

**TRANSNATIONAL SPECTRALITY: HISTORY, TRAUMA AND PHANTOM
BODIES IN POSTCOLONIAL ASIAN ART AND LITERATURE**

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes “transnational spectrality” as a socio-cultural phenomenon of a globalized world. Examining ghosts as metaphors of subaltern or counter-hegemonic transnational subjectivity, memory and history, this study focuses on transnationalism’s potential by exploring the intersection between terms, such as the subaltern, spectrality, transnational Asia, colonial/postcolonial histories, trauma and bodies. Particularly discussing postcolonial Asian literature and art works that dramatize traumatic historical events in Korea, India, and Sri Lanka, this project investigates how these cultural products construct a spectral vision of nations and the world through their metaphoric uses of wounded or phantom bodies.

This dissertation begins with the examinations of Nora Okja Keller’s *Comfort Woman* (1997) and the Korean-American female artists’ works—Yong Soon Min’s *decolonization* (1991) and *Remembering Jungshindae* (1992), Soo Jin Kim’s “Comfort Me” (1993) and Miran Kim’s *Comfort Women* (1995-8) that explore the history of comfort women—sexual slaves for Japanese imperial armies during World War II. By representing traumatized female bodies as emblems of the inherited trauma of the homeland, these diasporic producers provide an alternative paradigm for transnational history that challenges not only Japanese and American masculinist colonialism/neo-colonialism, but also Korean patriarchy and nationalism. This project also examines how Salman Rushdie, whose novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981), and Indian-origin artists such as Sutapa Biswas, Yatin Patel, Surekha and Reena Saini present visions of “spectral

India”—the nation as a liminal/hybrid space—through their manifestations of houses and bodies haunted by historical trauma. This project extends its investigation to Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) along with Sri Lankan local and global artists—Bandu Manamperi, Janani Cooray, Pradeep Chandrasiri, R. Veidehi and Kali Arulpragasam. These Sri Lanka cultural producers portray the spectralized victims of the Sri Lankan Civil War as metonyms of the national trauma, presenting the wounded or phantom body as a communicative space that links personal trauma to collective trauma on a local, national and global scale.

Finally, *Transnational Spectrality* concludes that these postcolonial Asian practitioners emerge as transnational agents who can offer a fuller understanding of Asia to the transnational world by representing the fear, pain and suffering that Asian communities bear as the consequences of colonialism and its aftermath of violence.

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I remember when I arrived at Easterwood Airport in College Station as an international graduate student with two black immigration bags. I felt like a ghost wandering a strange, fearful space, like a lost piece of the puzzle that doesn't fit anywhere. Since then, the ghost has been my personal and academic theme, a way to explore my transnational subjectivity. Writing my dissertation has been a journey to find myself as a scholar who searches for my own voice in a transnational academic society and who wants to build cultural bridges between the East and the West. My advisor, Dr. McWhirter, helped me navigate this long journey with his amazing patience and intelligence. As a respected professor and scholar, he always offered the most helpful, sharp and brilliant comments on my writing, and as a good father of his own grown-up children, he shared tips regarding how I could make my eight-month-old daughter sleep better and how I could focus on my dissertation while taking care of two toddlers. I want to express my deep and sincere gratitude to him, as my academic role-model and as a mentor who has given me valuable life lessons through his own life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: TRANSNATIONALITY, SUBALTAN GHOSTS AND BODILY HAUNTING

The graphic suicide scene from Im Sang-soo's South Korean film, *The Housemaid* (2010), was shown to an audience at the Grand Théâtre Lumière at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival (12-23 May, 2010) in France. In the scene, the heroine Eun-yi, a traumatized young housemaid, commits suicide in a living room in front of her employer /illicit lover—wealthy businessman Hoon—and his family. Eun-yi appears on the second floor balcony, puts a rope around her neck and the chandelier, and falls downstairs to hang herself. Leaving her last words to Hoon's daughter Nami—"You should remember me"—Eun-yi sets her body on fire. Her burning body, clinging to the chandelier, dangles over the employer's family members who watch the scene in horror. The Korean title, *Hanyeo* (하녀) is translated as *Housemaid*, but its original meaning is closer to "female servant," an old term used in a traditional society that adheres to the closed social stratification systems of the Joseon Dynasty¹. The director Im heightens the class divide in this domestic horror-drama by refashioning South Korea's hierarchical class and gender system—a struggle between the country's wealthy male leisure class and the

¹ In Joseon Dynasty Korea, there are four distinct social statuses: the scholar-officials, collectively referred to as the *yangban*; the *chungin*, technicians and administrators subordinate to the *yangban*; the *sangmin*, a large group composed of farmers, craftsmen, and merchants; and the *ch'ommin* at the bottom of society. In this class system, *yangban* as a social class with legal status and landed wealth, includes government officials who passed the civil service examinations that tested knowledge of the Confucian classics and history. The "hanyeo" was a part of the *ch'ommin* as a domestic slave to a *yangban* family.

poor female working class.² Im portrays Eun-yi as a naïve, ambiguous female subaltern whose body is described as a space of violence and desire subjected to sexual pleasure/exploitation, physical assault and a forced abortion. Hoon secretly seduces/coerces Eun-yi for a sexual relationship and ends their affair by paying her. When Eun-yi becomes pregnant and her pregnancy is revealed to his wife Hae-ra and her mother, they start abusing Eun-yi to abort her baby. They stage an accident in which Eun-yi falls from a ladder while dusting a chandelier, threaten and beat her, put poison in her herbal medicine, and forcefully abort her baby without Eun-yi's consent. After her abortion surgery, Eun-yi returns to the Hoon's household, declaring: "I will get my revenge. I cannot shut up. I will say something, even one word" (*The Housemaid*).

Eun-yi chooses her own body as a way to speak, as a form of revenge and resistance against the Hoon family. Eun-yi's burning body reveals the way in which subalterns speak when they are denied access to hegemonic power, as well as the ways in which they are exploited and forcefully silenced by the dominant system. Eun-yi speaks by destroying her own body: the flames brutally devour her body, erasing the marks of trauma and suffering, as well as the marks of class and gender hierarchies. Her burning body is like a "bomb"—as Im Sang-soo described it at Cannes³--that destroys and traumatizes the psyches and minds of the Hoon family members. The memory of

² In his interview with Kee Chang, director Im clarifies his intention to deal with social issues concerning class distinctions and struggles in South Korea: "On the surface, *The Housemaid* is a suspenseful thriller, but at its core, it has much more to do with social issues that are deeply rooted in Korean society....South Korea is a place where the wealthy have been monopolizing on a lot of power in society—even more so than elected officials—so I wanted to highlight that. In recent years, the wealthy have really become the dominating force" (Anthem).

³ According to Im Sang-soo, the film is based on suspense that keeps you on the edge: "Four people go into a room to play poker. Suddenly, a bomb explodes and none of the people get out. In this kind of configuration, the people are simply surprised" ("The Housemaid by Im Sang-soo in Competition").

Eun-yi haunts Hoon's bourgeois household as an emblem of their horrible past. Her haunting presence is subtly manifested in the final scene that depicts the family, celebrating Nami's birthday with three young female servants. The location is unknown, but the scene suggests that it is somewhere in the West as they all speak English and appreciate a western artist's painting given to Nami as a birthday present. This family gathering appears as a haunting scene in which the unstable camera angle works as the eyes of Eun-yi's ghost that haunts the family. Through this spectral gaze, the characters look possessed, insane and delusionary. While Hae-ra sings "Happy Birthday," the camera follows Nami who looks disturbed and haunted as she feels Eun-yi's spectral gaze. Interestingly, Nami's haunting story also appears in director Im's seventh film *The Taste of Money* (2012): the director himself calls it "an extension of *The Housemaid*," saying that "You can say that it's the story of the children of *The Housemaid* who've grown up" (Dramabeans). Nami, fully grown up as a divorcée with a child of her own, is described as the only member of the wealthy family with a moral sense. She still remembers her nanny Eun-yi's suicide and her burning body, mentioning that they haunt her. In Im's filmic representations of class struggles, Eun-yi's ghost haunts Nami, as well as the director Im, crossing time and space and fiction and reality.

Presold by Mirovision to French distributor Pretty Pictures, Im's film ran transnationally in France, Japan, the U. S., Canada, England, and South Korea. Eun-yi's self-immolation scene is definitely unforgettable, but rather unconvincing to western critics: critics considered the scene as "a little too melodramatic" (*The Guardian*), an "[unconvincing]...dreadful conclusion" (*Los Angeles Times*), "its craziness for the end,"

a scene of “dramatic extremity and phantasmagorical invention” (*New York Times*). The abrupt scene of Eun-yi’s self-immolation reflects the director Im’s trauma or guilt arising from his indirect experiences of student and labor demonstrations against South Korea’s military regimes in which self-immolated, dying and mutilated bodies are witnessed and experienced as forms of political resistance. In fact, Im Sang-soo (1962-), a director who grew up during the period of Chunghee Park’s and Doohwan Chun’s political dictatorships,⁴ mentions his guilt, fear or ethical burdens of such collective memory.⁵

4 President Chunghee Park, after seizing power through a military coup d’état, led South Korea from 1961 until his assassination in 1979. In 1972, Park’s government enacted Martial Law in support of the Yushin Constitution, which gave Park effective control over the parliament and made his presidency permanent. Park’s rule led to immense economic growth and rapid industrialization in South Korea based on export-based industrialization policy. However, his authoritarian rule produced numerous human rights abuses and unequal distribution of wealth. Park’s government, centered on the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), arrested, tortured and killed students and workers under Emergency Decrees that forbade student gatherings, organizations, political demonstrations and publications against Park’s regime. The government also preferably offered emerging corporate conglomerates low-interest bank loans and tax benefits, but ignored laborers’ horrible working conditions and low wages that might increase the price competitiveness for export business. After the assassination of President Park in 1979, Doohwan Chun ruled the government as an unelected military dictator from 1979 to 1980, and became the fifth President of South Korea until 1988. Like President Park, Chun devoted his efforts to maintaining export-led economic growth and rapid industrialization. In 1980, the military under Chun’s leadership declared martial law, and brutally suppressed democratic civilian opposition in the city of Kwangju. Later in 1996, Chun was sentenced to death for his role in the Gwangju Massacre, but received a presidential pardon in 1997.

⁵ Interestingly, Im often mentions he “feels indebted to his generation” because he, as a college student of sociology during Chun Doo-hwan’s dictatorship, understood political issues and situations, but he didn’t actively participate in the struggle because of “his psychological distance from group activism” (Yonhap). He also argues his feeling of “indebtedness” as a survivor or bystander becomes his energy to remember such collective trauma and memory of that period. Some of his works directly remember the periods of political oppression: *The President’s Last Bang* (2005) portrays President Park Chung-hee’s assassination and *The Old Garden* (2006) has a backdrop of Park’s assassination, Chun Doo-hwan’s military government and the civilian revolution in the city of Gwangju against Chun’s dictatorship. Im says, “With *The Old Garden* I was able to wrap up my work on modern Korean history. It is the portrait of myself and everyone” (Yonhap).

In fact, self-immolation is a familiar form of demonstration that emerged out of social movements for peace and democratization in transnational Asia. The term came into common usage primarily as a result of the publicity given to the deaths of Buddhist monks who set themselves on fire to protest the Vietnam War (King 148). In particular, Vietnam, South Korea, India and Tibet are countries with the highest rates of self-immolation. In Vietnam, there were about 40 cases of self-immolation during the period of 1963-1972 (Bostic 1973). Around 1,451 self-immolations in 2000 and 1,584 in 2001 were reported in India (Coleman 66). In 2012 scores of Indians set themselves on fire demanding a new state, Telangana. Telangana groups claim that over 800 people, mostly students, committed suicide for the cause of Telangana between 2010 and 2013 (Hindustan Times). Self-immolation also has become a demonstration tactic among Tibetans protesting the rule of Tibet by China. 133 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet and China since February 27, 2009 (International Campaign for Tibet). Among them, 24 of the Tibetans who self-immolated were 18 or under (International Campaign for Tibet). In South Korea, nearly 100 laborers and students committed self-immolations in the 1970s, 80s and 90s in order to acquire democratic rights and freedoms in their struggles against dictatorial military governments (B.C. Ben Park).

Borah Chung and Richard James Havis argue that Eun-yi's self-immolation is the director's act of homage to Korean labor activist Jeon Tae-il: "Eun-yi's final act of self-immolation will remind some viewers of Korean labor activist Jeon Tae-il, who set himself aflame as a protest against poor working conditions" (Cineaste). Tae-il Jeon (1948–1970) is considered as a symbol of the Korean labor movement that fought

against Park Chunghee's dictatorship and unequal distribution of wealth. Coming from poverty, Jeon at the age of 16 began working in the textile sweatshops of the Seoul Peace Market. Based on his own experience of horrid working conditions in the textile sweatshops, Jeon realized the disparity between the principles in Korea's labour standards act and the actual practices of employers. Jeon organized the first labor association—Samdong Friendship Association—and joined the labor protests which were first ignored and soon repressed by police and military. On 13 November 1970, during the protest, Jeon set himself on fire and ran through the streets, shouting "We are not machines" (Shin 41). Just as Eun-yi in Im's film highlights her last words—"remember me"—Jeon writes his last will in his personal diary: "To my friend. To all those who know me. Remember me. I hope you remember me forever. If you do, then, I am not afraid even when thunder breaks the world, and heaven falls to the ground. What shall I fear at this moment? I fear nothing" (Jeon 22-3). Jeon's self-immolation shattered the media blockade and sparked public outrage, inspiring many workers and intellectuals to pursue underground activities against Park's dictatorship when its political suppression was most severe.

