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Ghosts Here and There

Spectral Resistance and the Ethics of Ghosts in Postcolonial Literature

Chia-Sui Lee

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Spectral Resistance and the Ethics of Ghosts in Postcolonial Literature

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Introduction

> If ghosts are old, they are certainly not tired. (Blanco and Peeren, *Popular Ghosts* ix)

> To worry or to smile, such is the choice when we are assailed by the strange; our decision depends on how familiar we are with our ghosts. (Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* 191)

Ghosts are intriguing and powerful. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "ghost" as the synonym for "specter" that refers to "the soul of a deceased person, spoken of as appearing in a visible form, or otherwise manifesting its presence, to the living." It usually refers to the scary spirit of the unsettled dead that disturbs the life of the living and haunts our unjust memories. In addition to its similarity to the meaning of specter, "ghost" is also defined as "a slight trace or vestige of something" (*Oxford Dictionaries Online*). According to this definition, Michael M. Bell employs the term in a broader sense and defines it as "the sense of the presence of those who are not physically there" or "a felt *presence*—an anima, *geist*, or genius—that possesses and gives a sense of social aliveness to a place," a person, or a thing (Bell 813, 816). As a figure of absent presence, ghosts are unintelligible and invisible to rational knowledge and science. However, they are still very real. They play vital roles in religious beliefs, cultural traditions, literary narratives and everyday discourse, representing an essence, a memory, or unexplainable feelings that can be experienced through our social and human sensibilities.

For instance, in my home country Taiwan, due to our Buddhist and Confucian ideological roots, most people believe that the spirit of every person stays in the world and continuously affects the lives of the living after s/he has passed away. Thus, many people worship their ancestors, hoping that the

spirits of the ancestors can protect them. They also hold a ceremony for ghosts that are considered to be the spirits of those who die lonely or secretly and have no one to worship them as ancestors. During the month of the ghost—the lunar month of July—they worship and devote paper money to these ghosts, begging them not to disturb or harm the living.[1] These traditions reveal how the people pay their respects to the unknown or the spiritual domain, and how they determine their relationships with life and death, presence and absence, the real and the unreal.

Traditions of ghost narratives like these have served roles and hold crucial symbolic values in different cultures and across a variety of periods. Tracing back to prehistoric times, stories of ghosts have been used to explain phenomena that could not be understood rationally, such as death and natural disasters. In the European as well as American cultural heritage, ghosts in literature express concerns about mortality, cultural discontinuity in the face of shifting social conditions, and psychological mechanisms of the living population.[2] In several Asian countries, ghosts are used to signify something

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[1] The seventh month is believed by many followers of Buddhism to be a time when ghosts and spirits come out of the lower realm and interact with people. So a Ghost Festival of sorts is honored, paying homage to ancestors through various rituals designed to ease the suffering of ghosts and possibly aid in direction. In Chinese culture, the fifteenth day of the seventh month in the lunar calendar is called Ghost Day and the seventh month in general is regarded as the Ghost month (鬼月), in which ghosts and spirits come out from the Underworld and move among the living. The annual Hungry Ghost Festival, celebrated on Ghost Day in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, and elsewhere in the Chinese diaspora, is dedicated to performing rituals to honor and remember the spirits of the dead. Families prepare food and other offerings and place them on a shrine dedicated to deceased relatives. Incense and paper money are burned and other rituals are performed in hopes that the spirits of the dead will protect and bring good luck to the family.

[2] In *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters* (2014), Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock states that ghosts appear as characters in many genres of literature, ranging from the epic, poetry, tragedy, and church writings in classical and medieval ages to the novel and cinema in contemporary world: "In the classical period, ghosts illustrated a number of traditional themes related to restless spirits, such as the desire for vengeance or for a proper burial. In the medieval period, ghosts were tied more closely to Christian themes such as spiritual salvation … From the late eighteenth century, the Romantic reaction against Enlightenment rationalism provokes new trends in supernatural literature, including the German *Sturm und Drang*, the French *roman noir* (whose gruesome plotlines responded directly to the real-life horrors of the French Revolution), and the British Gothic novel … Twentieth- and

that is going wrong in a particular society. There is a common ghost narrative in which the spirits of the dead linger on earth and seek vengeance due to their unjust death. They are usually depicted as scary and violent, and only leave the world when their demands are met. In African literature, because of the severe effects of colonialism, ghosts often "serve as figures through which writers comment on immigration, return, and struggles in postcolonial national-making" (Weinstock 267).

"Ghost" can even be a political term in the literary field and everyday speech. Premised on notions of hierarchy and exclusion, one designates someone or something unfamiliar and alienated as being a ghost or ghostly. In this way, one constructs him- or herself as the dominant self in opposition to the other. For instance, in China, the term "ghost" is used to refer to those who are different and regarded as others, such as foreigners who are called White or Black Ghosts, while the despised are referred to as "Nasty" Ghosts. In America and Canada, immigrants and homosexuals are usually depicted as being spectral or spooky because of their absence in dominant narrative.[3] In other words, ghosts are often employed to establish a perspectival bias that fixes self and other as non-interchangeable positions.

Ghosts have a long history as metaphors or literary figures. There are thousands of different representations of ghosts in oral and written narratives, visual arts, and popular culture. From benign ancestors, spooky family ghosts to fearsome otherworldly creatures, the ghost appears in a variety of forms throughout history and across cultures. I will argue that the ghost is diverse and

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twenty-first-century cinema renewed Europe's fascination with the spectral, often casting the phantom as a symbol for absence, alienation, or cultural discontinuity. Today, European literary and cinematic ghosts continue to reflect personal and national traumas" (252-54).

[3] The propensity for lesbian subjects to be culturally considered as ghosts has been elaborated in Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian*, which sees ghosts as a metaphor representing "an absence," a disavowal, or "amor impossibilia—a kind of love that, by definition, cannot exist" of lesbianism (Castle, *The Apparitional Lesbian* 30-31). For other works focusing on the spectralization of queernesss, see Bobby Benedicto, "The Haunting of Gay Manila: Global Space-Time and the Specter of *Kabaklaan*," *GLQ* 14.2 (2008): 317-38; John Fletcher, "The Haunted Closet: Henry James's Queer Spectrality," *Textual Practice* 14.1 (2000): 53-80; Mair Rigby, "Uncanny Recognition: Queer Theory's Debt to the Gothic," *Gothic Studies* 11.1 (2009): 46-57.

intriguing because of its undecidable nature—its association with the issues of death and afterlife, which are irredeemable and inexplicable to the living. It sometimes serves as a figure of return—the return of repressed desires or hidden secrets from the past—which continuously haunts the present. Sometimes the metaphor marks "a present absence": despite being invisible or ephemeral, "something is *there* that matters and has to be taken into account" (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphors* 10). In this sense, subjects designated as ghostly are those that have been marginalized and disavowed by different forms of dispossession and exploitations, such as outcasts, migrants, homeless, and homosexuals, but are persistently present in their absence, silence, or invisibility. Spaces considered as spectral may refer to empty houses, castles, or landscapes that have been haunted by repressed memories and history.

A ghost also emerges as a figure of liminality, being neither and both at the same time, so that one "does not know whether it is living or if it is dead" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 6). Its presence in cultural imagination blurs multiple borders, between life and death, body and spirit, past and present, reality and imagination. In other words, through their "ambivalent multiplicity"—their different shapes, acts, and effects, and their association with transgression of temporality, corporality, and causality, ghosts are never subjected to a fixed meaning (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 33). Rather, they are transcultural and possess a narrative potential for invoking an alternative signification.

Minority and postcolonial literature are fundamentally intertwined with differentiated and complex presences of ghosts in a metaphorical sense. They have a variety of names and forms, appear at specific moments and locations, and are capable of producing divergent acts and effects. For instance, in much of African and Caribbean literature, where the boundary between the world of the living and the world of the dead is depicted as being permeable, and the spirits of the dead are assumed to return easily or in many forms (such as in the form of wild animals), ghosts serve to represent everyday practices or ways of being that are associated with African and Caribbean traditions, landscapes and histories.

In some works of ethnic writers, ghosts are represented as otherworldly manifestations that need to be lived with rather than exorcised, including oppressed groups of people in a society, and the repressed individual and communal histories. In some of these texts, groups of migrants, workers, and colonized people are linked to ghosts or related figures on the basis of their dispossessed and uncertain status between life and death. Peeren calls such spectralized figures of the present "living ghosts" since they, in their lifetimes, already resemble ghosts when they are ignored and considered invisible (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphors* 14). Though these people are invisible or marginalized in society, under certain circumstances they have the power to haunt and ask for a response from the subjects affected.

There is also a deep connection between the ghost and the realm of memory in postcolonial and minority literature. Judith Richardson claims, "[g]hosts operate as a particular, and peculiar, kind of social memory, an alternate form of history-making in which things usually forgotten, discarded, or repressed become foregrounded, whether as items of fear, regret, explanation, or desire" (Richardson 25). Ghosts in American and Canadian minority literature tend in particular to mirror the immigrant experience. For instance, many Asian American writers employ the figure of ghost to reflect on the lost or unspeakable histories of Asian immigrants and the deep connection between the forgetting of the community's history and the loss of group identity. Through their description of the ghosts' trans-generational haunting, these writers deal with the question of how to revise the cultural memory and ethnic identity of their communities.

A number of literary critics have explored the specific way in which the figures of ghosts operate in postcolonial literature, including how a ghost is linked to the identification of specific postcolonial subjects in terms of class, gender, race, and sexuality, and how it effectuates a reworking of phenomena previously ignored, suppressed, and overlooked. Noting the ineluctable encounters between ghosts, memories, and subjectivities in postcolonial and minority literature, the aim of this dissertation is to reach a deeper and broader understanding of the narrative potential of the ghostly in spatial, cultural, and

ethical dimensions. I do not attempt to entail a statement about the ontological status of the ghosts' being. Rather, I perceive ghosts as a concept as well as a metaphor. In addition, instead of perceiving ghosts in general, I will pay attention to the specificity and diversity of ghosts. I will incorporate a variety of notions of ghosts into my analysis of some postcolonial and minority texts to explore the concepts of "spectral space," "ghost language," and "mediums." I will investigate how these ghost-related concepts or metaphors function to facilitate a deeper understanding of the realms of knowledge, history, and identity, as well as to illuminate a new mode of thinking about the ethics of ghosts—the ethics of living with ghosts and being a ghost.

Ghosts as Methodology

The concept of the ghost encompasses various possibilities since it conveys a radical potential of deconstruction that directs our attention to something still ambiguous, invisible, unfamiliar, and undecidable. In the academic discourse of the humanities and social sciences, the ghost or its synonyms, such as a specter or phantom, are employed as a powerful conceptual tool in reconsidering our relation to different aspects of otherness and borders. Between the early 1990s and the present, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to the figures of ghosts as representing the return of the repressed that haunts the living and urgently calls for attention or justice. The psychoanalytical elaboration of phantoms by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok suggests that our secrets or repressed desires (from the past) might continuously disturb our consciousness (in the present) through their unpredictable and inexplicable effects such as "a series of parasitic foreign bodies, lodged inside the psyche" (Punter 63). When transposed to literary and cultural studies, this notion of ghosts as "a lying intruder to be exposed and expelled through psychotherapy" effectuates a revision of memory and identity of the subjectivities that have been disavowed by different forms of dispossession, but are never erased completely and persistently reappear to disturb authority.

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida develops a fresh idea of "the specter as possibility" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 12). He achieves this through an exploration of the disjointing function of the specter to ontology, and his association of the specter with notions of absolute alterity, inheritance, hospitality, and the messianic. According to him, a specter is a figure of liminality. By indicating the ghost's ambiguity and its liminal status between life and death, his concept of spectrality has been adopted as an analytical tool to question the binary oppositions embedded in the western linguistic and cognitive frame. The concept of ghost enables us to think "beyond the opposition between presence and non-presence, actuality and in-actuality, life and non-life and question the rigid boundaries between dominant and subordinate, self and other" (12).

In addition, by relating the specter to "a question of repetition"—which is both *revenant* and *arrivant*, or which is called upon to come and to come back—Derrida suggests that the concept of spectrality functions as "a deconstructive force that disturbs traditional notions of temporality and history" (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphor* 11). According to him, a specter operates on a number of temporal planes, marking "the unbidden imposition of parts of the past on the present, and the way in which the future is always already populated with certain possibilities derived from the past" (Brown 36).[4] Fredric Jameson further assumes a connection between the specific temporality of a specter with the messianic. He claims that the messianic specter belongs to both the unborn (the future) and the dead (the past): "the messianic is spectral, it is the spectrality of the future, the other dimension, the answers to the haunting spectrality of the past which is historicity" (Jameson 108). The

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[4] In order to understand this statement, one should explore Derrida's view of time first. Derrida's notion of the specter's time is neither a scientific (linear) time, moving from the Birth of Time toward the Death of Time, nor the Heideggerian Being's time in which the present is the part of the self-constituting production of a particular kind of being. Rather, it is a messianic time, a time without clock, without "Being-towards-the-end," a time "out of joint" and always "not yet" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 224). It stays open for the specter to join and come: "repetition and first time, but also repetition and the last time, since the singularity of any first time makes of it also a last time … Let us call it as a Hauntology" (10). Associated with the eternal return of singularity and the repetition of first-time-and-last-time, a specter is the incorporation of the past into the present and the future.

messianic singularity of the specter signifies just this waving co-existing of a first time in the past and a last time in the future—the event of coming back as a singular haunting.

Based on these notions of the specter's temporality and its association with the messianic, one can assume that the specter of the repressed past has a power to haunt the present and ask for answers and responsibilities toward the future. Being characterized by a heterogeneous temporality, such a ghost proposes historiography as "a form of haunting," which questions closed and smooth historical narratives and reveals multiple versions of the past (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 482). In addition, due to its ability to haunt, such a specter engages in a "spectropolitics"—"a politics of or *for* specters"—designed to address and criticize the way the process of spectralization produces particular subjects as the metaphorical ghosts of our society (immigrants, foreigners, social outcasts, or victims of historical injustices such as colonialism and slavery) (*Spectralities Reader* 20). Slavoj Žižek associates the specter and its haunting force with *insistence*:

> that which does not exist, continues to *insist*, striving toward existence … When I miss a crucial ethical opportunity, and fail to make a move that would "change everything," the very nonexistence of what I *should have done* will haunt me forever: although what I did not do does not exist, its spectre continues to exist. (Žižek, *Welcome* 22)

A specter of "what I should have done" but didn't do insists on haunting so that it propels us to pay attention to and take responsibility for the inscrutable otherness or neglected aspects of social and cultural realms. It marks as "*symptoms*, points of rupture that insist their singular tale be told and their wrongs acknowledged" (Luckhurst 542), and plays a distinctive role of "producing a something-to-be-done" (Gordon xvi). Thus, Derrida urges us to treat these ghosts through the principle of absolute hospitality that respects their otherness and allows this otherness to disrupt rigid categorizations

(presence/absence, life/death, past/present/future). By doing this, we, as Janice Radway argues in the forward to Avery F. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters*, are able to "revivify our collective capacity to imagine a future radically other to the one ideologically charted out already by the militarized, patriarchal capitalism that has thrived heretofore on the practice of social erasure" (Radway xv). Inspired by Derrida's theory of hauntology and the prior psychoanalytical elaboration of phantoms and the uncanny, scholars in the humanities have employed ghosts as a methodology to reconstruct an ethical framework. They have employed it to open up the analysis of disavowed histories or hidden subjects that haunt like ghosts, and figure out how to establish an ethical relationship with repressed otherness.

Specter and Space

Issues concerning space became important in the humanities and social sciences at the end of 20th century. As one of the most profound thinkers in contemporary human geography, Doreen Massey has stated in a Podcast interview with Social Science Bites that most scholars in social sciences and philosophers seem to pay much attention to time, thinking of it as the dimension of change and of dynamism, but treat space as "a kind of flat surface out there"—something static and neutral, something we simply pass through. In her prominent work *For Space*, she argues for a rethinking of space as the dimension of the social—the dimension of things being at the same time, of multiplicity and simultaneity. She claims that space, by presenting us with questions of how it is inhabited by the contemporaneous co-existence of others or imbued with all kinds of stories, memories and events, is about relationships between human beings or about our connections with each other.

Such a spatial emphasis is productive in the face of recent theorizations of ghosts, which have analyzed the specter or the ghostly more in its temporal dimension than in spatial terms. Many scholars begin questioning the persistent focus on temporality in Derrida's account of the specter as well as within

psychoanalysis and trauma studies.[5] In her critique of Derrida's privileging of time over space, Esther Peeren argues that it is not merely time "that spectralizes space" and "transforms space into spacing," but also space that "spectralizes time by giving it body and causing it to appear" (Peeren, "The Ghost as a Gendered Chronotope" 82). As such, "the ghost of time" is "conjured in space." The ghost is "both out of sync and out of place" (82). In the "Introduction" of *Popular Ghosts*, Blanco and Peeren also analyze a specter in spatial terms, claiming it "as a physical occupation of everyday sites … in a disturbance of space as much as of time" (Blanco and Peeren, *Popular Ghosts* xvii). In their studies, however, the question of where or what kind of space is "spectral" is still under-theorized.

In the first chapter, I will explore the connection between the current spectral turn and spatial turn in cultural studies by proposing the term "spectral space" as a haunted place or a space characterized by the diverse nature of ghosts. Some literary scholars have explored the spatial dimension of ghosts, demonstrating how haunting is attached to particular architectures, landscapes, and places, such as the haunted house, the ghost town, the desolate landscape and the site where disastrous events have transpired. For instance, through her analysis of the history and the causes and consequences of haunting (ghost stories) in the Hudson Valley in her work *Possessions*, Judith Richardson re-considers haunting in terms of both its temporal and spatial dimensions. Through its geographical focus, *Possessions* shows how the Hudson Valley hauntings came to operate not merely as an instance of social and cultural memory, but function as a kind of possession that relates to the issues of identity and belonging in an ongoing, contentious politics of place. In other words, these hauntings reveal "how senses of the past and of place are apprehended and created" (Richardson 3).

From spaces haunted by ghosts, memory, or history to the landscape as palimpsest, I will explore the spectral quality of space through the question of

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[5] Derrida thinks of the specter as a figure of relentless repetition and temporal disturbance by claiming the specter's time is the time "out of joint." Psychoanalytic critics such as Freud and Abraham and Torok also have focused on the temporal dimension of the ghost by aligning their apparition with theories of trauma and the returned of the repressed.

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how the spectral creates spaces that have powerful effects upon identity and experience. I will further examine the narrative and ethical potentials of such spectral space by performing close readings of portrayals of three kinds of spectral spaces in a selection of postcolonial novels, including Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* and J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*. I will argue that spectral space is a space of heterogeneous temporality, a space of fluidity, and a space of uncanniness; and I will explore how the manifestations of these three kinds of spectral spaces question the essentialist notion of binary demarcations between the present and the past, inside and outside, self and other, and propel the characters to re-create their time-bound, place-bound, and socially constructed identities in the novels. In so doing, I will assert that the ghostly or the specter not only functions productively to re-conceptualize the relationship between subject and space, but also serves as a useful narrative tool for us to imagine a more communal future.

Ghosts, Gender, and Ethnicity

Spectral studies in the 1990s have ignored the issues of gender and race. According to Peeren's comparison between "Antonio's Negri's ontological spectrality" and "Derrida's deconstructivist hauntology," both of these studies suggest a generalized theory of spectrality that considers the political implications of a ghost from a western and male-dominant perspective (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphor* 23).[6] In the case of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*, when Derrida "spins a reading of the literary ghost of the king in *Hamlet* and a discussion of the legacy of Karl Marx into a conceptual meditation on

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[6] In *The Spectral Metaphor*, Peeren elaborates the differences between Antonio's Negri's ontological spectrality and Derrida's deconstructivist hauntology. In the case of Negri's study of spectrality, she argues, "In a response to *Specters of Marx* entitled 'The Specter's Smile,' Antonio Negri suggests that Marx situated the ghost firmly in the world of the living by showing how the 'abstraction of value' in capitalist production 'vampirizes all the worker's labor and, transforming itself into surplus-value, becomes capital'" (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphor* 21). Ghosts for Negri refer to the workers whose subjects become "unlocatable" under the spectral movement of the capitalist system (9).

spectrality" as a figure of deconstruction, he is questioned by some scholars, especially those in feminist and postcolonial studies, as being biased and having a lack of awareness of the gender of the ghost and the specific way in which the postcolonial subjectivity is theorized (*Spectral Metaphor* 11).[7] In their attempts to examine the ghost or spectrality beyond the Derridean framework, many other scholars have argued for the need to culturally and sexually specify the ghost and its association with different forms of violence and oppression.

From the perspective of gender, in Derrida's analysis of spectrality, the focus on the ghost of Hamlet's father, who demands Prince Hamlet to investigate his murder and seek revenge upon his uncle, King Claudius, neglects a rich variety of legends of female ghosts around the world and their moral and cultural significance. For instance, White Lady legends are popular in many countries. It is a type of female ghost reported to appear in rural areas in Great Britain, Ireland, and the United States. Analogous to Western legends of the White Lady, ghosts in Asian literature and cinema are also predominantly female. They usually appear angry and destructive, and return to or linger in the world of the living for vengeance. In Korea, the most renowned and ferocious female ghost is the *cheonyeogwishin*. Known as virgin ghosts, *cheonyeogwishins* are portrayed in a similar form as the scariest ghosts with long hair, wearing white dresses and haunting the men who unfairly oppressed them when they were alive. There are also many female ghost myths, such as those about the female vampires Pontianak and Penanggalan, shared throughout the regions of Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei. Common to most of these female ghost stories is the theme of losing or being betrayed by a husband,

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[7] In her 1995 response to *Specters of Marx*, the essay "Ghostwriting," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argues that Derrida is writing a "how-to-mourn-your-father book" (Spivak, "Ghostwriting" 6) that, citing Blanco and Peeren's words, "configures haunting as a masculine economy and, in describing the new world order, overlooks how global capitalism particularly exploits the labor and reproductive power of subaltern women" (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 310). Nancy J. Holland also criticizes Derrida's focus on haunting as a patriarchal structure: "at the very moment when Derrida attempts to say something, however partial and attenuated, about *the* ghost, he must at the same time recreate a tradition in which the Father/Ghost, and all that they represent, speak only to the Son" (Holland 69).

boyfriend, or fiancé, or being exploited by men. Through the stories of ferocious or uncanny female ghosts, women could speak to society and express their hatred toward men as well as patriarchal systems. These ghost stories also reveal how ghosts and haunting are related to specific formations of subjectivity as well as the process of subjectification itself in terms of gender.[8]

Kathleen Brogan has paid attention to the neglected concerns about the ethnicity of ghosts by examining the role literary ghosts play in the work of some ethnic writers. She claims that literary ghosts in ethnic writing are examples of "cultural hauntings" that reflect "the increased emphasis on ethnic and cultural differentiation in all social groups" (Brogan 4).[9] Each ghost or haunting has its cultural specificity and is deeply connected to the specific history and identity of an ethic group. Likewise, many Asian American scholars have investigated how the recurrence of ghosts in Asian American literature reflects "a shadowy root in Asianness"—the psyche of "being in limbo, between two worlds": the Asian past and the Western present (Ma 20). In addition, by tracing how some of these ghosts descend from Chinese and other Asian traditions replete with ghosts of female victims, some critics have explored the issues of gender and racial discrimination. The subjects they have dealt with include the transgenerational haunting between mother and daughter, the double oppression of Asian American women by Western racism and Asian patriarchal systems, and the relationship between Asian women's silence (or passivity) and their loss of identity.[10]

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[8] For more examples concerning issues of gender and ghosts, see: Mary Beth Mills' "Attack of the Widow Ghosts: Gender, Death, and Modernity in Northeast Thailand," in *Bewitching Women, Pious Men: Gender and Body Politics in Southeast Asia*, ed. Aihwa Ong and Michael G. Peletz (Berkeley and LA: U of California P, 1995), 244-73; Esther Peeren's "The Ghost as a Gendered Chronotope," in *Ghosts, Stories, Histories: Ghost Stories and Alternative Histories*, ed. Sladja Blazan (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 81-96.

[9] For other explorations of the intersection of spectrality and ethnicity, see Renée L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny : Indian Ghost and American Subjects*. Hanover: UP of New England, 2000; Atsuko Matsuoko and John Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2001; David Tyrer and Salman Sayyid, "Governing Ghosts: Race, Incorporeality and Difference in Post-Political Times," *Current Sociology* 60.3 (2012): 353-67.

[10] See for example: Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's *Reading Asian American Literature:*

When these scholars show how minority writers use ghosts as a way to reflect on the problems faced by different ethnic groups or genders, I would like to claim that they also employ the figure of ghost as a narrative tool to negotiate the past and revise identities of minority people. In order to elaborate this statement, a careful consideration of each ghost's specific alterity in each literary work is needed. The arguments about the dependency of identities on notions of alterity are not new anymore. Adi Hastings and Paul Manning assert, "identity performances are relational with respect to different aspects of alterity" (Hastings and Manning 293). Esther Peeren and Silke Horstkotte further argue, "Alterity is radically specified and differentiated: there is no singular alterity, but a plethora of forms of alterity, each of which interacts with identity in its own manner" (Peeren and Horstkotte 10). Their statements reveal that alterity has its precise form to deliver its own shock and to prompt a particular subject to take a different position in relation to self and otherness.

In three novels written by three minority woman writers—Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, the figures of female ghosts represent various forms of alterity. By portraying the strong presence of anonymous female ghosts and their vivid but silent interaction with living characters, the three writers employ ghosts as a medium not only to reflect on different kinds of individual trauma and social oppression of minority people in North America, but also to reveal the literary ghost's potential of empowerment—its potential of evoking the healing of the traumatic past and the re-creation of identity. So far, less attention has been paid to how female ghosts manifest themselves to the living when their voices or stories are silenced or fragmented. If words or the symbolic order are the sources of oppression, what kinds of alternative "language" do they use to convey their otherness? Putting the questions in a more specific way: what is ghost language? What is the difference between

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From Necessity to Extravagance (1993); Wendy Ho's *In Her Mother's House: The Politics of Asian American Mother-daughter Writing* (1999); Patti Duncan's *Tell This Silence: Asian American Woman Writers and the Politics of Speech* (2003); Erin Khuê Ninh's *Ingratitude: The Debt-Bound Daughter in Asian American Literature* (2011); Sheng-Mei Ma's *Diaspora Literature and Visual Culture: Asia in Flight* (2011).

human language and ghost language? How does this alternative way of haunting function in the revision of suppressed memory and identity?

In the second chapter, by investigating the specific ways in which female ghosts manifest themselves to and interact with the living characters in the three novels, I will elaborate the concept and function of "ghost language" in relation to minority women's ethnic and sexual identities. It is worth noting that I use the term "ghost language" in an ironic way. I do not suggest language as a linguistic system that is constructed in a rational and orderly manner. Instead, I would like to argue that "ghost languages" are ways of expression outside a linguistic and cognitive frame and even beyond human knowledge. I will elaborate two kinds of "ghost language"—two different ways of haunting, namely the ghost's madness in *Beloved* and its uncanny silence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*. By focusing on the different ways in which these female ghosts demand attention and justice, I intend to suggest that ghostly otherness has plural forms and is always open to change. And through their diverse alterity, the literary ghosts will survive from one generation to another, keep evolving and invoking a re-imagining of a new, communal and transcultural identity in the contemporary racial and patriarchal society.

