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Peeren, E.

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Issue No. 25 2014 — New Immaterialities

Lumumba's Ghosts: Immaterial Matters and Matters Immaterial in Sven Augustijnen's *Spectres*

By *Esther Peeren*

What does it mean to evoke immaterialities in the context of a surging new materialism committed to “giving special attention to matter, which has been so neglected by dualist thought” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 85)? While matter is traditionally opposed to the mind, this is not the only form taken by the immaterial, defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “not material, not consisting of matter, incorporeal, spiritual” and “of no essential consequence, unimportant.” In fact, much like the materiality of the body, many forms of immateriality were considered inferior and suspect within the Cartesian framework of rationality. These included emotion and superstition, along with any other experience or phenomenon not susceptible to “an empiricist epistemology and its supporting ontology of the visible and the concrete” (Radway viii). Thus, rather than entailing a return to privileging the mind, a focus on immaterialities prompts us to take seriously that which is not immediately apprehensible or is deemed inconsequential. Recovering disparaged forms of the immaterial as also mattering may even take on a political function in the form of Jacques Rancière’s “redistribution of the sensible” – as effectuating a shift in what can be sensed and is taken to make sense in a particular context.

At the same time, paying attention to immaterialities can transform our understanding of matter itself, not through contrast but through a consideration of their interrelationship. Immateriality is implied in materiality both metaphorically (materialities may be considered immaterial, insignificant) and literally (over time, materialities may transform, decay or even disappear). This potential for discursive or physical immaterialisation is particularly salient in relation to contested histories, where the same materials may be differently evaluated and where material traces may not persist intact or at all. In the face of the faith placed by traditional historiographical and archival practices in the convergence of the materiality and mattering of documentation, such contested histories suggest that we might do well to conceive of matter in more complex ways.

In this article, I turn to an artistic contemplation of a particular contested history which – in revolving around a dissolved corpse that refuses to be put to rest – moves the materiality of the immaterial and its counterpart, the immateriality of the material, centre stage, laying out the consequences of this double imbrication for individual and collective understandings of history, memory and the archive. It does so by appealing to the concept of spectrality, which, as María del Pilar Blanco and I outline in *The Spectralities Reader*, from the early 1990s onwards has been mobilised across the humanities and social sciences to render absent presences and present absences accessible without doing away with their ambivalent materiality.

Spectral materials

Sven Augustijnen's 2011 multi-media exhibition *Spectres* comprises a feature-length film directed by Augustijnen (also screened separately), as well as photographs, hand-drawn maps, posters, flags, and other items made and collected by the Belgian ex-colonial officer Jacques Brassinne de la Buissière over the course of a more than forty-year-long investigation into the assassination, on 17 January 1961, of Patrice Lumumba, the first democratically elected prime minister of the Republic of the Congo. [1] Additional items are included in the eponymous book (compiled by Augustijnen) accompanying the exhibition: transcripts of speeches given by King Baudoin I and Lumumba on the occasion of the Congo's independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960, a lengthy interview by Augustijnen with Brassinne, open letters to the media from those alleging official Belgian complicity in Lumumba's death and those contesting this, a chronology, biographies and images of more objects, mostly photographs, from Brassinne's collection.

It is important to note that Brassinne is both historian and witness to some of the events surrounding Lumumba's death: he was General Secretary of the 1960 Political Roundtable on the Congo, attended the proclamation of Congolese independence and took part in several post-independence Belgian diplomatic and military interventions. After serving as advisor to Prime Minister Moïse Tchombe's cabinet, Brassinne was expelled by Joseph Mobutu in 1965 upon the latter's second coup d'état. He returned to what was then called Zaïre in 1985 for the twenty-fifth anniversary of independence and for several visits since, one of which, in 2009, is portrayed in Augustijnen's film (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 172–4).

