open up a sense of a ‘shared we’). The presence of haunting cannot be separated from the decisions that are made about how (and where) we chose to remember a colonial past, about the types of bodies and lives that are implicated in the ‘we’ that grieves or are given space to have their experiences reflected back at them.

Whilst the tie between haunting and commemorative practice can create pitfalls in an engagement with the colonial past, it does not, ultimately, have to come at the expense of meaningful representation of it. As Mary Stevens

\[445\] Hassett, p. 40.
argues in her analysis of the Cité Nationale de l'Histoire de L'Immigration, Le Palais de la Porte Dorée was initially ‘conceived as a vehicle for colonial propaganda and remains inseparable from it’. In spite of this, I suggest that despite this problematic positionality, the museum still offers what I see as the clearest way to harness what Claire Eldridge has described as the ‘authority and the legitimacy to speak on behalf of the past’. As I have outlined earlier on in this thesis, the museum’s Galerie du Don stands out as a poignant example of the steps that can be taken as part of a process of ‘redistributing respect, authority and the right to representability’ in France’s memory landscape. Unlike the Africa Museum that notoriously failed to engage with the wishes and perspectives of the Congolese diaspora community in Belgium, the Cité Nationale de L’Histoire’s inclusion of the gallery (and its ongoing liaison and outreach work with generations of migrant communities), provides a unique opportunity to shine a light on cross-generational stories of immigration and migration to France and centre the perspectives of families with ongoing lived experiences of it. The museum’s emphasis on archiving and collecting testimony to shine a light on the subjective lived realities of historical immigration to France offers a new perspective on Stevens’ vision of the “metropolitan context of colonial legacy.” Whilst, as I have previously discussed the limitations of containing (and tending to) colonial legacies in static locations or in state-funded (and

446 Stevens, p. 246.  
447 Ibid.  
448 Eldridge, p. 305.  
449 Stevens, Ibid.
curated) institutions, the example of the Galerie du Don provides an example of what steps institutions can take to make sure that curatorial decisions — and ongoing commitments to decolonisation such as those outlined by the Musée Quai Branly — are able to enrich debates about restitution with an appropriate re-centering of overlooked perspectives. By putting families and intergenerational tales at the heart of the curatorial process (and choices about what objects are displayed to the public), La Galerie du Don provides a clear example of how an openness to haunting (and the presence of ghosts) can move beyond theoretical discussions and become part of the reforms and decisions that institutions are being required to take.

At the start of the thesis, I asked how ghosts, or, more specifically, dialogue with ghosts through new creative practice, can help us rethink the ways that history is embodied in city spaces, as well as the impact that history has on individuals in the present. The form that this innovative relationship with the ghosts of colonial history can take has been illustrated through my engagement with 17.10.61, the Collectif Memoire Coloniale, La Colonie, la Place Patrice Lumumba and both the French and Belgian state has taken in subsequent years. The emphasis on outreach and hybridity — whilst undoubtedly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic — points to a need to reach out beyond the walls and confines of state-backed institutions or fixed venues to engage with different modes of practice and with communities or groups whose perspectives must guide steps taken moving forward. Doing so, I suggest, is essential to making sure the correct voices are tended to in commemorative or memorial work moving forward, as well as to offer up the
alternate readings of history that are so central to Chamoiseau’s images of memory traces that I have deployed throughout this thesis. This position is also paramount to deliver on the objectives of the Sarr-Savoy report and to bring about a wider understanding of both objects that are still being held in Western nations but also (and, as I argue, crucially) what perspectives and legacies have been silenced as a result of these decisions. As part of their definition of what restitution will proactively look like — and how this will impact the cultural narratives surrounding colonial history in institutions moving forward — the report also argues that the act of restitution should be seen as:

Indeed a question of re-activating a concealed memory and restitution to the cultural heritage its signifying, integrative, dynamic, and mediating functions within contemporary African societies.450