Mediums as the Ethics toward Ghosts

In Western philosophy as well as in European ghost stories, ghosts and spirits usually take on the disturbing role of an undesirable interruption that causes shock and fear in the everyday and threatens the life and sanity of the living. The living in these stories tend to banish and exorcise ghosts in order to restore the order of their lives and return to the familiar, the comfortable, and the normal. Living subjects do not seem to attempt to enter the ghostly realm or communicate with ghosts, while ghosts make their appearance to them. In the following chapters, I will bring different notions of the ghost together and use them in my study of postcolonial and minority literature to open up a new way of thinking about the subversive potential of ghosts and the spectral. The literal and metaphorical ghosts that I will discuss in the coming chapters are

sometimes similar to Derrida's specter, which emerges as a figure of radical alterity "that cannot be anticipated" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 65), and appears in irrational and obscure ways. Sometimes they function as the continued presence of those who have died (ancestors or ghosts in Asian and African cultures) or those who exist in the spiritual world but keep playing a concrete role in everyday life. While these ghosts haunt the living through various forms of otherness or become intertwined within everyday practices such as religious rituals or oral traditions, they are either un-representable or un-assimilable. An ethical problem then arises when we reflect on the question of how to approach ghosts or ghostly domains when they are unable to be successfully banished and exorcised. Since so far it remains unclear how the living relate to or communicate with these unapproachable but irreducible ghosts or spectral aspects, I will explore in the third chapter the ways in which the dialogue is brought about and shaped. I regard the process of treating and dealing with ghosts in a respectful and responsible manner as the ethics toward ghosts that needs to be developed.

Ethics has been defined as the branch of philosophy that deals with morality and involves systematizing, defining, and recommending concepts of good and evil, right and wrong, virtuous and non-virtuous conduct. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* claims that the word ethics is also used more narrowly to mean "the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual." However, contemporary poststructuralist and postmodernist scholars argue that ethics should study the more complex and relational conditions of actions. Two prominent representatives of this ethical turn are Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida.

Levinas' philosophy has been called ethics, but it differs from traditional theories on ethics. His elaboration of the concepts of face, alterity, singularity, and responsibility in his works emphasizes more our relationship to the other than the behavior of the moral subject. In *The Ethics of Emmaneul Levinas*, Diane Perpich provides a clear explanation of these basic concepts. For instance, in chapter two, she argues that the face cannot be represented since it is neither a phenomenon with particular qualities nor a mere abstraction.

Rather, it "presents itself to me as the irreducible presence of a mortal and vulnerable other with whom I am in a social relation, whether I like it or not" (Guenther 2009). [11] By developing the connection between alterity and singularity, Levinas reflects on the irreducible resistance of the face of the other: its resistance to comprehension in the repetition of the face-to-face encounter, and its capability of putting our powers in question and demanding for ethical justification. In other words, his notion of ethics focuses on the intersubjective relationship, being called by and responding to the radical otherness of the Other, and the endless responsibility imposed on us in every encounter with the singular other.

Likewise, Derrida claims, "Ethics is … the order of and respect for absolute singularity, and not only that of the generality or of the repetition of the same" (Derrida, *Gift of Death* 84). In his view, ethics not merely involves abstract beliefs and principles, but concerns a more responsible way in which people "learn to living finally" with ghosts (*Specters of Marx* xvii). He argues that an ethical act must convey our responsibility for the singular other, concretized as the specter, guest, or foreigner. The self, rather than assimilating the other, is asked to adopt an attitude of unconditional hospitality, which, as Marais reminds us, citing Derrida, "involves saying 'yes' to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification" (Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible* 2). Such absolute hospitality can be perceived as the ethics of hospitality that proposes a mediation on how to respect various forms of otherness: to respond to the stranger as a stranger, wait for the unexpected visitor without expecting it, or mourn the dead without naming, identifying, and so locating the dead.

Levinas' notion of responsibility and Derrida's discourse on hospitality are rich in potentialities because they recast the inter-subjective relationship between self and other as an ethical problem that concerns one's identity and limits. By developing their theories into literary and postcolonial studies, scholars such as Maurice Blanchot and Derek Attridge have contributed to the

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[11] See Lisa Guenther's review of Perpich's *The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas* on *Philosophical Reviews: An Electronic Journal* (2009.02.23). http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23921-the-ethics-of-emmanuel-levinas/. Accessed 10 Oct. 2015.

debate on the ethics of literature—the impossible task of responding to absolute alterity—in the process of reading or writing.[12] In order to extend the discussion into my study of ethics toward ghosts, I will explore the concept of "a medium" and examine how the literary figure of "a medium" functions to represent a mode of negotiation as well as a way to recognize and take responsibility for the ghostly others in two South African Gothic novels: J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*.

A medium is a person who receives messages from the dead, and travels between the living and spiritual worlds in many religious and cultural beliefs. Like ghosts, mediums come in many varieties. Depending on his or her specific location and capacity, a medium mediates different worlds and conceptual domains in different manners. By elaborating the literary representation of two kinds of mediums—a passive medium in Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and an active medium in Mda's *The Heart of*

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[12] Derek Attridge has established the relevance of Levinasian philosophy to the ethics of literature and Coetzee's fiction and argues for the impossibility of being wholly responsive to the other in his notable works *The Singularity of Literature* and *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading*. In *The Singularity of Literature*, Attridge states: "Otherness exists only in the registering of that which resists my usual modes of understanding, and that moment of registering alterity is a moment in which I simultaneously acknowledge my failure to comprehend and find my procedures of comprehension beginning to change" (*The Singularity of Literature* 27). Based on this, he further argues that the reading or writing subject, like Levinas's ethical subject, is always reduced to a state of passivity in its encounter with alterity in the moment of reading or writing, and that this passivity is its responsibility for the other: "Being responsible for the other involves assuming the other's needs (if only the need to exist), affirming it, sustaining it, being prepared to give up my own wants and satisfactions for the sake of the other" (*The Singularity of Literature* 124). Similarly, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* providess insight into the ethical significance of Coetzee's fiction with its elaboration on Coetzee's engagement with alterity in his fiction and its relationship with the ethical philosophy of accommodating the other. By tracing the numerous "figures of alterity" in the novels—characters like Klawer, the barbarian girl, Michael K, Friday, Verceuil, and Lucy, and investigating the way in which their otherness is "staged," Attridge says, "The responsible answer to this paradox, to this aporia, is not to throw up one's hands, of course, but to carry on, to increase one's attentiveness and one's responsiveness, recognizing that the aporia not only makes wholly responsible action impossible but also that it is a condition for any experience of responsibility at all" (*J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading* 12, 124). This statement demonstrates the ethics of the impossibility of responding to the absolute other—to open oneself to the other and wait "without any clear sense of what would constitute the longed-for arrival" (120).

Redness, I argue that the figure of the medium serves to reveal different situated and specific accounts of the interaction between different domains, including the present and the past, the real and the unreal, modernity and tradition, center and margin, self and other, and so on. Their work of mediating oppositional entities can not only be seen as an effective way in which one approaches his or her internal or external otherness, but also provides us with a model of negotiation by which we can live with ghosts, establish a mutual understanding with them, and create a more dialogic society.

The Ethics of Ghosts

By examining the concepts of spectral space, ghost language, and medium, and the literary representation of them in the aforementioned postcolonial and ethnic texts, I will be able to answer some crucial questions: when and where does spectrality take place? How and in what way do ghostly others deliver their effects to particular subjects and re-position them in relation to history and otherness? How does a subject approach and mediate these ghostly aspects so as to imagine and establish a more inclusive future? The answers to these questions demonstrate the ethical and narrative potentials of the ghostly metaphor in postcolonial and minority literature, including the metaphor's power of invoking alternative notions of space, history, and identity, as well as its power of enabling a more ethical and welcoming attitude toward others.

In the concluding chapter, I will suggest that ghosts are not merely products of human imagination or objects of social and cultural constructions. Rather, they are ethical subjects. By exploring how, in J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K,* the protagonist, Michael K, plays the role of an active agent or a medium for his status as a living ghost, I will argue that the ghostly have an ethical power to trigger new modes of thinking beyond boundaries and to produce ethical subjects. They have critical possibilities in reconstructing the ethics of how to live with ghosts and survive as ghosts. In sum, reflecting on the diversity and specificity of the ghost in postcolonial and minority works, I aim in this dissertation to re-conceptualize the ghost as a metaphorical concept

so as to contribute to a burgeoning sub-field in postcolonial studies.

Chapter I

Haunting Effects of Spectral Spaces in Postcolonial Literature

> We moderns, despite our mechanistic and rationalistic ethos, live in landscapes filled with ghosts. (Bell 813)

Specter is a synonym for the term "ghost" or "phantom." What is slightly different between a ghost and a specter is that a ghost can also refer to some otherworldly "non-human" creatures in various cultures.[13] A specter is defined in a more narrow sense as the spirit of a deceased person. The *Oxford Dictionary* claims that the term "specter" is derived from the Latin word "spectrum" that literally refers to "image, apparition" from *specere* "to look." The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines a specter as "a visible disembodied spirit" of a dead person and as "a ghost," "the soul of a dead person thought of as living in an unseen world or as appearing to the living people." According to these definitions, I will argue that a specter (sometimes known as ghost, phantom, apparition, spook, revenant, or wraith) is the spirit of a dead person that can appear to the living in visible form or other manifestation. It is generally described as a restless essence that haunts particular places, objects, or people he or she was associated with in life. Distinguished from the more benign spirits involved in ancestor worship, which are regarded as venerable and imagined as having a continued presence in some sort of afterlife, a specter

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[13] In various African and Asian cultures, many types of ghosts usually appear in animal form or refer to a non-human creature. For instance, The *Oni* (鬼) are a kind of *Yōkai* (ghost or strange apparition) in Japanese folklore that are portrayed as hideous and mythical creatures with sharp claws, wild hair, and two long horns growing from their heads. They were originally invisible spirits that caused disasters, disease, and other unpleasant things. Since these formless creatures could take on a variety of forms to deceive or eat human beings, they eventually became anthropomorphized and took on a form of ogres. References include Shirley Lim and Amy Ling's *Reading the Literatures of Asian America* (1992) and Laurence C. Bush's *Asian Horror Encyclopedia: Asian Horror Culture in Literature, Manga and Folklore* (2001).

is the spirit kept from a peaceful afterlife. It is generally regarded as an undesirable state and its haunting is associated with fear and injustice.

Since the early 1990s, the issue of the specter has become an important issue in contemporary literary and cultural studies. Considering the concept of "specter" in general, in terms of a reference to what is now unseen or past, it is usually employed as a metaphor of ghostly figures, such as strangers, aliens, foreigners, and invisible social outcasts, or serves to represent an unspeakable secret or history that is repressed within the dominant discourse. Inspired by the poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theorizations of ghosts that have stressed the temporal dimension of the specter, many literary critics have explored how the "haunting" of the spectral marks the return of the repressed or the relentless repetition and temporal disturbance of the past in the present. The haunting indicates that there are some oppressed groups who urgently call for attention and justice. It also reveals an untold story that challenges the authorized version of the event. Besides, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to the role of specters as "unstable interstitial figures" and something that "disrupts both oppositional thinking and the linearity of historical chronology" (Weinstock 62-63). Weinstock explains:

> Neither living nor dead, present nor absent, the ghosts function as the paradigmatic deconstructive gesture, the "shadowy third" or trace of an absence that undermines the fixedness of such binary oppositions. As an entity out of place in time, as something from the past that emerges into the present, the phantom calls into question the linearity of history. (6)

By applying current notions of the specter to the studies of postcolonial literature, many researchers have demonstrated the deep connection between the spectral metaphor and the realms of memory, narrative, and subjectivity. They have not only examined the crucial place figurative ghosts have in the constitution of self, communities, and societies in some postcolonial works, but also have shown how the literary representation of the spectral effectuates the

transcendence of temporality and corporality, brings repressed others or histories to light, and undermines the rigid and figurative boundaries between presence and absence, dominant and subordinate, self and other in terms of race, gender, and class in a postcolonial context. Hence, the spectral metaphor can be regarded as a productive narrative device to re-construct the identities and historical narratives of oppressed groups.

Likewise, recent developments in the humanities and social sciences have highlighted the importance of "space." Foucault states that the present epoch is "the epoch of space" in which "space takes for us the form of relations among sites" (Foucault 23). French anthropologist Marc Augé claims, "Society's way of symbolically treating space constitutes the given from which the individual personality is shaped and the individual person's experience constructed" (Augé, *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds* 5). Their arguments show that the way we think about space or establish a relation to a place inflects our understanding of the world, our attitudes toward others, and our construction of identities. Besides, more and more scholars have treated space as "a significant indicator of meaning" that represents social and political realities (Gräbe 163). Through their reconsideration of space and spatial practices in arts or social events, they have contributed to a renewed understanding of space: space is not an empty stage or physical locality but a dimension of the social, imbued with all kinds of stories, memories, events, and power relationships.[14] Thus, "space" can be perceived as a loaded term that incorporates the interconnecting dimensions of cultural, geographical, and textual studies.

There are extended discussions of controversial issues in terms of space, such as boundary, border crossing, the politics of space, space and subjectivity, and time-space compression. One of the most fascinating concepts raised in the theories of contemporary space is the space of otherness, a place outside other places, outside power structures. Foucault claims, "despite the whole network of knowledge that enables us to delimit or to formalize it

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[14] See Doreen Massey's *For Space* (2005), Tim Cresswell's *Place: A Short Introduction*, and *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, edited by Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchen and Gill Valentine.

[space], contemporary space is still not disanctified. [It is] still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred" (Foucault 23). His statement suggests the intractable and spectral aspect of contemporary space, which, when nurtured by "the hidden presence of the sacred" (23), functions as "counter-sites" in which "the real sites are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (24). In the current environment of globalization, transnationalism and the postcolonial, there is a dimension of space that presents us with the existence of the "sacred" other and keeps eluding our grasp and reverting into the realm of the unknown.

Inspired by the current spectral turn and Foucault's notion of space of otherness, I would like to suggest that the changing spaces of the contemporary world require new theoretical appraisals within which the ghost or the specter can serve as a productive narrative tool. Besides, by turning to the spatial turn and postcolonial studies, I attempt to give new territory to the ghost outside the framework of the Gothic.[15] In this chapter, I will combine the concept of the specter with the notion of space to investigate how "spectral space" functions as a useful metaphor in reconstructing prevailing ideas of time, space, and identity in postcolonial literature. Spectral spaces are not Gothic spaces that are haunted by ghosts. I define the term "spectral space" as an actual living space—a place, location, or landscape—that is characterized by the nature of the specter, including the specter's temporal heterogeneity, liminality, fluidity, and uncanny-ness. Considering specters as culturally specific and differentiated when descriptions of the specters vary widely in different cultures, I argue that there are various forms of spectral spaces and each of their representations needs to be explored in terms of its present singularity.[16] By probing multiple

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[15] While the Gothic concentrate on the spatial dimension of haunting, there are a variety of literary representations of Gothic spaces, such as the haunted house, abandoned castles, alienated landscapes, and so on. Most of them are haunted by ghosts and informed by the language of necromancy.

[16] Descriptions of the apparition of specters vary widely from a being-less presence to transparent, barely visible shapes, from realistic, lifelike visions to the shape of monstrous creatures. In Scandinavian and Finish tradition, ghosts appear in corporeal form. They are first mistaken for the living but appear and disappear suddenly, or leave no footprints or other traces. In Chinese and Japanese cultures, Yūrei (幽靈) are the general terms for specter. According to both traditional beliefs, all humans have a spirit or soul. When a person dies, the spirit leaves the body and enters a form of purgatory, where it waits for the proper funeral rites to be performed,

concepts of specters in different cultural traditions, I will suggest that spectral space can be perceived as a space of heterogeneous time, a space of fluidity, and a space of uncanny-ness. I will address how these three kinds of spectral space are represented in some well-known postcolonial novels, including Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, V. S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing,* and J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*. By interrogating the literary representation of these spectral spaces and the effect they have on the subjects who live in, visit, or traverse them, I will examine how spectral spaces function in diverse manners to question the fixed demarcations between past and present, inside and outside, self and other, and to reconstruct the time-bound, place-bound, and socially constructed identity.

Spectral Space as Space of Heterogeneous Time

In Derrida's explorations of the temporality of the specter, a specter does not belong to the past but embodies a heterogeneous temporal horizon in which the past, present, and future are integrated. According to Derrida, a specter is present-absent, being neither and both at the same time, of which one "does not know whether it is living or if it is dead" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 6). Thus, it "is always both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come)," and always associated with the eternal return of singularity and with the repetition of first-time-and-last-time (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 13). Bearing Derrida's argument in mind, one can assume that a specter operates "in a number of temporal planes, most crucially the future and its possible interaction with the present and the past" (13). Besides, being associated with the messianic—"the way in which the future is always already

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so that it may join its ancestors. However, if the person dies in a sudden, violent, or unhappy way, such as murder or suicide, or if the proper rituals for the dead have not been performed, the spirit is thought to transform into a yūrei (幽靈) which stays on earth, near a specific location, such as where s/he was killed or where his/her body lies, and haunts the living, especially a specific person, such as his/her murderer or beloved one. Like their European counterparts, a yūrei (幽靈) usually appears to the living in bodily likeness. In China and Japan, the appearance of yūrei (幽靈) is somewhat uniform: they are usually transparent, legless, and float in mid-air. Most of them are dressed in white and have long, black, and disheveled hair.

populated with certain possibilities derived from the past" (Brown 36)—Derrida's notion of specter signals "the potential of re-articulation of these possibilities" (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 13).

Acknowledging this temporal quality of a specter, spectral space can be perceived as a space of heterogeneous time that embodies a complex interaction of past, present, and future. It opens onto one of the features of Foucault's idea of "heterotopias" or "heterochronies," which refer to spaces which contain "slices of time," including both "accumulating" and "temporal" time (Foucault 26). It is also related to the notion of the ghost theorized by Cameroonian political and historical theorist Achille Mbembe. In his description of the African postcolony, Mbembe argues that it is characterized by a form of sovereignty, which exerts a ghostly violence (necropower) to produce negative subjectivity and create 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 (ghost)" (Mbembe 1). In such a postcolony, the ghost defines a new concept of temporality: there is no "reversibility and irreversibility of time" but "folding and unfolding over anew of experience," and everything "takes place in an indefinite present" without congealing "to the point of consolidating into history" (6). In such a heterogeneously temporal territory, there is no continuity between the past, present, and future. There is no genealogy. There are only suspension and multiplication, which, according to Gerald Gaylard's analysis of time and death in Southern African postcolonial novels, bear relevance to the imageries of "stranding, frozen decay, moments outside of time, lostness, in-betweenness, interstitiality" (Gaylard 5). Thus, spectral space can also be regarded as space of "infinity and fusion" as well as one of "stories and possibilities" (Foucault 26). When it is employed as a metaphor in narrative, it cannot only question the concept of linearity, but also convey "something of the transhistorical imagination" (Gaylard 1)—the "glimpses of the transpersonal and enduring which can have effective ethical effects" in a specific historical moment and location (5).

The desert in Ondaatje's *The English Patient* serves as a good example

of such a space of heterogeneous time. Set at the end of World War II in an abandoned and damaged Italian villa, this Booker Prize-winning novel traces the intersection of four damaged lives, including an emotionally-wounded army nurse, Hana, the maimed thief and a friend of Hana's father, Caravaggio, the wary Indian sapper, Kip, and the mysterious, nameless, burned victim, the English patient. As the main character, even mentioned in the tile of the novel, the English patient, who is burnt beyond recognition and acts as a riddle to his companions, turns out to be a Hungarian Count named Almásy. He was an explorer of the deserts of North Africa. It is worth noting that Count Almásy's exploration of the desert in the novel can be regarded as a practice of imperialism or colonialism—"an act of geographical violence, through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control" (Said 225). By mapping and recording geographical surveys of the desert, he and other Saharan explorers of the Geographical Society participate in the colonial enterprise that treats the remote desert as a vast and empty space on which to draw boundaries of power and difference for further expropriation.

However, when the English patient's story unfolds through a series of flashbacks, one will find that the desert is neither fixed nor empty, but mobile and heterogeneously temporal. The English patient describes it as a place of shifting temporal and ontological realities—"a piece of cloth carried by winds, never held down by stones, and given a hundred shifting names long before Canterbury existed" (Ondaatje 138-39). He also considers it as "a place of pockets" and the "trompe l'oeil of time and water" (259). In the desert, he recognizes different plants, winds, routes, and towns that existed in the past or have existed for centuries. There he learns the stories of the ancient tribes or kingdoms, and is rescued from an airplane on fire and nursed by Bedouins. There he watches his dying lover being surrounded by the ancient cave paintings. The routes, towns, stories, paintings in the caves, the Bedouins, and the activities taken by the Geographical Society all mark signs of life and interconnected histories within the desert. Thus, the desert can be regarded as a space of heterogeneous time being "inhabited, traversed, and negotiated" (Boer 12). It is, in fact, "a varied landscape in which all sorts of flexible demarcations

are present, which draw and redraw spaces through time" (136), and in which "every trace tells a history" (138).

With signs of presence and absence, the desert ruptures the linearity of time and enables the English patient to develop a trans-historical sense of identity. Rufus Cook assumes that the desert is endowed with a certain time-defeating power, the power to "suspend or short-circuit linear, successive time, to collapse the past, present and future into one simultaneous, a-temporal instant" (Cook, "Imploding Time and Geography" 123). When the English patient stays for a while in the time-redeeming and heterogeneously temporal space of the desert, he can't help becoming "unconscious of ancestry" (Ondaatje 246). He claims, "It (the desert) was a place of faith. We disappeared into landscape … Erase the family name! Erase nations! I was taught such things by the desert" (139). I would like to argue that it is not the emptiness of the desert but its overwhelming presence of memories, histories, and something imperceptible that makes it "a place of faith" for the English patient. The desert is regarded as a transformed landscape—"an earth that had no maps" (261)—that is changing and metamorphasized because it is intertwined with past, present, and future. It is sometimes a site of memorialization, sometimes a site of love, conflict and violence, and sometimes a site of dream and imagination. Its heterogeneous temporality and multiplicity frees the English patient from the grip of fixed and frozen time, and prompts him to re-examine his time-bound existence related to his homeland and nationality.

The desert not only disrupts the made up ideas of home or nationality, but also creates a communal identity or society. The English patient and the other members of the Geographical Society are infected by the desire "to remove the clothing of [their] countries" and the paths they have emerged from (Ondaatje 139). Though they are German, English, Hungarian, and African, they re-conceive of themselves as an "oasis society" through their love of the sand rather than through their identification with the nation-states (136). Since the desert dissolves their sense of temporal/spatial demarcation, names and origins become meaningless to them. Thus, they finally break the pretended continuity assigned by the dominant western discourse and reconstruct a

"communal identity" by creating a circle of international community (Whetter 446). In other words, containing traces of life and history, the desert stands for a point of entry into "that pure zone between land and chart between distances and legend between nature and storyteller," where one learns that every subject is marked by "communal histories" and "communal books" (Ondaatje 246, 261).

The ruined villa in the novel serves as another instance of a space of heterogeneous time. As the major setting in the book, the abandoned Italian monastery, the Villa San Girolamo, not only acts as a shelter for the four disparate characters during the final days of World War II, but also stands for a place of memory and possibility. It might have been once the Villa Bruscoli owned by Poliziano—the great protégé of Lorenzo during the 15th century, and was a nunnery, the last stronghold of the German army and then a hospital of the Allies. When the novel opens at the end of the war, the villa used as a hospital has been evacuated. However, Hana decides to stay there with the English patient, who is not up to being transported along with the rest of the patients. Later, Caravaggio comes when he is drawn to Hana in ways he cannot articulate. Being responsible for disarming bombs in the area, Kip also stays in the villa with them.

On one hand, the remains of the old chapel, library, wild gardens, and unexplored mines in the villa mark the traces of different periods of time. Besides, the narrator describes the villa as a space without boundaries and structure: "There seemed little demarcation between house and landscape, between damaged building and the burned and shelled remnants of the earth" (Ondaatje 43). The imagery of the lack of border conveys how the present and the past appear heterogeneously and randomly there. By living and roaming among the ruins, Hana and the other characters seem to witness both presence and absence-presence of historical events and incorporate them into their life experiences.

On the other hand, the villa acts as a spectral location where the memories of Hana, Caravaggio, Kip, and Almásy are disclosed by unconventional yet interlaced narratives. There are multiple realities as the

point of view shifts from one character to another. The tense switches back and forth from present to past, and settings change randomly as each character's past unfolds. I will argue that, as a place where such a web of memories is displayed, the villa is heterogeneously temporal. In it, the characters are up to travel through time and space through their remembrance of the past and interaction with the other characters in the present. Besides, it acts as a place of "postcolonial transhistorical time," the time "that has a memory, that is learning from past failure, that is syncopating linear realism but not falling into iterative historical repetition" (Gaylard 13). It not only marks "escape" or "transcendence" from linear clock time, but also engages "interconnection" between past and present.

Such spectral temporality of the villa enables the characters to develop "transhistorical consciousness" and re-create a suspended but communal identity (Gaylard 8). The narrator says, "But here they were shedding skins. They could imitate nothing but what they were. There was no defence but to look for the truth in others" (Ondaatje 117). Since the "skins" that mark the demarcation between self and other are eliminated in the villa, the four characters of different backgrounds can string together without being constrained to their races, classes, and nations. In addition, by developing a profound relationship with each other and weaving a connected web of traumatic memories, they have reached an understanding, though temporarily, and begin undertaking a healing process. For instance, when they celebrate Hana's twenty-first birthday with food, wine, and snail lights, these four characters experience a communal union. They listen to Hana singing a song for Kip:

> Singing in the voice of a tired traveler, alone against everything. A new testament. There was no certainty to the song anymore, the singer could only be one voice against all the mountains of power. That was the only sureness. The one voice was the single unspoiled thing. A song of snail light. Caravaggio realized she was singing with and echoing the

heart of the sapper. (269)

The scene represents not only a moment of communion between strangers, but also of "a postnational alternative to collective goodness" (Ty 18). In the ruined villa outside the history of linearity and progress, these international orphans free themselves from their time-bound identities and gather to celebrate the birth of a trans-historical and trans-national community at such a time of darkness.

Spectral Space as Space of Fluidity

A specter is associated with fluidity for its geographic movement, physical transformation, and liminality. Many cultures and religions believe that the essence of a being, such as the soul or the spirit of a deceased, continues to exist. It might either travel to heaven or hell (the sky world or underworld, nirvana, or join its ancestors, depending on different traditions), or stay on earth. Some religious views argue that the spirits of those who have died in violent or tragic events such as murder, accident, or suicide, or those who have no one perform proper funerals, are considered to be restless and disturbing ghosts existing on earth. Being kept from a peaceful afterlife, they are sometimes trapped inside the property where their death occurred or where their memories are strong. In certain contexts, they wander. Derrida argues that a specter is always out of place. It appears "when the dead have been misplaced, when they turn out to be no longer in the grave … but re-appear in another or other places" (Peeren, "The Ghost as a Gendered Chronotope" 84). As such, a specter always moves, making different places unsafe by its uncanny presence. In addition, in Chinese culture, a specter is a ghost of a person whom the family refuses to worship as an ancestor because of his or her shameful deeds. Without home, without belonging, a ghost in China is suggested to go from one place to another, looking for a substitute. Take No Name Woman in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* for example. She committed suicide because she had an affair with another man. Regarding her story as a stain in

the family history, the family tries to forget her after her death. No one in the family worships her. The mother even forbids the heroin, Maxine, to talk about this nameless aunt. Dislocated from its origin and ancestry, the aunt's ghost is destined to be hungry and homeless, and to wander around endlessly. In this circumstance, a specter acts as an existence outside traditional forms of family, class, and nation. It can't take root anywhere, so it is condemned to wandering and a general drifting on a spatial as well as a symbolic level.