Ostensibly, what is at stake in the exhibition's almost overwhelming aggregation of materials – which the visitor can only assume must all somehow matter – is the adjudication of whether and to what extent Belgian authorities were involved in Lumumba's elimination. Augustijnen's documentary-style film follows Brassinne – who published his first book about Lumumba in 1966 and in 1991 defended a dissertation at the Université libre de Bruxelles (ULB) arguing against Belgian complicity – as he undertakes a series of interviews and a journey to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to re-substantiate his account of Lumumba's death. This has become necessary in the wake of sociologist Ludo de Witte's 1999 book *The Assassination of Lumumba*, which holds Belgian officials, as well as the CIA, directly responsible, and the 2001 findings of a parliamentary investigation commission, which assigned a moral accountability, prompting the Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs to extend an official apology. The displayed items from Brassinne's ever-expanding archive testify to his conviction that the unrelenting gathering and production of documents, eye witness accounts and photographs, together with pinpointing the precise location of the events (in particular the tree against which Lumumba and two of his supporters were shot), will eventually equate to incontrovertible evidence. The way Augustijnen frames Brassinne's efforts in the exhibition, the film and the book, however, refutes such faith in the material, most notably by invoking, in their shared title, Jacques Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1993).

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida engages the ghostly apparition in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and the enduring legacies of Karl Marx to develop a conceptual reading of the spectre as that which disrupts conventional, linear notions of temporality and history by collapsing past, present and future – putting time “out of joint.” As a reappearance that always already announces its return, the spectre is taken to transform ontology into *hauntology*, a neologism indicating a form of Being that is never unambiguously present to itself and has no locatable, unified point of origin or demise. As such, the spectre embodies “the more than one/no more one [le plus d'un]” (Derrida, *Specters* xx, emphasis in original).

While Derrida's reading of *Hamlet* emphasises the spectre's sovereign power to disrupt through haunting, he notes that it can also figure the dispossession of the immigrant or victim of, among others, “colonialist ... exterminations” (*Specters* xix). According to Derrida, when facing any spectre, the aim should not be to exorcise or assimilate, but to live *with* it so that it may *live on*. This entails adopting an ethical attitude of open expectancy that approximates absolute

hospitality, a welcoming without imposing conditions.

In *The Spectral Metaphor*, I have critiqued Derrida's tendency to gloss over the substantial power differentials between sovereign and dispossessed spectres (17). This is particularly problematic when it comes to understanding the precarious position of those confined to what Achille Mbembe calls "*death-worlds*, forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead (ghosts)," of which the African (post)colonies are a prime example ("Life" 1). The ability of such ghostly subjects to haunt in a disturbing manner or to be noticed at all is severely limited. It is no coincidence, then, that in *Spectres* both Brassinne and Augustijnen focus on Lumumba, who may be an ex-colonial subject but, as (deposed) prime minister, also partakes in sovereignty, while the many other Congolese victims of this tumultuous period remain immaterial-as-inconsequential or altogether absent.

In addition, Derrida's privileging of the temporality of the spectre somewhat obscures its propensity to also put "space 'out of joint'" (Cherry 688). In *Specters*, as I will show, spatial dislocation is essential, for it is the inability to assign Lumumba's body a stable material location that confounds Brassinne's attempt to keep him from *living on*. Moreover, this body – said to have been dismembered and dissolved – is itself a site of spatial and material inconsistency, in accordance with Derrida's description of the spectre as

a paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit. It becomes, rather, some "thing" that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other. For it is flesh and phenomenality that give to the spirit its spectral apparition, but which disappear right away in the apparition, in the very coming of the *revenant* or the return of the specter. There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself as reappearance of the departed. (*Specters* 6)

The spectre thus constitutes an incomplete, inconsistent materialisation of the spirit as a "thing" that cannot fully be known in its thingness and, consequently, cannot be placed. It becomes flesh but, in becoming flesh, also signals the disappearance of this flesh, its absence in that which is making its appearance – after all, the ghost inevitably points to the corpse, to bodily matter in final decay. The spectre, therefore, is never pure immateriality or pure matter, but always both at the same time: immaterial matter and material immateriality. Significantly, Derrida likens spectrality to the "*non-sensuous sensuous*" of exchange-value in Marx's *Capital* and to "the tangible intangibility of a proper body without flesh, but still the body of someone as someone other" (*Specters* 7, emphasis in original). It is not, then, as Avery Gordon argues, the ghost's "real presence" – only possible "when the trouble they represent and symptomize is no longer being contained or repressed or blocked from view" – that demands attention and compels reparative action (xvi). Rather, it is its persistently ambivalent materiality (its presence as absence or absence as presence) that renders the spectre irrefutable as an ethico-political imperative that insists on a response – a response which, however, is not necessarily just but may also consist of inaction, indifference or exorcism.