Eun-yi's ghost, which revisits the Hoon family in a filmic representation, in reality haunts the transnational world through its cultural manifestations. Through its haunting, this female subaltern ghost conveys her personal tragic history, as well as the ghostly trace of the nation's subaltern memory and resistance. Like Eun-yi's ghost, subaltern ghosts, manifested in various Asia-based cultural products, haunt the world as emblems of the unresolved past of Asia—a past produced by the experience of colonial

oppression, diasporic migration, national consolidation and dictatorships. These ghosts arrive at Western shores like dark waves, bringing transnational exchanges of culture, people, capital and technology between East and West. They haunt our daily lives through images, sounds and movements in films, on-line or in television programs, art and literature.

This dissertation reads this socio-cultural phenomenon as “Transnational Spectrality”—the ghostly presence or haunting of subaltern ghosts on a local, national and global scale. Particularly discussing contemporary Asian and Asian diasporic arts, films and fictions that dramatize traumatic historical events in colonial/postcolonial Asia, I trace the subaltern ghosts and their images and metaphors that construct a spectral vision of the nations and the world. In doing so, I investigate historical trauma’s haunting effect on Asian cultural practitioners. Noting that colonial and postcolonial traumatic collective memories —ghosts of the past—are haunting Asian and Asian diasporic artists and writers, this project examines how they serve as mediums who “speak” for the dead and how they present a spectral liminality as a narrative power as they reconstruct notions of history, identity, nation and the global. In examining this topic, I particularly focus on the phantom body that emerges as a haunted or haunting place where trauma is inscribed and remembered. The phantom body, as a metaphoric manifestation of “the unhomely,” serves as a transnational narrative space where silenced histories are spoken and delivered.

Transnationalism, in its early definition, refers to “the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multistranded social relations that link together their

societies of origin and settlement” (Basch et al. 7). Critics in transnational studies emphasize transnationalism as a global phenomenon in which “many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders” (Basch et al. 7). Recently, Thomas Faist broadly defines transnationalism as the “sustained ties of persons, networks and organizations across the borders across multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly institutionalized forms” (189). However, Alejandro Portes, Luis E. Guarnizo and Patricia Landolt argue that the notion of transnational practices should be limited to those organised by non-institutional actors—individual members of civil society and their networks—outside the realms of national or neoliberal regulation and control (220). These critics focus on individuals as privileged agents of transnationalism as “Grass-roots transnational activities...commonly developed in reaction to governmental policies and to the condition of dependent capitalism fostered on weaker countries, as immigrants and their families sought to circumvent the permanent subordination to which these conditions condemned them” (Portes et al. 220).

Recently, the term ‘transnational’ has become a key concept in scholarly research in the humanities and social sciences. In particular, many humanities scholars employ transnationality as a new perspective that can provide an effective way of reading how the mobility of people, technologies, ideas and capital influences current cultural practices. They explore various types of transnational approaches and movements on local, national and global scales. The US historian of Germany Michael Geyer calls transnational history the “new consensus” in German history (29). He categorizes three transnational approaches: local transnationalism, global transnationalism

and a strategy in-between the local and the global. According to Geyer, local transnationalism stresses the nation's entanglement in the world, proceeding from the inside out; global transnationalism examines the form of the nation in its function as a global regime of organizing territoriality, moving from the outside in; the last strategy examines "forces, movements, people, things and knowledge that circulate across boundaries" (33). Considering transnational history as a perspective rather than a methodology, he argues that the transnational perspective helps scholars of Germany in their understanding of the national past, by locating German history in a global context and by connecting it to that of the non-European world.

In examining transnationality's subversive potential, critics understand that transnationalism is located "at the crossroad" or that transnational practices have been "Janus-faced" (Boehmer and Moor-Gilbert 18). Some critics celebrate transnationalism's subversive potential by reading it as an active resistance to hegemonic nationalism and globalism, as well as to Euro-centered discourse. They argue that this new perspective helps to overcome simple binaries of domination and resistance, victimizers and victims, based on discourses centered on Europe. On the other hand, other critics argue that transnationalism has too often served as "an instrument of oppression" in the form of colonialism, multinational corporations, economic blocs, and western-dominated coalitions against terror (Boehmer and Moor-Gilbert 18). Those who are dismissive of transnationalism insist that transnationalism provides a soft version of national and postcolonial history and resistance, as it neglects power relations and existing political and economic privileges between nations. They also suggest that "an excessive

privileging of transnational modes of resistance may work against the articulation of legitimate ‘local’ demands for justice” (Boehmer and Moor-Gilbert 19).

Especially through its engagement with postcolonialism and theories of nation and nationalism, this study focuses on transnational practice’s decolonizing potential that can awaken national histories and cultures from the colonial and national amnesia enforced by patriarchic nationalism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Critics such as Young Sun Hong also argue that transnationalism enables the scholarly moves necessary for a decolonizing turn. By investigating the differences between postcolonial and transnational scholarship, Hong suggests that postcolonialism helped to lay the foundations of transnational scholarship by giving expression to subaltern identities silenced in conventional narratives of the nation-state, but its narrow focus on “the democratic project within territorially bound nation-states” cannot efficiently deal with “the different ways in which these nationally bounded visions of citizenship were themselves constructed in relation to sub- and supra-national forces” (Hong). Thus, in Hong’s view, adapting a transnational perspective may represent a step forward in advancing the critical projects in which postcolonial and feminist scholars are already engaged.

In fact, although postcolonial studies provides applicable concepts regarding anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial identity and history, its institutionalization in the U.S. and Europe has given it a narrow scope. My study brings a transnational perspective to the study of postcolonial Asian art, film, literature and history in order to re-imagine Asia by thinking through and beyond established postcolonial paradigms.

Asia, the continent where five US-European empires and one Asian empire competed with each other to acquire colonial power, has been a substantial subject in postcolonial studies. However, postcolonial studies—which often categorizes postcolonial countries as former colonies of the British Empire and postcolonial writings as “writings by those people colonized by Britain” —has produced a singularized version of Asia that is often reduced to South Asia (Ashcroft, Griffith, and Tiffin 2). Problematizing this restrictive focus on Asia, Gayatri Spivak argues that the differently singularized “Asia”—a word that mainly refers to South Asia in Britain, and that means East Asia in the United States—has become a product of Euro-US hegemony that imagines Asia according to its political and economic interests (8).⁶ Understanding the problem in the concept of postcolonial Asia, my dissertation imagines Asia not as a singular region trapped in the Euro-US imagination, but as transnational Asia—a pluralized continent beyond national boundaries—where the global and the local are mutually implicated to shape complex postcolonial memories. To imagine transnational Asia, my project scrutinizes diverse visual and verbal representations of Asian histories deployed in the writings of Asian and Asian diasporic authors and artists who have diverse historical, regional backgrounds—British Indian writer Salman Rushdie, Sri-Lankan-origin Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje, and Korean-American writer Nora Okja Keller, along with local and diasporic artists who have cultural backgrounds in India, Sri-Lanka, South Korea, Britain and the United States. These cultural producers represent the dynamics of a

⁶ Robert Young and Anshuman Mondal also point out that postcolonial critics have privileged India and overlooked other Asian countries, displacing Asian postcolonial experiences from the history of decolonization to the ideological struggle between capitalism and communism.

pluralized Asia by depicting various types of postcolonial relationships and histories that challenge a singularized version of Asia and Asian history in postcolonial studies. These authors' diasporic and transnational situations—living “in between” the multiple histories and cultures of their homelands and their adopted lands—challenge a singularized Asia by producing their ambivalent or multiple views on postcolonial Asian history. This extended focus initiates a discussion of colonial relationships between a non-western empire, Japan, and its former Asian colonies, challenging simple binary oppositions of colonizer/the colonized, white/non-white, and western/non-western in postcolonial studies.

My dissertation is a conversational work as I see the transnational approach as an attempt to create a communicative space where different people, ideas and cultures understand and impact each other. By exploring the art and literary works of a wide range of cultural producers who grow out of local, national and diasporic sites, I examine various types of transnational approaches—approaches as Michael Geyer defines them, moving from the inside out, outside in and in-between. I especially examine how local artists communicate with global artists and audiences through their international exhibitions, scholarly conferences, and publications, how diasporic cultural producers are connected to their homelands' historical traumas and bodies as their cultural and historical inheritances, and how local, national and diasporic cultural producers share a common ground or find differences in terms of trauma, history and culture. In summary, the transnational approach in my study attempts to include a

heterogeneous array of voices in building a transnational Asian narrative, linked to local and national voices.

This dissertation, *Transnational Spectrality*, focuses on transnationalism's counter-hegemonic potential by exploring the concept in terms of the subaltern, ghosts, Asia, colonialism, trauma, and bodies. In particular, this study employs postcolonial concepts of subalternity, investigating the history and culture of subaltern resistance against hegemonic nationalism and globalism which exist as forms of colonial atrocities, patriarchic national oppression, governmental violence and dictatorship, and neocolonial control and exploitation. The term "subaltern" was coined by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971), where it refers to those groups in society who are subject to the ruling classes, being denied access to their hegemonic power. Gramsci, writing of class struggles in Europe, states that "[t]he lower classes, historically on the defensive, can only achieve self-awareness via a series of negations, via their consciousness of the identity and class limits of their enemy" (Prison Notebook). In its original sense, the subaltern signifies the proletariat whose voice could not be heard, being effectively written out of the capitalist bourgeois narrative. In particular, Gramsci is interested in the historiography of the subaltern classes which is often silenced or excluded by socially dominant voices as a form of 'official' history. For him, the history of subaltern groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic as their voices are excluded from a society's established structures for political representation.

The term subaltern has been adapted to postcolonial studies, especially by scholars associated with the Subaltern Studies group in South Asian Studies. The

Subaltern Studies group examines subalternity as “the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society” “in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office” (Guha vii). Ranajit Guha, the influential historian and critic of this group, defines subalternity as “the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the ‘elite’” (8). He argues that the historiography of Indian nationalism has been dominated by elitism—colonialist elitism and bourgeois-nationalist elitism—as the legacy of British colonialism (1). Guha asserts that such historiography, as an elite achievement, cannot interpret the contribution made by the subalterns on their own (1). Guha argues that the subaltern’s consciousness begins with the formation of an identity in which he “learnt to recognize himself not by the properties and attributes of his own social being but by diminution, if not negation, of those of his superiors” (1983, 18). Moreover, influenced by Gramsci’s theories on cultural hegemony, Guha demonstrates that “the same hegemonic process of negation operates in colonial situations: the dominated reproduce the conceptual and institutional structures of their domination, even in struggling against it” (Keesing 25).

Gayatri Spivak develops the notion of subalternity beyond Gramsci’s initial conceptualization as well as the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies group. Spivak criticizes the essentialist premise embodied in the Gramscian claim for the autonomy of the subaltern group, arguing that no methodology for determining who might constitute this group can avoid this essentialism. Spivak, in an interview with Leon de Kock (1992), also argues that “subaltern is not just a classy word for “oppressed,” for [the] Other, for somebody who’s not getting a piece of the pie. . . . In post-colonial terms,

everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now, who would say that’s just the oppressed?” (45-6) In her essay, “Can the subaltern speak?” Spivak elaborates the category of the subaltern by examining the prohibition of sati (the immolation of Hindu widows) in early nineteenth century India. Spivak explores the competitive representations of the Hindu widow’s voice between “progressive” colonialist males and “traditionalist” indigenous men. According to Spivak, while British colonialist males represented the Hindu widow’s voice as a cry for liberation, considering such liberation as part of the colonial mission, the native male considers the voice as an expression of the subaltern woman’s attachment to tradition by assenting voluntarily to sati. In both accounts, Spivak argues, the voice of the female subaltern is in fact ventriloquized. Consequently, “one can never directly encounter the testimony of the women’s voice-consciousness” (297). Spivak argues, “in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (287).

Following Spivak, this dissertation criticizes the essentialist premises of subalternity as its terms and categories are changeable in each specific socio-political situation. Especially, in the transnational context, the boundary of subaltern identity—who is subaltern and who is not—is more flexible since the act of crossing-borders means incremental or radical changes in social and political status, in many cases, from middle class to the lower. This study sees the subaltern as a key concept for understanding individuals or groups who become agents of counter-hegemonic transnational practices—the colonized, refugees and exiles—moving across and between

nation-states. Homi Bhabha also views migrants, postcolonials and wandering peoples as subalterns. Bhabha formulates a subalternity through cultural difference: rather than defining the term with simplistic polarities, he places the term in a relationship of negotiation with the status quo. According to him, “subalternity represents a form of contestation or challenge to the status quo that does not homogenize or demonize the state in formulating an opposition to it” (32).

My examination is based on the history and culture of subaltern resistance to hegemonic nationalism and globalism in the form of colonial atrocities, patriarchic national oppressions, violence and dictatorship, and neocolonial control and exploitation. In his essay “DissemiNation” Bhabha writes, “forces of social authority and subversion or subalternity may emerge in displaced, even decentered strategies of signification” (ibid. 145). Describing subalternity as adjacent to subversion, he highlights the subversive potential of the subaltern in his discussion of subaltern historiography and agency. In *Toward a New Legal Common Sense* (2002), the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos defines the term “subaltern” as referring to those oppressed peoples at the margins of a society who are struggling against hegemonic globalization. By introducing two conflicting forms of globalization, neoliberal globalization and counter-hegemonic globalization, he argues that counter-hegemonic globalization is the “vast set of networks, initiatives, organizations and movement that fight against the economic, social and political outcomes of hegemonic globalization” (29). These counter-hegemonic practices challenge the conceptions of world development by proposing alternative conceptions. Based on his reading of the world, Santos coins the term “subaltern

cosmopolitanism” to refer to the counter-hegemonic practice, social movement, resistance, and struggle against outcomes of hegemonic globalization, especially of social exclusion.