Whilst the Creation of a National Reflection Council on the circulation and return of non-European cultural goods as well as the France Africa Summit are positive signs for the future of this re-activation and mediation of memory, they must be respected and protected at all costs. The example of August 2019 ‘Afrohouse’ party held in the grounds of the Africa Museums (which saw partygoers dressed in pith helmets, grass skirts, and blackface) remains fresh in popular imagination, and was labelled by the vice chair of the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent as:

450 Sarr and Savoy, p. 40.
A glorification of ways African bodies, resources, land, the lives of Africans were both stolen and exploited for individual gain and national gain. 451

Furthermore, the case of the Afrohouse party in Belgium casts uncomfortable parallels with a decision taken by members Sorbonne University three months previously to allow students starring in a production of ‘Les Suppliantes d’Eschyle’ to use blackface over the course of a three-night long run. 452 Whilst much of the debate in France was dominated by an uncomfortable preoccupation with censorship rather than how to address engrained racism, the dismissal of certain bodies and lived experience bring us back once again to the ways certain bodies and skin tones continue to be made vulnerable in city spaces, whose perspectives and experiences continue to be denied care and space within it. The staging of a blackface place on a university campus that sits less than 200m from the Pont St Michel and its inadequate plaque, are a reminder of ghosts that continue to be excluded from institutional creative work, and of vestiges of inequality that reside barely below the surface.

VIII. Moving forward: what do we expect from scholars

Given the ongoing debate around restitution and creation of new forms of memory — or new creative expressions of memory — is ongoing in both France and Belgium, it is undeniable that a clear challenge awaits scholars in

the field of Francophone Postcolonial Studies. The nature of our discipline demands a receptiveness to the dynamic quality of memory, and the broader geo-political changes that affect the laws surrounding (and the public appetite for) questions of how we commemorate past crimes. I suggest that it also leaves researchers with a unique possibility to dive into alternate readings of history offered up by cultural objects and initiatives that work directly in postcolonial capitals, but that these readings must be supplemented by conscious outreach and communication with individuals whose perspectives have been historically silenced.

I follow on from John McLeod in *The Routledge Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, who reminds us that:

> Postcolonial studies has the potential to assemble new communities and networks of people who are joined by the common political and ethical commitment to challenging and questioning the practices and consequences of domination and subordination. Anyone can do it. We all come to things from our own positions, of course, and we are each of us enabled and blinkered by the location of our standpoint; but we all have something to learn from, and contribute to, postcolonial studies.\(^{453}\)

He suggests that the intersections of Modern Languages, postcolonialism and comparativism retain rich possibilities and permit the reinvigoration of all three fields. As I have outlined in my methodology and analysis of the work of institutions like La Colonie and the MNHI, by choosing to centre the perspectives of communities whose experience of colonial crimes have been too long silenced we can open up possibilities to subvert long standing

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colonial power dynamics, providing the possibility to reinvigorate museum and curatorial practice at the same time.

Indeed, some of the case studies have revealed people working to dismantle institutional resistance to opening up and sharing knowledge, such as the outreach work of La Colonie and the educational programme offered by the Collectif Mémoire Coloniale. Introspection within establishments will reduce or remove the resistance placed in the path of future researchers, and I follow on from Forsdick who argues that work in this disciplinary ‘contact zone’ will not only permit new:

ways of engaging with the hypercomplexity of the contemporary world, in which, as Claire Joubert notes, ‘il n’y a pas de colonialisme moderne qui ne soit un co-colonialisme plurinational’. It also allows us to re-conceptualise the terms and retool the intellectual underpinnings of such an engagement.454

I lead on from this by suggesting that part of this re-conceptualisation needs to involve a broadening of the research models (and objects) that we group under the umbrella of Francophone Postcolonial Studies. Drawing on my experience of a mixed methods approach I advocate for an openness to interdisciplinary projects and cross-sector collaboration. As Stuart Hall reminds us, a renewed impact agenda and the Global Challenges Research Fund require a bridging of ethnographic and Cultural Studies theory (as I have demonstrated in this thesis), which in turn has potential to go beyond reductionist or instrumental approaches and instead put forward an