Augustijnen's *Spectres* revolves around the literal "body without flesh" of Lumumba, which, after being buried, is said to have been dug up, treated with acid and burned, with any remnants dispersed and never recovered. Brassinne is shown stubbornly refusing to deal with the ambiguous "tangible intangibility" of this body, seeking, rather, to render it fully material and present – not in order to make the trouble it represents visible but to do away with it. Through his efforts of collection and detection, he engages in what Derrida designates, in relation to mourning, as the attempt

to ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by *identifying* the bodily remains and by *localizing* the dead ... One has to know. *One has to know it.*

One has to have knowledge [Il faut le savoir]. Now, to know is to know *who* and *where*, to know whose body it really is and what place it occupies – for it must stay in its place. In a safe place. ... Nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning, than confusion or doubt: one *has to know* who is buried where – and *it is necessary* (to know – to make certain) that, in what remains of him, *he remain there*. Let him stay there and move no more! (*Specters* 9, emphasis in original)

Brassinne is, of course, an apologist rather than a mourner, but his need to know, locate and identify is equally strong, as he takes these acts, which Derrida associates with exorcism, as the only way to ensure an end to the “confusion and doubt” surrounding the question of Belgian involvement in Lumumba’s death. Yet Brassinne’s tragedy, Augustijnen poignantly shows, is precisely that there is no body, no “safe place” to be found. Lumumba cannot be fully materialised or fully immaterialised. He persists as material immateriality and immaterial materiality – ironically also through Brassinne’s incessant attempts to turn him into pure, settled matter that would, consequently, no longer be of importance. [2]

As Robrecht Vanderbeeken points out, Augustijnen’s film, besides being thematically concerned with the ghostly body of Lumumba, formally proceeds in a spectral manner as well by creating an “optical illusion” (98). Although the hand-held camera at first appears to simply register what is there to be seen, the use of particular camera angles, cut-aways, montage, intertitles and an extra-diegetic soundtrack, as well as the film’s reliance “on our knowledge of the historical context [and] our ability to decode the social forms implicit in the images,” subtly suggests that what really matters is to be found in a more immaterial substrate (Vanderbeeken 98). A crucial part of this substrate consists of the film’s visualisation of what Brassinne does not (want to) see or reveal, what he, consciously or unconsciously, disavows. Thus, as Vanderbeeken concludes, “a hidden reality is revealed by overexposing the very act of ignoring and concealing” (98). By having the camera linger on hesitations, silences, refusals and omissions, and on spaces seemingly empty of relevant actions or objects, Augustijnen renders the immaterial material, putting it in the frame without explicitly showing it. In doing so, the film stresses its importance, the fact that, albeit only implicitly there, the immaterial matters, sometimes more than what is spoken or pointed out as documentary evidence. [3]

A similar strategy of overexposure – of revealing by ostensibly going beyond the point of revelation through shedding too much light or repeating *ad nauseam* – is found in the book, where the circling of Augustijnen’s lengthy interview with Brassinne around the same questions posed in the film works to draw the reader’s attention to Brassinne’s recurrent dissociations: he will say he was not present or did not know about something, only to contradict this later on. At one point, he even entangles himself in a version of the liar’s paradox: “I don’t make things up, and I lie very little ... (*laughs*) If I don’t lie, it is because there is no reason to lie. I would lie if I had a reason to, but I don’t” (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 108).

It is by allowing Brassinne, in the book and the film, to speak at wearying length that the material immaterialities of his account – its gaps and fissures – come to the fore, while the materialities that he seeks to highlight as unassailable fact come to seem, in their excessive accumulation, more and more immaterial. Likewise, the sheer number of photographs and schematic drawings of the sites through which Lumumba passed on his final day – from Luano Airport in Elisabethville to the house he was held in to the road travelled to get to the supposed site of his death – made by Brassinne and presented, page after page, in Augustijnen’s book, ultimately points to the lack of material evidence, the absence of discovery and disclosure (362-82, 389-38). What the photographs and drawings do not show and cannot show, since they were made after the fact, becomes what matters about them. In the same way as the photographs discussed by Ulrich Baer in *Spectral Evidence* of landscapes that once harboured but no longer bear any physical evidence of the Holocaust, Brassinne’s pictures and diagrams, against their intended documentary purpose, “force us to see that there is *nothing* to see” and,

as such, “place us in reference to experiences that resist integration into memory, historical narratives, or other mitigating contexts” (Baer 66, 68).