In other cultural contexts, such as in West African culture, a specter is perceived as a magical figure or spirit of an ancestor that can adopt different forms or shapes. Mbembe has investigated the capricious nature of the ghost and its ability to overturn things in the fiction of Amos Tutuola. He assumes that caprice is related to "dissolving the identity of each thing within an infinity of identities and forms with no direct link to their origin." (Mbembe 14). Accordingly, by changing its shape according to different situations, a ghost in this context is marked by its multiple identities and a process of becoming. It not only represents "the negation of all essential singularity," but it is also related to the concepts of fluidity and plurality (Mbembe 14).

In addition, a specter's mobile and hybrid nature results from its in-betweenness or liminality. Lois Parkinson Zamora, a leader in comparative literature of the Americas, defines a ghost as a prisoner in limbo that hangs between two worlds. She says, "Ghosts are liminal, metamorphic, intermediary: they exist in/between/on modernity's boundaries of physical and spiritual, magical and real, and challenge the lines of demarcation" (Zamora 77-78). Likewise, ghosts are recognized in the Buddhist religion as an intermediate existence occupying a distinct but overlapping world to the human one. Tibetan Buddhists believe that, when humans die, they enter the intermediate *Bardo* state, from which they will be reborn as a human or other creature unless they achieve *Nirvana*, where they are beyond all states of embodiment (Karma-gliṅ-pa and Walter Yeeling Evans-Wentz xxxiii).[17] The Tibetan word

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[17] The term "nirvana" is most commonly associated with Buddhism, and represents an ultimate state of perfect quietude, freedom, and the highest happiness along with being the liberation from *samsara*, the repeating cycle of birth, life, and death. See *Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (Flood, Gavin. *Nirvana*. Ed. John Bowker. *Oxford Dictionary of World*

bardo literally means "intermediate state" and is also translated as "transitional state," "in-between state," or "liminal state."[18] The term "liminality" derives from the word "limen" that designates threshold. Since "the threshold functions simultaneously as both an obstructive barrier and an enticing opening for the entry into unknown," the liminal can be assumed as "a site where difference becomes encounter as well as a location that resists assimilation while simultaneously allowing for the dynamic possibilities of fusion."[19] Often informed by such notions of crossing, intersectionality, transition, and transformation, a specter occupies an ambivalent and hybridized space that "facilitates a process of encounters, engagements, and conversations within, between, among, and across the rich polyphony" that constitutes the dominant discourses on race, class, and gender.

Inheriting these features of a specter—mobility, hybridity, and liminality, the second kind of spectral space can be assumed as a space of fluidity. It acts as what Foucault asserts as "a floating piece of space, a place without a place" that is "closed in on itself and at the same time is given to the infinity" (Foucault 27). It also shares the similarity of Augé's concept of "non-places" that are marked by the "fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral," and convey a sense of transience, such as spaces of "circulation (freeways, airways), consumption (department stores, supermarkets), and communication (telephones, faxes, television, cable networks)" (Augé, *Non-Places* 110). However, I will argue that this kind of spectral space is different from Augé's concept of "non-places," the spaces of "super-modernity" that lack anchoring in history, locality, and identity. Instead, it demonstrates interconnecting flows between specific places and histories. This spectral space is much like Doreen Massey's idea of "routes" that call into question any authentic "roots" of traditions but keep connected with those local lives and traditions.[20] These

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Religions) and *On World Religions: Diversity, Not Dissension*. Ed. Anindita N. Balslev. New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2014.

[18] See "Bardo" on Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bardo. Accessed 22 Apr. 2015.

[19] See SSAWW 2015 CFP. https://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/58456. Accessed 15 Sep. 2014.

[20] Humanist geographer and space theorist Doreen Massey argues in "A Global Sense

routes are multiple instead of single. They are not linear and straightforward. Otherwise, they twist and turn, and interconnect with other routes. In such a kind of space, people are apt to "come into contact with those who haven't moved around, or have come from different places" as well as to "become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity" (Lippard 5-6).

By being hybrid and mobile, the literary representation of a fluid space not only questions the static concepts of home, nation, and the "us/them distinction," but also effectuates the subjects who stay or traverse in it to reconsider his or her relationship to a place (Cresswell 27). In the following, I will show some examples of this kind of spectral space in Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*. I will examine how they function as productive figures in deconstructing one's normative understanding of social or national space that assumes "a tight and relatively immobile connection between a group of people and a site" (39), and in recreating a new sense of belonging for diasporas.

A Bend in the River is set in post-colonial Africa during the early days of Zaire's independence after Belgian colonial rule of Congo. The protagonist, Salim, is a young Indian merchant from a Muslim family on the eastern coast of Africa. By witnessing how his family "continued to live … blindly" without establishing their connection with the locals, he decides to purchase a shop from his friend, Nazruddin, and begin a new life in the ragged African town at a bend in the great river (Naipaul 23). He journeys inland along the river, following the route of Conrad from a coastal city into the "heart of darkness" as well as the route of slavery in reverse (4). And then, in the town at the bend in the river, he builds his business and a new home with a family slave, Metty, and establishes a relationship with Zabeth, a tribal magician and trading woman, Ferdinand, the son of Zabeth, and some other European migrants from the east,

of Place" (1994) that, as geographers or citizens of the globalized world, one of the key political tasks is to forge a "global sense of place" that takes interconnectedness rather than separatism, routes rather than roots, as its foundation. In addition, in her notable work *For Space* (2005), she re-conceptualizes place in term of "routes," in preference to single "roots," and challenges notions of authenticity and identity that set up "place" (the fixity or rootedness of place) and "flow" (the fluidity of global economy) as opposites, whereas in fact, each is necessary to and formative of the other: "Identities are relational in ways that are *spatio*-temporal" (Massey, *For Space* 195).

such as Shoba and Mahesh. He also makes friends with Raymond and Yvette, the couple who live in the New Domain, a group of new buildings that are built on the ruined European suburb to show the Big Man's power in the newly independent country. Later, under the pressure of a serious political insurrection, Salim flies to London to become engaged to Nazruddin's daughter, Kareisha. After he returns to the town, he faces a national crisis of political violence and corruption. He not only finds his shop confiscated, but also experiences imprisonment for smuggling ivory and gold. With the help of Ferdinand, who serves as "an administrative cadet" in the town, Salim leaves the country at the end of the novel (270). In the last scene, he boards a steamer and flees from the inland village to the west coast of Africa.

It is worth noting that Salim travels often, moving from coast city to the inland village, from the village to the New Domain, and between the metropolis London and the formerly colonial Africa. He moves to those places under pressure "in the hope of finding a dwelling" and "surviving energy" (Wu 13). The means of transportation, such as steamer and airplane, play important roles in his journeys. By connecting different places, such as inland and coast, metropolis and colony, Europe and Africa, but without belonging to any of the locations, these means of transportation can be regarded as what I call spaces of fluidity. Marking Salim's temporary movement and his state of in-betweenness in the novel, such spaces of fluidity can disrupt the established discourse of polarities as well as underscore "the possibility of cultural hybridity" (Bhabha 4).

For instance, by bridging and juxtaposing European and African locales that contain similar pointlessly busy populations, undergo similar processes of decay, and are in a similar "self-consumptive state," the airplane serves as a crucial means for Salim to gain awareness of the problems of binary divisions embedded in colonial discourse (Johnson 219). During his visit to London, Salim discovers that "the Europe the airplane brought me to was not the Europe I had known all my life … It was something shrunken and mean and forbidding" (Naipaul 229). He also finds that what he experiences in London is more like the repetition of his life in Africa: "In the streets of London I saw

these people, who were like myself … they traded in the middle of London as they had traded in the middle of Africa" (230). Possessed of this disorientation, he questions the binaries of center and periphery, modernity and tradition, the metropolitan city and the colonial outposts. For him, the difference between London and Africa, "great cities" and "shanty cities," collapses. Thus, we can assume that an airplane acts as a liminal space that not only connects different locations, but also prompts one to revise a binary thinking sustained by the constructed social order and power relationships.

In addition, the airplane propels Salim to develop a new and ambiguous sense of belonging and re-create his relationship with place, history, and other communities. For example, by taking the flight back and forth from central Africa to London, Salim feels a sense of uncertainty that prompts him to question the essentialist thinking about home and nation, and the boundary between empire and colony. Salim's rich and educated Punjabi friend, Indar, assumes the airplane as "a wonderful thing": "You are still in one place when you arrive at the other. The aeroplane is faster than the heart … You stop grieving … You trample on the past" (Naipaul 119-20). Marked by its transience and mobility, the airplane seems to relate to Augé's concept of "non-places" and suggest a "global" identity, which is detached from feelings, local connection, and the past (Appiah 167-68). However, the celebration of freedom here turns out to be a deception. When Salim takes a flight to London, he not only feels "travelling fast" and "being in two places at once," but also develops a sense of uncertainty: "Both places were real; both places were unreal. You could play off one against another; and you had no feeling of having made a final decision, a great last journey" (Naipaul 229). Traveling by air to London makes him recognize his state as a visitor, a traveler or "a man just passing by" (95).

This sense of uncertainty is strengthened and turned into anxieties during his stay in the hotel in London. He claims, "I hated that hotel room. It made me feel I was nowhere. It forced old anxieties on me and added new ones, about London, about this bigger world where I would have to make my way" (231). The "old anxieties" are what he experiences in the middle of Africa

where "all was arbitrary" and "all our lives were fluid" and "isolated" (190). The airplane doesn't bring him a sense of security or make him feel attached to the arrived city. On the contrary, it leads to his "disbelief in belongingness" (Wu 129):

> That idea of going home, of leaving, the idea of the other place—I had lived with it in various forms for many years. In Africa it had always been with me. In London, in my hotel room, I had allowed it on some nights to take me over. It was a deception. I saw now that it comforted only to weaken and destroy … There could be no going back; there was nothing to go back to. We had become what the world outside had made us; we had to live in the world as it existed. (Naipaul 244)

Salim gains an insight of his diasporic condition in the postcolonial world, where no place remains as the ultimate home. This sense of displacement or "unhomeliness" deconstructs "the old discourse of rootedness" and turns him into a "traveler who searches for an identity that is constantly in flux" (Boer 15). The airplane here acts as a space of fluidity in which none of the subjects feels an authentic relationship with any place, and their identities are always ambiguous, always both and neither at the same time.

The river in the novel serves as another instance of this kind of spectral space—a place of fluidity, liminality, and changeability. It is more than a fixed line cutting through the African landscape, but an avenue of commerce and a place where different people and cultures meet and mix. Besides, it plays a prominent role in Salim's journey. Along the river, Salim travels from his Indian family's home on the east coast of Africa to the inland village and then from the middle part of Africa to the west coast. Thus, the river here can be perceived as a mobile and hybrid space that not only connects worlds of difference, but also is itself a world of difference, within which negotiation and interaction between various and contrasting visions take place.

The water hyacinths—the "dark floating islands on the dark

river"—represent such a hybrid and mobile nature of the river (Naipaul 46). As the new-breeding plants in the river, these water hyacinths grow very fast, floating on the river day and night, and traveling long away. For the local people, they are an unfamiliar existence with dark power:

> It was as if rain and river were tearing away bush from the heart of the continent and floating it down to the ocean, incalculable miles away. But the water hyacinth was the fruit of the river alone. The tall lilac-coloured flower had appeared only a few years before, and in the local language there was no word for it. The people still called it "the new thing" or "the new thing in the river," and to them it was another enemy. (46)

The bush or the forest is described as the place "full of spirits" and hovered by "the protecting presences of a man's ancestors" in the novel (65). The new plant that seems to come from the bush can be perceived as associated with the spirits of the dead. Besides, its fertility shows its monstrosity and conveys a sense of gothic horror: "Its rubbery vines and leaves formed thick tangles of vegetation that adhered to the river banks and clogged up waterways. It grew fast, faster than men could destroy it with the tools they had" (46). I would like to suggest that the spectral presence of this new enemy in the river questions the static concept of origin. Its association with the bush and the ghosts, its unfamiliarity, and its immeasurable fertility threaten people's sense of security based on essentialist notions of home, rootedness, and binary divisions between life and death.

When the water hyacinths symbolize a new and aggressive resistance to the idea of essence, the river that breeds and spreads these new plants can be regarded as a space of creativity and becoming that propels the characters to recreate their identities. For example, by moving from one place to another along the river, Salim develops a critical attitude toward an essentialist notion of identity. He questions the Big Man's agenda of nationalizing his country through practices of territorial and racial purity. He realizes that "the process of

nationalization," which highlights ancestral belonging by excluding all non-African populations, doesn't "produce a new nation for its citoyens and citoyennes, but rather a new space of unbelonging" (Johnson 224). In other words, the river undermines his belief in an identity rooted in the binary politics of race, gender, and sexuality.

Furthermore, the river propels Salim to establish a new and fluid identity. Leon claims:

> Mobility creates multiple centres of consciousness in which the self feels that it is participating in several cultural traditions without being at home. Theses displacements, either real or imagined, create a sense of "unhomeliness" which can be defined as the obscure feelings that simultaneously draw and repel a person in her relations to a place. (Leon 15)

He also argues that "the fragmented, fluid places of travel represent sites for negotiating identity" in which the traveler is up to "reclaim, retrieve or create a home and a sense of belonging" (18). In the novel, by traveling frequently on the river, which contains diverse traces of histories, natural lives, and human practices, and which is always in the process of becoming, Salim develops a new sense of belonging. When Salim keeps searching for home and a place for arriving during the journey, he is also constantly placed in a situation of something new, unknown, and unexpected. He not only experiences complex political power relationships, but also participates in different cultural exchanges. Gradually, he establishes a new identity, an "identity-en-route," that is always fluid, transitory, and "in the act of 'becoming'" (66). In the final scene, as he takes a steamer to float away from the village, the river appears spectral and creates a sense of unhomeliness in his mind: "The air would have been full of moths and flying insects. The searchlight, while it was on, has shown thousands, white in the white light" (Naipaul 278). The thousands of moths and flying insects in the white misty air upon the river convey a gothic sense of the river in which something unknown and ghostly seem to happen.

Being haunting and consuming throughout the novel, the dark fluid river shows us an endless life journey without points of departure and arrival as well as a mobile identity in the postcolonial world.

Spectral Space as Space of Uncannyness

Specters are always uncanny since they mark a conflation of the real and the unreal, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the otherness within the self, and the return of the repressed. The notion of the uncanny derives from Freud's essay "The Uncanny," which defines it as "the class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar"—the coming together of strangeness and intimacy, the disturbing overlap between terror and comfort (Freud 1). He further explains that such a feeling of "dread and creeping horror" arises when "infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when the primitive beliefs which have been surmounted is seen once more to be confirmed" (245). For Freud, an uncanny moment is one in which repressed psychic material from the past returns repetitively in the present and haunts from generation to generation. Terry Castle further argues that the uncanny stands for an unseen realm beyond knowledge, the "darkness" that is "invented" by systems of reasoning in the "light" of the Enlightenment (Castle, *The Female Thermometer* 8). It is something inexplicable and banished from established knowledge, but appears darkly seductive and always sets off returns in the future.

As a spirit of the dead that exists outside the framework of temporal and spatial distinctions as well as beyond rational thoughts, a specter is uncanny. It usually appears to people in a foreign, incomprehensible, unfamiliar, and even fearful way. In the western gothic tradition, a specter is usually invisible but brings chill, smell, and noises. Derrida considers it an invisible visibility—"the visibility of a body which is not present in flesh and blood" (Derrida and Stiegler 115), and as "non-object," "non-present present," "being-there of an absent or departed one" (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 6). By always "confronting us with what precedes and exceeds our sense of autonomy, seeing us without

being seen," this specter can be regarded as "a figure of absolute alterity (existing both outside and within us)" that cannot be anticipated, but always demands "a certain responsibility and answerability" (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 33). Since the spirit of a deceased person that remains present in the material world is regarded as an unnatural or undesirable state of affairs, the idea of the specter is associated with a feeling of fear and terror.

Likewise, in other cultural traditions, a specter or ghost appears in an uncanny manner. A *revenant* in European folklore refers to "a deceased person returning from the dead to haunt the living, either as a disembodied ghost or alternatively as an animated ('undead') corpse" (Pettigrove 68). It sometimes looks pale or transparent, and sometimes appears fearsome with "extreme forms of human life" like the ghost in Africa and Asia (Mbembe 11). By re-reading two Tutuola's texts, *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, Mbembe shows the diverse shapes of ghostly terror and violence. On one hand, he argues that ghost terror derives from the deformity and the ugliness of the ghost's body that "allow ghostly power to acquire this ability to double and to divide into a multiplicity of opposites" (11). On the other hand, he claims that operating through murder, capture, noise, and caprice, ghostly violence shows the concrete power of ghosts, which is tied to the world of terror. Similar to its western counterpart, the ghosts in this context are associated with "the fearsome machinations of an illogical, ungraspable system that negates all singularity and security, and imposes a constant threat of dismemberment and death" (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 95).

As a figure beyond rationality or as the repressed one from the past that recurs persistently in the present to demand attention, a specter is always haunting and provoking senses of anxiety, fear, and terror in the mind of the living. Based upon these aspects of specter, I would like to suggest the third kind of spectral space as a space of uncanny-ness that, by being alien, chaotic, threatening, or unpredictable, functions as the opposite of reformed, hierarchical, and mapped space. It can be a place haunted by specters, like a location where irrevocable violence has been committed and traumatic memories recur. It can also be a natural landscape that remains foreign and

impenetrable to human beings. To paraphrase Mbembe, it can be "a world of images," "a field of visions: fantasies, strange spaces, masks, surprises, and astonishment," and a space escaping from "synthesis and geometry" (Mbembe 5). In such spectral space, one is caught between the past and the present, the intimate and the exposed, the familiar and the frightening, and one will develop a sense of uncertainty and doubt about rationality as well as the dominant notions of time, space, and identity.

The wild and monstrous landscapes act as this kind of spectral space in many colonial and postcolonial works set in Africa. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the wilderness is "a region of a wild or desolate character, or in which one wanders or loses one's way." In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the wilderness refers to "a world where the law of nature reigns, a world over which the first act of culture, Adam's act of naming, has not been performed" (Coetzee, *White Writing* 49). Marking spaces of unruliness and desolation, the ones that are naturally born instead of being made, the wilderness plays an important role in the colonial history of Africa. When the white colonizers tried to tame the African land, to feel "at home in" or "at harmony with" it, or to "maintain a border separating a region of order and culture … from the barbarian wilderness," the wild and natural aspect of it was always failing their wishes (10). As Luce Irigaray has observed: "Even as man seeks to rise higher and higher—in his knowledge too—so the ground fractures more and more beneath his feet. 'Nature' is forever dodging his project of representation, of reproduction. And his grasp" (Irigaray 134). Likewise, fraught with mysteries and indecipherable violence, the nature of African landscape always appears frightening and uncanny to the colonizers. It not only remains un-representable in dominant narratives, but also arouses a sense of anxiety and fear within the mind of the colonizers.

In Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing,* the bush serves as a good example of this kind of spectral space. JanMohamed identifies the world of the African bush and high-veldt as "uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil" (JanMohamed 83). What he argues shows that the bush always looks unfamiliar and threatening to the white colonizers. Although most of

them can live a carefree life in the suburban world by reforming the land, none of them can avoid suffering from the fears when they confront its harshness. In the novel, the bush signifies an immeasurable force of darkness and otherness to the white protagonist, Mary Tuner. Mary was once an efficient secretary in town. After she marries Dick Turner, the white farmer in South Rhodesia, they move to the farmhouse that is surrounded by the bush in the country. When she first arrives there, she is totally terrified by "a wild nocturnal sound" of a bird, feeling "as if a hostile breath had blown upon her, from another world, from the trees" (Lessing 69). In her imagination, the bush marks an eternal and violent existence that will swallow their house one day after they leave the farm:

> She had never become used to the bush, never felt at home in it … Often in the night she woke and thought of the small brick house, like a frail shell that might crush inwards under the presence of the hostile bush. Often she thought how, if they left this place, one wet fermenting season would swallow the small cleared space, and send the young trees thrusting up from the floor, pushing aside brick and cement, so that in a few months there would be nothing left but heaps of rubble about the trunks of the trees. (187)

For Mary, the bush is there forever, haunting and destructive. As the title of the book suggests, whether people stay there or not, the grass is always singing. The vastness and darkness of the bush, which hasn't been deformed yet or can't be reformed completely by whites, endows itself with a mystic and uncanny power that gradually erodes Mary's sense of time and her certainty of white superiority.

On one hand, the bush functions as a space of otherness that challenges the authenticity of white domination, which establishes the distribution between rich White land and poor Black land, between the dominant urban area and marginal rural one. Through spatial and narrative practices, the Empire and the colonizers tried to establish "place attachment" to foreign and unfamiliar

landscapes of the colonies. Said has analyzed three examples of imperialist geographical domination. The most general is to transform the colony into "images of what they left behind" by installing their own plants, animals, crops, and building methods. It usually brings the colony "new diseases, environmental imbalances and traumatic dislocation for the overpowered natives" (Said 225). The second way is to rationalize the long-term territorial possession, which implies the capitalistic exploitation of the colonial territory. The third is to transform the colonial space, such as anglicizing the names and conducting many geographical surveys for further expropriation of land in favor of "seigniorial families," in order that it won't look "foreign to the imperial eye" (226). Enforced during the colonial encounter, these three ways of geographical domination not only deform the existing land, but also install a traumatic relationship between the original inhabitants and newcomers. However, by refusing to be domesticated and to emerge into meaningful signs within imperialist narratives, the wilderness or the African bush calls into question the white settlers' attempts to control and to create habitality in the unfamiliar and natural landscapes in Africa.

On the other hand, by signifying the uncanny existence of the native, the bush suspends the hierarchy between black and white, colonizer and colonized, higher and lower class. For Mary, the bush is not only made monstrous by its uncanny atmosphere, but also through its symbolic relationship with the native. By associating the bush with the hostile emotions and dark bodies of the native workers, Mary transforms her fear of the trees into her dread of Moses, the native servant at her house. She becomes weaker and weaker in her struggle with Moses and gradually relies on him. The hierarchical relationship and convention between white and black, mistress and servant are finally broken. The climax comes in the murder scene in the last chapter. Mary's last thought comes out before Moses kills her, "the bush avenged itself." And the narrator adds, "The trees advanced in a rush, like beasts, and the thunder was the noise of their coming" (Lessing 243). While the bush is described as something monstrous that "advanced in a rush," I can't help arguing that it might be because the spirits of the dead black ancestors

who have suffered under colonial exploitation invade the body of the bush, return to the world of the living, and take revenge against the white oppressor. Here, the images of the bush and the native mingle and act as the primary source of action. They present a subversive critique of what Mary holds to be true—about race, class, and white domination. In a broader sense, the bush, by persistently haunting Mary until her death, functions to fail the white colonizers' attempt to exploit the natives and their land.

There is a similar example of such an uncanny space in Coetzee's *Age of Iron* (1990). The novel takes the form of a letter-diary from a white Cape Town resident, Mrs. Curren, who is a retired classics professor dying of cancer, to her daughter in America. She details a series of strange events that turn her protected middle-class life upside down. As a "political liberal who has always considered herself a 'good person' in deploring the government's obfuscatory and brutal policies," Mrs. Curren acknowledges her complicity in upholding the system after she experiences directly the horrors of apartheid (*Publishers Weekly*). The only person with whom she can communicate and get along is a homeless alcoholic appearing at her door. She asks him to be her messenger after her death and to mail the packet of her letters to her daughter. In her letters, she "records the rising tide of militancy among young blacks," who are "brave, defiant and vengeful," and mark "a generation whose hearts have turned to iron." She depicts the earth of South Africa as a space of specters that brings the white settlers an indescribable anxiety for the revenge of the black. She says,

> Let me tell you, when I walk upon this land, this South Africa, I have a gathering feeling of walking upon black faces. They are dead but their spirit has not left them. They lie there heavy and obdurate, waiting for my feet to pass, waiting for me to go, waiting to be raised up again. Millions of figures of pig iron floating under the skin of the earth. The age of iron waiting to return. (Coetzee, *Age of Iron* 115)

By projecting and inflicting African spirituality and monstrosity to the land of South Africa, the white narrator is haunted by the possible return of the dead and the repressed other. She gradually feels uncertain about her attachment to the lived space. She is forced to reconsider the following questions: Whose land is it that she lives on and becomes attached to? Is it really possible to claim an attachment to the unfamiliar land of South Africa? The answers become unclear and her feeling of anxiety seems to obscure her understanding of relevant history, including the history of imperialism, as well as her construction of a stable and superior identity. In contrast to the mapped and secure space in the metropolis or the empire, the African landscape is spectral, uncanny, and hostile to the white settlers, so that it keeps reminding them of their internal fears of the unknown others. The landscape mocks their vain efforts to reign or control the inhabitants and their land.

Conclusion

Spectrality is intimately connected with certain locations. From mysterious deserts and dense forests, to haunted houses and urban labyrinths, specters haunt and traverse many varied landscapes, both internal and external, historic and contemporary, from which disturbing atmospheres emerge. Conceptualizing the specter as a differentiated concept, spectral space emerges as a diverse trope. It is called by a variety of names, represented in plural forms, and capable of producing divergent effects. In this chapter, I have defined spectral space as a space of heterogeneous time, a space of fluidity, and a space of uncanny-ness. Marking the crossing of the past and the present, inside and outside, self and other, each kind of spectral space provides a critique of the essentialist notions of time, space, race, and nationality. Its existence not only questions the authenticity of mapped and functionalized space, but also undermines established narratives and identities. In addition, inheriting the otherness and un-decidability of a specter, spectral space is surely always complex and mobile. Due to its multiplicity and changeability, it is destined to haunt the present and the dominant, and will never be exorcised completely. In

other words, spectral space functions as an alternative to the contemporary power system and ideologies. It ceaselessly directs our attention to internal and external otherness, as well as to the "future struggles for recognition, respect, and justice of those identified as non-masculine, non-heterosexual and/or non-white" (Blanco and Peeren, *Spectralities Reader* 20).

Chapter II

The Ghost's Language and the Re-creation of Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*

> The ghost makes itself known to us through haunting and pulls us effectively into the structure of feeling as a reality we come to experience as a recognition. (Gordon 63)

In today's world, ghosts invade our popular culture, literature, and academic and critical discourses. In contrast to the living, ghosts are a non-present presence. They are real, but usually invisible and inacessible. Therefore, they have been employed as metaphors of absent presence or irreducible otherness in cultural imaginations.[21] For instance, unlike the ancestors worshiped by Asians from generation to generation, ghosts have usually been feared and ignored. They represent something unspeakable or forgotten, such as family secrets and repressed memories, or someone who has been unknown to or excluded from the community, including strangers, foreigners, and social outcasts. In China, the term "ghost" is used to refer to those who are different and regarded as others, such as foreigners who are called White or Black Ghosts, while the despised are referred to as "Nasty" Ghosts. Likewise, in America and Canada, immigrants and homosexuals are usually depicted as

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[21] In Morrison's 1988 Tanner Lecture at the University of Michigan, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature," she argues, "We can agree, I think, that invisible things are not necessarily 'not there'; that a void may be empty, but is not a vacuum. In addition, certain absences are so stressed, so ornate, so planned, they call attention to themselves; arrest us with intentionality and purpose, like neighborhoods that are defined by the population held away from them" (Morrison, "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" 11). The connection between this argument and the ghostly presence in Morrison's *Beloved* shows that a ghost can be employed as a metaphor of absent presence that has the power to haunt or draw attention.

being spectral or spooky because of their invisibility. In African-American culture, ghosts refer to the spirits of the black ancestors who suffered the brutality of slavery, and thus represent the traumatic memories of African Americans, which are ignored or oppressed by society.