‘ontological commitment to human beings as cultural creatures’.\(^{455}\) As such, ethnographic approaches can provide those with expertise on forms of cultural production and representation with models of meaningful and collaborative interventions ‘in a world in which it would make some difference’.\(^{456}\)

By following the trails set out by creative and activist interventions in both Paris and Brussels, my methodology has supplemented engagement with memory and postcolonial studies from the field of Modern Languages and triangulated this with semi-structured interviews, observations and snowball sampling from social sciences. While fieldwork and digital research influenced by ethnographic approaches have become more widespread among Early Career Researchers working in Modern Languages, Stuart Hall reminds us that ‘Researchers and supervisors within the discipline lack access to appropriate training and support for those managing the complex relationships such research involves.’\(^{457}\)

However, I believe that community-based research (particularly in the context of vulnerable social groups) will also help to shape similar projects for future researchers. Whilst this was not available to me given the time constraints of this thesis, co-creation would form the basis of any future research projects.


\(^{457}\) Hall, (p. 274).
(or postdoctoral work) I carry out in this field. As Schwandt reminds us, through community-based research, Collective Auto Ethnography (CAE) can offer a way to broaden the scope of the autoethnographic approach and incorporate as wide a range of perspectives as possible into analysis and outputs. This view is corroborated by Johnson who argues that CAE offers the possibility to move beyond university-trained ‘qualitative researchers, and thus address the concerns that AE has turned away from conducting research responsive to a broad range of social issues, social groups, and subcultures. Indeed, by including a range of invested people to define the research focus and add to analytic understandings, this approach is more likely to lead to pragmatic applications and interventions, and open up more avenues of exploration as a result.

Moreover, I suggest that the proliferation of community-led activism and artistic engagement with colonial history across Brussels and France is indicative of a need for scholars within postcolonial studies to dedicate closer attention to the role of walking and practical site-based interventions. Whilst the time and practical limitations of this PhD thesis meant I was not able to expand my focus beyond France and Belgium, larger-scale projects that explore the impact of walking tours (or artefacts that encourage movement through sites connected to colonial legacies) will be necessary as the scope

459 Bruce Johnson, Eloise Dunlap and Ellen Benoit ‘Organizing “mountains of words” for data analysis, both qualitative and quantitative’, Substance Use & Misuse, 45 (2010), 648–70 (p. 650).
of Modern Languages adapts to take into account the global dismantling of legacies’ colonial control, such as repatriation of stolen artefacts and decolonisation of teaching curriculum and practices.

It is clear to me, however, that in order for new journeys in postcolonial cities to begin they must originate in academic spaces. If we are to invest funds and critical focus on models of community-led action, or on a working through of layers of systematic oppression and racial inequality, this outward process needs to be coupled with necessary institutional introspection. Whether this be the questioning of overwhelmingly male dominated university leadership for whom, as The Free Black University argue, ‘Diversity means simply populating White spaces with Black or Brown bodies, irrespective of how hostile and demeaning those spaces are for non-White people’.

The appetite for change within institutions has undoubtedly been accelerated over the time that I have been writing this thesis. On 2nd June 2020, Leeds Sabbatical Officer and PhD Student Melz Olwusu set up a Go-fund me to create a Free Black University to ‘redistribute knowledge’ and place Black students and a decolonised curriculum at its heart. In an interview with the Guardian outlining her initiatives, Olwusu reminded us that:

> Universities hold a deep responsibility when it comes to racism, the knowledge that introduced the very ideology of racism into our society was born in British Universities. The Free Black University exists to re-distribute knowledge and act as a space of incubation.