Ghostly Multiplicities

Besides mobilising the paradoxical incorporation of the Derridean spectre to destabilise Brassinne’s account, which does not just seek to mitigate but to absolve, Augustijnen’s work also invokes its multiplicity and heterogeneity, its status as *more than one/no more one*. The title shared by the exhibition, film and book raises spectres in the plural, and to grasp the full ethico-political injunction Augustijnen stages across these media it is vital to ascertain who exactly these spectres are.

A likely assumption on the part of those encountering *Spectres* is that Lumumba will be the primary *revenant*, returning to haunt the Belgian nation (personified by Brassinne) with a demand for justice. Precisely such a demand is materialised at the end of the film when the final intertitle notes that Lumumba’s widow and children plan to bring charges against several surviving Belgians for active and passive complicity in his death. The back cover of Augustijnen’s book, however, raises two additional spectres. First, it refers to “the ‘communist infiltration of Africa’” as “a spectre often used to justify the elimination of Patrice Lumumba.” This echoes the spectre of communism Marx sees haunting Europe in the opening line of *The Communist Manifesto*, which, according to Derrida, is awaited with an anticipation that is “at once impatient, anxious and fascinated,” a mixture of hope and dread (*Spectres* 4). In the context of the newly independent Republic of the Congo, the element of dread prevailed as the Cold War spectre of communism came to serve as a legitimation for Lumumba’s removal. The second spectre identified on the back cover is more ambiguous. It could be the haunting mystery created by the secretive murder, which prompted Brassinne’s attempt to “bring to light ‘what really happened’” (with Augustijnen’s quotation marks already questioning its feasibility). Alternatively, it could be Brassinne himself, named right after the second spectre is evoked and identified as “the film’s main character, who is at once guide, narrator, and symbol of a past that continues to cast its shadow on the present.” As a symbol of spectrality, Brassinne’s own integrity is disjointed, in a moral and material sense, as visualised in the final scene of Augustijnen’s film, to which I will return later.

From Brassinne’s perspective, what he is haunted by is not so much Lumumba (or the two men killed with him, Maurice Mpolo and Joseph Okito, who barely feature in his account) as the lingering question of Belgian culpability. Augustijnen recounts how, when he first proposed making the film, presumably mentioning its title, Brassinne responded: “Ludo de Witte is my spectre” (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 4). It is De Witte’s discrediting of Brassinne’s dissertation – and his insistence on Belgian accountability for Lumumba’s murder – that most disturbs Brassinne, in line with his overall attempt to reduce a complex postcolonial spectral formation to a straightforward, purely Belgian affair. While it is undoubtedly important for debates to be waged in former colonising nations about the colonial past, Brassinne’s exclusion of Congolese voices from this debate constitutes a blatant re-colonising move.

Again, both Augustijnen’s film and book obliquely stage this exclusion, making it apparent in its immateriality. In the film, there is a scene in which Brassinne listens to a recording of the speeches made by King Baudoin I and Lumumba on the occasion of the Congo’s independence. While Lumumba’s impassioned celebration of the end to the struggle against “the humiliating slavery that was imposed upon us by force” clearly discomforts Brassinne, this is mainly because he considers it a breach of royal etiquette (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] x). In the interview with Augustijnen, Brassinne dwells at length on the impact of the speech on Baudoin I, while devoting only a few sentences to refuting Lumumba’s actual words by arguing that, at the time of independence, the Congo “was really a ‘model colony’” (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 40). The recording in question is included in the exhibition and pictured in four photographs over two pages of the book (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 383–4). The record sleeve

reveals that it was produced in Brussels by Brassinne (under the pseudonym H. Donnay) and Jules-Gérard Libois (under the pseudonym G. Heinz) to accompany their book *Lumumba Patrice. Les cinquantes derniers jours de sa vie* (1966). Thus, although the sleeve bears, front and back, Lumumba's face and proclaims, on the back, "*P. Lumumba parle*" (P. Lumumba speaks), his image and voice are colonially curated and circumscribed.