Due to the similarities among ghosts in different cultures, increasing scholarly attention has been paid to the functions of literary ghosts in representing the marginalized, the repressed, and the silenced other and history in literature, especially ethnic American literature. Avery Gordon argues that "to write stories concerning exclusions and invisibilities" is "to write ghost stories" (Gordon 17). Brogan claims that the "enactment of commemorative ritual" is always taking place during one's confrontation with ghosts (Brogan 138). Accordingly, ghosts play an important role in representing history and the voices of minority people from alternate and competing perspectives. On one hand, ghost stories are employed to consider the mechanism of spectralization and how such processes of othering are utilized by the ideologies of patriarchy, capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, and sexism to label someone or something as ghostly and so create or maintain inequality in the society. On the other hand, the haunting of ghosts in ethnic American literature speaks to "the potential emergence of a different story and a competing history" (Weinstock 64). Their presences not only represent "our desires for truth and justice," but also "our longing for a coherent and 'correct' narrative of history" (64).

In order to learn or recognize "a different story and a competing history" the ghosts brought about, one needs to learn the ghost's language or their ways of speaking. As Brogan argues, each literary ghost represents a specific form of "cultural hauntings" that reflect "the increased emphasis on ethnic and cultural differentiation in all social groups" (Brogan 4). Peeren and Horstkotte further claim, "Alterity is radically specified and differentiated: there is no singular alterity, but a plethora of forms of alterity, each of which interacts with identity in its own manner" (Peeren and Horstkotte 10). Since the figures of ghosts appear in different forms and interact with the living in different manners, a careful consideration of each ghost's specific alterity in each literary work is needed. By performing a reading of ghost stories written by

three minority woman writers—Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975), and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan* (1981), I will examine how the literary representations of female ghosts are used to reflect the problems faced by different ethnic groups and sexualities in North America, and how their specific ways of haunting—their distinctive ways of speaking—function to negotiate the past and revise individual and group identities.

Female Ghosts in Ethnic Woman Writing

Female ghosts are prominent in various cultural imaginations from folktales to works of literature. For instance, White Lady legends are popular in many countries. It is a type of female ghost reported to appear in rural areas in Great Britain, Ireland, and the United States. Common to many of them is the theme of losing or being betrayed by a husband, boyfriend, or fiancé. In addition, ghosts in Asian literature and cinema are predominantly female. They are usually angry and violent, returning to seek revenge against men who oppressed them during their lifetimes. Compared to the ghost stories in which the main characters are male, the stories of female ghosts are usually used to reflect the problems women encountered in their time. The *cheonyeogwishins*, the most renowned and ferocious virgin ghosts in Korea, who are portrayed as extremely scary ghosts with long, black, and disheveled hair but no legs, wearing white dresses, keep haunting the men of society. The stories of *cheonyeogwishins* were told because women in them suffered much under the domination of men and had no right to speak for themselves. However, through the stories, women could express their hatred toward the men who oppressed them.

Morrison's *Beloved*, Kingston's *The Woman Warrior,* and Kogawa's *Obasan* function as the type of ghost stories in which the figure of female ghosts signifies the repression of histories and identities of minority women. They also serve as the stories of "cultural haunting" and represent various forms of alterity through the metaphor of the ghost. Morrison's *Beloved* begins

with the baby ghost of Beloved haunting thouse No. 124. Beloved is Sethe's baby daughter, murdered by Sethe in a desperate bid to save her from the misery of slavery when her white owners tried to catch her and her children, and bring them back to Sweet Home. Connected to the oppression of African Americans, the ghost of Beloved represents the unspeakable past and the traumatic memories of slavery. She is "not only the spirit of Sethe's daughter," but also "the projection of the repressed collective memory of a violated people" (Heinze 179).[22]

Subtitled "Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts," Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* begins with the story of the No Name Woman—the narrator's nameless aunt who became pregnant during the "starvation time," a period when "to be a woman, to have a daughter … was waste enough" (Kingston 6). Moreover, the narrator notes that adultery, "perhaps only a mistake during good times, became a crime when the villagers needed food" (13). In order to punish

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[22] Much of the critical response to the novel involved the representation of Beloved, including her ghostly presence and her resurrection. In Sharon Patricia Holland's *Raising the Dead: Readings of Death and (Black) Subjectivity* (2000), Morrison's *Beloved* has been conceived as "recuperating a black culture as were most of the nation's black subjects" by allowing "a BLACK FEMALE 'ghost' with agency to possess and destroy the house and sense of home" and "to tell the story of a death-in-life" (Holland 2-4). Several literary critics also have commented on the intersection between the figure of Beloved's ghost and the loss and recovery of African American history and identity. See Bernard Bell, "*Beloved*: A Womanist Neo-Slave Narrative; or Multivocal Remembrances of Things Past," *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 7-15; Emily Miller Budick, "Absence, Loss and the Space of History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *Arizona Quarterly* 48.2 (1992): 117-38; Stephanie A. Demetrakopoulos, "Maternal Bonds as Devourers of Woman's Individuation in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," *African American Review* 26.1 (1992): 51-60; Deborah Horvitz, "Nameless Ghosts: Possession and Dispossession in *Beloved*," *Studies in American Fiction* 17.2 (1989): 157-67; Sally Keenan, "Four Hundred Years of Silence: Myth, History, and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Recasting the World: Writing after Colonialism*, ed. Jonathan White. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993. 45-81; Linda Krumholz, "The Ghosts of Slavery: Historical Recovery in Toni Morrison's Beloved," *African American Review* 26.3 (1992): 395-408; David Lawrence, "Fleshy Ghosts and Ghostly Flesh: The Word and the Body in Beloved," *Studies in American Fiction* 19.2 (1991): 189-201; Barbara Hill Rigby, "'A Story to Pass On': Ghosts and the Significance of History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," in *Haunting the House of Fiction*, eds. Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar, Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1991, 229-35; Carol E. Schmudde, "The Haunting of 124," *African American Review* 26.3 (1992): 409-16; and Molly Abel Travis, "Beloved and Middle Passage: Race, Narrative and the Critics Essentialism," Narrative 2.3 (1994): 179-200.

the nameless aunt for "acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them" and for creating a break in the "roundness" of the community, the villagers attack the family house. After they leave, the family curses the aunt: "Aiaa, we're going to die. Death is coming. Look what you have done. You've killed us. Ghost! Dead ghost! Ghost! You've never been born" (13-14). Here the term "ghost" is used to signify shame and exclusion. Eventually, Kingston's aunt commits suicide by throwing herself and the baby into the community well and becomes a real ghost, wandering endlessly alone with no family member willing to remember or worship her. Marked as a stain on the family history, the aunt is deliberately forgotten and silenced. Jennifer Griffiths claims that the aunt's story acts as a "pedagogy of shame" (Bartky 225) that "instructs young girls to learn about the inherent danger and corruption of their bodies" (Griffiths 356). As such, the ghost of the nameless aunt represents the suppression of womanhood in a patriarchal society in general and more specifically, the oppression of Chinese American women in the United States.

Although ghosts are not directly represented in Kogawa's *Obasan*, the absent mother frustrates and haunts the protagonist, Naomi, from the beginning of the novel: "But we're trapped, Obasan and I, by our memories of the dead—all our dead—those who refuse to bury themselves" (Kogawa 30). She continues, "When I least expect it, a memory comes skittering out of the dark, spinning and netting the air, ready to snap me up and ensnare me in old and complex puzzles … and the old question comes thudding out of the night again like a giant moth. Why did my mother not return?" (30-31). Later, the text reveals that Naomi's mother left Canada to take care of Grandma in Japan, but was killed during the bombing of Nagasaki. In order to protect children from the sorrowful truth, the family erases these facts from the family narrative. The silencing of the mother's death not only symbolizes repressed family memories, but also represents the historical absence of Canadian Japanese during War World II.

These three novels demonstrate the ways in which ghosts expose the individual traumas as well as racial and patriarchal oppression of minority people in North America. In addition, they show the deep connection between

the silencing of the ghost and the loss of identity of other protagonists of the community. The voices or the stories of the female ghosts in all the novels are either suppressed or fragmented. The absence of the ghosts' voices illustrates that the dominant narratives, whether attempting to oppress, warn, or protect someone, repress the shameful and traumatic past. And the act of forgetting or silencing seems to prevent the living characters from developing a sense of certainty about their identities.

However, the ghosts don't merely represent metaphors of erasure or repression. In her 2003 essay about the Chinese diaspora in Australia, Wenche Ommundsen employs a term, "tough ghosts," mentioned by one of her interviewed subjects, to describe the resilient yet spectral presence and power of cultural traditions among the immigrant community. What she suggests is that the ghostly presence doesn't always lead to disturbing or destructive consequences for the diaspora; in some cases it may help to preserve elements of the cultural past in the face of pressures or struggles of identification in a patriarchal and racial society. By portraying the strong presence of female ghosts and their vivid interaction with living characters, the three writers also employ ghosts as a powerful medium that enables healing of the traumatic past and re-creation of a more communal identity.

So far, less attention has been paid to how female ghosts manifest themselves to the living when their voices are silenced. If words or the symbolic order are the sources of oppression, what kinds of alternative language do they use to convey their otherness? Putting these questions in a more specific way: what is a ghost's language? What is the difference between normal language and ghostly language? How does this alternative language function in the revision of suppressed memory and identity? In order to investigate the role and function of literary representation of ghosts in these minority novels, this chapter will explore the mechanism of spectralization—the ways in which the minority others are created and maintained in the system of demarcation and exclusion, as well as the language of ghosts—the ways ghosts interact with the living. I divide the chapter into three parts. The first part investigates the relationship between the construction

of dominant narratives and the loss of history/identity in minority experience. By illustrating different forms of linguistic oppression, especially the practices of silencing and forgetting, I elaborate how these narrative practices silence the voices, histories, and identities of minority people. The second part explores two kinds of ghost's language that the female ghosts employ to manifest themselves to the living. This part examines how each language functions to reconstruct suppressed memories and identities. In the final part, I summarize the key ideas that I discuss throughout the chapter and assert a ghost as a narrative figure of diversity that plays a vital role in re-creating a more inclusive and communal future for minority people.

The Violence of Language and the Silencing of the Other

King-kok Cheung claims, "Language issued by the powerful … can constitute a form of speech act, commanding performance" (Cheung 128). When it is turned into a social discourse that intends to assume the wholeness and authenticity of the dominant, biases and oppression become unavoidable. Morrison has spoken of the oppression that exists within language. She claims in her Nobel lecture that language, especially racial discourse, "limits knowledge" by "hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek" and locks "creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness" (Morrison, *Lecture* 18). Rather than functioning as a "device for grappling with meaning, providing guidance, or expressing love," language acts as something she calls "tongue-suicide" (15). It has been used "to impose, enforce and naturalize apparently essential differences, denying or preventing the possibility of multiplicity within divisions" (Jones 218). In order to discipline literal foreignness, racist language makes efforts "at producing foreignness" in its representation of the other by its "simultaneous exploitation and repression of linguistic foreignness" (Saunders 215).

The three texts in this chapter demonstrate how dominant people employ language to establish the binary hierarchy of self and other. In *Beloved*, Schoolteacher and his pupils use their writing to define black bodies as animals

in order to produce a superior self. In *The Woman Warrior*, the protagonist's boss at an art supply house uses the term "nigger yellow" to address the Chinese American in public in order to confirm the imagined superiority of White Americans (Kingston 48). Naomi also finds that the public narratives during the Second World War constructed Japanese Canadians as the despised other. She says: "None of us … escaped the naming. We were defined and identified by the way we were seen. A newspaper in B.C. headlined: 'They are a stench in the nostrils of the people of Canada.' We were therefore relegated to the cesspools" (Kogawa 139-40). By naming the other and securing its "one meaning," the one that seems "so obvious that one cannot see how it could be otherwise," the discriminative discourse produces a negative identity of the other, and naturalizes conceptual boundaries between self and other (Fish 277).

The performative reiteration of dominant narratives not only conditions the drastic display of power upon minority groups, but also frames their negative conception of themselves. On one hand, the authority employs a constructive discourse as a powerful medium in the acts of dominating the others. Such a discourse causes the sufferings of subordinated groups. For example, in *Obasan*, the Canadian government enacted racism during the war through official speeches that assigned Japanese Canadians as others and enemies. It also whitewashed the prisons as "interior housing projects" and the internment camps as relocation camps through their construction of duplicitous discourse. Under such linguistic oppression, Naomi's family was forced to fall apart and move from their home into remote and unfamiliar places.

On the other hand, the reiteration of dominant discourses impels the dominated people to accept the dominant criteria in shaping their identities. Chicana feminist theorist Gloria Anzaldúa claims, "When we, the objects, become the subjects, and look at and analyze our own experiences, a danger arises that we may look through the master's gaze, speak through his tongue, use his methodology" (Anzaldua xxiii). This adoption of the master's language and cognitive frame always dissociates the oppressed subject from constructing his or her identity. Young Maxine's valorization of speech conveys her unquestioning acceptance of the Western notion of silence as the absence of

brain and lack of personality. When she bullies the mute girl in her school, she says, "If you don't talk, you can't have a personality" (Kingston 180). It reveals not only her belief in the power of words, but also her preference for the Western criteria. However, she is unable to stick to the values of white society. When she criticizes her Chinese culture from the white perspective, she is also continually "reminded as an other in the dominant culture" (Cheung 93). Her assimilation of both white racism and Chinese patriarchal oppression of women confuses her and makes it difficult for her to develop a sense of confidence and assert her identity.

I will now specifically explore one of the important narrative practices in the act of domination—the silencing of the other. Addressing it as "a direct consequence of prohibition," Cheung argues that the process of silencing takes at least two forms: collective oppression and individual repression (Cheung 3). Collective oppression includes the official's construction of dominant narratives, the community's act of forgetting, and the family's hiding of shameful secrets. Individual repression is associated with a personal repression of traumatic memories or the deliberate denial of one's past due to a sense of guilt. Both forms of silencing lead to the absence of language that is related to the loss of memory and the lack of subjectivity.

In *Beloved,* the histories of black slavery are percieved as an unspeakable knowledge. They are suppressed in official, communal, and even individual narratives. For instance, the story of Beloved's death is silenced and forgotten by the community and Sethe. Though Sethe chooses to live with Beloved's ghost, she refuses to remember the tragic event—the memories of her life at Sweet Home and murder of her own baby. Both collective and individual acts of denying and forgetting the past prevent Sethe from establishing connection with other members of the community. By allowing herself to be haunted and devoured by the angry baby ghost, she can't help feeling a sense of uncertainty and almost loses her life.

In *The Woman Warrior*, both the white authorities and her family silence the second-generation Chinese American heroine, Maxine. When the immigration authorities threaten to send the Chinese immigrants back to China,

Maxine is forced to stay silenced in front of the white Americans. She states, "We had so many secrets to hold in … There were secrets never to be said in front of the (white) ghosts, immigration secrets whose telling could get us sent back to China" (Kingston 182-83). In addition, since she and other children "had been born among the (white) ghosts, were taught by ghosts and were ourselves ghostlike," their parents usually keep the secrets from them. When Maxine has no access to the family history, she is unable to remember and tell her own story. She says, "How could I have that memory when I couldn't talk? My mother says that we, like the ghosts, have no memories" (Kingston 167). Duncan explains further, "She cannot remember because she cannot speak; she cannot speak because she cannot remember" (Duncan 186). Finally, her lack of memory and speech turns her into a ghost like her nameless aunt. Her muteness is "suggestive of the repercussions of being unnamed, misnamed, or distorted through stereotypical representations in the United States" (25).

Besides, by withholding the aunt's story from young Maxine and forbidding her to talk about it, the family silences both the voices of the female ancestor and the young protagonist. Exiled by her family, the nameless aunt has no opportunity to tell the story of her past, her lover, or her silent birth. Similarly, the family tries to prevent the young Maxine from telling the story of her aunt as it acts as a threat to the security of the family. Warned repeatedly by her mother, "You must not tell anyone," the protagonist begins to believe that "sex was unspeakable" and that her aunt would do her father "mysterious harm" (Kingston 3). Through her silence, she keeps punishing her aunt and leaves her aunt alone in solitude.

The silencing of her aunt results in young Maxine's subjugation of her desire, creativity, and identity. It reminds the young protagonist of the corruption of female sexuality. By internalizing the gaze of the hostile witness to female sexuality, she develops a sense of negativity toward being female. She keeps claiming, "I am not a bad girl … I'm not a girl" (Kingston 46). In addition, she regards her creativity and the adventurous person in her head as expressions of her imminent insanity. She says, "I thought every house had to have its crazy woman or crazy girl, every village its idiot. Who would it be at

our house? Probably me" (189). Rather than appreciating her sensitivity to the arts, she interprets it as a symptom of mental weakness and insanity.

In *Obasan*, the Canadian government's silencing of the experiences of Japanese Canadians in dominant and historical narratives not only causes undesirable collective amnesia, but also leads to the loss of identity of Japanese Canadians. Naomi says:

> We are hammers and chisels … the fragments of fragments that fly like arrows from the heart of the rock. We are the silences that speak from the stone. We are the despised rendered voiceless, stripped of car, radio, camera, and every means of communication … We are the Issei and the Nisei and the Sansei, the Japanese Canadians. We disappear into the future undemanding as dew. (Kogawa 132)

Rendered voiceless or anonymous, Japanese Canadians are regarded as a species that never existed. "Dew" can be read as a metaphor of fragility, evanescence, and something that can be easily wiped out. It signifies that the histories and identities of Japanese Canadians are ignored under the linguistic and social oppression of the Canadian government. Thus, when Naomi revisits the ghost town of Slocan, the place where her brother, Obasan and she had lived during the Second World War, she can't find any traces of their presence there. Instead, she finds "the site of an erasure, a significant absence" (Jones 219). She doubts, "What remains of our time there" (Kogawa 139)? Without leaving any traces in the place and passing down any documents of their internment, Naomi and many other Japanese Canadians lose their memories, voices, and the certainty of their identities.

In addition, the family's suppression of their traumatic experiences and Naomi's repression of her personal trauma are acts of silencing that lead to the fragmentation of Naomi's memory and identity. Since Naomi's family was forced to separate and her mother was killed in the atomic bombing during the war, the family thinks it's better to keep silent about these memories in order to

protect Naomi from the sorrowful truths. The narrator says, **"**Everywhere I could hear the adults whispering, 'Kodomo no tame. For the sake of the children'" (Kogawa 26). Naomi's memories of her mother "were drowned in a whirlpool of protective silence" (26).

Naomi also becomes silenced due to her guilt and shame, which were generated by her own traumatic experience of sexual abuse. Cheung notes, "Most victims of rape seal their lip in shame" (Cheung 143). After being sexually abused by Old Man Gower, Naomi dares not tell her mother about it. She feels that she becomes "other—a parasite on her body, no longer of her mind" (Kogawa 77). She claims, "If I tell my mother about Mr. Gower, the alarm will send a tremor through our bodies and I will be torn from her." (77). After her molestation by Old Man Gower, Naomi's mother leaves for Japan and never comes back. Continuously asking if her mother has abandoned her, but getting no answers from the adults, she is burdened by a sense of guilt. She imagines that her mother disappears because of her complicity with Old Man Gower. She is afraid of telling the truth. Accompanying her sense of guilt and shame, the family's silencing of her mother's story turns her into a child "forever unable to speak" and who "forever fears to tell" (291). Her inability to speak prevents her from achieving a spiritual union with her mother. She says, "Gentle Mother, we were lost together in our silences. Our wordlessness was our mutual destruction" (291).

These three minority novels direct our attention to the effects of a narrative practice in the construction of hierarchy, memory, and identity, namely silencing. The process of silencing prevents minority people from constructing their histories and identities. Many critics have associated speech with freedom and social changes, assuming that "it must be through speech that we locate freedom and subjectivity" (Duncan 78). One of the strategies of minority people against the hegemonic discourse is "to assume the symbolic armor, to name the law and attack it using the same laws" (Jardine 231). Aunt Emily in *Obasan* employs this strategy to resist both the physical and narrative oppression of the Canadian government upon Japanese Canadians. She is "a word warrior," "a crusader, a little old gray-haired Mighty Mouse, a Bachelor

of Advanced Activists and General Practitioner of Just Causes" (Kogawa 39). However, her words are not effective in representing the radically incommensurable material history of the sufferings. A traumatic history always refuses to be translated into the symbolic order that tries to discipline and repress linguistic foreignness and uncertainty.[23] Therefore, Naomi argues that few of her aunt's worded protests have been converted: "Like Cupid, she aimed for the heart. But the heart was not there" (49). She claims that her aunt's "little black typewritten words," "like scratchings in the barnyard, the evidence of much activity, scaly claws hard at work," are "not made flesh" and do not respond to her prayers (226).

Cheung states that words or speech "can convey only partial and subjective realities" (Cheung 136). Accordingly, I suggest that words should not be regarded as the most powerful medium to counter the dominant narratives and effectuate revision of the repressed history and identity. In the second part of this chapter, by investigating the specific ways in which the anonymous and silenced female ghosts manifest themselves to and interact with the living characters in the three novels, I will elaborate the concept of "ghost language" as a useful narrative tool for the minority woman writer to resist the racist and patriarchal oppression in society, and recreate their ethnic and sexual identities. It is worth noting that I use the term "ghost language" in an arbitrary and ironic way. I suggest that "ghost language" has nothing to do with human language or any linguistic system that is constructed in a rational or orderly manner. Instead, I would like to argue that "ghost languages" are ways of expression outside a linguistic and cognitive frame and even beyond human knowledge. Because the ghosts are different in various social and cultural contexts, there are multiple kinds of ghost language. I will elaborate two kinds of "ghost language"—two different ways of haunting, namely the

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[23] In Ernst van Alphen's analysis of the historical trauma of the Holocaust, he argues that trauma is "failed experience" that "has not come about and that shows negatively symptoms of the discursivity that defines 'successful' experience" (Ernst van Alphen, "Symptoms of Discursivity" 25-26). He argues for the impossibility of integrating the "experience" into narrative because the cause of trauma is precisely "the impossibility of experiencing" or framing an event.

ghost's madness in *Beloved* and its uncanny silence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*. By investigating the ferocious or uncanny way in which the female ghosts haunt the living, demand attention and justice, I intend to suggest that ghostly otherness has plural forms. Through its diverse alterity, the ghost can be regarded as a metaphor of empowerment which not only functions to represent resistance to the closed and logo-centric narratives that trap minority people in the erasure of subjectivity, but also invokes a re-imagining of a new, communal, and transcultural identity in contemporary racial and patriarchal society.

The Language of Madness in *Beloved*

For several centuries, madness has been "relegated to the female gender" in western social discourse and literature (Mcneal 12). Imposed by patriarchal thought, madness and mental instability in women turn them into inferior people and victims. In most of Morrison's works, female protagonists are portrayed as mad or mentally unstable people undergoing severe exploitation. For instance, Sethe's murder of her child and denial of her motherhood function as symptoms of madness. However, madness cannot merely be regarded as a symbol of the unstable nature of women. It also relates to acts of resistance that "give voice to those who are traumatized by oppressive social and familial forces" (Vickery 91).

In *Beloved*, the baby ghost appears malevolent as it marks the brutal history of slavery, genocide, racism, and infanticide of African Americans. But I would like to argue that the baby ghost's violent emotions and behavior can be understood as a positive kind of madness. Brogan argues that, during "the intermediary period between provisional and final burials" the ghost often appears "malicious" and "troubling" (Brogan 22). I suggest that the malicious way in which the improperly buried ghost invades the affairs of the living is the language of madness. In some ways, it can be understood in terms of Julia Kristeva's concept of the preverbal semiotic, obeying the maternal instead of paternal law. It also acts as Irigarayen "hysteria" that refers to "a non-verbal

language, a mode of physical communication that broadcasts a coded message" (Parker 2). In other words, it is intuitive, wordless, and often related to the female body and emotions. Going beyond human language, such madness creates gaps and holes in dominant discourse and provides an alternate means of expressing the other's history. Moreover, acting as a mode of intervention, it urges the traumatized subjects to remember the repressed past and reconstruct their identities.

The ghost of Beloved uses the language of madness to articulate herself. Her madness is represented in several forms, including anger, desire, and violence and by means of fragmented narratives. First, she manifests herself through acts of violence. Because she died before she was two years old, Beloved is unable to speak of her hatred and discontent. Therefore, she shows her rage by spilling things, smashing furniture, and attacking the dog. She turns house No. 124 into a place with spiteful feelings full of "a baby's venom" (Morrison, *Beloved* 3).

Beloved's madness is also expressed through her infinite desire, which Cixous links to hysteria. Cixous claims that a hysteric says, "I want everything" (Cixous and Clement 155). The metaphor of consumption plays a key role in the possession of the ghost. For example, because Beloved still has no voice for her painful memories after she returns in physical form, she conveys her feelings through her craving for sweets and her mother's love. She devours honey, wax, sugar sandwiches, sluggy molasses, lemonade, taffy, and every dessert that Sethe brings home from the restaurant. She also hungers for Sethe's love and develops a cannibalistic appetite toward her. She never takes her eyes from Sethe. Her gaze devours Sethe metaphorically: "Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes" (Morrison, *Beloved* 68). In addition, she urgently desires to fuse with Sethe. She says: "I am Beloved and she is mine. I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own and I want to be there in the place where her face is and to be looking at it too" (248). Becoming greedier and greedier, Beloved finally "ate up her [Sethe's] life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur" (295).

Beloved's fragmented voices during the possession are another expression of her madness. Speaking in a chaotic and fragmented way during her possession of Sethe, Beloved conveys the repressed voices of Sethe's slaughtered daughter, the black ancestors suffering in the Middle passage, and African-American women exploited in slavery and contemporary America. Distinguished by "its repetitiveness, fragmentation, unhinging of vocabulary," and "by its wily resistance to conventions of narrative organization," her voice succeeds in manifesting her otherness to the paternal symbolic order that is ordered, regulated, and marked by its denial of gaps and holes within its structure. By violently disrupting Sethe's and Denver's lives with her fragmented narrative, Beloved confronts them with the unspeakable thoughts of the dead—the traumatic history of slavery—which are suppressed in the patriarchal linguistic frame.

As a representation of Kristeva's concept of maternal semiotic, Beloved's madness marks "a dissatisfaction with the established order" (Parker 4) and represents "the traumatic nature of experience" (Brogan 75). By urging the living to reconstruct their memories and historical accounts of slavery, it impels them to re-create their individual and collective identities. Shu-li Chang claims that Beloved "signifies not what one already knows about the past, but the part of one's traumatic past that one doesn't yet know" (Chang 125). The white girl, who helped Sethe deliver Denver, says, "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" (Morrison, *Beloved* 42), and "Can't nothing heal without pain" (92). Based on these statements, I suggest that the returned baby ghost brings back the painful memories and, by living through them, the living characters are compelled to face their repressed past and work through their traumatic symptoms.