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461 The GoFundMe campaign launched to finance the project raised more than £149,000 and won backing from both the University and College Union and National Union of Students. See ‘Fundraiser: The Free Black University’, https://uk.gofundme.com/f/the-free-black-university (accessed 22 August 2020).
for the creation of transformative knowledge in the Black community. We firmly believe education should centre Black people healing and it should be free, anti-colonial, and accessible to all.

Leading on from Olwusu’s brilliant intervention, I believe that part of the challenge both in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the global resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement will involve updating methodological practices so that they take into account — and offset — the inequalities within our field. It is an invite to interrogate how hospitable academia is to non-white and non-male people, link it to questions embedded in theses, institutions of art and museums. Just as French and Belgian museums concretise social hierarchies, UK academics cannot appropriately interrogate or challenge structures of oppression if the structures are part of the oppressing of other people. Part of challenging this institutional inequality can be achieved through adjusting the means by which research outputs are rewarded, and also by simply offsetting traditionally theoretical and text-based approaches to our discipline with a wider range of artefacts and perspectives. It is necessary that this approach brings an awareness back to subjective experiences, to the way in which we are, perhaps now more than ever, vulnerable to the whims and contradictions of each other, and how our lives are, more than ever, in each other’s hands.

Whether we embrace the subjective pull of our own ghosts or approach it from a more detached view of historical injustices, we are being propelled towards a reckoning with the alternate readings of history and our own positionality in the present (within Francophone Postcolonial studies and beyond). By bringing an awareness of the presence and varying forms of
ghosts into our research practices we can come to understand how haunting exposes the ties between lives. It allows us to create space to understand the ways in which we are all haunted - subject to different interpretations of history and the absence of necessary voices in the stories we are told and in those we wish to carry forward and the need to account for our shared vulnerability and its impact on spaces around us. As Derrida reminds us: ‘Il faut parler du fantôme, voire au fantôme et avec lui.’

This necessity of this exchange might not be obvious at first. It is working-through and memory work to be carried between generations, to be taken up in our wondering about and navigations of new cities and new destinations. It is communities gathered on bridges in October sunlight, where after years of campaigning the first sitting president in French history will make a formal apology for the role played by the state in the massacre of an entire generation who are not there. It can be sensed in projections of formerly classified military photos on the walls of community spaces, and in the discussions that animate the downstairs space where academics, students and families are brought together in animated discussion. It is the sound made by the wheels of a cart transporting the statues pushed of an assassinated yet still lauded president, twisting throngs of people gathered to watch it take up place in a new, bitterly fought for, home. It is the echoes and whispers that come back again and again, footsteps that override lines of movement across the postcolonial city scape, as walking tour attendees are ushered around a city they thought they knew, led by the descendants of

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462 Derrida, p. 20.
those who can no longer speak to them in ways that are apparently obvious. It is traces that can never be effaced: the knowledge that even when everything, or everyone, else is gone, we are richer for an acknowledgement of all that is available to be discovered in absence, and in loss.

Talking with and to ghosts itself can therefore be part of a much wider journey. It is not one, I believe, that is even necessarily contingent on any real conviction that physical ghosts exist. Rather, the journeys that we undertake in postcolonial cities- or in response to a knowledge about what happened in those cities at that hands of perpetrators of colonial crimes- should be seen as a much more universal reminder of our shared vulnerability in public space and beyond. It is a reminder of the proximity of stories and experiences of those who have walked before us who we are not able to physically meet or dialogue with. This process of moving through and around the capitals of former colonial powers can become a means of implementing and re-asserting a politics of fairness: an attention to those whose lives were lost (and their descendants) that has been previously denied or precluded. It is a journey that, in the end, reaches towards the echoes of the past without fear or constraint. It allows us to turn towards the dead with an openness and curiosity. In doing so, we are free, as Thomas Tranströmer does in the final lines of the Blue House with which I opened this thesis to search for whatever lessons we find in metaphorical sea swell of joy and sorrow and in the half-glimpsed shadows of lives that could have been.\(^{463}\)