Lumumba, however, cannot be completely contained by Brassinne's multiple written, photographic and sonic framings. This is not just because, as *Spectres* shows, such framings can themselves be reframed and thereby made to matter in new ways, but also because Lumumba, much like Marx, has generated a spectral legacy that proliferates in accordance with Derrida's notion that

An inheritance is never gathered together, it is never one with itself. Its presumed unity, if there is one, can consist only in the *injunction to reaffirm by choosing*. "One must" means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles that inhabit the same injunction. And inhabit it in a contradictory fashion around a secret. If the readability of a legacy were given, natural, transparent, univocal, if it did not call for and at the same time defy interpretation, we would never have anything to inherit from it. We would be affected by it as by a cause – natural or genetic. One always inherits from a secret – which says "read me, will you ever be able to do so?" (*Specters* 16, emphasis in original)

In Lumumba's case, the "different possibles that inhabit the same injunction" are burgeoned by his complex position within national and global politics and history. In the Congo, Mobutu, whose first coup d'état in September 1960 unseated Lumumba as prime minister and who later facilitated his arrest, declared him a "national hero martyred by capitalist imperialists" in June 1966 (Augustijnen, *Spectres* [book] 164). Raoul Peck's 2000 film *Lumumba* – which presents a Congolese perspective on his life and death – pointedly intercuts Mobutu's 1966 speech with scenes of Lumumba's assassination, indicating that Mobutu, far from inheriting from a secret, seeks to foreclose any acts of choosing or criticizing with regard to this particular legacy by imposing a singular, incontestable reading that exonerates him and places all responsibility outside the newly re-united nation. [4] In geopolitical terms, even though Belgium is most obviously entangled with Lumumba's legacy, the United States, the United Nations and the Soviet Union also played a part in the events leading up to his death and may therefore be expected to have inherited, too, each in a different way. In line with Michael Rothberg's work on collective memory as inevitably anachronistic and thus ghostly – in "its bringing together of now and then, here and there" (5) – these multiple, divergent inheritances do not have to be conceptualised as mutually exclusive or competing, but may instead be thought of as engaging with each other multi-directionally. Multi-directionality then pertains not only to the "convoluted, sometimes historically unjustified, back-and-forth movement of seemingly distant collective memories in and out of public consciousness," but also operates within particular collective memories, rendering them *more than one/no more one* (Rothberg 17).

For Derrida, too, the point is not to decide which heir can claim Lumumba's true legacy, since its spectral construction around a secret ensures that such a singular truth cannot be found. This does not mean that Derrida would not agree that some claims are less legitimate than others, particularly when, like Brassinne's, they assert full transparency and function in exclusive ways. In a difficult to watch scene, Augustijnen's film shows Brassinne imposing his account (in the form of his 1966 book) during a visit to Lumumba's widow and surviving children with a patronising familiarity and a complete disregard for their own memories. The end of the scene, however, challenges Brassinne's aggressive attempt to gather together Lumumba's inheritance and gestures at its enduring haunting quality through the sudden appearance of the latter's son, whose striking resemblance to his father (remarked upon by his sister) Brassinne refuses to acknowledge even as the camera registers it. Thus, the scene suggests that what a spectral inheritance such as Lumumba's requires, ethically and politically,

is not a closing off of the past in the form of the single, definitive account Brassinne purports to offer, but a continuous, multidirectional engagement with its secret as secret, an indefinite sifting and choosing that acknowledges how the deceased's various afterlives continue to matter in the present. Such engagement, crucially, should not exclude colonising accounts such as Brassinne's – which continue to have material and immaterial effects – but should render perceptible, as *Spectres* does, their inability to fully reduce history, memory and the archive to fixed, unitary materialities.

This is particularly important in a postcolonial context where mattering often remains tied to materiality as solid substance, as in surviving colonial statues or monuments. Such statues or monuments, according to Mbembe, overcome their ostensible muteness by uniting objectality, subjectivity and mortality to signal an attempt to turn back time and re-ensnare ex-colonised subjects in their colonial subjection (*Critique* 185-6). What they enact is a necromancy or "*culte des esprits*" (spirit cult) which, contrary to the Derridean spectre's *living on*, exerts "a typically funerary power that has the tendency to reify the death of the colonised and to deny to their life any value" (Mbembe, *Critique* 188, my translation). [5] This stultifying form of haunting, operating through the material, cannot be countered by further materialisations: erecting monuments of victims of colonialism such as Lumumba would only reaffirm the possibility of the past re-emerging unchanged in the present.