Based on postcolonial and cosmopolitan concepts of subalternity, this study proposes ghosts as socio-cultural metaphors of the subaltern. Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning, and The New International* (1994) connects subalternity to the spectrality embedded in socio-political history. Derrida focuses on subaltern ghosts— “the ghosts of those who are not yet born or who are already dead, be they victims of wars, political or other kinds of violence, nationalist, racist, colonialist, sexist, or other kinds of exterminations, victims of the oppressions of capitalist imperialism or any of the forms of totalitarianism” (xix). These ghosts are the silenced voices of the victims of hegemonic oppression and violence, and this is “the mark of an all-too-real historical trauma which has been erased from conscious memory but which makes its presence felt through its ghostly traces” (Labanyi 6). In her reading of Derrida’s *Spectres of Marx*, Jo Labanyi directly calls ghosts “subaltern groups,” arguing that ghosts “are the traces of those who were not allowed to leave a trace; that is, the victims of history and in particular subaltern groups, whose stories—those of the losers—are excluded from the dominant narratives of the victors” (1-2). Particularly in her interpretation of the ghostly presence in contemporary Spanish culture and history, Labanyi explores how the spectrality of history requires a process of acknowledgement of the “traces” of the traumatic past, by allowing the repressed memories of the past to be told in ghostly form. For her, the presence of the ghost is a testament to a historical

trauma. Avery Gordon also sees a ghost as “a social figure” that can lead to the “dense site where history and subjectivity make social life” (8). Her definition of the ghost suggests that spectral figures involve subalternity: the haunting of these ghosts “is not the same as being exploited, traumatized, or oppressed,” but it “usually involves these experiences or is produced by them” (8). Gordon suggests that ghosts, as social figures that involve “a history of loss and repression,” and “the memories of the lost and the disappeared,” offer a socio-historical “transformative recognition—“a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening” (9).

In this sense, for Gordon and Derrida, a historical truth belongs to the realm of the specters, which are located between existence and nonexistence, between certainty and uncertainty, or between the representable and the unrepresentable. For Gordon, a haunting “is a constituent element of modern social life. . . . it is a generalizable social phenomenon of great import. To study social life one must confront the ghostly aspects of it” (7). Derrida also describes haunting as a form of postmortem communication, a way “to learn to live with ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship” (xvii). This haunting involves “a politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations” that construct insights regarding silenced subaltern historiography (xviii). For Derrida, the narratives of mourning and remembering of these ghosts move an ethical imperative to give these ghosts “a hospitable memory . . . out of a concern for justice” (xviii). Derrida argues that such remembering is the living’s and the society’s responsibility as they should properly mourn the dead of subaltern history

My study of spectral transnationality also foregrounds bodies as focal points in literary and artistic representations of history, arguing that the body—in particular, the wounded or spectral body—becomes an important site where trauma is inscribed and remembered. Critics in body and trauma studies argue that the body is integral to the process of remembering and narrating traumatic events that refuse adequate representation because “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it” (Caruth 91-92). Critics such as Edward S. Casey and Charlotte Delbo claim that traumatic memory can be grasped not on a semantic-linguistic level, but through “the sensations, the physical imprints” (Delbo 14). Casey articulates that trauma “arise[s] from and bear[s] on one’s own lived body in moments of duress,” and it returns in a somatic form as remembered; Delbo explains traumatic memory in her term “deep memory,” arguing that the body establishes “deep memory,” which is distinguished from rational, linguistic “common memory,” through its reexperiencing of pain (154, 14). Caruth assumes that the body, as a figure for a “self-knowing, self referential system,” often becomes a form of historical narrative based on an alternate system of reference as “the paradoxical evocation of a referential reality neither fictionalized by direct reference nor formalized into a theoretical abstraction” (79, 89). Felman, in her analysis of Albert Camus’ *The Plague* (1947), suggests that literary testimony should place “the imaginative capability of perceiving history” “in one’s own body,” transmitting traumas from one body to another. These critics all agree that the body, as “a language, a gesture, a sign, and a form of speaking,” becomes a new form of historical testimony in literature and art (Slattery 19).

Dennis Patrick Slattery, Kathryn A. Burnett and Mary Holmes focus more on the wounded or scarred body as a means of conveying self-contained traumatic psyches and memories. These critics suggest that the wounded body not only functions as a marker of traumatic memories, but also assumes a powerful agency in historical narratives. Pointing out that bodily wounds—as “the place[s] of dialogue and of narrative”—“always tell a story through their opening onto the world,” Slattery argues that Odysseus’s wounds in Homer’s *Odyssey* (800 B.C.) become a historical text which “opens a deep and painful connection between present and past,” conjuring absent memories to the present (6, 41). Beginning with the notion that scars are sites of memories, emotions and voices, Kathryn A. Burnett and Mary Holmes argue that “bodies speak ‘social codes’ and are therefore ‘intertextualized’ and ‘narrativized’” (21–22). They argue that bodily scars serve as the “sites of the struggle between making sense of what is real or mythic in one’s past and indeed one’s present” (21). Describing the body as a form of “heritage site,” they write, “the person can literally use the visible scar...as an aide memoire to one’s past situated self” (22).

Along with the wounded body, the phantom body also serves as a metaphor of subaltern narrative and historiography, which constantly confront silences and absences imposed by the hegemonic power structure, like ghosts who are not allowed to leave a trace. Subaltern historiography, Ranajit Guha writes, involves “‘bending closer to the ground in order to pick up the traces of a subaltern life in its passing through time,’ or exploring the scars that are left behind, after a limb has been severed and the throbbing pain of the phantom limb has taken its place” (qtd. Linhard 8). The phantom-limb

metaphor manifests a corporeal presence that is like the “memory of pain” or like a specter that can be neither seen nor apprehended. Following Derrida’s definition, a specter is a “paradoxical incorporation, the becoming-body, a certain phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit”—in other words, “some ‘thing’ that remains difficult to name: neither soul nor body, and both one and the other” (6).

Building on theoretical and cultural notions of transnational spectrality and subalternity in relation to history, trauma and bodies, Chapter II, “Can the Comfort Women Speak?: Nora Okja Keller’s *Comfort Woman* (1997) and Korean Female Diaspora Art,” explores the female body’s narrativity by discussing Korean diasporic female artists’ and writers’ mourning works that deal with the comfort women—victims of sexual slavery in the Japanese military during World War II. To build a framework for this topic, I first reread an anecdote of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri in Gayatri Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), juxtaposing it with the Korean comfort women. In my reading, I argue that trauma has a haunting effect on these cultural practitioners by defining a haunting as the moment of postmortem communication when transactions take place between the author and the ghost, the dead and the living, and the past and the present. Through this communication, the haunted subjects can achieve historical insights and become capable of what Gordon describes in *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (2008), as “knowing what has happened or is happening”—“a transformative recognition.” In my analysis, I particularly focus on the female body that emerges as a haunted or haunting place where trauma is inscribed and remembered. The female body serves as a narrative space where silenced histories are

spoken and delivered. Second, this chapter examines how Korean diasporic female artists and writers rewrite comfort women's history by presenting the female body as a focus of representation, remembering, and identification. Especially analyzing Yong Soon Min's sculptural installations, *deCOLONIZATION* (1991) and *Remembering Jungshindae* (1992), Soo Jin Kim's eight-minute video feature titled "Comfort Me" (1993), Miran Kim's art work *Comfort Women* (1995-8), and two comfort women novels, Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997) and Therese Park's *A Gift of the Emperor* (1997), I argue that these diasporic female artists and writers employ the female body as a focal point in constructing an alternative transnational history by remembering and testifying to silenced historical traumas.

Chapter III, "Spectral India: Metaphors of Houses and Bodies in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) and Transnational Indian Visual Art," investigates how Indian and Indian diasporic cultural practitioners construct a spectral vision of transnationality as a future vision of the nation and the world. Particularly discussing Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* along with Indian-origin artists' works—Sutapa Biswas' *Synopsis* (1992), Yatin Patel's *Sutra* (2011), and Surekha's *Skin Home* (2009), Reena Saini Kallat's *Synonym* (2007)—that manifest "my India" through their re-readings of Indian and Pakistan histories marked by colonialism, Independence, Partition, and the India-Pakistan War. In doing so, I argue that these cultural practitioners represent a nation or beyond-the-nation as a phantasmagoric space of hybridity, haunting and rebirth. Especially juxtaposing Rushdie's novel with visual art works—mostly photographs—by Indian-origin visual artists, I show how metaphors of

the spectral body and the haunted house to present a transnational “uncanny” home. The phantom body and the haunted house emerge as haunted or haunting places where trauma is inscribed and remembered. These haunted or haunting metaphors, as liminal manifestations of the nation, serve as narrative spaces where silenced histories are spoken and delivered.

Chapter IV, “Dead Bodies’ Return: Transnational Communication in *Anil’s Ghost* (2000) and Sri Lankan Contemporary Art,” examines Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s Ghost* along with Sri Lankan visual art works that deal with the Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009). In discussing these cultural products, my project demonstrates how they reconstruct a spiritual vision of the nation that opposes a “nation of fear” where the voices of war victims are deliberately silenced and forgotten. In reading *Anil’s Ghost*, I especially focus on the body as a focal point in visual and verbal trauma narratives. In Ondaatje’s novel, I examine how the body speaks through its wounds and scars as coded sites by reading the ways in which the fictional characters—Anil, a diasporic forensic anthropologist, Sarath, a Sri Lankan archaeologist, and Ananda, an eye-painter—decipher wounds of the dead, rebuild the spectral face of the skull, and reconstruct a disembodied Buddha statue that has a “great scarred face.” I argue that their vision of the nation reveals postcolonial spectrality in that it is haunted by traumatic memories of lost bodies of victims. By juxtaposing the novel with visual art works—Bandu Manamperi’s *Bandaged Barrel Man*(2004) and *Bandaged Body: Body in Ash* (2003), Janani Cooray’s performance *Pasting the Pieces*(2004), Pradeep Chandrasiri’s *Broken Hands*(1997, 2004) and *the Broken Hands in the Burnt House* (1997), R. Veidehi’s *Awaiting I, II*,

and Kali Arulpragasam's jewellery art "Murder" collection—, my chapter provides a moment of transmutation—from image to word or word to image—focusing on images of the spectral body. These cultural products present the wounded or phantom body as a communicative space of "Aham-Puram"—a Tamil parallel for "inner-outer," "insider-outsider" "personal-public" or "home-the world." In these art works and Ondaatje's novel, the dead bodies of the victims, as a center of aham-puram conversation, emerge as a link that connects the home and the world.

CHAPTER II

CAN THE COMFORT WOMEN SPEAK?: FEMALE BODIES AND HISTORICAL HAUNTING IN NORA OKJA KELLER'S *COMFORT WOMAN* (1997) AND KOREAN FEMALE DIASPORA ART

The Subaltern Bodies' Haunting: From Bhubaneswari Bhaduri to Comfort Women

In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) Indian diasporic critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers a provocative assertion, "the subaltern cannot speak," providing an anecdote of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri as an example of the subaltern's inability to speak. Bhubaneswari was a young Bengali woman who hanged herself in Calcutta in 1926. Her suicide was enigmatic, as she had been menstruating at the point of her death, which would prove that her death was not the result of shame stemming from an illicit pregnancy. Years later it emerged that Bhubaneswari had been assigned to a political assassination as a member of a revolutionary group struggling for the independence of India. According to Spivak, Bhubaneswari, who had been unable to carry out the mission, decided to kill herself to safeguard the group. But, realizing that her death might be interpreted as an act of shame for an illegitimate pregnancy, she waited until the onset of menstruation to commit the act. Spivak calls Bhubaneswari's suicide the "unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of sati-suicide as much as the hegemonic account of the blazing, fighting, familial Durga" (CS 308). For Spivak, Bhubaneswari's act reflects her purpose to "generalize the sanctioned motive for female suicide" by "[displacing] in the physiological inscription of her body, its

imprisonment within legitimate passion by a single male” (CS 308). Spivak, however, considers Bhubaneswari’s bodily inscription as a failed speech act, since “hegemonic accounts of the fighting mother are well documented and popularly well remembered” by Indian male nationalists, but her subaltern voice that tells her menstruating body as a sign of good wifedom “cannot be heard or read” (CS 308). Spivak addresses the fact that Bhubaneswari’s death had not been noticed or remembered publicly and it had been only understood as a case of “illicit love” among her family members. In an interview in 1993 with the editors of *The Spivak Reader*, Spivak explains that Bhubaneswari’s case is one of “failure of communication” in which speaking—as “a transaction between the listener and the speaker”—indeed cannot happen when a woman displays her body as a physical imprint at the moment of death (Landry and MacLean, 289). According to Spivak, Bhubaneswari’s dead female body serves as a mark of her gendered subalternity “by virtue of [her] muting by heterogeneous circumstances” (CPR 308).