\(^{463}\) Tranströmer, p. 12.
**Appendix - Timelines**

*Table 1: Timeline of the life of Patrice Lumumba*

Credits: ‘Race and History’ archive:  
http://www.raceandhistory.com/historicalviews/Lumumbabrief.htm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2, 1925</td>
<td>Born in Katako Kombe, Kasai Province, Congo (Zaire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5, 1958</td>
<td>Founded the National Congolese Movement (Movement National Congolaise-MNC) and became its president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 11, 1958</td>
<td>Lumumba addressed the Pan-African Conference in Accra-Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23, 1960</td>
<td>Became first prime minister of Congo (Zaire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 1960</td>
<td>Independence of the Republic of Congo (Zaire)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31, 1960</td>
<td>Secession of Katanga declared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 14, 1960</td>
<td>Colonel Mobutu neutralises political institutions and their leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 10, 1960</td>
<td>Lumumba is put in guarded residence under ANC and United Nations protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 27, 1960</td>
<td>Lumumba leaves his residence on Leopoldville (Kinshasa) to reach Stanleyville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1, 1960</td>
<td>Lumumba arrested by ANC Mobutu soldiers and taken to Leopoldville (Kinshasa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 1960</td>
<td>Lumumba transferred to Camp Hardy in Thysville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 17, 1961</td>
<td>Lumumba is transferred to Elizabethville, Katanga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 17, 1961</td>
<td>Death by assassination with two of his comrades; Mpolo and Okito</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 23, 2001</td>
<td>Belgium behind icon’s murder Belgian government ministers bore &quot;moral responsibility&quot; for events leading to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the murder of the Congolese independence leader Patrice Lumumba in 1961

Table 2: Timeline of the CMC/ABL – led campaign to secure a Place Patrice Lumumba

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 5, 2011</td>
<td>CMC launch their first march entitled ‘Pour l’inauguration d’une statue de Patrice Lumumba en Belgique’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 16, 2011</td>
<td>Protest to mark the 50th anniversary of Lumumba’s assassination ‘Vérité, justice, et réparation pour le peuple congolais’ (CMC ABL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 17, 2011</td>
<td>Sit-in in front of the European Parliament organised by the CMC, Ludo De Witte, et Guy Lumumba to mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba- these sit ins were to continue until 2018.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 14, 2013</td>
<td>Lambert Mende announces plans for the creation of a new town of Lumumbaville (merging two existing communities in central DR Congo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 19, 2013</td>
<td>Conseil communal de la commune d’Ixelles holds first debate on the creation of a Place Patrice Lumumba in Matonge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 13, 2013</td>
<td>Statue of Lumumba unveiled in Garnisonkirchplatz, Berlin, leading to renewed pressure from the CMC on the conseil communal d’Ixelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24, 2013</td>
<td>Motion for ‘Place Patrice Lumumba’ to be inaugurated behind the église Saint-Boniface is dismissed by the Conseil Communal d’Ixelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 15-24, 2015</td>
<td>#LeopoldMustFall protests break out in Brussels to mark the 150th anniversary of the crowning of Leopold II. Stickers calling for a Place Patrice Lumumba are placed by demonstrators on colonial landmarks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 24, 2015</td>
<td>Open Letter launched by the group Bruxelles Pantheres (Qui a peur de Lumumba) including a Place Patrice Lumumba in their demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17, 2018</td>
<td>Bourgmestre Phillipe Close announces plans for an inauguration of a Place Patrice Lumumba on 30th June during his interview with La Premiere Radio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23, 2018</td>
<td>Second motion for a Place Patrice Lumumba unanimously accepted by Commune de Bruxelles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 24, 2018</td>
<td>Rue Pasteur in Charleroi-Nord is officially re-named rue Lumumba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30, 2018</td>
<td>Official inauguration of the Place Patrice Lumumba</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Walk On The Dark Side, *Perfect Paris*