Accordingly, *Spectres* suggests that the monuments for Lumumba erected by Mobutu and proposed by Ludo de Witte act to close off discussion and speculation, working against the need to allow Lumumba's legacy to *live on* and continue to perturb. Augustijnen's film, in showing how, in Kinshasa, the toppled statue of Henry Morton Stanley may be found not far from the still erect statue of Leopold II on horseback, evokes both Mbembe's idea that such statues seek to incarnate and resurrect unified legacies and the seemingly logical inference that such legacies can be overcome and left behind through iconoclasm: "The re-siting or demolition of monumental statuary bespeaks a desire not only to obliterate the individual commemorated, but to recast the history which that individual and the statue has come to signify" (Cherry 664). This inference, which continues to rely on the notion that materialities are all that matter, is undercut by listing both statues in the film's end credits among those "appearing" in the film, assigning them a vital mattering that exceeds both Leopold II's material intactness and Stanley's ostensible destruction. They are, in fact, conjured as *revenants* whose legacy does not have to be accepted wholesale but ought to be subjected to efforts of filtering, sifting and criticising. On the whole, Augustijnen's film, as the title of Vanderbeeken's article also indicates, counters the monumentalising impulse of the documentary genre and of contemporary memory culture in general by showing how Lumumba's secret cannot be resolved or his legacy fixed by building a "durable monument" (De Witte, "Memorial" 144), as well as how Brassinne, far from being in possession of the key to the secret, as he claims, ends up possessed by it. [6]

Haunted Archives

In the end, Brassinne cannot fully lay Lumumba to rest because there are simply too many things *not known* about his death. The endlessly redrawn maps of no longer existing buildings and the virtually indistinguishable photographs of ostensibly empty landscapes, as well as Brassinne's own growing uncertainty as he searches for and repeatedly misidentifies particular locations, all stress that no definitive answers can be found. As Derrida insists, the spectre is that which exceeds knowledge:

It is something that one does not know, precisely, and one does not know if precisely it is, if it exists, if it responds to a name and corresponds to an essence. One does not know: not out of ignorance, but because this non-object, this non-present present, this being-there of an absent or departed one no longer belongs to knowledge. At least no longer to that which one thinks one knows by the name of

knowledge. (*Specters* 6, emphasis in original)

Accordingly, the proliferation of documentation in *Spectres* brings not certainty but an intensification of the sense of secrecy, while Augustijnen's film tracks Brassinne's transformation – in the viewers' eyes if not his own – from confident ghostbuster into a man possessed. The spectre of Lumumba is shown to act not just as an ethical injunction but as a profoundly affective force, acting upon and coming to inhabit Brassinne's emotions and body. With its inconsistent materiality, it is able to impose itself in an intimate, invasive way that negates the distance Derrida's ultimately rather sterile account maintains between the spectre and the haunted.

The film's final scene shows Brassinne, illuminated by the headlights of a car, wandering through bushes and undergrowth attempting to materialise Lumumba's last moments through a bodily re-enactment that is, in the terms of Rebecca Schneider's *Performing Remains*, designed to "achieve a radically rigorous mimesis" (10). Even though the tree against which Lumumba was supposedly executed has disappeared (according to a village woman, it was chopped down to make charcoal), Brassinne, armed with his own schematic drawings, persists in his conviction that (re)placing the events in their precise location will bring the past "to the very fingertips of the present" and thus reveal the truth of his account (Schneider 2). This is signalled by his use – in an earlier daytime re-enactment at what may or may not be the same site – of the present tense: "[The Belgian officers] are standing to one side, away from it all. They have nothing to do with the execution." As noted before, for Brassinne, the point of rendering the event material in the present is not to keep it alive but to close and distance it. In the final scene, he emphatically states: "That's all I have to say about this sombre affair. All that had to be said." Yet the force of this discursive closing is undermined by his statement, during the day, that this is his third visit to the site – making the night-time visit his fourth. The element of (compulsive) repetition points to the way re-enactment both materialises and immaterialises, producing a copy that always harbours "curious inadequacies" and, in its performative dimension, exposing the presumed original act as itself already a repetition (Schneider 6). With each of Brassinne's returns to the supposed scene, this "temporal tangle," which Schneider sees linking re-enactment to the uncanny, is intensified (10). Another immaterialising layer is added by the fact that, because of the absence of any clearly identifiable, stable markers (trees and termite hills change over time), Brassinne cannot be certain that this is in fact the same place he identified before. Once more, this stresses that the act of material location cannot serve to certify and finalise his account: space here is irrevocably and disturbingly out of joint, not for the local villagers, who live *with* it as a changing environment, but for Brassinne, who seeks to transfix it, in a re-colonising move, through identification and mapping.