Like Bhubaneswari, Korean comfort women—victims of sexual slavery during World War II—are female subalterns who are doubly marginalized by patriarchal tradition as well as colonial oppression. Their subalternity is not only based on their gendered socio-political status, but also involved with their diasporic displacement that is the very result of such hegemonic dominance. Since 1932, an estimated 80,000 to 280,000 Asian women from ages 12 to early 20s were coerced, deceptively recruited, or sold into sexual slavery for the imperial Japanese military (Korean Research Institute for Jungshindae 2000). While comfort women were from various Asian colonies occupied by Japan, 80 to 90% of them were Koreans, especially young unmarried Korean women

from socially marginalized groups. Most of them were poor, uneducated, and living in rural areas. They were loaded onto cargo ships and transported by sea from colonized land to land, from Korea to Taiwan, Canton, Thailand, Singapore, Saigon, and Jakarta. During their slavery, the comfort women suffered from constant rape, beating, burning, stabbing, and venereal disease, and many of them were abandoned or killed on the battlefield by retreating Japanese forces at the end of war. Many of the surviving comfort women, despite their survival, could not return home and continued their lives in exile, because they feared rejection by a Korean society that considered them promiscuous women whose bodies had been contaminated by foreigners. In fact, as Chunghee Sarah Soh points out, the comfort women who returned to Korea were often called “hwanhyangnyon,” which means a home-coming woman with disgrace as well as a prostitute or a promiscuous woman.⁷ The victims were forced to be silent due to their intense fear of this social rejection of female survivors from foreign captivity (204).

The subaltern memories of Korean comfort women were “forgotten” for a half-century, erased from national histories of Korea and Japan. That is, this female history was doubly silenced by both colonizers and the colonized, by Japanese masculinist

⁷ According to Soh, the term “hwanhyangnyon” originally referred to Korean young women sent to Imperial Qing China as human tributes, and came back home when they became useless (204). When they returned home, most of them attempted suicide as they were labeled disgraced women or prostitutes or expelled by their communities. Chungmoo Choi argues that the term demonstrates how Korean women were victimized by “foreign domination and homonational misogyny” (13). During that time, Korean women were under an “ideology of chastity”: upper class women carried a small dagger “as a reminder for them to take their own lives, if and when their bodies were violated by men other than their husbands, especially by invading foreign soldiers” (13).

colonialism and by a Korean patriarchal nationalism concerned to promote national regeneration and economic growth. After World War II, the Japanese government, which for fifty five years was dominated by the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), conducted an organized, strategic “forgetting” of the comfort women’s history. Especially, for the LDP, which supported ex-military officers, the comfort women were obstacles to the construction of heroic narratives of the war as national memory. Similarly, the newly established Korean government was reluctant to make the comfort women a diplomatic issue that might damage national regeneration projects related to Japan and the U. S. Some conservative nationalists conflated this national regeneration with a break with uncomfortable memories of colonization, including memories of comfort women. Under a patriarchal nationalist regime that emphasized purity and homogeneity as foundations of a burgeoning Korean nationhood, comfort women’s bodies as symbols of national shame were kept in a tightly-closed closet. In this socio-political context in Japan and Korea, the term “comfort women” and these women’s histories have been totally absent from history books in both nations; their governments expressed no official concerns about the issue until the mid-1990s.

Historians also claim a U.S. role in the silence imposed on comfort women as a result of Cold War power dynamics. After Korea was liberated from Japan and the U.S. occupied South Korea (1945-1948), the U.S. government learned of this war crime by interrogating the comfort women left behind in Burma, but the government buried the historical records since Japan’s diplomatic coalition was strategically significant to the U.S. confrontation with the Soviet Union. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japan’s

Kyodo news agency published declassified U.S. records based on interrogations of twenty comfort women in Burma. Some critics and historians such as George Hicks even point to links between the Japanese imperial army and the American occupation army, arguing that American soldiers also participated in military prostitution, benefitting from “the same sort of service their Japanese counterparts had” (141). According to Hicks, the two nations’ military sexual activities are “two sides of the same coin—the exploitation of women” (168). Korean comfort women’s silence reveals not only the limits of the U.S.’s role in Korean Independence given the dynamics of the Cold War relationship, but also a Korean postcolonial reality in which decolonization was not yet completed. Repressed as evidence of institutionalized sexual violence and as a symbol of national shame in Japan and Korea, comfort women have been a taboo subject to the U.S. as a symbol of a gendered Asia that the U.S. could not wholly save.

I wonder, had Spivak “heard or read” of Korean comfort women, how would she have interpreted their voices and histories? Spivak might offer a similar analysis as she gave on Bhubaneswari’s case, rendering comfort women as colonized victims whose stories “cannot be heard or read”— the “spectacular example of the subaltern not being able to ‘speak’” (CS 308, Landry and MacLean 291). However, the comfort woman issue reveals a complex interplay between subaltern practices and historical representations in regard to the possibility of subaltern speech. The official silence imposed on comfort woman was broken in 1991 when a 68-year-old former comfort woman, Hak Sun Kim, stepped forward and officially testified that she had been forcibly taken by the Japanese imperial army. For the first time in Post-World War II history,

Kim, with two other former comfort women, filed suit against the Japanese government to seek an official apology and compensation. Not long after Kim offered her official testimony, more comfort women from South Korea, North Korea, the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, and the Netherlands came out from history's closet and revealed their stories. These survivors' public testimonies and appearances riveted the attention of transnational communities, making the comfort woman issue a hot topic of the postcolonial human rights movements. Social campaigns and further research on the issue have been initiated, centered on Korea, Japan, and America and aimed at forcing the Japanese government to take responsibility. In January 1992, historian Yoshiaki Yoshimi discovered official war documents at the Library of the National Institute for Defense Studies in Tokyo that prove the Japanese military's direct involvement in establishing and operating comfort stations. Finally, national and international pressure led to Chief Secretary Yohei Kono's 1993 apology: "We hereby reiterated our firm determination never to repeat the same mistake by forever engraving such issues in our memories through the study and teaching of history" ("Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono").

The survivors' historical "coming out" is a meaningful action that supports the idea that the subaltern can speak, but it does not always mean that these female subaltern subjects can speak with their own voices. As Spivak argues, these women often confronted socio-political "silencing" when their voices entered the system. This silencing was committed by both political sides, the one that wanted to erase these subaltern voices through its hegemonic power, and the other one that wanted to speak for

them as a homogenized voice. In Japan, an anti-redress movement supported by Japanese conservatives strives to revise or cancel Kono's 1993 statement by denying the very existence of the comfort woman system and by arguing that the wartime sex trade was conducted by private entrepreneurs, not the government. They have also tried to destroy the credibility of surviving comfort women's testimonies by striving to find logical flaws and mistakes in their verbal performances, and in the worst cases, by categorizing them as "willing prostitutes" who lied about their suffering to receive compensation money from the government. This anti-redress movement led to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's 2007 denial of the Japanese government's complicity in organizing wartime sex slavery, in which he claimed that "there is no evidence that women were forced to become sex slaves by the Japanese army during World War II" ("Abe Questions Sex Slave 'Coercion'").

On the other hand, supporters of the comfort women redress movement in Korea and Japan struggled over how to represent the victims' voices. The ethno-nationalistic trend of Korean feminist discourse, which has strategically emphasized Japan's colonial control as a cause for comfort women's victimization, has "failed to generate a sense of societal responsibility among Koreans" for the issue (Soh 237). Soh argues: "since the start of the Korean comfort women movement, there has been little room for critical self-reflection in South Korean public discourse on the victim-survivors. Questions of enduring social inequality and sexual exploitation suffered by lower class women simply are not broached" (237). However, Korean victims and their supporters also have suspected Japanese feminist discourse on the comfort woman issue

that has privileged transnational feminism. Japanese Feminist Chizuko Ueno suggests that feminism should transcend nationalism, criticizing the nationalistic discourses on the issue in both Japan and Korea. Soh comments on Ueno's argument: "Such a postmodernist call, coming from a Japanese perspective, however, will not convince many Koreans, who may suspect her of taking this position for ulterior motives" (237). In fact, Japanese feminists' stress on transnational discourse that tries to equalize Japanese victims and Korean victims has often downplayed the context of colonial oppression that doubly marginalized Korean comfort women.

In such a context, how can the comfort women speak for themselves? How can we hear subaltern voices in this complicated matrix of discourses that attempt to silence them or speak for them? And, how about dead comfort women? How can we even "hear and read" the dead comfort women, like Bhubaneswari, whose voices and bodies are lost by their death? In an interview with Landry and MacLean, Spivak, referring to two hundred years of subaltern resistance against British rule, claims the following: "Now what we have here is the story of continuous subaltern insurgency, always failing, but continuous to this day. This is a spectacular example of the subaltern not being able to 'speak'" (Spivak in Landry and MacLean 1996, 291). When we read Spivak's statement in relation to Bhubaneswari's case, we see how Spivak interprets continuous discursive moments of "speaking for" the female subaltern as the moments when the "helpless" Bhubaneswari is muted. However, I would rather focus on Spivak's word, "continuous" rather than "failing," by exploring "continuing" discursive moments of "speaking for" the subaltern as various attempts to find another possibility—failing, "since" continuing.

The reason I use “since” instead of “but” is that I interpret “continuing” voices as the haunting effect of unrepresented subaltern voices. We are still hearing and reading Bhubaneswari’s story: her spectral voice is weak and small, but it haunts us.

With this focus, I would ask additional questions about Bhubaneswari’s subaltern speaking: Why has this “helpless Bhubaneswari” been continuously rewritten by contemporary readers and writers in this postcolonial present? Why should we hear and read her “failing, since continuing” death story through Spivak’s canonical works? I imagine asking another question of Spivak—the same question that Spivak’s friend, a Bengali female philosopher asked her—“why...are you interested in the helpless Bhubaneswari?” (307). Since 1988 when Spivak published her article, Bhubaneswari’s ghostly body, inscribing her unrepresentable voice and unfulfilled desire, has returned to readers and critics to demand that they find another reading of her death story. In the various academic responses that agree or disagree with Spivak’s argument, Bhubaneswari’s case often has been at the center of discussions as the embodiment of the possibility/impossibility of subaltern speech. Spivak herself rewrote Bhubaneswari’s story in her book, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* (1999), answering these critical responses. Bhubaneswari’s case is also considered as an important issue in a recent book of essays, *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea* (2010) that deals with debates and discourses on Spivak’s question. The “continuing” appearance of Bhubaneswari’s dead body in the present emerges as a socio-cultural phenomenon, as what Avery Gordon calls “haunting”—“the sociality of living with ghosts,” the moment in which sociologists “talk to and listen to ghosts...as the precondition for establishing

[their] scientific or humanistic knowledge” (23). This haunting is the moment of postmortem communication when transactions take place between the speaker and listener, and the dead and living, and the past and present. Through this communication, the haunted subjects can achieve historical insights.

Spivak, in fact, in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* somewhat admits the possibility of postmortem communication between Bhubaneswari and herself. She reconsiders her early conclusion as “an inadvisable remark,” mentioning that her early writing was her “passionate lament”—“Can the Subaltern Speak!”—after witnessing the failure of Bhubaneswari’s bodily communication among her family members (CPR 308). Spivak’s main argument remains the same as she insists she still sees “historical silencing” through the case of Bhubaneswari’s great-grand niece who “works for the New Empire” (311). However, she also notices how Bhubaneswari’s body becomes a focal point in the possible postmortem communication between the dead and Spivak (311). Spivak points out that Bhubaneswari deliberately employs her body as “a text of woman/writing” by which scholars such as Spivak herself “[were] able to read Bhubaneswari’s case, and therefore she has spoken in some way” (CPR 308-9). Spivak offers the definition of speaking as follows: “[all] speaking, even seemingly the most immediate, entails a distanced decipherment by another, which is, at best, an interception. That is what speaking is” (CPR 308-9). I imagine the enigmatic moment when Spivak finds Bhubaneswari and listens to what her spectral body speaks through her corporeal inscription. In this moment, Bhubaneswari emerges as the subaltern ghost whose menstruating phantom womb haunts Spivak, making her a sort of a medium who

can speak for the ghost. As Rosalind C. Morris notices, Bhubaneswari's body "returns there as the haunting figure of a continually misread woman whose impossible story has...even possessed Spivak in her own effort to be accountable to and for history" (16).

In December 1991, Kim Hak Soon, with two other former comfort women, traveled to Japan to file suit against the Japanese government. Asahi Shimbun gave Kim's story extensive coverage under the headline, "Korean Former Comfort Woman Breaks Silence after Half a Century," and numerous articles including those by Yomiuri and Mainichi featured stories and photographs about these comfort women, focusing on the unresolved comfort women controversy (Seaton 101-102). The Japanese public was shocked by these comfort women's physical arrival and presence in Japan, since the government had denied their very existence in history. Their bodies—oscillating between presence and non-presence, and existence and non-existence—emerge as those of "ghosts from another time that haunted Japan's economic and political growth" (Izumi 10). As Izumi describes, these victims' spectral living bodies generated a "popular anachronism" in which the nation was forced to look back at its wartime past and reexamine it (10). In fact, while the surviving victims testified at courts, conferences, exhibits, and rallies, they demonstrated their spectrality based on their trauma shared with the dead. Their voices that testified to traumatic memories included those of the dead: they not only spoke for themselves, but also for their dead colleagues, the nameless comfort women killed and forgotten on the battlefield. In the same way, these surviving victims' scarred bodies became collective as materialized forms of historical traumas. As the Holocaust critic Terrence Des Pres comments, "the dead's

own scream is active” in the surviving victims’ bodies: At the 1,000th “Wednesday Demonstration” (December, 2011), where five surviving comfort women, with an estimated 1,000 supporters, rallied in front of Japan’s embassy in South Korea, and at the 2012 news conference for the “Wednesday Demonstration” where the 83-year-old former comfort woman Lee Yong Soo declared she was running as a candidate in the South Korean parliamentary election “to resolve [the] comfort woman issue,” the survivors’ bodies represent those of the dead victims (Des Pres 36; “Ex-Comfort Woman to Run in S. Korean General Election”). The surviving victims’ bodies, which are haunted by the memories of the dead victims, are haunting a transnational world, making the war and colonialism exist again in the present. Similarly, the aging survivors’ physical bodies are disappearing through death, but their spectral bodies return to public memory as a haunting effect against hegemonic silencing.