For example, Beloved's madness confronts Sethe with what she denies remembering and leads to her revision of the traumatic past. At the height of the possession, Beloved's voice is mingled with Sethe's and Denver's voices. Stamp Paid describes the sound as "a conflagration of hasty voices—loud, urgent, all speaking at once so he could not make out what they were talking about or to whom," as something "nonsensical" and indecipherable (202).

Though it appears as eerie noises to the outsider, the indecipherable dialogue of different voices invokes a transgenerational interaction among the traumatized subjects. It turns the haunted house into a surreal world, a place of "no-time," where the denied memories of personal and collective traumas are pressed into the present (225). The boundaries between the living and the dead, present and past, self and other, are eliminated. Sethe finally mingles with Beloved and confronts the denied memories of the past.

However, Sethe's complete retreat to the haunted house with Beloved's ghost almost destroys her. Beloved's madness transforms her into a cannibalistic figure that consumes the present with intrusive memories of a traumatic past. It locks Sethe into a repetitive enactment of the past "without relevance to present realities" (Brogan 10). Kristeva claims that "complete withdrawal into the semiotic leads to psychosis or even death" (Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 82). When Sethe submits to the indefinite desires or madness of Beloved, she forgets to eat and almost loses her life.

Recognizing Beloved's severe threat to Sethe's life, the black community feels an urgency to exorcise the ghost. Thirty neighborhood women organize an exorcism in order to save Sethe and re-establish the boundary between the living and the dead. At the climax of the exorcism, they converge upon No.124, singing a pre-linguistic song. This wordless song represents "the lost language of Africa and Sethe's mother" (Rigney 62). The narrator says, "In the beginning there were no words. In the beginning was the sound, and they all knew what that sound sounded like" (Morrison, *Beloved* 305). Turning to the communal experiences of African ancestors, the women of the community employ the song as a strategy for reshaping their relationship with the ghost and saving Sethe from self-destruction.

Feeling relived and connected to ancient African spirituality in the "word-breaking wave of sound," Sethe finally frees herself from her time-bound and traumatized identity (Brogan 85). By mistaking her white neighbor Bodwin for School Teacher, Sethe reenacts the murder of 19 years ago. But this time, she turns the ice pick toward the white man instead of desperately killing her own children. Her action successfully revises the

traumatic past as she escapes from reenactment of the traumatic scene of murdering her own children. It is also in this scene that Beloved disappears. The communal wordless song not only successfully transforms the dangerous ghost into a safer presence, saving Sethe from the threat of being locked into her traumatic experience, but also prompts Sethe to call a new self into being.

By undertaking the exorcism of the ghost, the women of the community take responsibility for the crisis and re-construct their collective identity. Their performance marks the community's support, which was absent at the time of the original murder. When they approach No. 124, they remember the day when they refused to warn Sethe about the coming of the slave catchers. Through rememory of the traumatic past, they undergo "cultural memorization," which Mieke Bal defines as "an activity occurring in the present, in which the past is continuously modified and redescribed even as it continues to shape the future" (Bal vii). They realize that the ghost of Beloved is not merely "one traumatic return" for Sethe but "a conflation of all these traumas and repression" of the community (Berger 201). By asserting Sethe's inclusion in the community and answering the call of the ghost, the women of the community not only revise the injustices of the past, but also achieve emotional healing.

However, ghosts can never be exorcised completely because of their in-assimilability and multiplicity. In Morrison's novel, although the non-verbal exorcism of the community temporarily chases Beloved's ghost away, it fails to properly bury the dead. After Beloved disappears, the community members intend to forget the unspeakable past. For them, "Remembering seemed unwise" (Morrison, *Beloved* 324). However, the more the community hopes to forget it "like a bad dream," the more the ghost resists the act of forgetting (323). The narrator says, "Occasionally, however, the rustle of a skirt hushes when they wake, and the knuckles brushing a cheek in sleep seem to belong to the sleeper …" Down by the stream of No. 124, people find the ghost's footprints coming and going (325). After the exorcism, the slim traces of the ghost mark the continued presence of the traumatic past. The ghost of Beloved never really disappears. Rather, it exists silently in a liminal and marginal space

and appears repetitively to remind the living of their unfinished mourning as well as their historical amnesia.

Morrison argues, "The past, until you confront it, until you live through it, keeps coming back in other forms. The shapes redesign themselves in other constellations, until you get a chance to play it over again" (Morrison, *Interview* 68). Her statement reveals some important qualities of a ghost, including its uncanny haunting and multiplicity. By continuously confronting the living with its diverse atrocities, a ghost keeps calling for a proper answer to repression and injustice. In the following, I will explore how the ghost's uncanny silence represents another kind of ghost language that invokes textual commemorative rituals of the repressed past and re-creation of the minority women's identity in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*.

Uncanny Silence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*

In her well-known book about the role of silence in Asian Woman Writers' novels *Articulate Silence*, Cheung argues that "words can liberate, but they can also distort and wound, and while silence may obliterate, it can also minister, soothe, and communicate" (Cheung 128). Her statement complicates the notion of the contradiction between silence and speech. It implies that silence is not merely the absence of speech, but a productive way of communicating. Isabel Hoving explores both negative and positive meanings of silence and argues that silence can be regarded as "the inability to make an authoritative use of dominant or even nondominant discourses," or as "an inarticulated blabbering and madness," as well as "an instrument to find a new voice" (Hoving 23). It helps to open up a space where "counterdiscursivity" and "the plurality of identity" can be expressed (23). Likewise, Trinh T. Minh-ha suggests that silence is "a means to gain a hearing," and "a voice, a mode of uttering, and a response in its own right" (Minh-ha 83). Relating these concepts of silence to the ghost's uncanny silence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*, I will argue that silence should not only be perceived as "undesirable silences" that mark absence, muteness, and the lack of subjectivity in minority experiences

(Cheung 20). It also functions as "enabling silences," a way of telling that effectuates minority people to revise the dominant narrative and to re-create their identities.

In *The Woman Warrior*, by creating gaps in the closed family narratives full of silence, the ghost of the protagonist's nameless aunt conveys its repetitive and uncanny effects on the protagonist. It is a paradoxical situation. Since No Name Woman bears the unspeakable shameful history, the family makes efforts to veil her story. Brave Orchid not only forbids young Maxine to mention the nameless aunt, but also withholds most of the story. However, the more the family tries to contain the aunt's story through denial, the more fascinating her ghost appears in the shaping of the passed-down narratives. Her silence creates holes within the hegemonic discourse, encouraging the protagonist to question the established narratives and create new versions of the story.

Cheung states, "This haunting silence is precisely what gives wings to the niece's imagination, allowing Maxine to test her own power to talk story and to play with different identities" (Cheung 85). Haunted by the absence of truth, Maxine feels the urgency to perform the rituals of mourning by rewriting her aunt's story, devoting "pages of paper to her" (Kingston 16). By inventing new memories of her aunt, she breaks the family's secrecy surrounding the shameful past and gives voices to the women who have been excluded from the dominant narratives. Being a woman is no longer shameful. Her new version of the story challenges hegemonic sexual and patriarchal discourses and releases her from the burden of a woman's body.

Maxine also recreates her identity by establishing kinship with her aunt's ghost. In her revised version of the nameless aunt's story, she imagines the aunt as a vengeful ghost and actively reanimates "the aunt as a forerunner" (Brogan 138). She says, "She (the aunt) was a spite suicide, drowning herself in the drinking water. The Chinese are always very frightened of the drowned one, whose weeping ghost … waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute" (Kingston 16). By taking the ghost's rebellious nature as an inheritance, she has power to challenge the constraints of dominant narratives and invent a new

identity—"a new Chinese American tradition"—that negotiates two contrasting cultures (Cheung 85).

By reinterpreting the Chinese legend of Ts'ai Yen in the concluding story of the novel—"A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe"—the narrator represents a new language/norm that is open-ended for its interethnic harmony. She illustrates that, during the exile, Ts'ai Yen creates a song that connects her mother tongue and the barbarian music for her children:

> Then, out of Ts'ai Yen tent … the barbarians heard a woman's voice singing, as if to her babies, a song so high and clear, it matched the flutes … Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger … She brought her songs back from the savage lands, and one of the three that has been passed down to us is "Eighteen Stanzas for a Barbarian Reed Pipe," a song that Chinese sing to their own instruments. It translated well. (Kingston 209)

Ts'ai Yen's song acts as a kind of translation between two cultures, bridging the past and the present, the ancestral roots and the foreign culture. It evokes what Duplessis calls a "both/and vision," the one "born of shifts, contraries, negations, contradictions and linked to personal vulnerability and need" (Duplessis 276). Such a vision is able "to criticize, to differentiate from, to overturn the dominant forms of knowledge and understanding with which they are saturated" (285).

The "both/and vision" of the song marks the possibility of transcending the ghost's silence and recreating a communal and trans-cultural identity. The narrator says, "Here is a story my mother told me, not when I was young, but recently, when I told her I also talk story. The beginning is hers, the ending, mine" (Kingston 206). The novel begins with Brave Orchid's story of the No Name Woman who is silenced by the family, and ends with the story of Ts'ai Yen, who, instead of being nameless, "achieves her mortal fame by singing about her exile" (Cheung 95). By using her story as a revised narrative to

coincide with her mother's, Maxine achieves a symbolic return to her community and re-creates her bicultural identity. She says, "The swordswoman and I are not so dissimilar. May my people understand the resemblance soon so that I can return to them. What we have in common are the words at our backs" (Kingston 53). The words at the back of the swordswoman symbolize her greatness in taking her father's responsibility for the country. Similarly, by taking her words and stories that bridge her bicultural resources as a weapon, Maxine emulates the legendary swordswoman and reconstructs "a composite self" as a heroin (Cheung 100). In sum, the ghost's uncanny silence not only functions as a source for her imagination, but also leads to a new narrative strategy that propels her to recreate a new and communal identity for Asian American women.

A similar haunting of silent ghosts occurs in *Obasan*. The more Naomi avoids the memory of her experiences of sexual abuse and racial oppression, the more the ghosts haunt her in a silent and repetitive way. She says, "Potent and pervasive as a prairie dust storm, memories and dreams seep and mingle through cracks, settling on furniture and into upholstery" (Kogawa 30). Although the ghost's silence represents the suppression of memories, its uncanny implication still reaches Naomi in her dreams and memories and on a subconscious level. For instance, during the wake for Uncle, Naomi feels "Uncle's absent voice that speaks even more urgently and that I must attend." The voice bids her to "care for Obasan" and to "keep her safe" (56). Without speaking a word, the ghost of Uncle delivers his message to Naomi and makes her act.

The ghost of Naomi's mother, though continuing "her vigil of silence," also invokes a cyclic repetition of images and senses in Naomi's dreams and involuntary memories (Kogawa 283). From the beginning of Chapter 15, the memories she intends to forget flood into her consciousness involuntarily. Naomi begins to narrate the story of her family, "It is three decades ago …" (132). In addition, images of oriental women connected with the fragmented memories of her silent mother keep appearing in her dreams. Those images act as a medium through which her mother's ghost returns "with all the immediacy

and power of Benjamin's 'lived life,'" threatening to displace the present (Cook, "The Penelope Work of Forgetting" 61). They direct Naomi's attention to the untold stories, the stories that resist being remembered, such as that of her mother's death in Japan during the war. In other words, the ghost's uncanny silence functions as an intriguing enigma that urges Naomi to listen to the dead and look for "corners and rooms" she has never seen in her "childhood house" (Kogawa 95).

By responding to her mother's uncanny haunting, Naomi overcomes her denial of the traumatic past and begins to accept Aunt Emily's idea that "the past is the future" (Kogawa 51). She decides to listen to the words in Grandma Kato's letter. When Nakayama-sensei reads the letter, he begins, "Naomi … Stephen, your mother is speaking. Listen carefully to her voice" (279). The letter describes Naomi's mother's story during the bombing of Nagasaki and unveils her family's unknown past. Upon learning the reason for her mother's disappearance, Naomi seems to gain access to the absent voice of the ghosts. She claims, "Gradually the room grows still and it is as if I am back with Uncle again, listening and listening to the silent earth and the silent sky as I have done all my life" (288). At that moment, she gives in to the unfamiliar presence of the repressed memory, a sigh of "remembered breath, a wordless word" (289), and rebuilds a spiritual and emotional connection with the dead.

In the epigraph of the novel, the narrator says, "The speech that frees comes forth from that amniotic deep. To attend its voice, I can hear it say, is to embrace its absence." By attending to the hidden words in this "amniotic deep," Naomi recaptures a sense of wholeness. Naomi's acceptance of the dominant notion of binary thinking before prevents her from achieving a stable identity. Rufus Cook claims that "the polarization values … that pits speech against silence, gratitude against protest or resistance, the necessity of remembering against forgetting" afflict Naomi with the fragmentation of her self and restrict her to "a time-bound phenomenal existence" (Cook, "The Penelope Work of Forgetting" 54). Being torn by conflicting claims, Naomi questions her mother's love and suffers the feeling of her legs being "sawn in a half" (Kogawa 77).

However, after she gives in to the unfamiliar absent presence of her mother, she no longer blames her for her absence. On the contrary, she realizes that the Grand Inquisitor's accusatory "demand to know," with which she unconsciously complies in her nightmare, is "both a judgment and a refusal to hear" that separates her from her mother (Kogawa 273). This insight frees Naomi from the phallic authority of the symbolic order that constructs the dominant notion of phenomenal distinction between speech and silence. Naomi finally escapes from the temporal and logical world and reunites with her mother: "I am thinking that for a child there is no presence without flesh. But perhaps it is because I am no longer a child I can know your presence though you are not here" (292). She reaches a universe where she is able to "swim full circle back to that other shore and her mother's arms" (17) and re-creates her identity by having "her leg become the grounded family tree for a future generation" (Tourino 146).

Naomi's spiritual integration with her mother enables her to learn a new communal language associated with love and double vision. Before she learns her mother's story, she has an instructive dream: "What the Grand Inquisitor has never learned is that the avenues of speech are the avenues of silence. To hear my mother, to attend her speech, to attend the sound of stone, he must first become silent" (Kogawa 274). The dream foreshadows a new language or identity, which marks the connection between silence and speech. When her mother's "wordless word" is uncovered on the night Grandma Kato's letter is read to her, Naomi experiences both verbal and nonverbal expressions of love in Mother and Obasan's silence and Emily's words. She says, "The letters tonight are skeletons. Bones only. But the earth still stirs with dormant blooms. Love flows through the roots of the trees by our graves" (292). Thus, she begins to think about the complementary relationship between two ideographs for the word "love": "The first contained the root words 'heart' and 'hand' and 'action'—love as hands and heart in action together. The other ideograph, for 'passionate love,' was formed of 'heart,' 'to tell,' and 'a long thread'" (273). According to Cheung, the two ideographs represent different kinds of love enacted by Naomi's two aunts: "Obasan's serving hands" in silence and Aunt

Emily's "passionate thing" through words (Cheung 165). Naomi's awareness of the loving intentions of both Obasan and Emily enables her to achieve a "transcendent empathy which conflates words and silence, presence and absence, and testifies to the presence of an absent mother's nurturing love—yasashi kokoro" (McFarlane 405).

At the end of the novel, Naomi symbolically achieves a "transcendent empathy." Taking Aunt Emily's coat, which is associated with the aunt's love for her, Naomi returns to the coulee, which she and Uncle visit on every anniversary of Nagasaki's bombing. According to Tourino, Naomi's return to the coulee "creates the effects of cyclical return" (Tourino 149). By comparing the similar language of the closing passage of each visit, she claims that the coulee is transformed from "the protective womb of silence and stillness" into a site of second birth where Naomi senses "new possibilities for communication" (149). Since Naomi realizes the truth about her mother's death and the love embedded in Emily's words that can been represented by the coat Naomi carries to the coulee, she experiences an epiphany during the second visit to the coulee. She says: "Above the trees, the moon is a pure white stone. The reflection is rippling in the river—water and stone dancing. It's a quiet ballet, soundless as breath" (Kogawa 296). I suggest that the moon and a stone here signify the silence and stillness valued in Japanese traditions. The imagery of stone and water dancing "a quiet ballet" represents a harmonious vision that incorporate silence into communication, stillness into action, Japanese tradition into western culture. By employing this double vision in the process of cultural revision and self-invention, Naomi brings the stories of her family and the repressed history of Japanese Canadians to light and symbolically experiences the second birth of self.

Conclusion

> If it—learning to live—remains to be done, it can happen only
> between life and death. Neither in life or in death alone. What
> happens between two, and between all the "two's" one likes,

such as between life and death, can only maintain itself with some ghost, can only talk with or about some ghost ['sentretenir de quelque fantome]. So it would be necessary to learn spirits … (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* xviii-xix)

As an enigmatic and liminal figure between the living and the dead, present and past, a ghost acts as a productive means for ethnic writers to cross the figurative boundary between presence and absence, dominant and subordinate, self and other. One way of knowing spirits is to learn their languages, their ways of speaking. By investigating the effects that the ghost's madness and uncanny silence produce in the three minority texts, I conclude that the literary representation of ghost's otherness functions as a narrative strategy for challenging hegemonic discourse and revising the traumatic memories and identities of ethnic minority. In *Beloved*, the baby ghost's fierce emotions and chaotic expression represent the voices of African Americans in a position of resistance to the racist and patriarchal logos. In *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*, the ghost's uncanny silence leads to the evocation of the repressed memories to which the second-generation Asian-American heroines respond by means of a creative process of historical recovery and ethnic invention. In sum, being sometimes invasive and sometimes uncanny, the ghosts ceaselessly confront the living with the denied and silenced past and urge them to listen and reply to their calls. By learning the ghost's languages and communicating with them, the traumatized subjects are not only able to redefine their relationship with the past, but also can develop a new, open-ended and communal language to reconstruct new, composite, and plural identities.

Chapter III

Mediums at Work: Toward a Dialogic World

> [E]very period has its ghosts, its own experience, its own
> medium, and its proper hauntological media. (Derrida,
> *Specters of Marx* 193).

Many experts in the fields of literary and cultural studies have discussed how the concept of ghost, phantom, or specter is used as a designation for the invisible, unspeakable, or fearful other as well as for the denied and unknown history of traumatized subjects or oppressed ethnic groups. These ghostly others are usually repressed within the dominant discourse, but occasionally haunt and disturb the dominant to demand attention. As figures beyond rationality, they are regarded as un-representable as well as inassimilable. They are "real and terrible," always reminding us "of the dead … and of our own dead, to assert a terrible continuity between the omnipresent past and the already vanishing present" (Punter 64).

In previous chapters, I brought different notions of the ghost together and used them in my study of postcolonial and minority literature to reach a deeper and broader understanding of the subversive potential of the spectral in spatial and cultural dimensions. A problem arises when one further reflects on the question of how to approach ghosts or the spectral in time and space when they usually appear in an irrational and obscure way. Since so far, it is not clear how the living relate to or communicate with those inassimilable ghosts, I will explore in this chapter how the dialogue is brought about and shaped. In many religious and cultural beliefs, mediums are able to receive messages from the dead, and travel between the living and spiritual worlds. As such, I will use the concept of medium figuratively as a mode of negotiation by which one is able to approach the spectral—including one's internal and external alterity, and to

establish a mutual understanding with it.

Since a ghost has a variety of names and forms, appears in specific moments and locations, and produces divergent acts and effects, a medium performs his or her work in a variety of ways. I will demonstrate that the main protagonists in two South African novels—J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*—represent two different kinds of medium: a passive medium and an active one. Set in different transitional phases of South Africa, these two novels employ several gothic devices to depict the uncanny and uncertain reality of "anti-dialogic societies" in which different figurative ghosts linger and haunt the living.[24] I will first elaborate the connection between the Gothic and South African literature, and analyze how these two books use a Gothic mode to reflect a sense of unease during the encounter with the inaccessible other or the repressed past. In the second part of the chapter, I will further examine the literary representations of two kinds of mediums, who show two specific and situated ways in which one is able to identify with ghostly beings or phenomena, and to problematize modes of thought premised on boundaries and opposition.

South African Gothic and Postcolonial Ghosts

The Gothic has been defined as "a cultural form of thanatophia, the love of death and the opposite of eros and biophilia, the irrational urge to cripple and/or extinguish life," which "typically manifests as the return of the repressed, the manifestation of repressed anxieties" (Gaylard 3). Such thanotophia in the Gothic is usually represented as the living dead, ghosts, the monstrous, the spectral, and the uncanny so as to allow readers to experience death or mortality in a virtual form. Throughout history, the Gothic usually erupts forcefully in periods of dramatic social change. Since the world ceases to

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[24] According to Paulo Freire's Marxist analysis, the concept of an anti-dialogic or dehumanizing society refers to a society which is sectarian or in which distinguishing behavioural characteristics are oppressed under conquest, divide and rule, manipulation and cultural invasion. See Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, New York: Continuum, 1974.

be interpretable via traditional conceptual frameworks in periods of dramatic rupture or social upheaval, the resulting fears find their way into the fictions of the Gothic, where these fears are represented by horrible figures or irrational scenarios. During the first century of its lifespan (since its genesis in late 18th century Britain on the eve of industrial revolution: the publication of Horace Walpole's The Castle of Otranto in 1764), the genre, as many critics pointed out, was fundamentally informed by the fears or unease caused by the fundamental changes in British society. It is a period when industrialization and imperial expansion led to the crumbling of social hierarchy and ceaseless struggles between the white and nonwhite races, dominant Christian and non-Christian belief systems in England.[25] Since then, the Gothic has become a long-lasting literary form across modern history by expanding the widest range into prose, fiction, films, plays, TV series, video games, and even academic study. The reason for the persistence of the Gothic over 250 years is the way it helps us address forbidden desires or sources of anxiety and deal with different cultural and psychological contradictions. Thus, the Gothic, as Steven Bruhm puts it, "has always been a barometer of the anxieties plaguing a certain culture at a particular moment in history" (Bruhm 288).

Many South African literary scholars, such as Gerald Gaylard, Jack Shear, and Cheryl Stobie have elaborated the connection between the Gothic and South African literature from the period of apartheid to the present day. This is the period of transition during which South Africa's social and national reality continues to shift and change. The slow dismantling of the apartheid state from the early 1980s, the celebration of official liberation in the 1994 democratic election, the post-apartheid anxieties about how to reconstruct a new national identity, and the country's encounter with global capitalism in the present day, all breed fears and uncertainties in South African society. Those fears become a condition that drives the production of gothic aesthetics in South African literature. For example, elements—such as the horrifying and uncanny figures, the deserted landscapes, alienated individuals, physical and/or

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[25] See Jerrold E. Hogle's "Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction,* ed. Jerrold E. Hogle, Cambridge UP, 2002. 1-20.

psychic suffering, and violent events—are prevalent in the texts written during the last three decades by André Brink, Derek Walcott, William Plomer, Doris Lessing, J. M. Coetzee, Mike Nicol, Karel Schoeman, Dambudzo Marechera, Etinne van Heerden, Reza de Wet, Zakes Mda, Eben Venter, Lily Herne, and so on. Such disturbing gothic aesthetics not only functions as a means to register the repressed other or alterity, and to "expose that which social engineering attempted to sweep under its carpet" (Gaylard 16), but also allows the writers to engage with the fearful uncertainty during the period in which the world keeps unmaking itself. Thus, I suggest in line with Gaylard that the gothic is much suited to Southern Africa, "for what other genre could better convey the eldritch horrors of imperialism and apartheid and their aftermath" (Gaylard 2).

Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Mda's *Heart of Redness* are two examples of South African Gothic that deploy gothic devices to speak to the fears and uncertainty generated during the South African interregnum—the final years of apartheid—and during its post-apartheid era. *Waiting for the Barbarians* was written in 1980, the early phase of the interregnum.[26] Nadine Gordimer describes some of the essential characteristics of the period in the epigraph to her novel *July's People*, "The old is dying, and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum there arises a great diversity of morbid symptoms." She also mentioned in her article entitled "Living in the Interregnum" that South Africa during the last years of the colonial era was "a society whirling, stamping, swaying with the force of revolutionary change" (Gordimer, "Living in the Interregnum" 262). This is the period during which apartheid faltered amidst equal measures of hope and destruction, and the future of the country

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[26] In his essay "Writing the Interregnum," Stephen Clingman summarizes a list of important events happening during the era of interregnum. He says, "This was the era of the rise of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and sustained grass-roots resistance through the country; of major strikes and insistent labour activism; of people's culture, worker poets and union plays; of successive State of Emergency; of secret and unsecret wars in Namibia and Angola; of no education without liberation; of state terrorism, assassinations, dirty tricks and third forces; of people's courts, mass funerals, the *toyi-toyi*, of necklacing; of the myriad horrific acts of brutality and inhumanity that characterized apartheid in its last throes" (Clingman 634). Nelson Mandela was released in 1990 and elected president in 1994.

appeared unpredictable and inaccessible. No one could tell whether the dismantling of an institutionalized racism would lead up to peaceful liberation or unprecedented chaos. The future was, in Elleke Boehmer's words, "a space of which it was impossible to imagine the shape" (Boehmer 45).

When this uncertainty characterizes life in South Africa of the interregnum, the reality itself, as Stephen Clingman argues, became "loosed from its moorings" and "intrinsically problematic—in some sense invisible, presented only as the shadowed and uncanny" (Clingman 632). It is also with this fearful uncertainty that many South African writers engaged in the production of gothic narrative. A number of the country's major texts, such as Gordimer's *July's People* (1981), Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), and Reze de Wet's "African Gothic" (2005) all utilized gothic aesthetics—most notably motifs of the monstrous, the spectral, the problematic self, dislodged version of time and space, and apocalyptic presentiments—to create uneasy fictional worlds that reflect a perplexed anxiety of the cultural moment.

Waiting for the Barbarians also captures haunting evocations of the interregnum via gothic elements. For instance, as the novel set in an undefined time on the frontier of an unknown empire, time and space in it "are dislodged from anything like the 'real'" (Clingman 637). Though many allegorical readings have interpreted the story as the history of racial and political crisis in the apartheid South Africa, the indeterminate setting seems to suggest, "its relation to South African world is at most one of the uncanny—shadowed, looming, yet also evasive" (637). Besides, the presence of the barbarians haunts the novel from the beginning. The barbarians and their history appear to be a spectral and mysterious existence to the Magistrate, who is the servant of the Empire, in an undefined time full of strife and unrest. Afterward, the unspeakable violence upon the barbarians turns the Empire into a closed environment "which allows no escape at all" and in which the Magistrate "can see no way forward, no redemption, no differentiation from its undifferentiated space" (638). In its gothic framework, *Waiting for the Barbarians* conveys the sense of endless "suspension," which characterizes the reality of apartheid

South Africa (Boehmer 48). Perceived as mysterious and threatening manifestations of enemies or outcasts that need to be suppressed, the barbarians and their history can be perceived as a figure of an inaccessible ghost—a metaphor of irreducible otherness, haunting the Empire, the Magistrate, and the text itself.