Although he can at least posit a discursive ending, however unconvincingly, Brassinne cannot dismiss the affective force Lumumba's material immateriality exerts on him. Augustijnen's extension of the film's final shot beyond Brassinne's last word on the matter reveals that he remains perturbed: after making his way back to the car, he stands, backlit by the headlamps, but then moves into the undergrowth to resume searching and re-enacting. It is at this point that, for the viewer, the power definitively shifts from him – as the scholar who knows, the master interpreter, the ghostbuster – to Lumumba and the disavowed Belgian responsibility for his death. Lumumba's spectre, as *more than one/no more one*, keeps returning to possess, never to be possessed in turn, despite all Brassinne's efforts of material collection and spatial localisation. The longer the shot of Brassinne wandering through the bushes lasts, well beyond the point where the viewer expects it to end, the more uncertain and restless he appears, his failure to exorcise Lumumba's ghosts emphasised by the overbearing soundtrack of Bach's *St John Passion*, which deals with another violent ending (the crucifixion of Jesus) that functions, in Christianity, as a prelude to resurrection and the promise of a further return in the Second Coming.

Having set out to halt a haunting by taking the position of the objective, positivist scholar – placing himself “a l’extérieur de tout” ‘away from it all’ as he argues the Belgian soldiers did at Lumumba’s execution – Brassinne and his scholarship are, in the end, revealed as fatally implicated in the conjuration of the ghost and its *living on*. The two meanings of conjuration cited by Derrida – as, on the one hand, a conjurement or exorcism that seeks to ensure that the dead are really dead and, on the other hand, a conspiracy against power or a magical incantation that convokes spectres – become indistinguishable. Moreover, Brassinne himself takes on, in the eerie light of the headlamps, a ghostly aspect, in line with Schneider’s argument that re-enactment may reveal how “the dead [are] not completely disappeared nor lost, but also, and perhaps more complexly, the living are not entirely (or not only) living” (15).

As a whole, *Spectres* emphasises how mattering – of the material or the immaterial – depends on perspective and context. The assumption that the assassination of Africa’s first democratically elected prime minister, and any Belgian involvement in it, would *not* matter, especially if his remains were made to disappear, which may, in Rancière’s terms, have been perfectly *sensible* at the time, cannot be sustained in a postcolonial, globalised context in which history and cultural memory are no longer thought as singular and in which the colonial gaze, together with the archive it constituted, has been opened up to scrutiny.

In showing the futile attempts made by Brassinne, as a representative of the colonial gaze, to withstand this scrutiny through the accumulation of material documentation, *Spectres* points to what Derrida calls “*mal d’archive*,” translated into English as “archive fever.” As self-appointed “*archon*” – the one who traditionally guarded the archive and was “accorded the hermeneutic right and competence” – Brassinne denies the inevitable selection and manipulation that accompanies any inscription of the archive, the “functions of unification, of identification, of classification” that complicate claims to historical objectivity (Derrida, *Archive* 2-3). On the one hand, no matter how many materials the archive gathers, it will never be one with the past it seeks to conserve, rendering it incapable of fully guaranteeing what happened. On the other hand, the obsessive accumulation of materials may undermine the archive’s “power of *consignation*”; it is possible to overdo the act of “gathering together” to the point where the archive falls apart, together with the authority of the archivist (Derrida, *Archive* 3).

It is the latter danger to which Brassinne is shown to fall prey by *Spectres* as it (over)exposes the fever, trouble and need – Derrida notes that “*mal d’archive*” may also translate as “in need of archives” (*Archive* 91) – that, immaterially and normally imperceptibly, inhabit the concept of the archive. Brassinne’s wandering through the bush, determined to once and for all locate, on the basis of what he has archived, the site of Lumumba’s death, incarnates how “to be *en mal d’archive*”

is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there’s too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. (Derrida, *Archive* 91)

While the need for the archive and the security and completeness it promises is to some extent inescapable, one does not have to give into it. It is possible to recognise the archive as withholding the commencement and commandment – the full control over what matters – it appears to offer, as harbouring its own death drive that continually threatens to destroy or deconstruct it from within. This entails acknowledging the archive’s imbrication with the immaterial, coming to see that “the structure of the archive is *spectral*. It is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor absent ‘in the flesh,’ neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another ... ” (Derrida, *Archive* 84).