Criticizing the Japanese government’s failure to educate future generations concerning comfort women’s history, the Judges of the Tokyo Tribunal⁸ quoted Jose Zalaquett, a member of the Chilean Commission for Truth and Reconciliation: “If the ‘ghosts of the past [are] not exorcised to the fullest extent possible, [they] will continue to haunt the nation.’ This is true in Latin America and it is true in Asia and elsewhere” (Sajor 6-7). This haunting emerges as a continuing memory work conducted by the next generations who must acknowledge “the absence of traces” as trauma is “an event

⁸ The Women’s International War Crimes Tribunal for the Trial of Japan’s Military Sexual Slavery—also called, “The Tokyo Tribunal”—was held in December 2000. This Tribunal was established as a result of the failure of the states to discharge their responsibility to ensure justice for the former “comfort women.”

without a witness” (Radstone 12). The comfort women speak through their spectral bodies as they haunt South Korean’s postcolonial present.

The Phantom Body’s Speaking: Comfort Women and Diasporic Mourning Work Thermodynamics

As Bhubaneswari’s ghostly body haunts the diasporic critic Spivak, the comfort women’s spectral bodies revisit their Korean diasporic descendants, requiring them to speak for the ghosts through their conjuring works. Korean diasporic subjects began their transnational conjuring of the comfort women in 1976, led by Ilmyong Kim, a first-generation *zainichi* (Korean resident in Japan), but it is since the early 1990s that comfort women’s spectral bodies grabbed the diasporic imagination, especially the imagination of Korean diasporic female subjects in America. The diasporic production has been varied, ranging from art exhibits, public education forums and international feminist academic conferences to more individual modes of production such as publication of academic research, testimonials, and literary works, and artistic representations such as paintings, sculptures and documentary films. As Margaret Diane Stetz and Bonnie B. C. Oh argue, this socio-cultural production has been marked by “acts of fusion and of crossing over, in style as well as in substance,” crossing the different arenas of scholarship, culture, and activism (xiii).⁹

⁹ Annie Fukushima in *Encyclopedia of Asian American Issues Today* (2009) identifies various female diasporic responses to the issue: international exhibits such as the “Quest for Justice: The Story of Comfort women as Told through Their Art”; “Comfort Women—Now and Then—from Exploration to Empowerment” (2008); Margaret Diane Stetz and Bonnie B. C. Oh’s book, *Legacies of the Comfort Women of World War II* (2001), which contains academic, activist, and artistic responses; Chunghee Sarah Soh’s social research work, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (2008); two comfort women novels, Nora Okja Keller’s *Comfort Woman* (1997) and Therese Park’s *A Gift of the Emperor* (1997); Soo Jin Kim’s experimental video work, “Comfort Women”; Yong Soon

Among these socio-cultural producers, the female artists and writers who deal with Korean comfort women have strived to provide meaningful postmortem communication by foregrounding spectral female bodies as a focus of such representation, remembering, and identification. Referring to these cultural producers as the writers and artists of “the second generation—those who are deeply affected by the events they themselves did not experience but whose memory they inherited”—Marianne Hirsch argues that these producers employ “an aesthetic based on a form of identification and projection that can include the transmission of the bodily memory of trauma” (77). These diasporic artists’ and writers’ adoption or inheritance of the preceding generation’s traumatic memory is clearly manifested in their works on comfort women. In 1991, the same year that Hak Sun Kim revealed her own story to the transnational community, Korean diasporic activist and visual artist Yong Soon Min expressed Korean women’s colonial histories and traumas through a series that reproduced Korean traditional dress hanbok as an empty dress where colonial women’s bodies are lost and displaced, but leave their spectral traces. In Figure 1, Min represented colonized women’s spectral bodies by creating a white translucent hanbok that floated from the ceiling, looking over the installation. This mourning work was her version of a history text that imagines the haunting of traumatic colonial memory: she materializes the colonial female’s ghostly body through her own dead mother’s empty dress that floats over a postcolonial present when decolonization is not yet completed.

Min’s sculptural installations; Sasha Y. Lee’s photographs; Dai Sil Kim-Gibson’s documentary film, *Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women* (1999); Hein Seok’s documentary films, *The House of Sharing* (2007) and *63 Years On* (2008).



Figure 1. Yong Soon Min, *deCOLONIZATION* (1991), from *Yongsoonmin.com*.
Copyright © 2012 by Yong Soon Min



Figure 2. Yong Soon Min, *Remembering Jungshindae* (1993), from *Yongsoonmin.com*.

The comfort women's haunting bodies are more clearly represented in Figure 2 in which Min represents the comfort woman's bodiless body that haunts the black mourning dress:

[T]he body of the military prostitute is recalled by the empty dress Min has fashioned by stretching starch-stiffened fabric over a wooden armature and then laying on paint, modeling paste, gravel, dirt, and charcoal bits to give the rigid structure a textured surface, all expressing the severity of the comfort woman's history. The dress is elegiac black, not a traditional color for a Korean dress, and wire mesh screen is placed at the opening of the neck so that the red light of the acetate seems to glow from inside. Also, the gashes in the skirt emit red light like fire or bloody wounds. The Korean script translates: "Your story will not be forgotten." (qtd. in Kang 35)

As Elaine H. Kim describes, Min produces the bloody phantom wounds on the dress as a trace of the specter's body by creating "red light like fire or bloody wounds" that "glows from inside of the dress" (qtd. in Kang 35). In her mourning work, Min represents the comfort woman's spectral body as the owner of an empty dress that haunts the postcolonial present in order to deliver the dead' voice that "will not be forgotten" (qtd. in Kang 35).

Visual artists Soo Jin Kim and Miran Kim also represent their retrospective witnessing of the comfort women's spectral bodies in their works. Those bodies are resurrected in Figure 3, Soo Jin Kim's eight-minute video feature, as extreme close-up images of the female body. With background sounds of hurried breathing, this bodily

image shows how comfort women are raped and traumatized through images of frantic cleansing of the body. Combining these body images with the account of a comfort woman's story, the author attempts to speak for the ghost, responding to the ghost's demand, "Comfort me."



Figure 3. Soo Jin Kim. *Comfort Me* (1993), photographed by Douglas McCulloh, from *Flickr*, Copyright © 2008

Miran Kim is also speaking for colonial women's ghosts by remembering their bodies in Figure 4. In these two-piece paintings, Kim creates the double images of comfort women's bodies to represent the very moments of the author's corporeal haunting and identification with the dead. In one painting, Kim produces the reflected vision of two female upper bodies, connected to each other with their linked hands and a metal hook piercing both bodies on which the Korean word, "정신대" (Jungshindea)—another reference to comfort women—is written. In the other painting, she shows two

phantom bodies merging into each other's and becoming one body. The double images of these paintings implicate the author's metaphorical encounter with the ghost when she witnesses its history and hears its voice. The female bodies serve as a site of this postmortem communication between the author and the ghost.



Figure 4. Miran Kim. *Comfort Woman* (1995 – 1998), from *Boy In the Water: The Website of Miran Kim*

In 1997, two comfort women novels, Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997) and Therese Park's *A Gift of the Emperor* (1997), were published in America. While visual artists who deal with Korean comfort women offer audiences the multi-sensational experience of colonial female ghosts by visualizing spectral bodies with images, materials and colors, the writers make this bodily remembering visible to the

reader's imagination through language that adds flesh and blood to this phantom subject of history. These comfort women novels offer a narrative site where colonized women's ghosts as living or spectral characters come-out from history's closet and tell the audience their personal stories interwoven with their history.

Park invites the ghostly female bodies into her work through the narrator and main character, Soon-ah—the former comfort woman—by imagining her voice, feelings, and habits. In this first person narrative, Soon-ah tells her story of how her body was wounded but also how she survived during her traumatic war experience: her abduction to the battlefield, her traumatic memory as a sex slave, her flight from the comfort station with her lover a Japanese war correspondent, their rescue by the U.S. Navy, her painful life as an exile in Hawaii, and her return to Korea. Soon-ah's wounded body not only becomes a marker of colonial violence and abuse, but also constructs the narrative by bringing the character's testimony to her traumatic experiences such as rape, abortion and torture.

In *Comfort Woman*, Keller dramatizes the haunting or haunted moments of the two female narrators—the former comfort woman Soon Hyo/Akiko and her half-American and half-daughter, Beccah. By juxtaposing the first-person narratives of the dead mother Korean Soon Hyo/Akiko and surviving daughter Beccah, Keller produces a fiction that oscillates between the narratives of the dead and the living, and the past and present. This doubling effectively demonstrates the conflicts and reconciliations between the ghosts and their spiritual daughters, revealing the ways in which their bodies pass down “unclaimed” historical traumas from generation to generation. Keller attempts to

create an alternative archive of postcolonial history by dramatizing how these silenced but un-dead bodies deliver their collective traumas of colonialism as a form of history. These spectral bodies resist the deliberate “forgetting” that characterizes national and colonial memory, revealing the empire’s and the nation’s symptomatic failure to deal with such histories.

Explaining the motive of her writing, Park confesses a certain spectral inspiration after indirectly witnessing the surviving comfort women, their voices and bodies. In her essay, “To Give a Voice,” Park explains that her initial encounter with the comfort women was the moment when she was “looking at three old Korean [comfort] women” who were testifying at the court in a documentary film (218). After Park witnessed victims’ testimonies and bodies and learned about comfort women’s history, she felt haunted by the colonial female ghosts and compelled to speak for them. In particular, Park depicts her creation of the character Soon-ah as her haunting moment when the apparition of the comfort women visited and talked to the author: “The heroine of my novel, Soon-ah, came to me during a long walk. It seemed that she found me, rather than that I created her. ‘I was one of them,’ she told me. ‘I’ll tell you how it happened, if you’ll trust my voice.’ Not only did I trust her voice, but I embraced her with compassion as well” (220).

In various interviews about her book *Comfort Woman*, Keller mentions that her novel was inspired by her physical confrontation with a former comfort woman, Keum Ja Hwang, who testified to her story of survival at a human rights symposium at the

University of Hawaii in 1993. Keller, as a witness of Hwang's body and voice, mentions that she "felt so haunted" by the images of the dead comfort women:

I often tell people that my dreams were haunted after I attend the lecture given by Hwang. Throughout the writing of this book, my dreams were filled with images of war and women, of blood and birth. And the only way I could exorcise these images was through writing. ("Author Questions" 6)

Keller and Park consider themselves "compassionate" mediums who deliver the voices of the dead through their writings. The writer's role as a medium is, in Park's words, to become an emphatic listener to the spectral voices—"the feeble voice of the powerless"—that her "inner ears" can magnify into "a thunderous roar" (218). This medium has a shamanic characteristic, as Keller depicts it: "I really felt that sometimes I entered a type of trance, that I was really connected to something higher [than] myself...I was almost like a medium" (Cinader). In her interview with Jocelyn Lieu, Keller clearly addresses the influence of Korean shamanism and historical trauma on her writing:

In *Comfort Woman*, I tried to make Akiko's experience after the camps parallel the tradition of shamanism in Korea which, I understand, is a very woman centered tradition...To me, that is a very powerful tradition to draw on and so I tried to parallel her movements, even her sickness and the experiences she has with the spirits to the studies I did on shamanism. That was an interest I had years before I even conceived of *Comfort Woman*, before I even heard that first testimony. It's not like I

analytically said, 'Not only does the shamanism illuminate Akiko's movement but it also illustrates post traumatic stress syndrome.' It's not something that you do consciously but again that's tapping into something that's a little bit deeper and finding the patterns as you go through the writing of it. (Lieu)

Keller defines shamanism as "a very woman centered tradition" by adding her explanation: "I think 95% of the shamans are women and the few men who are Shamans have to dress like women and act like women in order to flirt with the spirits who come down and speak with them" (Lieu). She understands that the shaman tradition involves gender-transgressive practices, in Keller's words, "[existing] outside the cultural norms for women in Korea" (Lieu). Keller considers shaman practices subversive acts of resistance through which colonial women can speak their historical traumas that are silenced in society. During her writing process, Keller herself becomes a shamanic medium, whose remembering or an act of "giving voice" is to offer colonial ghosts "a hospitable memory out of a concern for justice (Derrida xviii).