Mda's *Heart of Redness* is another South African text that engages powerfully with gothic aesthetics. By being redolent of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* in its title, the fiction was written in 2000, the transitional time following from the 1994 election to the new millennium of globalization. It is a period during which the nation was animated not only by the spirit of liberation, but also slowly integrated into the fast, fluid, increasingly interconnected network of global economy. According to Barnard, in contrast to the writing of the interregnum that reflects South Africa's anxiety about the future, most of the post-apartheid texts are preoccupied with the complex interaction between the past and the present (Barnard 660). To this, Samuelson adds that novels in this era can be considered "a process of scripting connections," an emergent body of works in which bonds are "mapped both within the nation and beyond it" (Samuelson 113-14). It is interesting that Mda's book juxtaposes the past and the present of the Eastern Cape, including the period of imperialism and the time of contemporary post-apartheid life of the Xhosas.[27] The novel is set against the backdrops of realist and magic-realist events involving the ceaseless struggles between the Believers and the Unbelievers. These struggles span several generations, from the frontier wars between the British and the Xhosas, the tragic historical event of cattle-killing in the late nineteenth century, to the present-day struggles over the development of the seaside resort at

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[27] The Xhosa people are a Bantu ethnic group mainly found in the Eastern Cape and South Africa. They were well established in the mid-17th century and first encountered white settlers in the early 18th century. From the late 18th century to 1812, there were many conflicts and frontier wars between the Xhosa and British colonial forces. Due to the famines and political divisions that followed the cattle-killing movement of 1856-1858, the Xhosa people lost the battle and territory to colonial expansion. Presently, there are approximately eight million Xhosa people across the country. They are divided into several tribes. Many of them live in Cape Town, East London, and Port Elizabeth. See "Xhosa people" on Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xhosa_people. Accessed 11 Oct 2016.

Qolorha-by-Sea. Similar to the symbolic meaning of Conrad's darkness, which marks "the Dark Continent, the African wilderness, a place which still awaits the civilizing mission of the West," Mda's idea of redness refers to the "backwardness" of Xhosa traditions (Sewlall 331). Because these traditions are associated with nature, ancestral spirituality, and the prophecies of Nongqawuse, they can be perceived as figurative ghosts that are in conflict with the Western view of Enlightenment and progress.[28] By using such Gothic elements, Mda's novel speaks to the nation's post-apartheid integration into the global economy, and to a sense of unease, which arises within the context of this encounter.

Through different gothic techniques—including repetition, transgression, haunting of the irrational and mysterious others, interaction between the present and the past, the two novels create uneasy fictional worlds in which there are ceaseless struggles between the natives and the colonizers, the traditions and contemporary ways of life. Since ghosts always roam when conflicts emerge, the figure of a medium becomes important. Looking for the figure or function of a medium in my analysis of these two novels, I will investigate two different ways in which the protagonists negotiate binary entities, such as the living and the dead, self and other, tradition and modernity, nature and culture. I will show how they settle down present crisis and initiate "the process of change" that will symbolically or literally "bring into being a dialogic society" (Bell 95).

The Magistrate as a Passive Medium in *Waiting for the Barbarians*

The Magistrate represents the figure of a passive medium between the Empire and the barbarians by experiencing emotional and social ambivalence in his

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[28] In Xhosa tradition, the ancestors act as intermediaries between the living and God. There are diviners known as amagqirha and prophets izanuse who work to communicate with the ancestors for the community. These jobs are mostly taken by women. In the novel, Nongqawuse is the fifteen-year-old Xhosa prophet who instructed the Xhosa people to slaughter all their cattle in the 1850s and claimed that in return the ancestors would replenish Xhosa livestock and grain. Her prophecies caused the tragic historical event of cattle-killing and the ceaseless struggle between the Believers and the Unbelievers.

encounters with his inner otherness as well as with barbarian others. I define the term "passive medium" as a person who originally belongs to the class of authorities, but is haunted by and becomes identified with ghostly otherness in an involuntary way. At the beginning of the novel, the Magistrate appears in the role of a careless official at the borders. He has no intention of learning about the barbarians who live and do business there. After Colonel Joll comes, he faces a crisis caused by the nation's new policy toward the barbarians. By bearing witness to Joll's torturing of the barbarians, the Magistrate is weighed down by a sense of guilt, shame, and sympathy, though he first tries to deny what is happening in the torture chamber by closing off his ears. However, the screams of the tortured barbarians intrude upon his consciousness and provoke a sense of guilt in his mind. In order to compensate for his sense of guilt, he undertakes different acts of mercy, such as taking care of the barbarian girl, feeding her, healing her, and washing her body. Later, this sympathy is transformed into the Magistrate's desire for the barbarian girl. He especially feels obsessed by her "twisted feet" and "half-blinded eyes" and is compelled to uncover what happened to her in the chamber (Coetzee, *Waiting* 70). Her broken body is "a rune for him, like the enigmatic scripts he discovers in the desert" (Masse 169). He says, "It has been growing more and more clear to me that until the marks on this girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 33).

However, as the Magistrate is epistemologically and ethically constricted within an imperial cognitive frame, his efforts to gain access to the barbarians always fail. For instance, he always loses consciousness in the ritual of washing the barbarian girl's feet, a ritual that shows his efforts to find answers to the questions about the scars on her body. He says, "I lose awareness of the girl herself. There is a space of time which is blank to me: perhaps I am not even present" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 30). As time goes on, he realizes that he is unable to solve the mysteries of the marks on the body, as well as to integrate them into his discursive understanding of the world: "The body of the other one, closed, ponderous, sleeping in my bed in a faraway room, seems beyond comprehension" (45). By acknowledging his impotence as well

as the absence of his own subjectivity during the ritual, the Magistrate experiences a "spatial-temporal dislocation" in his self (Craps 64). He feels that "time has broken, something has fallen in upon me from the sky, at random, from nowhere" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 47). This moment of contradiction causes the ground to shift beneath his feet and impels him to re-position himself in relation to both the barbarians and the Empire. Thus, he is turned into a passive medium.

I contend that *the condition of trance* serves as an important phase when the Magistrate mediates his inner otherness and the alterity of the barbarians. *Oxford Dictionaries Online* defines trance as "a half-conscious state characterized by an absence of response to external stimuli, typically as induced by hypnosis or entered by a medium." Regarded as an important strategy that a medium employs to communicate with the spirits from the other world, trance also refers to the condition of letting the spectral other take over one's body as well as entering a foreign space outside the realm of rational knowledge. Trance not only challenges Enlightenment models of knowledge production, but also allows the entranced subject to navigate extra-linguistic experience. It raises questions concerning conceptions of subjecthood, as well as the limits of knowledge and conscious experience. Here I will use the notion of trance more figuratively as a means for a passive medium to identify with ghostliness, as a condition of unwillingly and simultaneously entering a foreign domain and becoming the other.

In some respects, the state of trance is similar to Kristeva's idea of "abjection," which refers to the experience of being thrown out of oneself, a "descent into the foundation of the symbolic construct," a re-experiencing of the moment of our separation, in order to arrive at a place where self and other are "inseparable" (Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* 18). Samuel Durrant, a postcolonial researcher from Leeds University, elaborates upon the concept further and claims: "Abjection is the reduction of the self to the body in which the body becomes radically defamiliarized … The abject body is auto-referential: no longer operating as a sign of the human, it accrues its own weight or pathos and becomes an image of its own pain" (Durrant 36).

According to these statements, I will suggest that the state of trance is a mode of irrational or unfamiliar experience—an altered consciousness—that is usually associated with ugly feelings, illness, a marginal state or degradation. In such a state, a medium is unwillingly forced to identify with the other and becomes receptive to his otherness within the self. Therefore, the threshold can be irrevocably crossed. However, a medium here is not active because he "can be thrown into a becoming by anything at all, by the most unexpected, most insignificant of things" and is unable to return to his own community anymore (Deleuze and Guattari 264). He is usually transformed from a majoritarian into a complete exile or a minoritarian forever.

Missing appropriate and sufficient knowledge of the barbarians, the Magistrate is unable to fulfill his attempts to interpret the stories of the barbarians. The fatal consequence is that he is continuously haunted by the enigmas and gaps embodied by the bodies of the barbarians and feels confused by the autonomy of his own identity. Therefore, he simultaneously undergoes different forms of trance, including 1) literally entering the zone of alienation in the journey to return the barbarian girl to her people, 2) experiencing himself as other in torture and imprisonment, and 3) falling into hallucination and dreams. I will elaborate how these three kinds of trance impel the Magistrate to leave his familiar community or to fall into degradation, so that he can involuntarily identify with the barbarians and negotiate between self and other.

The first kind of trance in the novel is the Magistrate's entry into foreignness by delivering the barbarian girl to her people. The confrontation with the unfamiliar environment during his journey provokes in him a sense of alienation from his people and from "the tranquil familiarity of his interpretive community" (Saunders 225). It makes him rethink the Empire's definitions of nation and history and gain awareness of their dubiousness and illegitimacy. He says:

> We think of the country here as ours, part of our Empire—our outpost, our settlement, our market centre. But these people, these barbarians don't think of it like that at all. We have been

here more than a hundred years, we have reclaimed land from the desert and built irrigation works and planted fields and built solid homes and put a wall around our town, but they still think of us as visitors, transients. (Coetzee, *Waiting* 55)

By illustrating how transient the Empire is for the barbarians, he redefines the hierarchy between the barbarian perspective of cyclical time and the Empire's notion of linear and progressive time. He questions the Empire's concept of "the time of history" and its pursuit of immortality:

> Empire has located its existence not in the smooth recurrent spinning time of the cycle of the seasons but in the jagged time of rise and fall, of beginning and end, of catastrophe. Empire dooms itself to live in history and plot against history. One thought alone preoccupies the submerged mind of Empire: how not to end, how not to die, how to prolong its era. By day it pursues its enemies. It is cunning and ruthless, it sends its bloodhounds everywhere. By night it feeds on images of disaster: the sack of cities, the rape of populations, pyramids of bones, acres of desolation. (Coetzee, *Waiting* 146)

He learns that the essence of history is nothing but violence. Entering the zone of foreignness undoubtedly provokes in the Magistrate a moral sense of time. It urges him to challenge the credibility of the Empire's definition of history and to revise the relationship between self and other.

The Magistrate undergoes the second kind of trance under torture. Hania Nashef claims that the Magistrate's entering the foreign land "propels him into a process of deterritorialization resulting in a change in his state" (Nashef 25). The journey does change his position in his community. After he returns from the journey, he is arrested by his men, accused of treason, and forced to experience himself the life of barbarians by living through the events of imprisonment, torture, and humiliation. He is forced by his people to wear a

women's calico smock, degraded into a dirty, stinking clown, and exploited severely in the public square. In his suffering, he begins to identify with the barbarians and gains critical awareness of the brutal quality of the Empire.

For example, his experience of imprisonment makes him acknowledge the otherness and barbarity within himself. He claims:

> Nevertheless, I am not taking easily to the humiliations of imprisonment. Sometimes, sitting on my mat staring at three specks on the wall and feeling myself drift for the thousandth time towards the questions, … or finding as I pace the room that I am counting *one-two-three-four-five-six-one-two-three* … or brushing my hand mindlessly over my face, I realize how tiny I have allowed them to make my world, how I daily become more like a beast or a simple machine … Then I respond with movements of vertiginous terror in which I rush around the cell jerking my arms about, pulling my beard, stamping my feet, doing anything to surprise myself, to remind myself of a world beyond that is various and rich. (Coetzee, *Waiting* 92-93)

This irrational experience in the prison forces him to learn that barbarianism is a part of humanity. He is not superior, saner, or more competent in coping with pain than the barbarians. It also challenges the dominant narratives of the Empire that construct the barbarians as non-human beings, such as beasts and machines.

Likewise, the experience of torture forces the Magistrate to confront his otherness and makes him develop an insight into humanity. When the rope tightens around his neck, the pains subjugate him into unconsciousness. Durrant argues that this is "a moment of … 'negative transcendence,' a descent that … brings the self into an abject, bodily relation with itself" (Durrant 48). The torture not only reduces him to basic and feral needs, but also completes his entry into foreignness. He is degraded from a thinking human being into a

gibbering and helpless body, "a pile of blood, bone, and meat" that, I will suggest, does not seem different from or superior to the tortured bodies of the barbarians (Coetzee, *Waiting* 93).

He learns that the Empire's hysteria regarding the barbarian is a kind of psychological illness. By violently mythologizing and falsifying the distinction between barbarity and civilization, self and other, the Empire tries to establish its authority and enact the manipulation of the other. Thus, he argues that it is the Empire itself that is barbaric instead of the natives and he responds with the following to his interrogator: "We are at peace here," "we have no enemies … Unless I make a mistake … Unless we are the enemy" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 85).

The Magistrate falls into the third form of trance by figuratively entering foreignness and communicating with the other in his dreams. Durrant argues that the dreams can be regarded as "a site of witnessing." It is a place where "our own desire is suspended" and where "other voices make themselves heard in our lives" (Durrant 35). Accordingly, I will suggest that the dreams function as a liminal zone where the passive medium encounters the specter of the other. Since the spectral other is inaccessible for somebody who belongs to a majority in his or her waking life as it lives outside the realm of dominant knowledge, his or her dreams serve to "open up the possibility of an abject identification with the other" (36).

In addition, the specter that the passive medium confronts in his or her dreams also represents the otherness of the self. In one of Coetzee's other novels, *Foe*, the protagonist Foe asks Susan about the function of dreaming: "would we be better or worse … if we were no longer to descend nightly into ourselves and meet … our darker selves, and other phantoms too" (Coetzee, *Foe* 137-38). Pursuing this thought a bit further, Durrant asserts that descending into our unconscious marks an encounter with "our own encrypted otherness" that enables us to "relate—ethically—to the otherness of those we encounter in our daily lives" (Durrant 35). In other words, by falling into an abnormal, dreamy and hypnotic state, a member of a majority group can temporarily withdraw from his or her rationality and gain insight into the traces of the repressed other/otherness within constructed knowledge. It

simultaneously prompts him or her to mediate between the self and the other and to re-imagine a vision of mutual understanding in his or her relationship to every form of otherness.

In the novel, the Magistrate's dreams function as a space outside of his realm of rational knowledge where he confronts the barbarian other and the otherness of the self. By falling into his dreams, he not only builds a connection with the barbarian girl, but also enacts remembrance of the indigestible pains of the body. For instance, "the hooded figure of the girl," which appears repeatedly in his dreams, can be regarded as a symbol of the barbarian girl (Coetzee, *Waiting* 57). Standing for a site of torture as well as the suffering of the barbarians, the body of this figure appears fragmented. The Magistrate narrates: "The feet lie before me in the dust, disembodied, monstrous, two stranded fish, two huge potatoes" (95). Though the Magistrate has no access to the body in his waking life, the body appears to him and prompts him to build a connection with it on a subconscious level. He dreams that he carries the girl, and assumes her body as "the only key I have to the labyrinth" (95).

The Magistrate symbolically receives a transmission and establishes a mutual understanding with her in his dreams. When he loses consciousness during the ritual of washing her feet, he dreams that the girl is constructing a fort out of snow. Durrant argues that "the construction of the fort is a mute indication of the place where her history went down, providing the Magistrate with a topographical map of her pain, one that will eventually allow him to navigate his own experience of torture" (Durrant 46). The dream not only provides the Magistrate a channel for understanding the pains of the barbarians, but also provokes his ethical action to identify with them. On one hand, compared to his earlier ignorance of the cries from the granary, he attunes his hearing "to that infinitely faint level at which the cries of all who suffered here must still beat from wall to wall" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 87). On the other hand, the reception of the voices of the barbarians in his dream urges him to replace the otherness from the barbarians with his self. He allows torture to take place in his life and experiences his identification with "the unbearable proximity of other lives" that is suppressed within the dominant discourse (Durrant 44).

The Magistrate also symbolically establishes a connection with the barbarian girl in his dream. In his last dream, the girl, who is dressed like a priestess, offers the Magistrate a loaf of bread. The girl also symbolizes the barbarian girl, but in this dream, she is building an oven rather than a snow fort. The disembodied feet in the earlier dream are transformed into a "shapeless lump"—the loaf of bread—which Durrant asserts as "the bread of remembrance, eaten in remembrance of another scene of torture and as a promise of salvation" (Durrant 48). Based on his argument, the bread marks the signs of communication and peace offerings that do not take place in the Magistrate's waking life. Thus, his dream holds out hope for salvation and for the coming of a new collectivity, the coming of a new community established by the mutual recognition between self and other.

During these three different forms of trance he experiences in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, namely entering into the wilderness, living through indigestible pains, and falling into the realm outside of consciousness, the Magistrate tends to become enmeshed in uncertainties, doubts, and mysteries. As he is ostracized, he undergoes a transformation and enters "an apparently permanent exile" away from the confines of the empire (Saunders 226). This condition provokes his inconsistent oscillation between self and other, unity and fragmentation. When he keeps experiencing such "an oscillatory process of transposition," he arrives at a momentarily ethical understanding of the barbarian others, and begins to perform the work of a medium (Peeren and Horstkotte 12).

It is when the Magistrate is in these altered states of consciousness that he develops the skills of negation and mistranslation to mediate external and internal otherness, and revise the hierarchy embodying the Empire and the barbarians. For instance, he openly shouts the word "No!" when he witnesses the Joll's public display of torture of the barbarian prisoners. The Magistrate's "No!" here marks a counter narrative to the Empire's physical and linguistic exploitation of the barbarians that attempts "to coerce the natives into assuming the identity of 'barbarians' and 'enemy' … in order to assert its existence" (Craps 62). His reading of the barbarian as "miracle of creation" or "Men" later

also questions the Empire's values of its absolute superiority in which he has been steeped (Coetzee, *Waiting* 117). Saunders claims: "the magistrate's word creates a hiatus, a disruptive and defamiliarizing lacuna, in the empire's performative reiteration. It transforms the empire's statement about itself into an uncertainty, into a question that can be answered affirmatively or negatively, into a proposition inhabited by truth or by error" (Saunders 230). Though the Magistrate's words only appeal to the crowd momentarily, they succeed in bringing uncertainties into the discourse of the Empire. His practices of negation and ambiguity unveil the problematic of imperial language and question the established relationship between his self and the barbarian other.

Mistranslation, or what Maria Boletsi's calls "infelicitous translation," is another strategy which the Magistrate employs to negotiate the binary relationship between the Empire and the barbarians (Boletsi 62). When Colonel Joll, who assumes that the Magistrate is communicating with the barbarians, asks him to translate the meaning of the wooden slips, which he excavated from the site of an ancient barbarian civilization, the Magistrate employs this strategy to invite a radical rethinking of the epistemological framework of the Empire. For instance, by misinterpreting a barbarian character as a word meaning *justice* as well as *vengeance* or *war*, he imbues the term of justice—this "favorite imperial category"—with an ambiguous meaning and makes it appear "foreign" to the dominant narratives (66). Boletsi suggests that his improvised translation of "the similarity" instead of "the difference" of the three terms not only challenges the fixed definitions of the words, but also exposes the brutality of the imperial language, which has constructed its own authenticity and the pre-constructed myth of a barbarian threat (67).

Besides, he invents numerous versions of barbarian characters on the slips and turns them into "signifiers of linguistic uncertainty and foreignness" (Boletsi 64):

> 'It is the same with the rest of these slips.' I plunge my good hand into the chest and stir. 'They form an allegory. They can be read in many orders. Further, each single slip can be read in

many ways. Together they can be read as a domestic journal, or they can be read as a plan of war, or they can be turned on their sides and read as history of the last years of the Empire – the old Empire, I mean.' (Coetzee, *Waiting* 122)

His act of mistranslation not only preserves the foreignness and the plurality of "barbarian cunning," but also reassesses the Empire's fixed definitions of categories (Boletsi 64). He also relocates the relationship between self and other in the process of translation. When he interprets the characters on the slips as "a history of the last years of the Empire—the old Empire, I mean" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 122), he sarcastically analogizes the ancient barbarian's empire with the current Empire, and in this manner, underscores the transience of both. His practice of mistranslation deconstructs the established division between the settler and the native, civilization and barbarity. It directs the readers' attention toward how the Empire's linguistic code is as "impaired" as the noises of a barbarian language, full of internal gaps and confusion.

The final strategy for the Magistrate to re-position his relationship with the Empire and the barbarians is to abandon the imperial practices of interpretation and narration. At the beginning of the novel, the Magistrate has lots of interest in deciphering the ancient history of the barbarians. He usually lingers among the ruins of the barbarian civilization, sitting there in the dark to wait "for spirits from the byways of history to speak to him" (Coetzee, *Waiting* 17). He is also writing a memorial to record his life among the barbarians. However, by falling into different trances, he gains the insight that he can never interpret the foreign bodies of the barbarians or understand the true stories of them when he is constricted to the imperial cognitive frame. That's why he is unable to receive a complete transmission from the other, and see any sign and feel any "tremor of ghostly fear" among the ruins (17). He reflects, "I think: 'There has been something staring at me in the face, and still I do not see it'" (170). Gaining awareness of his incompetence to solve the gaps in the dominant linguistic frame and access the barbarians, the Magistrate decides to give up his hope of achieving a deeper understanding of history as well as his

plan of writing the story. He assumes that what he has written is just like the barbarian slips, which contain "a message as devious, as equivocal, as reprehensible" as what he claimed the slips contained (169). In order to preserve the foreignness of the other and to avoid the distortion of its meaning, he ultimately chooses to resist every form of interpretation or narration.

By conducting the practices of negation and mistranslation, the Magistrate escapes from "the identity mapped out for him by the Empire" and symbolically establishes a connection with the barbarian others (Craps 65). Though his rapprochement with the other and his departure from his previous "interpretative community" do not guarantee him a better life, they enable him to venture forward "into uncharted territory, an ethical space which opens up the possibility of a non-appropriative encounter with the other" (65). He begins to redefine the boundary between self and other and imagine a not-yet-realized ethical space where the self and the other might achieve some sort of mutual understanding.

The novel ends with a scene that conveys such a symbolic and momentary glimpse of hope. In the final scene, the Magistrate comes across some children who are building a snowman at the square. The strong presence of children here marks a "psychological closure" for the Magistrate in its "exorcism" of dreams and suffering. Durrant says: "While the dreams begin as a futile attempt to reconstruct, and to make reparations for the past, the children's work, which makes the Magistrate feel 'inexplicably joyful,' is emphatically directed toward the future" (Durrant 49). Though the novel doesn't provide us with any real redemption in life, the final scene is symbolically messianic. As a witness and as the narrator of the scene, the Magistrate contributes to re-imagining a dialogic society to come in the promising future.

Active Mediums in Mda's *The Heart of Redness*

The magical settings and ceaseless struggles between the Believers and the Unbelievers in Mda's *The Heart of Redness* are different from the setting and

the conflicts between the Empire and the barbarians in Coetzee's novel. The struggles between the Believers and the Unbelievers span the period from the 19th century to the end of the 20th century. The two story lines of the community's past and present are interwoven. One will find that the main concerns of the debates between the two oppositional groups are similar in each period. The Believers want to search for solutions to the crisis within a traditional framework. The Unbelievers reject the traditions and regard them as superstitions and a sign of backwardness. Therefore, in the 19th century, the conflicts took place because the Believers believed in the prophecies of Nongqawuse and slaughtered all their cattle, expecting that their ancestors would rise from the ocean and bring herd and crop to them; the Unbelievers refused to do that and blamed the Believers for causing famine and many deaths among the Xhosas. This cattle-killing event can be paralleled with the present struggles between the contemporary Believers and Unbelievers over Nongqawuse's prophecies and land appropriation. In the case of the present divisions, the Unbelievers, being critical of the traditional faith and culture, invest in the notion of progress and the promise of capitalism. They argue that establishing the casino at Qolorha-by-sea is the only way to enhance development of the area. On the contrary, the Believers attempt to preserve the traditions and protect the site of the prophecies in order to fulfill their sentiments toward the past.

Compared to the spectral barbarian others in Coetzee's novel, the ancestral spirits of the Xhosas in *The Heart of Redness* are fundamentally intertwined with the everyday life of the community. They are not otherworldly manifestations that need to be exorcised, but represent the traditions or ancestral wisdom that should be incorporated into the contemporary ways of living. In this context, a medium plays an important role in negotiating between the supernatural realm of the ancestors and the daily life of the living, between past and present, tradition and modernity. He or she is similar to "the diviner" (amagqirha) in Xhosa society that Dirk Klopper defines as "a special person, elected by the ancestors to perform the function of mediator between … the human community with its established practices and customs and … the

intermediate forces of nature" (Klopper 101). According to the historian Jeff Peires' seminal study of Xhosa culture, the diviner is concerned with practicalities of "omens, medicines, witchcraft and the relationship between people and their ancestors" (Peires 1989: 30-31). He or she usually experiences symptoms such as withdrawal, troubling dreams, periods of unconsciousness, when he or she is called to the vocation by the ancestors (Prins and Lewis 140). It is when he or she is in these altered states of consciousness that he or she receives the messages from the ancestors. Besides, he or she is assumed to be able to communicate with animals because ancestral spirits usually appear in the shapes of wild animals. By interpreting the ambiguous signs conveyed by the ancestors to the living, the diviner "inhabits an in-between space, the space of interpretation, translating the signifiers of nature, which exceeds the symbolic of culture, into the sign systems of a given cultural community" (Klopper 102). According to these definitions of the diviner, I contend that the figure of a medium in the novel can be assumed to be an active medium. Being different from a passive medium, this kind of medium owns a key to the knowledge of different cultures and conflicting entities and is able to mediate in the real or symbolic battle between the oppositional groups or binary conceptualized domains.

The two protagonists, Camagu and Qukezwa, serve as good examples of active mediums in the novel. By employing the knowledge of the dead and the living, nature and culture, they settle the conflicts between the Believers and the Unbelievers and re-create a dialogic society in post-apartheid South Africa. Take Qukezwa as an instance. Embodying a sense of hybridity in spiritual, social, and ecological domains, she functions to mediate between the present and the past, ancestral wisdoms and modern knowledge, natural realm and human world. From a spiritual perspective, she is invested with a mythic aura as well as a trans-temporal identity. She crosses from the past to the present through her identification with an ancestor in the historical past, sometimes appearing as a Khoikhoi woman, the wife of the leader of the 19th century Believers Twin, and sometimes appearing as the modern daughter of the Believer Zim. As the novel progresses, the identities of the two Qukezwas

increasingly merge. In the last paragraph of the novel, one is not able to distinguish one character from the other. As Jacobs puts it, "The two stories blend into a seamless narrative of the past and the present, and the two voices combine into a single, split-tone song" (Jacobs 236). The reappearance of the character on different time levels endows Qukezwa with a mystic and prophetic power. It points out her trans-temporal and trans-historical role in preserving and passing on the traditional knowledge from the ancestors to the living. In addition, the merging of two characters in the end serves as a symbol of union of the present and the past. It draws our attention to an alternative way of life that highlights mutual communication instead of conflicts and struggles.

Qukezwa also embodies a sense of hybridity in the social domain. By combining different cultural and social traditions, Qukezwas live up to the significance of the term "qukezwa," which means "the person elected to bring the community together, to facilitate social integration" (Klopper 101). Their multi-voicedness reveals that tradition is not unchanging and static, but embodies potential for social renewal. For example, the early Qukezwa brought the Khoikhoi religious and cultural traditions to the Xhosa society after marrying Twin, and used them well to save the people from the disaster of Cattle-killing. And although the contemporary Qukezwa first appears as a rebellious city-bound youth and a modern consumer, who wears "a black woolen cap which is emblazoned with the P symbol of Pierre Cardin in green and yellow," she turns out to be the guardian of dying traditions (Mda 62, 56). She wears a traditional red blanket in court to defend her act of cutting the foreign trees. She employs the indigenous knowledge of nature to help the local people to develop a self-reliant industry of gathering shellfish. In addition, by showing Camagu the values of Nongqawuse's prophecies as well as of Xhosa traditions, she propels Camagu to integrate traditions with western knowledge and come up with a promising idea to establish the site of Nongqawuse's prophecies as a national heritage. In other words, by linking tradition with modernity, the two Qukezwas function as active mediums between the Believers and the Unbelievers, Xhosa and Khoikhoi. They encourage the oppositional groups to give up binary thinking in order to figure

out a solution for cultural and social conflicts.