Spectres renders the spectrality of the archive accessible by showing – in largely immaterial ways – how the material and the immaterial may converge as materialities cease to matter (when their gathering becomes excessive) and immaterialities (silences, gaps, absences) end up mattering most. Moreover, in not concealing the specificity of its own perspective (which, though it exceeds Brassinne’s, remains explicitly Belgian), *Spectres* highlights how, in the case of contested histories with global implications, the multiplicity of the spectre as *more than one* is literalised: Lumumba’s ghosts are many and so are the histories, memories and archives constructed around his life and death. The partiality of each conjuration can either be denied, as Brassinne tries to do by claiming an exhaustive and exclusive materiality and mattering for his account, or acknowledged by recognising the spectral as that which, in its paradoxical incorporation (which is always already a return or re-enactment), challenges notions of wholeness, homogeneity and uniqueness, and, moreover, is capable of acting politically in Rancière’s sense. In mobilising spectrality to turn Lumumba’s absent corpse from the missing puzzle piece it is for Brassinne into a haunting site from which contesting accounts emerge, Augustijnen’s exhibition redistributes the sensible by, on the one hand, undermining Brassinne’s neocolonial account’s “exclusion of what ‘is not’” and, on the other, assigning participation to that which was without part because it was relegated to the insensible (Rancière 36).

In conclusion, it is important to note that spectralising memory, history and the archive is not about rendering them impervious to assessments of validity, but about envisioning them as open-ended ethical and political processes involving both materialities and immaterialities. Such processes engage in what Rothberg, with regard to transcultural, multidirectional memory, refers to as an “ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing” that is “productive, not privative” (3). Conceptualising these interactions in terms of hauntings featuring more and less powerful ghosts, as well as would-be exorcists like Brassinne, helps to highlight the different, variable degrees of force particular memories, histories and archives exert in this dynamic.

Esther Peeren is Associate Professor of Globalisation and Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. She is author of *Intersubjectivities and Popular Culture: Bakhtin and Beyond* (Stanford UP, 2008) and *The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), as well as co-editor of *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture* (Continuum, 2010) and *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (Bloomsbury, 2013).

Endnotes

1. I saw the *Spectres* exhibition at De Appel Arts Centre in Amsterdam, where it was on show from 14 October 2011 to 4 March 2012. See www.augusteorts.be/projects/54/Spectres for other display locations.
2. Augustijnen’s film contrasts Lumumba’s unsettled and unsettling corpse with the neatly tended grave of Moïse Tshombe, leader of the post-independence Katanga secession (1960–1963) and among those who sentenced Lumumba to death. Tshombe’s demise – fleeing his own death sentence (imposed by Mobutu) to Spain, then kidnapped while on a private plane and imprisoned in Algiers, where he is said to have died of a heart attack on 29 June 1969 – is, if anything, more mysterious than that of Lumumba. Yet the known location of his remains in Brussels, which we see his family and Brassinne visiting,

prevents him, as pure matter kept safely in place, from acting as a spectral, disjuncting force.

3. See Berrebi, who similarly reads the film as deconstructing the notion that material evidence provides access to historical truth.
4. On Peck's film as "giving voice from beyond the grave to Lumumba" and "asserting that the murder of his physical presence cannot fully silence his historical memory," see Watson (230, 232).
5. French original: "un pouvoir typiquement *funéraire* tant il avait tendance à réifier la mort des colonisés et à dénier à leur vie toute espèce de valeur" (Mbembe 189).
6. De Witte's insistence on the need for a "durable monument" on the supposed site of Lumumba's assassination (which, like Brassinne, he claims to have located and for which he provides exact latitude and longitude coordinates) is curious in view of his dismissive account of "'the growing statue' case," which saw supporters of Tshombe, perceived as "nostalgics," insisting that the original statue of him erected in Lubumbashi on the fiftieth anniversary of the secession of Katanga was too small, leading it to be replaced by a bigger one (144, 148). De Witte's assertion that a monument for Lumumba would "put an end to the tacit agreement between successive generations of Congolese and Belgian elites to erase Lumumba and what he symbolizes" ("Memorial" 153-4) also clashes with Huyssen's suggestion that "the more monuments there are, the more the past becomes invisible, the easier it is to forget" (184) and Young's remark that "the surest engagement with memory lies in its perpetual irresolution" (270).

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