Park's and Keller's shamanic writings are based on a belated act, a form of "retrospective witnessing" (Hirsch 76). This is how Hirsch defines the "postmemory" triggered by the next generation's adoption of the former generation's traumatic experiences, especially through the corporeal transmission of memories (76):

Postmemory is defined through identification with the victim or witness of trauma, modulated by an admission of an unbridgeable distance separating the participant from the one born after...Postmemory thus would be

retrospective witnessing by adoption. It is a question of adopting the traumatic experiences—and thus also the memories—of others as experiences one might oneself have had, and thus of inscribing them into one’s own life story. (76)

According to Hirsch, this adoption involves a certain identification process between the listeners/readers and the victim/witness of trauma. In the cases of Keller and Park, their identification process often occurs between the writers and the comfort women—as the haunting of ancestral ghosts. Keller and Park dramatize their own haunting experiences in their novels through the voices of the first-person narrators, Soon-ah, Soon Hyo/Akiko and Beccah. Park explains that she is identifying with Soon-ah due to her own traumatic survival: “Wittingly or unwittingly, [the] writer also portrays herself in her ‘characters.’ Soon-ah’s determination to survive through her daily torture came from my own struggle as an Asian woman transplanted to American soil, which is harsh to nonwhites” (221). In an interview with the *Korea Times*, Keller also notes that *Comfort Woman* reflects her own “inter-generational conflict” with her Korean mother. At first glance, their identification process seems to depend on their shared gender and ethnic identity with those of the Korean comfort women, but it is also, and more complicatedly, based on their traumas shared with the ghosts. These writers see their traumas as female exiles as the condition for their spectrality that they also can find in the silenced ghostly bodies of the comfort women. As Hamid Naficy argues, these diasporic writers—living “in between” the multiple histories and cultures of their homelands and their adopted lands—see themselves as “interstitial creatures, liminars

suffused with hybrid excess” (208). That is, these writers see their phantomness through their liminality as ghosts are liminal beings, neither alive nor dead. As Elaine H. Kim suggests, “Korean American women may be interested in comfort women and sex workers because they too are marginalized and suspect as possible traitors to the Korean nation, and because they too feel subject to the processes of racialization and sexual objectification” (7-8). In some sense, these female writers’ identification with the ghosts can be better defined as, in Judith Kestenber’s terms, “transposition”: “‘transposition,’ into the world of the past, similar—but not identical—to the spiritualist’s journey into the world of the dead” (qtd. in Hirsch 74). Reading bodies as a “time tunnel of history” that enables them to witness traumatic historical moments, they inscribe the comfort women’s memories on to their bodies and transform those bodies into haunted space.

Keller’s *Comfort Woman*: Generational Haunting and The Female Body as a Site of History

In *Comfort Woman*, Keller provides a metaphorical scene that provides a vision of an alternate history book, manifesting a former comfort woman Soon Hyo/Akiko as an historical agent. While escaping from the Japanese military camp, Soon Hyo/Akiko witnesses in her trance a spectral “small book” that her mother’s ghost opens for her. This spectral book is a haunting history book that reveals how the mother’s ghost, like the living, has been witnessing her daughters’ traumas:

She held a small book, no bigger than the palm of my hand, which I recognized as the Ch’onja-chaek, most basic school primer. When she

began to turn the pages, I strained to read what is said, but to my surprise, I found I could not understand the words...As mother flipped through the book, I saw myself and my sisters as children, hanging on to our mother as she moved through our barley field and tended to our garden. And I saw us holding onto her body as we cried the death cries for her spirit. I saw myself underneath the pumping bodies of Japanese soldiers and, in the later pages, saw my oldest sister beneath the same soldiers. (53-4)

The mother's spectral book is the record of colonial women's traumas which can only be grasped not on a semantic-linguistic level, but through "the sensations, the physical imprints" (Delbo 14). The historical truth that this book holds can be understood not by reading words but by "seeing" the wounded female bodies in her trance as a visualized record of historical traumas. As Bessel van der Kolk and Onno van der Hart argue, Soon Hyo/Akiko's trauma is a "speechless terror" which is involved with bodily sensations and dreams because "[trauma's] failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: such as somatic sensations, behavioral reenactments, nightmares, and flashbacks" (172).

In this regard, the mother's spectral book is linked to the works of visual artists, such as Yong Soon Min, Soo Jin Kim and Miran Kim. The wounded phantom bodies as imprints of trauma are manifested in these artists' visual representations of comfort women: As they represent the comfort woman's history through hallucinating images of comfort women's spectral bodily traces, raped body parts and mutilated phantom limbs, Keller presents a fictionalized spectral book that consists of the mother's ghostly body

and the daughters' lamenting, raped bodies in a dream-like vision. Keller, like these visual artists, attempts to regenerate historical traumas by presenting wounded female bodies as important sites where traumas are inscribed and remembered.

Soon Hyo/Akiko's spectral witnessing is also reflected in that of Keller when she explains her reason for writing *Comfort Woman*: "I couldn't even find the words to express how horrified I was, much less find the vocabulary to talk about the pain in this woman's life...I began dreaming about images of blood and war...So I got up one night and began to write bits and pieces of my dreams and the comfort woman's words" (Hong). The "images of blood and war"—Keller also describes them in "Author Questions" as "images of war and women, of blood and birth"—appear in this spectral history book as the wounded bodies of Soon Hyo/Akiko, the mother and sister. Soon Hyo/Akiko's spectral history book emerges as the double text of Keller's novel based on Keller's own authorial haunting.

As Keller describes herself as a medium who rewrites the forgotten history of colonial female ghosts, Soon Hyo/Akiko serves as a historical agent who conveys the voices of the living and the dead. In *Comfort Woman*, Soon Hyo/Akiko, who speaks in the chapters entitled "Akiko" or "Soon Hyo," is a liminal character, neither living nor dead. As Soon Hyo/Akiko's daughter Beccah announces at the end of the first chapter that "[m]y mother is dead," Soon Hyo/Akiko is narrating as a living character in her chapters, but her narratives are haunting Beccah's chapters as the voice of the dead (13). In fact, Soon Hyo/Akiko begins the first "Akiko" chapter with an account of her own spiritual death: "The baby I could keep came when I was already dead. I was twelve

when I was murdered, fourteen when I looked into the Yalu River, and finding no face looking back at me, knew that I was dead” (15). As Jodi Kim argues, Soon Hyo/Akiko’s voice is a ghostly voice that reveals “why such figures were rendered ghostly in the first place, and why they continue to haunt us” (66). Soon Hyo/Akiko reveals the reason why she becomes a ghostly figure as a living person and why she is haunting her daughter’s narration, the novel and readers. Soon Hyo/Akiko narrates her hidden story as a form of “ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory [i.e. history] was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future” (Gorden 22, qtd. Kim 66). Soon Hyo/Akiko’s haunting narratives promote “countermemory for the future” that contests dominant patriarchal and colonial powers as a historical inheritance.

Soon Hyo/Akiko’s phantomness is a traumatic effect of patriarchy and colonialism that reduces her body to a mere object that is subject to control and exploitation. As a victim and survivor, Soon Hyo/Akiko emerges as a traumatized self who produces a traumatic narrative of the dead and the living, in Cathy Caruth’s terms, “a double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life; between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (7). Her traumatic narrative reveals how patriarchal colonial power negates her humanity by categorizing her body as a commodity for colonialist male desires. Dehumanized by gendered control and violence, Soon Hyo/Akiko sees herself as a ghost whose identity and existence are denied and rejected.

As the mother's spectral book displays, Soon Hyo/Akiko constructs a history of comfort women based on what she sees and knows about her own body and the colonial ancestors' spectral bodies, that is, what happened to her own body and to comfort women's, her mother's and sisters' bodies. She brings out the fragmented and time-shifted memories that these bodies hold by describing how the bodies are displaced and traumatized, and how they survived. In particular, Soon Hyo/Akiko creates her own story as a story of her wounded body, a story that shows how her body becomes a "dead" and "empty" body throughout her traumatic life. Her story of the wounded body effectively describes how her phantomness shadows her life from her birth as a girl in Korea to her youth as a sex slave sold to the Japanese army in China and her later immigration to America (11).

Her ghostly status begins with her birth as a "wrong-sexed baby" in her Korean family (118). Soon Hyo/Akiko's birth is "disappointing" since she is the fourth daughter who only adds "one more girl" for Kim's family that had longed for a son (117). Her birth is even more unwelcome because it occurs on the day before the first full moon celebration, considered a sign of bad luck for the family. As Soon Hyo/Akiko recalls, she feels displaced in her family as a "wrong-sexed baby arriving on an inauspicious day" (118). Soon Hyo/Akiko's eldest sister, in particular who internalizes patriarchal values herself, becomes a source of Soon Hyo/Akiko's traumatic displacement and diaspora: the sister not only enjoyed "tormenting" Soon Hyo/Akiko by reminding her, "[you] should have been a boy," but also after their parents' death, she sells Soon Hyo/Akiko into the Japanese military camp to secure money for her own dowry (119).

The twelve-year-old, orphaned Soon Hyo/Akiko is deceived not only by the Japanese soldier who falsely guarantees that she will work as a factory worker in the cities, but also by her eldest sister who might know the rumors about the girls sold into Japanese military camps. Under Korean patriarchy and Japanese colonialism, Soon Hyo's sexualized body is traded as a commoditized item that is "sold like one of the cows before and after [her]" (18). Under such dehumanizing oppression, Soon Hyo/Akiko's body becomes "a dead girl's body" that undergoes a state in which her spirit was murdered but her "body moved on" (15).

At the Japanese camp, Soon Hyo is forced to become Akiko #41, a comfort woman, whose body only functions as a "disposable commodity" ready to be killed or abandoned if it stops functioning (147). Soon Hyo/Akiko's body is "taught only whatever was necessary to service the soldiers," and disciplined only to respond to the colonial orders, "close mouth" and "open legs" (16). Her virginity is "auctioned off to the highest bidder. After that it was a free-for-all" (16, 21). Under repeated sexual violations and forced abortions, her body becomes "bruised and battered," as the Japanese doctor remarks, "impossible to properly heal" (15). Soon Hyo/Akiko describes her wounded body as "nothing but a bag of skin," the "empty body" where she cannot find her spirit, subjectivity, or voice (92).

Soon Hyo/Akiko's traumatic memories are not revealed during her stay at the camp, but they haunt her after she escapes from the Japanese army and finds shelter at the American missionary camp, as the trauma "is not experienced at the time of its occurrence but later as a haunting presence" (Kilby 217):

Whenever I stopped for a breath, I heard men laughing and betting on how many men one comfort woman could service before she split open...I heard the sound of a woman being kicked because she had used an old shirt as a sanitary pad. Or I heard a man sigh loudly as he urinated on the body where he had just pumped his seed. ...I heard the grinding of trucks delivering more men and more military supplies; food rations, ammunition, boots, and new women to replace the ones that died, their bodies erupting in pus. (64-5)

Like the mother's haunting history book that Soon Hyo/Akiko sees in her trance, her traumatic memories of the Japanese camp are not directly described through her own words, and only told through repeated images of trauma—the images of painful female bodies in her dream. Soon Hyo/Akiko's haunting memories make her mind and body “slip back into the camps” and re-experience her pain and suffering (35). While doing the chores assigned to her at the missionary camp, Soon Hyo/Akiko witnesses her trauma as collective memories of the comfort women through somatic sensations of her ear—the sounds of soldiers' grunting, speaking, laughing, and sighing. These haunting sounds help the reader visualize the female bodies being raped, kicked, urinated on and killed at the camp, transforming a painful past into a vivid, continuing present. For Soon Hyo/Akiko, her body, now a physical imprint of her trauma, seems “impossible to properly heal” (15).

Soon Hyo/Akiko's ghostly life persists even after she is married to American minister Richard and immigrates to America. Her husband Richard presents himself as

her savior, declaring his marriage an act of self-sacrifice undertaken to rescue her, the innocent victim and the fallen woman. As evidence of Robert's civil and religious mission, Soon Hyo/Akiko's body—"in [her] Korean dress"—is exhibited as a symbol of a poor gendered nation during Robert's lecture, "Spreading the Light: My Experiences in the Obscure Orient" (107). Soon Hyo/Akiko, however, sees through his genuine desire by reading his body. The language of his body—"his hooded eyes, in his breathing, sharp and fast, and in the way his hands fluttered about his sides"—reveals that he wanted her "half-starved girl's body with its narrow hips and new breasts" not for God but for himself (95). From her point of view, Richard's desire is the same as that of the Japanese soldiers: Soon Hyo/Akiko sees in her husband's eyes "the lust, dark and heavy and animal, that [she]'d seen in the eyes of men at the camps," and hears in his voice "the shout the men at the camps gave as they collapsed over the women in release and triumph" (146). She realizes that she is a mere object of his secret desires for a young and exotic female body. Describing her physical relationship with her husband as a series of traumatic events happening to her body, Soon Hyo/Akiko discloses her constant haunting sensation that her "body was, and always would be, locked in a cubicle at the camps, trapped under the bodies of innumerable men" (106). In her relationship with Richard, her body is still subjected to sexual colonization, only under a different colonizer.

While describing the gendered violence inscribed on Soon Hyo/Akiko's body, Keller shows how language serves as a medium of patriarchal and colonial power that marks the colonized female subjects as living dead. The language Soon Hyo/Akiko

experiences in the Japanese military camp consists of the male colonialists' "name-calling" and "bullet words" used for negating her subjectivity as well as silencing her voice. At the camp, Japanese soldiers deprive the comfort women of their own names, and give them Japanese names and numbers: Hanako 38, Miyoko 52, Kimiko 3, Tamayo 29, and so forth. Soon Hyo is also identified as a Japanese name and number, Akiko #41. In this re-naming, language serves as domination, a way to re-identify the Korean women as numbered Japanese military supplies. With her new name, Soon Hyo/Akiko experiences her displacement as an objectified body consumed by colonialist male desire. Her feelings of displacement haunt her when she first talks with Richard. Richard exerts his power to name Soon Hyo/Akiko by calling her "Akiko": "So call me Richard, he said, or Rick. May I call you Akiko? Rick and Akiko, our names somehow match" (93). When Soon Hyo/Akiko hears the name Akiko from Richard's mouth, she feels pain and suffering due to the violence that her Japanese name signifies: For her, it is "as if he has slapped [her] with the name the soldiers had assigned [her]" (93).