From an ecological perspective, Qukezwa is negotiating between nature and culture. For both characters of Qukezwa, nature is not an object of understanding, but imbued with soul and the quality of subjectivity. Their relationship with nature is based more on "mutual recognition and reciprocity" (Klopper 99). Being a Khoi woman, one of the true aboriginal people of Southern Africa, the early Qukezwa retains a sense of African spirituality that is mostly imbued with the land and nature. She dreams that she "flies … in the land of prophets" and "sings for soft pastel colours … in many voices" (Mda 312). She has passed such ability on to her descendent, the daughter of Zim. The contemporary Qukezwa knows the wisdom of trees, the sky, and the sea. She also has a talent for the dying tradition of split-tone singing through which she can communicate with animals:

> She bursts into a song and plays her umrhubhe musical instrument. She whistles and sings all at the same time. Many voices come out of her mouth. Deep sounds that echo like the night. Sounds that have the heaviness of a steamy summer night. Flaming sounds that crackle like a veld fire. Light sounds that float like flakes of snow on top of the Amathole Mountains. Hollow sounds like laughing mountains. Coming out all at once. As if a whole choir lives in her mouth. (Mda 175)

Transcending human language, the split-tone singing here not only marks Qukezwa's ability to mediate between the natural and the human world, but also demonstrates her ecological awareness embodied in the ancestral wisdoms of the African landscape.

By bridging the gap between her knowledge inherited from the ancestors and the progressive views of modernity, modern Qukezwa finds a balance between nature and culture. Her opposition to the presence of foreign trees is an example. When she answers in court to defend her act of cutting

down foreign trees, she combines modern rationality with the ancestral knowledge of the land of the Xhosas. Although dressed in a traditional red blanket, she indeed states progressive ecological views:

> "I cut the trees, and I shall cut them again …"
> "The trees that I destroyed are as harmful as the inkberry. They are the lantana and wattle trees … The seed can lie there for ten years, but when fire comes it grows. And it uses all the water. Nothing can grow under the wattle tree. It is an enemy since we do not have enough water in this country." (Mda 247-49)

The Austrian-born American physicist Fritjof Capra states in his well-known book about modern scientific and economic crises and their relationship with technology and ecological needs, *The Turning Point*: "Ecological awareness, then, will arise only when we combine our rational knowledge with an intuition for the nonlinear nature of our environment" (Capra 41). Qukezwa's speech demonstrates this progressive "ecological awareness" by successfully combining profound indigenous knowledge about her ancestral land with modern rationality. It also raises questions about the binary divisions between backwardness (nature) and civilization (culture). Her seemingly reckless act of cutting down foreign trees is not uncivilized behavior. Instead, by conveying a strong ecological message, it is a protest against colonial and capitalist exploitation of the local environment.

As a figure with enigmatic aura and multi-voices, Qukezwa inspires another protagonist, Camagu, to find his new interstitial identity as an active medium. In the opening scene of the novel, Camagu appears as the civilized intellectual and a returned exile from the United States, who lives a disaffected life in Johannesburg. After he arrives in Qolorha, he meets both the female intellectual, Xoliswa, the daughter of the Unbeliever Banco, and Qukezwa, the daughter of the Believer Zim. In his relationship with Xoliswa, he gradually learns that he doesn't share her disdain for the regressive practices of Xhosa

tradition and her approval of the seaside resort project, which for her is the symbol of progress and modernity. By contrast, he feels he is drawn to the enigmatic girl Qukezwa, who clings to the Xhosa traditions, knows the natural environment intimately, and owns an uncanny insight into his thoughts.

As he sees Qukezwa delightfully riding her father's beloved horse and strolling in the valley, he is fascinated and can't help joining her to experience the magic of the site of prophecies. In their moonlight bareback ride on Gxagxa, her split-tone singing imposes a spell on him. It invokes in his mind the vivid images of the earth, sky, and sea, and opens him up to a sensual enjoyment. After that, he experiences several symptoms that a novice diviner has gone through during being called to the profession of the spirits of ancestors, including withdrawal, dreams, and encountering an ancestral spirit in the form of a wild animal. For instance, he dreams that he becomes a river with water flowing through him. He is also visited by Majola, totem snake of his clan. Klopper argues that "these events—alienation from cosmopolitan life, disconcerting dreams involving the liminal space of the river, and a visitation by the ancestors in the form of a snake—point to the fact that Camagu has received a calling" (Klopper 99).[29] He begins to establish a connection with the spiritual world.

Thus, Camagu begins questioning his modernized identity based on the knowledge gained from Western education. As a guy with a doctorate in modern communication, he paradoxically finds that Qukezwa's split-tone singing functions as a more effective and supreme way of communication. Her singing not only transcends the human language, but also marks a connection between the human and natural world. By learning to appreciate her talent and her wordless song, Camagu develops a broader vision of life and the world. He

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[29] According to Prins and Lewis (1992), rivers are a kind of intermediate area that link the forest (ihlati)—"a place of danger, where witches and their familiars gather, where sorcerers and diviners obtain medicinal plants, and where predators lurk," with the homestead (umzi)—"a place of safety, where the structures and customs of social life prevail, where crops are cultivated and cattle are reared, and where the ancestors (izinyanya) are propitiated through appropriate rituals" (Klopper 97). They function like the Grassland (ithafa), which is not quite homestead, but may become domesticated. Being a liminal space, rivers act as a bridge between different binary entities, including the spirits and the living, the wild and the tame, nature and culture.

learns to appreciate the magic inherited in the site of Nongqawuse's prophecies. Instead of regarding it as the symbol of "redness" or "backwardness," he gains insight into its beauties and historical significance. He says to Xoliswa when she questions his relationship with Qukezwa: "Where you see darkness, witchcraft, heathens and barbarians, she sees song and dance and laughter and beauty" (Mda 219). Ina Gräbe assumes that "the transition becomes complete once he (Camagu) comes to understand and accept an aspect of African culture which celebrated the African landscape by means of songs and the ability to 'communicate' with animals" (Gräbe 172). By accepting the spiritual aspect of African traditions, Camagu becomes an active medium who negotiates between the living and the dead, modernity and tradition. He begins to live up the very word of his name—"Camagu"—that means "Amen and be Satisfied, O Great Ones" when a cow was slaughtered for worshipping the spirits of the ancestors in the Xhosa ritual (Peires 1987: 105). The meaning of this word implies that his modernized identity is deeply connected to the spirituality and traditional beliefs in Xhosa culture.

Mediating between different belief systems, Camagu develops an eco-critical, trans-cultural, and ethical vision of history and nature, and helps settle the local struggles over the tragic historical events and the development of the land. For example, by combining what he has learned about international business practices from his education in the United States with the indigenous knowledge of the local natural resources, which he learns from Qukezwa and the local women in the village, Camagu provides a self-sustained plan for the development of the valley. He claims that it is necessary to protect the local environment against unsustainable exploitation and proposes "the kind of tourism that will benefit the people, that will not destroy indigenous forests that will not bring hordes of people who will pollute the rivers and drives away the birds" (Mda 232). Thus, he establishes a cooperative society with the local women and helps declare Qolorgha-by-Sea a historical site of national heritage. Besides, he insists that the amaXhosa traditions should be displayed as living practices instead of museum installations. He says to Dalton: "Like all cultures their culture is dynamic … I am talking of self-reliance where people do things

for themselves and will be run by a committee elected by them in the true manner of co-operative societies" (286). His revisionary plan unmistakably disarms the threat of a seaside resort which might bring social and environmental damage, and solves the community's struggles over land appropriation.

Camagu also succeeds in settling the conflicts between the Believers and the Unbelievers over the traumatic history of Cattle-killing and the Nongqawuse's prophecies. He proposes a new pragmatic approach to revise the meaning of historical events: "Her prophecies arose out of the spiritual and material anguish of the amaXhosa nation" (Mda 283). Abandoning a skeptical cosmopolitan attitude that dismisses the events as foolishness or as a crime, he regards them as proper responses to the colonial exploitation of Xhosa in the 19th century. In addition, he says: "Believers are sincere in their belief. In this whole matter of Nongqawuse I see the sincerity of belief … It is the same sincerity of belief that has been seen throughout history and continues to be seen today where those who believe actually see miracles" (283). Here he assumes that the destructive past might contain a transcendent answer for the present crisis and that "the sincerity of belief" embodies hope for a better future. By integrating African spirituality into the modern framework of rational thinking, he goes beyond the norm of binary thinking and creates an ethical, compassionate, and open-ended interpretation of the traumatic memories. His act also impels the Xhosas to re-create a new kind of shared history. It is a history that doesn't look for the recovery of the whole past, but attempts to re-invent a communal memory for the community.

Linking the historical past to the crisis of the present through the switching of time from present to past and vice versa, Mda creates Camagu and Qukezwa as active mediums in the transitional stages of Xhosa society. Both characters function to recuperate a culture-nature/life-death/tradition-modernity dialectic. They give binary entities an equal discursive space to interrogate each other. This not only prevents particular discourses from becoming totalizing, but also deconstructs the simplistic binary thinking that causes the trans-generational conflicts of the community. In addition, through their

engagement with bringing the ancestral wisdom into the modernized world by re-imagining the spiritual relationships in terms of contemporary needs, they provoke a dialogue between the Believers and the Unbelievers and engender a communal and open-ended resolution of the social crisis. In other words, they reveal that tradition offers a generative value to the fast-changing world of the present. As soon as one learns to reconcile with the past and with his or her ancestral spirits, s/he is able to re-create a new trans-historical or trans-cultural identity as well as a solution for ever-changing conflicts.

Conclusion

The established division between binary domains fills our world with social and emotional contradictions. A ceaseless dialogue or perpetual oscillation between the binary entities is significant when one confronts various forms of otherness and settles the conflicts and pains of life. The two kinds of mediums I distinguished in this chapter represent two kinds of negotiating. Constricted to the dominant cognitive and linguistic frame, a passive medium is a person who involuntarily identifies with the spectral others by falling into a condition of trance. In an altered state of consciousness, he or she gains critical awareness of the limits of self-knowledge and begins to re-position his or her relationship with the oppressed others. Thus, in literary studies, the figure of a passive medium not only functions to question the dominant notions of history and identity, but also prompts readers to look for the gaps concealed in the hegemonic discourse.

With sufficient knowledge of different cultures and belief systems, an active medium plays the role of the double-voiced agent in the social and cultural struggles. Negotiating between binary conceptual domains of the living and the dead, present and past, tradition and modernity, nature and culture, this kind of medium serves to deconstruct simplistic binary thinking and provoke a solution for social conflicts. Except for these two kinds of mediums, there is still room for different attitudes in the face of different figurative or non-figurative ghosts. The concept of a medium is always diverse and it is

useful in mediating internal and external otherness, and in re-imagining a more communal identity as well as a dialogic world to come.

Conclusion

The Ethics of the Ghostly: A Ghost Medium in J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*

> [T]he absolute proximity of a stranger whose power is singular and anonymous (*es spukt*), an unameable and neutral power, that is undecidable, neither active nor passive, an an-identity that, *without doing anything*, invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it. (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 172)

In the previous chapters, I analyzed how the subjects experience different forms of ghosts and ghostly aspects in certain people, objects, and places, and at historical moments. By close-reading the literary representation of the ghostly in relation to space, language, and inter-subjectivity in the selected postcolonial and minority novels, I elaborated the narrative potential of ghosts and their relationship to the construction of identity. In these cases, ghosts are not merely perceived as products of human imagination, or of social and cultural constructions. Rather, they play the role of an active agent that continuously haunts the subjects, connecting them to the repressed past or the hidden social reality. By delineating how ghosts participate in one's daily life and effect his or her formation of a sense of self, I revealed that ghosts are not objects but subjects.

In the concluding chapter, I will elaborate the ethic potential of ghosts by integrating the concept of "medium" into the discussion. Being considered in its entanglement with death, alterity, difference, and indeterminacy, the metaphor of ghosts plays the role of a medium in many postcolonial novels, including some works that feature literary ghosts as well as the ones that designate subjects as ghostly in a metaphorical sense. In order to achieve the

aim for a contribution to the discussion on ghosts as a way of conceptualizing new modes of ethical thinking, I will explore the specific ways the metaphor of ghost operates in J. M. Coetzee's writing of the late-apartheid period, *Life & Times of Michael K*: In what way is the protagonist, Michael K, associated with a ghost? What kind of agency or ethical impact does his ghostliness generate? How does his ghostliness relate him to a medium that produces an ethical subject to think beyond boundaries and take responsibility for the vulnerable but irreducible other? In other words, by exploring how Michael K, who is described as, or manifests himself as a ghost, plays the role of an active agent or a medium in the novel, I will assume that the ghostly has an ethical power—the power of revealing the inconceivable, triggering new modes of thinking and producing ethical subjects.

Written in 1981, *Life & Times of Michael K* has not only been read as a postmodern allegory, closely tied to a South African context during apartheid, but also has been perceived as an example of the postcolonial gothic in which the figure of the ghostly is used to articulate severe social and individual crises. Set in some indeterminate breakdown in which "the military machine controls all aspects of civic life" (Van Vuuren 96), the novel portrays the protagonist, Michael K, as a marginalized and ghostly figure in a war-torn country. Michael K was born colored, disfigured, fatherless, and poor. From birth, he is marked by a hare-lip: "The lip curled like a snail's foot, the left nostril gape" (Coetzee, *MK* 3). His deformity leads to his speech impediment, slow wit, and social invisibility, and turns him into a victim of social mockery. Since he is unable to sufficiently communicate with others through words, he is usually objectified and dehumanized by the able-bodied people in his society. For instance, the medical officer expresses in his diary that Michael is an idiot (131), a stone (135), a stick insect (149), a clay man (161), and a wraith (154), which approached "as near to a state of life in death or death in life, whatever it was, as is humanly possible" (159). In these cases, the medical officer dehumanizes K. His use of the phrases such as "a wraith" and "a state of life in death or death in life" reveals Michael K's status as a living ghost, who has been overlooked and suffers a degree of dispossession.

Michael K is perceived and perceives himself as ghostly for some other reasons, including his radical passivity in the cycles of the world, and his enigmatic and uncertain status between life and death. For instance, K is transformed into the ghostly other during his journey. Living in Cape Town during a civil war, K decides to take his sick mother in a wheelbarrow back to the farm where she grew up. Though his mother dies en route, K continues the journey and happens to settle on a deserted farm where he grows pumpkins and vegetables. Entering an unfamiliar and silent landscape from the violence of the civil war and living like a beast, K becomes identified with the ghostly. The narrator claims, "After the hardship of the mountains and the camp there was nothing but bone and muscle on his body. His clothes, tattered already, hung on him without shape … His step was so light that he barely touched the earth. It seemed possible to fly; it seemed possible to be both body and spirit" (*MK* 101-2). The description conveys an image of a skeleton and reveals that the body of Michael K is spectralized. Later, he is caught and taken to an internment camp and soon escapes from the camp. He visits the farm again and lives like "a stranger or a ghost," in a burrow (120).

Michael K appears to the medical officer as a ghostly existence—a non-identifiable object, "the obscurest of the obscure" (*MK* 142) because of his uncertain status between life and death. The medical officer depicts one of his conversations with K and says: "He shook his head from side to side, then without warning opened the great dark pools of his eyes on me. There was something more I had wanted to say, but I could not speak. It seemed foolish to argue with someone who looked at you as if from beyond the grave" (149). The association of K with the dead or the ghostly figure appears repetitively through the medical officer's diary. For instance, the medical officer claims that Michael K has become "an albatross around my neck. Your bony arms are knotted behind my head. I walk bowed under the weight of you" (146). When K escapes the camp, the officer muses, "Michaels is gone … The wire does not seem to have been cut; but Michaels is enough of a wraith to slip through anything" (154). In the final entry of his journal, the medical officer also relates K to "a gathering, a thickening of darkness" (165). These references to

the ghostly not only reflect K's ambivalent condition between life and death, presence and absence, the human and the non-human, but also reveal his haunting power to the medical officer.

In the book *Secretary of the Invisible: The Idea of Hospitality in the Fiction of J. M. Coetzee*, which explores the ethic of hospitality—of how individuals respond responsibly to the stranger or the other in Coetzee's writing, Mike Marais claims that the medical officer's obsessive concern for K in his diary conveys a sense of responsibility that is not just a "yielding attitude to things," but "a substitution of oneself for the otherness" (Marais, *Secretary of the Invisible* 61-62). This kind of attitude "exacts a restructuring of subjectivity" and turns the self into "an ethical subject" that "acts not out of concerns for itself but for the other" (62). Based on Marais' argument, I will reflect on the question: In what ways does Michael K's peculiar ghostliness engage in impelling the subjects of both the medical officer and himself to act ethically? I will first examine how a condition of trance, which K experiences during his journey, endows him with irreducible ghostliness. And then I will further analyze how K acquires the ability to perform the work of a medium—the work of mobilizing the binary oppositions and inventing a new and ethical subject—through his ghostly alterity.

I contend that K is transformed into a ghost medium when he undergoes different processes of trance during the journey. I defined the notion of trance in my last chapter as a condition of unwillingly and simultaneously entering a foreign domain and becoming the other, as a mode of an irrational or extra-linguistic experience—an altered consciousness—that usually involves ugly feelings, illness, dreams, a marginal state, or degradation. When one undergoes such a condition, s/he usually becomes identified with the ghosts and is able to negotiate with his or her internal and external otherness.

When Michael K stays on the mountains, he falls into a condition of trance. His existence becomes sensory: sometimes he abandons himself to sickness, feeling himself "swooping through darkness" (*MK* 57); sometimes he spends a whole day in idleness, listening to "the great silence about him" (60). Besides, he stops making an adventure of eating and drinking and claims, "I

am becoming a different kind of man … If I were cut … the blood would no longer gush from me but seep, and after a little seeping dry and heal. I am becoming smaller and harder and drier every day" (67). He also becomes identified with animals. He eats insects and roots, and lives in a cave, where he becomes "so much a creature of twilight and night that daylight hurts his eyes" (115). Like a nocturnal animal, he depends less on a sense of sight than of touch and smell. In addition, he loves idleness. Most of the time, he lives "beyond the reach of calendar and clock … half awake, half asleep. Like a parasite dozing in the gut … like a lizard under a stone" (116).

Undergoing the process of trance, K develops a mode of altered-consciousness—a condition of "yielding up of himself to time," wanting nothing and looking forward to nothing, and such a state of radical passivity of K defines his peculiar ghostliness (*MK* 115). Marais has argued that a mode of altered-consciousness refers to "an anti-intentional mode of consciousness in which the self forgoes the control over the world of things" (Marais, "Negation" 110). He assumes that such a state is "akin to what Levinas refers to as the *il y a*, that is, the experience of consciousness without a subject, a totally impersonal, neutral situation in which Being is detached from beings which control it" (110).

It is worth noting that, in the same article, Marais suggests that the self constructs a subject by maintaining "the inscription of a dualism of inner self and external world which positions the subject as the centre around which other entities resolve as objects" (Marais, "Negation" 107). By comparing K's first and second visits to the Karoo farm, he argues that K's relationships with other entities "undergo a structural change: while they are initially portrayed as being informed by subject-centred consciousness, they are later shown to be the product of a consciousness that is divested of a controlling subjectivity" (107). He takes K's occupation of the farmhouse during his first visit to the farm as "a complex symbol of settlement, ownership and mastery" and argues that K's initial relationship with the land "is mediated, that he does not interact with the land in it-self, but rather construes it as a farm … as controlled, commodified space" (109). In this case, K tries to maintain a dualism of inner

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self and external world by producing the land as an object.

However, K's existence on the farm and mountains during his second visit is marked by the absence of subject-centred consciousness. For instance, he chooses not to stay in the farmhouse and takes up residence in a burrow at the dam where he "felt at home … as he had never felt in the house" (*MK* 99). There K relates to the things around him sensuously:

> His eyes remained unfocussed for hours on end like those of a blind person. He had learned to rely on smell too. He breathed into his lungs the clear sweet smell of water brought up from inside the earth. It intoxicated him, he could not have enough of it. Though he knew no names he could tell one bush from another by the smell of their leaves. He could smell rain-weather in the air. (*MK* 115)

In the above paragraph, K's sensory experience is not produced by mediating the things through his consciousness, but by identifying and interacting with them through the senses. Marais suggests that such an experience in the cave is marked by "the absence of language" that reveals K's inability to name and control the entities (Marais, "Negation" 111). Marais also cites Blanchot's analysis of Hegel's argument that "Adam's first act, which made him master of the animals, was to give animals names" (Blanchot, "Literature and the Right to Death" 323), and claims that the absence of naming reveals K's loss of control over things and his inability to construct a self-sufficient subject by maintaining the difference between his self and other entities. Thus, Michael K finds that he is unable to "be fully in possession of himself" (*MK* 119). He is unable to construct his subjectivity through language: "Always when he tried to explain himself to himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding bulked, into which it was useless to pour words. The words were eaten up, the gap remained. His was always a story with a hole in it: a wrong story, always wrong" (*MK* 110). In other words, K's relocation from the farmhouse to the burrow not only spectralizes his body, but also transforms

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him into a spectral medium whose lack of subject-centered consciousness "connotes an overcoming of the separation between human subject and nature object" (Marais, *Invisible* 39). By undermining this opposition, K is able to escape from the social world as it is constructed within the symbolic order and live outside history.

The narrator says, "He lived by the rising and setting of the sun, in a pocket outside time. Cape Town and the war and his passage to the farm slipped further and further into forgetfulness" (*MK* 60). In the silence of the farm and mountains, he tends to the earth, focusing only on the pleasure of gardening. Van Vuuren claims that "silence becomes his natural medium" (Van Vuuren 97). This medium allows him to live in the cycles of days and seasons, not being concerned about keeping a tally of days and recording the changes of the moon. It helps him escape from the war and history that take place in a constructed chronological time and within a linguistic frame. In this case, he gains a conceptual freedom: "He was not a prisoner or a castaway, his life by the dam was not a sentence that he had to serve out" (*MK* 115).

By identifying and interacting with the things through the medium of silence, Michael K questions the paternal laws constructed by language and further establishes a new and spiritual relationship with his dead mother. K had been constricted to the power of the father—the tyranny of language—since he was a child. He says:

> [M]y father was Huis Norenius. My father was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, the twenty-one rules of which the first was "There will be silence in dormitories at all times," and the woodwork teacher with the missing fingers who twisted my ear when the line was not straight, and the Sunday mornings when we put on our khaki shirts and our khaki shorts and our black socks and our black shoes and marched two abreast to the church on Papegaai Street to be forgiven. They were my father, and my mother is buried and not yet risen. (*MK* 104)

Having been repressed by the rules of the father, Michael is constricted to the linguistic frame. Therefore, he is unable to establish a spiritual connection with his dead mother or with any otherworldly and extra-linguistic existence. For instance, upon his arrival at Prince Albert after his mother's death, K heard a mystical voice and tried to make out words. However, his efforts failed:

> Is this the voice of Prince Albert? He wondered. I thought Prince Albert was dead. He tried to make out words, but though the voice pervaded the air like a mist or an aroma, the words, if there were words, if the voice were not simply lulling or chanting tones, were too faint or too smooth to hear. Then the voice ceased, giving way to a tiny faraway brass band. (49)

This voice comes back to him when he is ill. He is again unable to "make out a word … of the monotone that after a while blended with the twitter of the birds in the trees and then gave way to music" (69). The examples of these mysterious moments show that K may only receive messages from the spiritual world when he is in an irrational condition in which he undergoes an anti-intentional mode of consciousness. However, as soon as he tries to decode the unfamiliar voice through language, he loses control over them.

By tending to the earth in silence, Michael K learns to reject his identification with the father—the list of rules that restrict his freedom:

> He stood leaning against the frame of the pump, feeling the tremor that passed through it each time the piston reached the bottom of its stroke, hearing the great wheel above his head cut through the dark on its greased bearings. How fortunate that I have no children, he thought: how fortunate that I have no desire to father. I would not know what to do with a child out here in the heart of the country, who would need milk and clothes and friends and schooling. I would fail in my duties, I would be the worst of fathers … That is why it is a good thing

that I, who have nothing to pass on, should be spending my time to pass on, should be spending my time here where I am out of the way. (*MK* 104-05)

In addition to his refusal to be a father, Michael K establishes a spiritual connection with his dead mother by growing pumpkins and mealies on the Karoo farm, where he buries his mother's ashes. Because of the fact that the ashes become part of the land and provide nourishment to the plants and vegetables, K's mother is associated with the maternal cord of the earth and the cycle of nature. Thus, as Michael K begins his life as "a cultivator" (59), he redefines his relationship with his mother and the realm of the dead:

He thought of his mother … When my mother was dying in hospital, he thought, when she knew her end was coming, it was not me she looked to but someone who stood behind me: her mother or the ghost of her mother. To me she was a woman but to herself she was still as child calling to her mother to hold her hand and help her. And her own mother, in the secret life we do not see, was a child too. I come from a line of children without end. (116-17)

Considering himself coming from "a line of children without end," he establishes a closer relationship with mother earth, where life continues without end. He suggests: "[B]ecause enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over; whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once the cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children" (109). By re-identifying himself with "a gardener" (181), "an earthworm" or "a mole" (182), Michael K plays the role of medium, re-establishing a bond between the human and the earth. In sum, in the first part of the novel, which is centered on K's consciousness, Michael K undergoes different forms of trance to physically and mentally become a ghost

medium, who, through his association with the liminal state of a living ghost, can be perceived as a powerful point of excess mediating the worlds of the dead and the living, the realms of the spiritual and the empirical.

Later in the second part of the novel, by asserting his ghostliness after he is caught again and sent to the camp in Cape Town, Michael K exerts an effective force on the camp medical officer. Shifting from a third-person perspective focused on K's consciousness to the medical officer's first-person narration, this part of the novel comprises the medical officer's diary, which presents his obsessive concerns for K, especially for K's ghostliness that is expressed in his insubstantial existence and radical passivity.

I suggest that Michael K becomes an object of fascination to the medical officer due to his complex behaviors of self-spectralization, including his lack of interest in basic human needs, his lack of preoccupation with material possessions, his detachment from reality, his persistent silence, and his disappearance. For instance, he almost eats nothing as if, quoting the essay by a famous South African writer, translator and academic, Michiel Heyns, "his digestive system does reject certain kinds of food, but he can apparently survive without any food" (Heyns 30). In his analysis of an ethics of silence in the novel, Duncan McColl Chesney also assumes that Michael K's body is spectralized because it reveals "the indistinctiveness of the limit between human and nonhuman" (Chesney 311). In addition, when the authority interrogates Michael, he usually answers with a dense silence or "persistent *No*" (*MK* 164). He says to the police, who ask him where he is from, "I live nowhere" (120). When the medical officer tries to force him to tell his story and says, "Come on, Michael, we haven't got all day, there is a war on!" K at last replies to the medical officer: "I am not in the war" (138). As an agent of repressive authority, the medical officer attempts to know, name, and identify with K through language. He keeps asking K to talk, to give himself "some substance," but he is met by a dense silence and an intransigent non-communicativeness (140).

The significance of K's spectralized body and non-communicativeness lies in the representation of his inaccessible alterity to the authority or social

reality. According to David Attwell, Michael K is not "a historical being," but serves as "an Archimedean point of reference outside of the dimensions of what is recognizably real" (Attwell 174). He functions like a Derridean trace that evades the interpretation of the authority, remaining "free of history's referent" (Chapman 390). In addition, Marais argues that K, when described as "a gathering, a thickening of darkness," is like the figure of Eurydice or the "darkest point" of the "other dark" that invokes a subject's desire to bring it to the light—to render the invisible visible, but at the same time instills a restless dissatisfaction with his insufficiency of doing it (Marais, *Invisible* 54).[30] The more the medical officer desires to know his story, the more he exceeds the medical officer's attempt at comprehension. Based on these arguments, I will conclude that Michael K is able to escape different forms of confinement and interpretation.

Another example of Michael K's self-spectralization is his unexplained vanishing that turns him into "a wraith." Peeren has argued that "literal disappearance" is "one of the most effective and horrifying modes of producing living ghosts in which the 'living' part is effectively crossed out" (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphors* 142-43). Avery Gordon in *Ghostly Matters* claims, "[a] disappearance is real only when it is apparitional because the ghost or the apparition is the principle form by which something lost or invisible or seemingly not there *make itself known or apparent* to us" (Gordon 63). Their elaboration of the connection between disappearance and the ghostly is productive when we apply it to the case of Michael K's vanishing. When Michael K disappears from the camp, he, like a ghost, is caught in a liminal zone that is outside the progressive flow of temporality and off the map. His ghostliness is produced by his absent presence or his partaking of "Derrida's visible in-visible": "While they cannot be seen, they remain present" (Peeren,

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[30] In his 1955 essay "Orpheus' Gaze," Maurice Blanchot reconstructs the Orpheus myth as an analogue of writing: Orpheus is an artist-figure, who desires Eurydice, the "darkest point" of the "other dark" (Blanchot, "Orpheus' Gaze" 177). He also argues that "the work" of Orpheus is to encounter Eurydice in the "other dark" and brings him "to the light and, in the light, [gives] it form and reality" (177). For more details, see Blanchot's essay entitled "Orpheus' Gaze" (1955).

Spectral Metaphors 143). Since no one knows whether he is dead or alive, he can live on in a ghostly realm of indeterminacy and escapes the oppressive systems.

Embracing the status of the ghost through his non-identifiable presence, Michael K becomes an enigma that exerts a haunting force on the medical officer. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the verb "to haunt," when pertaining to "imaginary or spiritual beings, ghosts etc." as "to visit frequently and habitually with manifestations of their influence and presence, usually of a molesting kind." In excess of Derrida's emphasis on the ambivalent power of the *es spukt* or "it haunts," Peeren further suggests that an effective form of haunting is found "within or through spectrality" because of "its blurring of the active-passive dichotomy": "It promises an agency separate from acting out ('*without doing anything*') but still has a profound impact" (Peeren, *Spectral Metaphors* 20). Accordingly, Michael K's status as a ghost that is produced by his passivity, his silence and lack of substance, can generate an effective form of agency. It can haunt and effectuate ethical actions of the medical officer.

For example, the medical officer's failure to make sense of K's alterity keeps concerning him. Thus, the medical officer indulges in his imagination and creates fanciful interpretations of the bare facts of K's existence. In the camp, he sees K as "a human soul above and beneath classification, a soul blessedly untouched by doctrine, untouched by history, a soul stirring its wings within that stiff sarcophagus, murmuring behind that clownish mask" (*MK* 151). In this instance, Michael K provokes fascination through his inexplicable ghostliness.

After K escapes from the camp, the mystery of his disappearance forces the medical officer to experience an overwhelming sense of uncertainty. The medical officer can't help questioning his concepts of war, time, and his subjectivity. He says: "[I]t came to me with great force that I was wasting my life, that I was wasting it by living from day to day in a state of waiting, that I have in effect given myself up as a prisoner to this war … a castaway marooned in a pocket of time, the time of waiting, camp time, war-time" (*MK* 157-58). Furthermore, the medical officer allows himself to be possessed by K.

He imagines an encounter between himself and K in his diary. In this imaginary account, he becomes the disciple of K, hoping to follow K to the places that "belong to no camp" (162), and to "the sacred and alluring garden that blooms in the heart of the desert and produces the food of life," that is "off every map, no road leads to it, and only you know the way" (166). He also pays respects to K and assigns him as "a great escape artist" and "an allegory … of how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without becoming a term in it" (166). The medical officer is transformed from the representative of authority, who tries to confine Michael K to a single interpretation, into a subject who is involuntarily acted upon and possessed by K's ghostly force. K's unexplained disappearance undermines the medical officer's apparent certainty about who is self and who is other and challenges his restricted and self-sufficient subject.

K's ghostliness also impels the medical officer to develop a more caring and responsible attitude toward alterity. The medical officer not only takes care of Michael K, feeding him milk and caring for his physical conditions, but also develops an ethics of hospitality in which one responds to the stranger as a stranger or allows himself to be acted upon by the strangeness of the stranger. At the end of his diary, the medical officer self-reflexively speaks from within his consciousness of his loss of control over Michael K. He says:

> [W]ould it be true that at this point you would begin to throw your most urgent energies into running, so that it would be clear to the meanest observer that you were running to escape the man shouting at your back, the man in blue who must seem to be persecutor, madman, bloodhound, policeman? Would it be surprising if the children … after us … were now to begin to take your part and harry me from all sides, darting at me, throwing sticks and stones, so that I would have to stop and beat them away while shouting my last words to you … "Am I right?" I would shout. "Have I understood you? If I am right.

Hold up your right hand; if I am wrong, hold up your left!"
(*MK* 168)

The officer's questions will never be answered. His imaginary account of the encounter not only signifies his failure in comprehending and dominating K through language, but can also be perceived as his unconditional hospitality toward K's radical otherness. By reflecting on Durrant's analysis of the work of mourning, Marais relates unconditional hospitality to the notion of infinite mourning, which is marked by an "encryptment" of the dead within the living, claiming that the medical officer's diary "evinces precisely K's encryptment in the medical officer's consciousness" (Marais, *Invisible* 56).[31] Based on Marais' analysis, I suggest that the medical officer can be perceived as an ethical subject since he performs the work of infinite mourning upon Michael K through his writing of the diary. By depicting his failure in following K in his imaginary account of the encounter, he brings K's absent-presence to light without confining K to any interpretation. His diary not only reveals his loss of control over K, but also confirms K's absolute alterity, as "an absent entity; an entity without an address" (55). It is "a lament" for his loss of K, "the loss of what was never present," as well as "a record of his care, of his sense of responsibility for him" (62).

Due to his status as a living ghost or as the irreducible presence of a vulnerable other, Michael K plays the role of medium, who possesses the abilities to endow new forms of subjectivity and conceptualize new modes of thinking beyond boundaries. In the final section of the novel, which is narrated from K's perspective again, Michael K recreates his identity by developing an

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[31] Through his elaboration of Derrida's notion of the work of mourning that has been distinguished as healthy mourning—"the assimilation or integration of loss into consciousness"—and unhealthy, inconsolable or infinite mourning, which "is marked by the failure to integrate loss into consciousness," Durrant suggests infinite mourning goes together with an "encryptment" of the dead within the living: "the dead remain secretly entombed within—internal to be sealed off from—the consciousness of the living, and they also remain enigmatic, coded, untranslated" (31). For more discussion, see Samuel Durrant's work *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison*.

awareness of the balance between oppositional realms. Occupying a space peripheral to the South Africa after his escape from the camp, he re-identifies his relation to the land and imagines "the farm" as a promised land: "He thought of the farm, the grey thornbushes, the rocky soil, the ring of hills, the mountains pink and purple in the distance, the great still blue empty sky, the earthy grey and brown beneath the sun save here and there, where if you looked carefully you suddenly saw a tip of vivid green, pumpkin leaf or carrot-bush" (*MK* 183). In his imagination, he creates a heaven in his soul and withdraws himself from the unrest of social reality. He becomes "a gardener" who knows how to live in harmony with the earth. Thus, he supposes that he might meet someone who disregards the curfew and comes to join him in the work of gardening. The narrator says:

> And if the old man climbed out of the cart and stretched himself … and looked at where the pump had been that the soldiers had blown up so that nothing should be left standing, and complained, saying, "What are we going to do about water?" he, Michael K, would produce a teaspoon from his pocket, a teaspoon and a long roll of string. He would clear the rubble from the mouth of the shaft, he would bend the handle of the teaspoon in a loop and tie the string to it, he would lower it down the shaft deep into the earth, and when he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way, he would say, one can live. (183-84)

By delineating a harmonious way in which Michael K mediates between the human and the earth, the last paragraph of the novel is allegorically promising. The images that had previously been ascribed to the self and the other, the center and the margin, the abled and the disabled, have been undermined. By embracing the status of ghost through his passivity and self-spectralization, Michael K is able to escape the oppressive society and recreate a hope for the future. In other words, his ability to act or impact like a medium is not

necessarily derived from his full material presence, but can be found in his ghostliness or in his association with the ghostly. By refusing to be defined within a linguistic frame, by being neither present nor absent, the ghostly metaphor effectuates a restructuring of subjectivity or invention of an ethical subject like the medical officer, who acts out of concern for the non-identifiable others instead of himself.

Conclusion

> What does it mean to follow a ghost? And what if this came down to being followed by it, always, persecuted perhaps by the very chase we are leading? (Derrida, *Specters of Marx* 10)

In the era of globalization, ghosts are haunting us. They not only talk to us, but also speak of us. We are faced more and more with the ethical question of how exactly to live with and as ghosts. By looking at the various representations of the ghostly in postcolonial and minority literary works, this thesis has contributed to the discussion on the ethical and narrative potential of the ghostly for finding new ways to re-position ourselves or re-create our identities in a world overwhelmed by ghosts.

Though ghosts are usually identified in terms of class, gender, age, religion, and ethnicity in a dispossessing sense, their undecidable nature keeps reshaping their meaning to activate more empowering associations of them. The representations examined in this dissertation do not just portray the way certain groups, places, or entities are made sense of through reference to the ghostly, but serve themselves to challenge or shift the way in which the metaphor of ghost operates discursively and socially. Due to its irreducible otherness and indeterminacy, the ghost persistently slips through definitions and imbues authoritative discourses with foreign and ambiguous elements. It is perceived as a mode of becoming as well as a concept of an ambivalent relationship between hybrid condition between death and life, absence and presence, the human and the non-human. In addition, many ghostly figures in

narratives function to effectuate the ethical response of the haunted subject. The subject that tries to construct or maintain the difference between self and other is forced to question his or her certainty of binary opposition, and imagine a new way of relating to different forms of otherness, under the influence or haunting of ghosts. In other words, ghosts have power to trigger new modes of knowing and produce ethical subjects. They are mediums themselves. Though the question of what kind of ethical impact a ghost medium can have in the social realm remains unclear, the process of engaging with the narrative potential of the ghostly in postcolonial literature might provide us more productive ways of specifying and coping with different oppressive norms and exploitation, and of establishing a new ethics of ghosts, which is reconsidered as the ethics of how to live with and survive as ghosts.

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Samenvatting

Minderhedenliteratuur en postkoloniale literatuur zijn op fundamentele wijze verweven met een gedifferentieerde en complexe aanwezigheid van geesten in metaforische zin. Deze hebben een veelvoud van namen en vormen, verschijnen op specifieke momenten en locaties, en kunnen uiteenlopende handelingen en effecten teweegbrengen. In sommige werken van etnische minderheidsauteurs worden geesten gepresenteerd als buitenaardse manifestaties waarmee geleefd moet worden in plaats van dat deze moeten worden uitgebannen. Daaronder vallen onderdrukte groeperingen in de samenleving, en de in verdrukking geraakte individuele en gemeenschappelijke geschiedenissen. In sommige van deze teksten worden groepen migranten, arbeiders, en gekolonialiseerde volken gekoppeld aan geesten of aanverwante figuren op basis van hun gedepriveerde en onzekere status tussen leven en dood.

Verschillende literaire critici hebben onderzoek gedaan naar de specifieke manier waarop geesten opereren binnen postkoloniale literatuur, waaronder hoe een geest is gekoppeld aan de identificatie van specifieke postkoloniale thema's zoals klasse, geslacht, ras en seksualiteit, en hoe dit een herziening bewerkstelligt van verschijnselen die tevoren genegeerd, onderdrukt of over het hoofd gezien zijn. Het doel van dit proefschrift is het initiëren van een nieuwe manier van denken met betrekking tot het narratieve potentieel van het spectrale in de ruimtelijke, culturele en ethische dimensies door stil te staan bij de onvermijdelijke ontmoetingen tussen geesten, herinneringen en subjectiviteiten in postkoloniale en minderhedenliteratuur. Mijn intentie is niet om een stelling te poneren over de ontologische status van het wezen van geesten. Ik zie geesten daarentegen als conceptuele metaforen. Bovendien zal ik in plaats van geesten in hun algemeenheid te bekijken, aandacht besteden

aan de specificiteit en diversiteit van geesten. Ik zal een aantal verschillende opvattingen over geesten meenemen in mijn analyse van een aantal postkoloniale en minderhedenteksten teneinde de begrippen 'spectrale ruimte,' 'geestentaal' en 'mediums' te verkennen. Ik zal onderzoeken hoe deze geestgerelateerde concepten fungeren teneinde een dieper begrip van de domeinen van kennis, geschiedenis en identiteit tot stand te brengen, alsmede een nieuwe manier van denken te belichten met betrekking tot de ethiek van geesten – de ethiek van het leven met geesten of het zijn van een geest.

Overzicht van de hoofdstukken

Naast de inleiding is dit proefschrift opgedeeld in vier hoofdstukken:

Hoofdstuk I, "Haunting Effects of Spaces in Postcolonial Literature" onderzoekt het verband tussen de huidige *spectral turn* en *spatial turn* in culturele studies door de term "spectrale ruimte" als een door geesten bezochte plek voor te stellen of een ruimte die wordt gekenmerkt door dat wat geesten karakteriseert. Ik betoog dat "spectrale ruimte" kan worden opgevat als een ruimte van heterogene tijdelijkheid, een ruimte van vloeibaarheid of een ruimte van onbehagen. Bovendien onderzoek ik, door het nauwgezet bestuderen van uiteenzettingen van drie soorten spectrale ruimtes in een selectie van postkoloniale romans, waaronder Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* en J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, het narratieve en ethische potentieel van dergelijke spectrale ruimtes nader: hoe deze vraagtekens zetten bij het essentialistische begrip van binaire grenzen tussen het heden en het verleden, binnen- en buitenkant, het zelf en de ander, en de personages aansporen tot het hercreëren van hun tijdgebonden, plaatsgebonden en sociaal geconstrueerde identiteiten. Met andere woorden, dit hoofdstuk betoogt dat het spectrale of de geestverschijning niet alleen passend functioneert om het verband tussen

subject en ruimte te herconceptualiseren, maar dat het ook als een nuttig narratief instrument voor ons dient om een gemeenschappelijke toekomst voor te stellen.

Hoofdstuk 2, "Ghost's language and the Re-creation of Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* en Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*" richt de aandacht op vraagstukken met betrekking tot geslacht en ras in spookverhalen. Door het onderzoeken van de specifieke manieren waarop vrouwelijke geesten zichzelf manifesteren tegenover, en communiceren met, de levende personages in drie romans geschreven door drie vrouwelijke etnische minderheidsauteurs – gaat dit hoofdstuk dieper in op het concept "geestentaal" met betrekking tot de etnische en seksuele identiteiten van vrouwen uit etnische minderheidsgroepen. Hierbij moet worden opgemerkt dat ik de term "geestentaal" op een ironische manier gebruik. Ik wil taal niet opvatten als een linguïstisch systeem dat op een rationele en ordelijke manier geconstrueerd is. In plaats daarvan stel ik dat "geestentalen" expressiewijzen zijn buiten een taalkundig en cognitief kader en zelfs voorbij gaan aan het menselijke begrip. In dit hoofdstuk ga ik dieper in op twee soorten "geestentaal" - twee verschillende manieren van uitingen van geesten, namelijk de waanzin van de geestverschijning in *Beloved* en de onbehaaglijke stilte van de geestverschijning in *The Woman Warrior* en *Obasan*. Door te focussen op de verschillende manieren waarop deze vrouwelijke geesten aandacht en gerechtigheid opeisen, stel ik dat deze drie vrouwelijke auteurs geesten aanwenden als een medium, niet alleen om te reflecteren op de verschillende soorten individuele trauma's en sociale onderdrukking van minderheden in Noord-Amerika, maar ook om het potentieel van 'empowerment' door geesten in de literatuur aan het licht te brengen—hun mogelijkheid tot het teweegbrengen van een genezing van het traumatische verleden en een nieuwe creatie van identiteit. Tot slot heeft het spectrale anders-zijn diverse vormen en

is het altijd open voor verandering. Door hun uiteenlopende alteriteit, zullen de in de literatuur voorkomende geesten van generatie op generatie overleven, continu evoluerend en een hernieuwde, gemeenschappelijke en transculturele identiteit in de hedendaagse raciale en patriarchale maatschappij oproepend.

Hoofdstuk 3, "Mediums at Work: Toward a Dialogic World" heeft betrekking op de ethiek tegenover geesten - hoe men geesten of het spectrale rijk moet benaderen als ze niet met succes kunnen worden uitgebannen of uitgedreven. Terwijl geesten de levenden door middel van verschillende vormen van anders-zijn achtervolgen of worden verweven in dagelijkse praktijken, zoals religieuze rituelen of orale tradities, zijn ze ofwel niet-representeerbaar of onassimileerbaar. Omdat het tot dusverre onduidelijk blijft hoe de levenden zich verhouden tot of communiceren met deze ongrijpbare, maar onverloochenbare geesten of spectrale aspecten, poogt dit hoofdstuk de manier te verkennen waarop de dialoog bewerkstelligd en gevormd wordt. Door het concept van 'een medium' toe te passen en te onderzoeken hoe de literaire representatie een vorm van onderhandeling vertegenwoordigt in twee Zuid-Afrikaanse Gothic novels – J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* en *The Heart of Redness* van Zakes Mda, verken ik de ethiek met betrekking tot geesten, het proces van de behandeling van en het omgaan met geesten op een respectvolle en verantwoorde manier. Ik stel dat er ten minste twee soorten mediums bestaan – een passief medium in *Waiting for the Barbarians* en een actief medium in *The Heart of Redness*. Beide dienen om verschillend gesitueerde, specifieke relazen te belichten van interactie tussen de verschillende domeinen, waaronder het heden en het verleden, het werkelijke en het onwerkelijke, moderniteit en traditie, het centrum en de marge, het zelf en de ander, etcetera. Hun bemiddeling tussen oppositionele entiteiten kan niet alleen worden gezien als een effectieve manier waarop men zijn of haar interne of externe anders-zijn benadert, maar biedt ons ook een

model van onderhandeling met behulp waarvan we met geesten kunnen leven, een situatie van wederzijds begrip met hen tot stand kunnen brengen, en een meer dialogische samenleving kunnen creëren.

In het afsluitende hoofdstuk, "The Ethics of the Ghostly: A Ghost Medium in J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*," verken ik, na mijn onderzoek van de concepten van de spectrale ruimte, geestentaal en het medium, plus hun literaire representatie in de bovengenoemde postkoloniale teksten en teksten van etnische minderheden, het ethische en narratieve potentieel van geesten. Door het analyseren van de manifestatie van "een geestenmedium" – hoe de hoofdpersoon, Michael K, de rol speelt van *active agent* voor zijn status als een levende geest – in J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, stel ik dat geesten ethische subjecten zijn in plaats van sociaal geconstrueerde objecten. Ze hebben een ethische macht om nieuwe manieren van denken te activeren en ethische subjecten te produceren. Kortom, reflecterend op de diversiteit en specificiteit van geesten in postkoloniale werken en werken van etnische minderheden, beoogt dit proefschrift geesten als bruikbare metafoor of conceptueel instrument te herconceptualiseren, wat een ethiek construeert van zowel het leven met geesten als het overleven als geesten.

Summary

Minority and postcolonial literature are fundamentally intertwined with differentiated and complex presences of ghosts in a metaphorical sense. They have a variety of names and forms, appear at specific moments and locations, and are capable of producing divergent acts and effects. In some works of ethnic writers, ghosts are represented as otherworldly manifestations that need to be lived with rather than exorcised, including oppressed groups of people in a society, and the repressed individual and communal histories. In some of these texts, the groups of migrants, workers, and colonized people are linked to ghosts or related figures on the basis of their dispossessed and uncertain status between life and death.

A number of literary critics have explored the specific way the figures of ghosts operate in postcolonial literature, including how a ghost is linked to the identification of specific postcolonial subjects in terms of class, gender, race and sexuality, and how it effectuates a reworking of phenomena previously ignored suppressed and overlooked. Noting the ineluctable encounters between ghosts, memories, and subjectivities in postcolonial and minority literature, the aim of this dissertation is to open up a new way of thinking about the narrative potential of the ghostly in spatial, cultural and ethical dimensions. I don't attempt to entail a statement about the ontological status of the ghosts' being. Rather, I perceive ghosts as a concept as well as a metaphor. In addition, instead of perceiving ghosts in general, I will pay attention to the specificity and diversity of ghosts. I will incorporate a variety of notions of ghosts into my analysis of some postcolonial and minority texts to explore the concepts of "spectral space," "ghost language," and "mediums." I will investigate how these ghost-related concepts or metaphors function to facilitate a deeper understanding of the realms of knowledge, history and

identity, as well as to illuminate a new mode of thinking about the ethics of ghosts—the ethics of living with ghosts and being a ghost.

Overview of the Chapters

Apart from the introduction, this thesis is organized in four chapters:

Chapter I, "Haunting Effects of Spectral Spaces in Postcolonial Literature" explores the connection between the current spectral turn and spatial turn in cultural studies by proposing the term "spectral space" as a haunted place or a space characterized by the diverse nature of ghosts. I assume that "spectral space" can be perceived as a space of heterogeneous temporality, a space of fluidity, and a space of uncanniness. In addition, by performing close readings of portrayals of three kinds of spectral spaces in a selection of postcolonial novels, including Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, V.S. Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*, Doris Lessing's *The Grass is Singing* and J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*, I further examine the narrative and ethical potentials of such spectral spaces: how they question the essentialist notion of binary demarcations between the present and the past, inside and outside, self and other, and propel the characters to re-create their time-bound, place-bound and socially constructed identities. In other words, this chapter assert that the ghostly or the specter not only functions productively to re-conceptualize the relation between subject and space, but also serves as a useful narrative tool for us to imagine a more communal future.

Chapter 2, "Ghost's Language and the Re-creation of Identity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*" directs attentions to issues of gender and race in ghost narratives. By investigating the specific ways in which female ghosts manifest themselves to and interact with the living characters in three novels written by three minority woman writers—Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Maxine Hong

Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and Joy Kogawa's *Obasan*, this chapter elaborates the concept of "ghost language" in relation to minority woman's ethnic and sexual identities. It is worth noting that I use the term "ghost language" in an ironic way. I do not suggest language as a linguistic system that is constructed in a rational and orderly manner. Instead, I argue that "ghost languages" are ways of expression outside a linguistic and cognitive frame and even beyond human knowledge. In this chapter, I elaborate two kinds of "ghost language"—two different ways of haunting, namely the ghost's madness in *Beloved* and its uncanny silence in *The Woman Warrior* and *Obasan*. By focusing on the different ways in which these female ghosts demand attention and justice, I suggest that these three woman writers employ ghosts as a medium not only to reflect on different kinds of individual trauma and social oppression of minority people in North America, but also to reveal the literary ghost's potential of empowerment—its potential of evoking the healing of the traumatic past and the re-creation of identity. In conclusion, ghostly otherness has plural forms and is always open to change. Through their diverse alterity, the literary ghosts will survive from one generation to another, keeping evolving and invoking a re-imagining of a new, communal and transcultural identity in the contemporary racial and patriarchal society.

Chapter 3, "Mediums at Work: Toward a Dialogic World" concerns the ethics toward ghosts—how to approach ghosts or ghostly domains when they are unable to be successfully banished and exorcised. While ghosts haunt the living through various forms of otherness or become intertwined within everyday practices like religious rituals or oral traditions, they are either un-representable or un-assimilable. Since so far it remains unclear how the living relate to or communicate with these unapproachable but irreducible ghosts or spectral aspects, this chapter attempts to explore the ways in which the dialogue is brought about and shaped. By employing the concept of "a

medium" and examining how its literary representation represents a mode of negotiation in two South African Gothic novels—J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness*, I explore the ethics toward ghosts, that is the process of treating and dealing with ghosts in a respectful and responsible manner. I suggest that there are at least two kinds of mediums—a passive medium in *Waiting for the Barbarians* and an active medium in *The Heart of Redness*. Both of them serve to reveal different situated and specific accounts of the interaction between different domains, including the present and the past, the real and the unreal, modernity and tradition, center and margin, self and other, and so on. Their work of mediating oppositional entities can not only be seen as an effective way in which one approaches his or her internal or external otherness, but also provides us with a model of negotiation by which we can live with ghosts, establish a mutual understanding with them, and create a more dialogic society.

In the concluding chapter, "The Ethics of the Ghostly: A Ghost Medium in J. M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*," after examining the concepts of spectral space, ghost language and medium, and their literary representation in the aforementioned postcolonial and minority texts, I assume the ethical and narrative potential of ghosts. By exploring the manifestation of "a ghost medium"—how the protagonist, Michael K, plays the role of an active agent for his status as a living ghost—in J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K*, I suggest that ghosts are ethical subjects rather than objects of social constructions. They have an ethical power to trigger new modes of thinking and produce ethical subjects. In sum, reflecting on the diversity and specificity of the ghost in postcolonial and minority works, this dissertation aims to re-conceptualize the ghost as a useful metaphor or conceptual tool, which has critical possibilities in reconstructing the ethics of both living with ghosts and surviving as ghosts.

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Curriculum Vitae

Chia-Sui (Tracy) Lee was born in Taitung City, Taiwan, on 21 April 1980. Being a native speaker of Chinese, she has studied and worked in an international environment since she was an undergraduate; she is now trained as a bilingual and intercultural literary scholar. She majored in Foreign Language and Literature and acquired her BA and MA degrees at National Cheng Kung University in Tainan, Taiwan. After graduation, she worked as a curator in an art gallery and later as a project manager for the European Higher Education Fair in 2006. In 2007, she continued her academic career and began her Ph.D. research in literary studies under the supervision of Prof. Ernst van Alphen and Dr. Isabel Hoving at Leiden University. She worked as a part-time education counselor at NESO Nuffic Taipei (the official Dutch Higher Education Institution under the Netherlands Trade and Investment Office in Taiwan) from 2009 to 2012. Her research focused on ghosts, specters, and mediums in postcolonial and minority literature. During her stay in the Netherlands, she attended and presented papers in several theory seminars and at international conferences in Belgium, France, Romania, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. She also published research articles in the academic journals: *Fiction and Drama*, *Cross-Cultural Studies*, *New Academia* and *Research Scholar*.