Keller also reveals how Japanese colonialist power reinforces the ideologies of colonization and racial hierarchy through abusive language, what Soon Hyo/Akiko calls "the bullet words" that categorize her as the "inferior other" (115). In the scene of Soon Hyo/Akiko's forced abortion, the Japanese doctor who is "digging and piercing" Soon Hyo/Akiko's womb with a stick to pull out the fetus gives her a lecture about "evolutionary differences between the races" (22). He justifies Japanese control of the colonized female bodies, arguing that Korean women's bodies are naturally "promiscuous" and should be subjected to dominant males: "evolutionary

differences...that made the women of one race so pure and the women of another so promiscuous...Nature ensures that there is one dominant male to keep the others at bay and the female under control” (22). Suffering severe pain from her wounded womb, Soon Hyo/Akiko attempts to “leave [her] body behind,” but she feels that the doctor’s stick and words “pinned” her “to the earth,” making her body a specimen for his imperialistic pseudo-science (22). These abusive bullet words haunt Soon Hyo/Akiko, creating sensational bodily pain in her dream. She dreams that the Japanese soldiers aim rifles at her, and she feels “bullet words enter [her] back, burning through skin and blood, muscle and bone, so hot that [she] could feel [herself] evaporating (115).

Like the Japanese doctor’s colonialist language, Richard’s language stifles Soon Hyo/Akiko’s voice and subjectivity, marking her raped body as a symbol of shame and sin. Rather than building a relationship with his wife based on mutual understanding and compassion, Richard uses his religious rhetoric to justify his patriarchal desire to control her body. Revealing her experience as a comfort woman—the secret that she has kept in silence for more than twenty years—Soon Hyo/Akiko speaks out to her husband: “I speak of laying down for a hundred men—and each one of them Saja, Death’s Demon Soldier—over and over, until I died. I speak of bodies being bought and sold, of bodies” (195). However, Richard, identifying her as “a prostitute,” commands her to be silent to “protect our daughter, with your silence, from that shame” (195-6). Intending to reinforce his order of silence, he “[strikes] her down, pushing her into the damp ground in an attempt to cover her mouth” (196). Richard’s command, like the missionaries’ simple Japanese commands—“sit, eat, sleep”—at the missionary house, is an instance of

the same colonial “bullet words” that hurt Soon Hyo/Akiko’s body and mind, recalling sexual exploitation and abuse that she experienced at the Japanese military camp (16).

Keller dramatizes how Soon Hyo/Akiko becomes a living ghost whose body serves as a site of multiple traumas of colonial/patriarchal exploitation, but she also reveals how the same body provides a focal point for her surviving. Soon Hyo/Akiko employs the body as a female language through which she is connected to other colonized female victims. At the military camp, Soon Hyo/Akiko learns how to use the language of the body as an alternative means of communication and survival. Soon Hyo/Akiko remembers: “We taught ourselves to communicate through eye movements, body posture, tilts of the head, or—when we could not see each other—through rhythmic rustles between our stalls” (16). As Bhubaneswari, who could not speak according to colonial and patriarchal rules, employed her body as a way of communication, Soon Hyo/Akiko sees the body as the only language that she shares with the comfort women when they are “forbidden to speak” (16). For Soon Hyo/Akiko, this language of the body is the means of survival by which “we could speak” and “we kept our sanity” (16).

The language of the body is also a matrilineal language that connects Soon Hyo/Akiko to Beccah and to the ghosts of Korean female ancestors. Soon Hyo/Akiko conveys the language of the body to her newborn daughter by touching her in the same way she touched her dead mother: “I touch my child in the same way now; this is the language she understands: the cool caresses of my fingers across her tiny eyelids, her smooth tummy, her fat toes...She is like my mother in this way” (18). Soon Hyo/Akiko confesses: “Because of this likeness, this link to the dead, my daughter is the only living

thing I love” (18). She understands that the language of the body, which she shares with her daughter, builds the “link to the dead” as a meaningful communicative mode that she develops with the ghosts (18, 21). This is a “language I know is true” that opens a possible postmortem communication between the living and the dead. Without this meaningful communication, her husband, the missionaries and her sisters—as living people—“all are incidental” to Soon Hyo/Akiko, a ghost: “What are the living people to ghosts, except ghosts themselves? (18)”

Portraying the colonial female body as a meaningful communicative mode, Keller dramatizes how Soon Hyo/Akiko ultimately exerts her historical agency by transforming her traumatized “empty body” into a dwelling place for the ghosts, in Beccah’s words, by “[lending] her body to the spirits” (162). As a shaman, Soon Hyo/Akiko delivers the spectral voice of Induk, a major ghost that inhabits her body. Induk is the former comfort woman Akiko #40 whom Soon Hyo/Akiko replaces at the camps after her brutal death. Induk resists the colonial command, “shut the mouth” and “open legs,” by speaking out against the Japanese “invasion” of the female body and of Korea: “I am Korea, I am a woman, I am alive. I am seventeen, I had a family just like you do, I am a daughter, I am a sister” (20). This statement is her manifesto as a human being who has national and personal histories. Her statement is her act of resistance against colonial dehumanization that makes her body a mere object of masculinist sexual desire. As a result of her transgression, however, Induk is brutally murdered and her body is symbolically “skewered from her vagina to her mouth” as a colonial lesson to the rest of the comfort women, “warning [them] into silence” (20–1). Induk’s ghost

haunts the narrator as a symbol of female resistance as well as a figure of historical trauma.

The other ghost that haunts Soon Hyo/Akiko's dreams is that of her mother. Soon Hyo/Akiko's mother is also a victim/survivor of the Japanese massacre during the Korean independence movement of March 1, 1919. She survives by pretending to be a dead body "underneath the dead boy," her lover, but she lives on as one of the living dead under colonial and patriarchal rules (178). Her family reports her death and arranges for her marriage to a stranger to avoid persecution by the Japanese colonial regime. After the death of the husband she doesn't love, she also dies, only leaving her last words—"how tired she was"—during the Kimchee-making time (180). The mother is a colonized victim, but Soon Hyo/Akiko understands that she, despite her tragic life, is also a survivor who raises four daughters through her own survival strategy—"[hiding] her true self" (153). To survive, she camouflages herself as a dead body both literally and figuratively. The mother's strategy is linked to Homi Bhabha's postcolonial mimicry, which has the characteristic of Lacanian camouflage: "mimicry is like camouflage, not a harmonization of repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it in part, metonymically" (90). Bhabha argues that this "partial assimilation," which produces a partial vision of the colonizer's presence, has the resistant power to de-stabilize the authority of colonial discourse (88). The mother's camouflage strategy is the way she survived during the massacre and her married life. Her survival strategy is even reflected in her body, the change in "the shape of her head," her original heritage as a member of a round headed

family (153). As a survivor, the mother bequeaths her memory and history to her daughter through her “special box” that includes her “past and future” (183). Through the mother’s hidden memory that the box delivers, Soon Hyo/Akiko understands her mother: “She was a princess. She was a student. She was a revolutionary. She was a wife who knew her duty. And a mother who loved her daughter, but not to stay or to take them with her”(182). For Soon Hyo/Akiko, her mother is a victim, but at the same time she is warrior.

Jody Kim considers Induk and the mother as “patriotic martyred ghosts” that “haunt Keller’s narrative to offer us a counter-history through the voices of the historically dominated” (65). The ghostly characteristics of these female ancestors embody the invisible history of colonized women, revealing the empire’s and the nation’s symptomatic failure to deal with such history. Kim explains this silence long imposed on the colonized ancestors as, in Homi Bhabha’s words, a “paradoxical act of ‘forgetting to remember’: ‘To be obliged to forget—in the construction of the national present’ to totalize the people of a nation-state to imagine “unifying the national will” (72). Induk’s and the mother’s spectral bodies signify lost memories and histories— “something I had lost”— that Soon Hyo/Akiko strives to remember (59). Resisting the deliberate “forgetting” that constitutes national and colonial memory, these “martyred female ghosts” haunt Soon Hyo/Akiko as “un-dead bodies” by continuously visiting her dreams, states of trance and flashbacks.

The bodies of Induk and the mother are interchangeable. Soon Hyo/Akiko repeatedly witnesses scenes in which Induk's ghostly body is divided into her mother's and that of her ancestral ghosts:

At times, her [Induk's] form would blur until it doubled, then quadrupled, and she would become Induk and my mother, and in turn my mother's mother and an old woman dressed in the formal top'o of the olden days. I realized I was walking with my ancestors. (53)

Soon Hyo/Akiko also has a vision in which Induk's spectral body is merged into the mother's ghostly body: "It was as if without their earthly bodies, the boundaries between them melted, blending their features, merging their spirits. Now I cannot remember what either my mother or Induk looked like when she was alive and a separate person" (36). Induk's spectral body is vividly visualized in Miran Kim's two pieces of the painting *Comfort Women* that represent the instances when the female phantom body is dividing into two upper bodies, but still connected with linked hands, a hook and the word "comfort woman," and the two phantom bodies are merging into one. As Keller describes the moment of Soon Hyo/Akiko's haunting as an instance when Induk's "merging and dividing" body revisits her as a collective body of colonized women, Kim represents the very moment of her haunting through the images of uniting or separating phantom bodies. The haunting of these collective bodies serves as what Kathleen Brogan calls a "cultural haunting"—"concerned with the issue of communal memory, cultural transmission, and group inheritance" (6). These spectral bodies haunt their female descendants, requiring them to remember the communal past that has been excluded

from national and colonial history. Soon Hyo/Akiko learns the collective past of colonial women through Induk's lamenting or accusing voice that cries out that nobody remembers her "special death" and nobody performs proper rituals for her dead body.

Induk's ghost demands that Soon Hyo/Akiko redress Induk's traumatic life and death by letting Soon Hyo/Akiko "see" the spectral body. To look at the spectral body, Soon Hyo/Akiko witnesses a materialized form of colonial trauma that she shares with the ghost:

See me, she said as she stood up. See me as I am now. I looked and saw:
hair tangled through and around maggoty eye sockets and nostrils.
Gnawed arms ripped from the body but still dangled from hands to the
skewering pole...I forced myself to look, to linger over details of her
body. I found her beautiful...I grabbed her, and my fingers slipped into
bloated flesh. I kissed it and offered her my own hands, my eyes, my
skin. She offered me salvation. (96)

Induk's ghost insists that Soon Hyo/Akiko see its deteriorating body, which is skewered by a pole, alluding to the broken body of a crucified Christ that leads her to "salvation" (96). By "seeing" Induk's spectral flesh and blood in her trance, Soon Hyo/Akiko shares the same historical trauma with Induk's ghost. As Soon Hyo/Akiko admits, "[Induk's corpse] was Akiko 41; it was me" (21). Through this spiritual act of "seeing," Induk's wounded body becomes Soon Hyo/Akiko's own body and Induk's wounds become Soon Hyo/Akiko's own sign of trauma. Soon Hyo/Akiko is united with Induk's spirit as her body merges with Induk's collective body that remembers colonial women's traumas. In

this haunting moment, Soon Hyo/Akiko willingly provides her “empty body” to Induk as a dwelling place for the ghost. Soon Hyo/Akiko shares “one body, one flesh” with Induk, and gains a new birth, what she calls “salvation” (96-7). Soon Hyo/Akiko obtains her salvation through Induk’s pseudo-atonement. For her, Induk’s resistant “special death” is a sacrificial act that redeems her sin as one of survivors who remained silent about her death and left her body “to putrefy in the open air, as food for the wild animals” (96). By sharing one body with Induk’s ghost, Soon Hyo/Akiko feels released from her guilt, fear and pain involved with her trauma. Her salvation means her healing from historical traumas by memorializing the silenced ghostly bodies.

By sharing one body with Induk’s ghost, Soon Hyo/Akiko also achieves the double agency of the living and the dead, and therefore becomes able to produce a traumatic narrative of the dead and the living, in Cathy Caruth’s terms, “a double telling, the oscillation between a crisis of death and the correlative crisis of life” (7). Through this “double telling,” the ghost’s silenced trauma bursts with Soon Hyo/Akiko’s shamanic storytelling—her ritual songs and dances that express the “unbearable nature” of Induk’s death and life, and her victimization and survival. This double telling also serves as a means for Soon Hyo/Akiko’s own witnessing. By inviting Induk’s ghost to her body, Soon Hyo/Akiko acquires a witness to her own trauma who can speak for her. Feeling that Induk fills her body, Soon Hyo/Akiko confesses: “[Induk] spoke for me: No one performed the proper rites of the dead. For me. For you. Who was there to cry for us in kok, announcing our death? Or to fulfill the duties of yum: bathing and dressing our bodies, combing our hairs, trimming our nails, laying us out? Who was there to write our

names, to even know our names and remember us?" (38). As each other's witnesses, the ghost and Soon Hyo/Akiko open their traumas to each other, circulating memories to regenerate the silenced history of the comfort women. This is the very moment of postmortem communication when the ghost and Soon Hyo/Akiko speak their traumas. This communicative moment is also a moment of healing when Soon Hyo/Akiko feels free from her guilt, shame and fear in response to her trauma by delivering the voices of the dead.

While the "Akiko" chapters deliver Soon Hyo/Akiko's haunting narratives that bring back her ghostly voice and memory, the "Beccah" chapters are the narratives of Soon Hyo/Akiko's daughter Beccah, who strives to reconstruct her dead mother's history through her traumatized childhood memories. Beccah is a hybrid character who is born and raised between an American missionary father and a Korean shaman mother. As Therese Park argues that "Wittingly or unwittingly, a writer also portrays herself in her 'characters,'" Beccah reminds us of Keller, who herself immigrated to Hawaii as the daughter of her German father and Korean mother. Keller also commented in an interview with the *Korea Times* that the mother-daughter story in her novel reflects her own diasporic "inter-generational conflict," in which Keller "was rebelling against" her Korean mother "who is also rebelling against" American culture (*Korea Times*). What Keller calls "inter-generational conflict" is dramatized in the novel with a focus on Beccah's hybrid body. Beccah's hybrid body becomes the battleground where her cultural, historical, and spiritual inheritances clash and are reconciled. While Beccah's

father Richard tries to inscribe his linguistic rules and logics on Beccah's body, Soon Hyo/Akiko interprets Beccah's body as a shamanic space infested with ghosts.

After Richard's death, Beccah's cultural and spiritual struggle occurs between her Korean mother's shamanic world and mainstream American society. Soon Hyo/Akiko reads her daughter's growing female body, building on her own spiritual and cultural knowledge. While Beccah's school teacher understands Beccah's first menstruation as a part of biological knowledge that Beccah should learn from the educational video "*The Time of Your Life*, in fifth-grade health," Soon Hyo/Akiko understands the menstruation as "the blood of a lost spirit"—the trace by which the lost ghosts attempt to invade her daughter's body (185-7). Similarly, for Soon Hyo/Akiko, her daughter's hybrid body is vulnerable because it is continuously attacked by harmful ghosts and "evil-energy arrows, Sal,"¹⁰ that come from both her Korean home and American society. To protect her daughter, Soon Hyo/Akiko often performs a shamanic ritual, as Beccah remembers: "she peeled the blankets from my body, stripping me naked. When I shivered, she placed each of the seven strips of bed sheet... on my body...She ran her hands down my face, throat, arms, torso, legs, and when she touched my feet, her hands vibrated" (79). However, Beccah refuses her mother's shamanic protection by saying, "I wished the sal had killed me outright so that I would not have had to endure my mother's protection" (73). Instead, Beccah seeks comfort in mainstream American cultural values, which offer her logical explanations for her body consistent with a typical American childhood.

¹⁰ Sal(살) is a Korean term that refers to an evil energy or a ghost.

Beccah, with her hybrid biological and cultural background, sees the “foreignness” and “similarity” between her mother’s body and her own (209). For Beccah, her mother’s body is the subject that she identifies with, and at the same time, that she feels alienated from. First, the bodily “similarity” gives Beccah the feeling of connection between mother and daughter. As Soon Hyo/Akiko communicates with her new born daughter via motherly touches, Beccah experiences the sensation that her body is united with her mother’s while massaging her mother’s body: “I felt my arms disappear up to the elbows, my body reabsorbed by hers. In those moments, I knew I was truly my mother’s daughter that nursed her with my light (85). Beccah experiences sensations such that she becomes “hairless as a newborn” as “[her] body reabsorbed [her] hips, [her] breasts, and small belly that sloped between [her] pelvic bones (86). Through her preverbal exchange with her mother, Beccah perceives herself as “truly [her] mother’s daughter” who shares one body as “the fetus in the womb” (86).

Despite this bodily communication, most of the time Beccah perceives “foreignness” in her mother’s body. This “foreignness” is manifested through the mother’s “singing and dancing” body, through which she communicates with the ghosts. Whenever Beccah witnesses her mother dancing in her trances, “holding in her arms raw meat—chicken, or pig’s feet, or a pig’s head—calling, ‘Saja, Saja,’¹¹ in a singing voice,” she feels abandoned and discarded: “I would cry out, ‘Mommy, what about me?’ and throw my self across her body in order to keep her from floating away. Mother would step over me and continue waltzing with the pig’s head, daring Saja to cut in” (47).

¹¹ Saja(사자) means a death messenger in Korean.

Beccah feels shock that her mother abandons her whenever she belongs to the world of the dead. This traumatic experience develops Beccah's insecurity about her mother that the mother could leave her at any time.

Soon Hyo/Akiko's foreignness also means shame for Beccah as a mark of her mother's "insanity," "weakness" and "vulnerability" (5). This foreignness becomes clearly visible when Soon Hyo/Akiko visits her daughter's school for an exorcism (86). Beccah witnesses her mother's foreignness in her foreign body surrounded by her classmates who yell at her "crazy" mother. The "insanity" and "vulnerability" of Soon Hyo/Akiko's foreign body—"the frail, wild-haired lady in pajamas"—are evident in this public space of the American society to which Beccah belongs (86). Beccah wants to help her mother: "I wanted to scream, to tell the kids to shut their mouths and go to hell" (87). However, Beccah can't take any action because she feels "ashamed" about her mother. Struggling between her ambivalent feelings of pity and shame toward her mother, Beccah "slipped away," refusing to claim Soon Hyo/Akiko's foreign body as her mother's body (89). This is the way Beccah complies with an American society that she considers "normal."

Beccah introduces herself as an obituary journalist: "I record the lives of the dead" (25). Her job is similar to her mother's in that they both deliver the stories of the dead, but their approaches are contrastive. Different from shaman Soon Hyo/Akiko whose body becomes a vessel for the voices of the dead, Beccah "deal[s] only in words and statistics" to make a standardized obituary (26). After Soon Hyo/Akiko's sudden death, Beccah tries to write an obituary for her mother, but she quickly realizes that her

mother's life cannot be recorded in the standardized form of an obituary. The mother's life and death are incomprehensible and unimaginable even to her daughter. Beccah confesses that she does not have "the facts for even the most basic, skeletal obituary" about her mother (26). The mother's shamanic existence cannot be made to comply with the rules and standards of American mainstream society.

Keller employs generational haunting at the center of Beccah's story to dramatize how she understands her mother's life and death and finds a way to record her matrilineal history. As Soon Hyo/Akiko hears the colonial female ghosts' voices by sharing their traumas, Beccah also communicates with her dead mother by sharing traumatic memories that she inherited from her mother. This sharing occurs belatedly as a form of postmortem communication through generational inheritance: the mother's jewelry box and dead body. The mother's jewelry box includes her and her daughter's personal objects and body parts: pendants, earrings, a baby tooth, an umbilical cord, school pictures, report cards, old newspaper articles, missing persons reports, and a cassette tape marked "Beccah." Soon Hyo/Akiko's jewelry box has the same characteristics as her own mother's "special box" that contains "fingernails and newspaper articles; a red-and-blue wedding dress; gold thread that she was forever saving to sew her first son's" (182). These boxes enclose the mothers' "past and future" for their daughters to "come to know her own mother—and then herself as well" (183). The mother's jewelry box brings Soon Hyo/Akiko's past to the present, offering the clues for Beccah to "know" the mother and herself.

In particular, the cassette tape “Beccah” delivers the mother’s ghostly voice to the daughter directly as the ghost’s “prayers for justice” (197). While exploring the box, Beccah listens to her mother’s recorded voice from the cassette tape that cries out her trauma as a comfort woman:

“Chongsindea: Our brothers and fathers conscripted. The women left to be picked over like fruit to be tasted, consumed, the pits spit out as Chongsindea, where we rotted under the body of orders from the Emperor of Japan...Under the Emperor’s orders, the holes of our bodies were used to bury their excrement. Under the Emperor’s orders, we were bled again and again until we were thrown into a pit and burned, the ash from our thrashing arms dusting the surface of the river in which we had sometimes been allowed to bathe. (193)

For Beccah, the mother’s recorded song is a song of trauma. Soon Hyo/Akiko sings out how the colonial female bodies were consumed, exploited, and killed under Japanese imperial rule. In this song, the comfort women’s bodies are “used to bury their excrement,” “bled again and again,” “thrown into a pit and burned,” “dusting the surface of the river” (193). Beccah tries to add her own voice to her mother’s song as her gesture to understand and share her mother’s trauma: “Chongshindae. I fit the words into my mouth, syllable by syllable, and flipped through my Korean-English dictionary, sounding out a rough, possible translation: Battalion slave” (193).

The mother’s song of trauma enables Beccah to remember her “half-forgotten” memory about her father’s death, the trauma that the mother and daughter share together.

In Beccah's memory, Richard abuses her mother, calling her "a prostitute," and covers her mouth to command silence about her traumatic past (196). However, Soon Hyo/Akiko survived. Beccah realizes that her mother is a victim, as one of the comfort women, but at the same time, she also sees her mother as a survivor. Beccah's forgotten memory shows how her mother survived and provides the answers to her questions: "how could my mother have married, had a child, if she had been forced into the camps?" (194) Beccah understands that her mother was not "weak and vulnerable" as she has thought. Her mother is a strong "performer" who survived with her own survival strategy (203). As Soon Hyo/Akiko's mother camouflages herself as a dead body in order to survive the Japanese massacre, Soon Hyo/Akiko employs her mother's strategy to survive Japan's sexual slavery and her exile in America.

As Beccah witnesses her dead mother's trauma, she begins to comprehend her mother's spiritual world filled with colonial female ghosts. This understanding allows Beccah to realize her mother's love and care for her. Beccah remembers she felt "invisible, unimportant" while her mother prayed for the dead. But, she understands her mother always loved her in her own way: during her rituals for the dead, the mother knew, "I watched her": "That in her way, she had always carried me with her" (197). Reconciled with her mother, Beccah is able to hear her mother's spectral voice: "I heard my mother call me, weaving my name into her chants, her prayers for justice. Beccah-chan, lead the parade of the dead...When I can no longer perform the chesa for the spirits, we will look to you to feed us" (197).

Beccah also realizes that the proper mourning for her mother is not through the written words of a standardized obituary, but through claiming the mother's body. Upon listening to her mother's voice from the cassette tape, Beccah realizes that what she thought of as "senseless wails, a high-pitched keening" was her mother's performance of "the death ceremony" for the colonial female ghosts, the "yom"¹²—"preparing [the] body for its final transition" (192). From the cassette tape, Soon Hyo/Akiko performs the yom that she was unable to offer the comfort women at the moment of their death. She sings for the ghosts: "Yom...I bathe you for a final time. I massage your stiffening limbs, then tuck them close against your body. I wash your intimate places, pull your white hairs, and cut your nails" (192). During the yom, Soon Hyo/Akiko calls the names of her lost family members, comfort women, and her true name, "Soon Hyo." This death ceremony is not only for the dead colonial ancestors whose "bodies [were] left unprepared, lost in the river," but also for Soon Hyo/Akiko herself, who has been one of them, both as the living and the dead (192).

As a witness to her mother's trauma, Beccah emerges as a new subject of remembrance by adopting her mother's shamanic language. For the ritual, Beccah mimics her shamanic language—dancing and singing. Beccah's dancing and singing is the performative language that Soon Hyo/Akiko tried to teach her. Beccah remembers her childhood when Soon Hyo/Akiko said to her, "Dance... Free your spirit, Beccah-chan, let it loose" as Soon Hyo/Akiko herself was "dancing and singing a song with no

¹² Yom (염) is part of preparations for the traditional Korean funeral. It refers to the process of wrapping the dead body and of placing it into the coffin. After bathing, the dead body is fully dressed in *suui*, the traditional death dress, and is wrapped up into a quilted cloth called *yompo*.

words” for the ghosts (190). But Beccah refused to learn this shamanic language from her mother, because she felt embarrassed by her mother’s foreign body and ritual.

However, after her mother’s death, Beccah belatedly learns her mother’s dancing and singing “without knowing the words” during her own performance of the yom (208).

In this death ritual, “yom,” Soon Hyo/Akiko’s body is critical as a space where her trauma is inscribed and recorded, as well as a medium that enables postmortem communication between the dead and the living. Beccah touches her mother’s body as her mother did to her when she was a new-born:

My mother lay naked under her dress, in the body that had always embarrassed me both in its foreignness and in its similarity to mine. I looked now, fighting my shame, taking her body piece by piece...until I could see her in her entirety, without guilt or judgment...I fit my hands against my mother’s, palm to palm, finger tip to fingertip, mirror images...my hand had become my mother’s. (209)

Beccah’s touch is reminiscent of the language of the body that Soon Hyo/Akiko employs to initiate her daughter into their collective matrilineage. By mimicking the mother’s language of the body, Beccah overcomes the “shame” and “guilt” that she had for her mother’s foreign body. Finally, she can identify with her mother, finding the mirror image between two female bodies, ready to share one body with the mother’s ghost.

As Induk desires Soon Hyo/Akiko’s body as a dwelling place for the ghost, the mother’s ghost demands her daughter’s body: “Your blood is mine” (197). Beccah begins “speaking to [her] mother” by carrying her mother’s ghost in her body, “[f]eeling

my mother's arms around my waist" (197). As a final part of her corporeal ritual, Beccah eats her mother's ashes while sprinkling them over the river. During this ritual, Beccah, like Soon Hyo/Akiko, claims her mother's spectral body as her own: "Your body in mine" (212). As Induk is a pseudo-Jesus figure, Beccah's ritual alludes to Christian communion in which the disciples remember Jesus's death as well as his living presence by sharing bread and wine as His body and blood. By eating the ash of the mother's body, Beccah internalizes the traumatic memories of the maternal body, and becomes a surviving matrilineal descendant whose body itself represents their forgotten history. In this death ritual, Soon Hyo/Akiko's ghost promises Beccah her salvation and transformation, as Induk offered Soon Hyo/Akiko a "salvation."

Beccah becomes a powerful historical agent by transforming her body into a site of narrative that accesses her ancestors' unspeakable traumas. Keller metaphorically dramatizes Beccah's transformation through her traumatic dreams of drowning in which her mother and Induk continue to haunt her. Previously, this repeated dream represented Beccah's frustration about Soon Hyo/Akiko's and the ghost's incomprehensible "foreignness," ending with her drowning caused by her mother's "[wrapping] around her leg, holding on to [her]" (141). In the final scene, the river dream indicates Beccah's revival and empowerment as her version of baptism, an enactment of death to sin and a reemergence into her new life. Embracing her mother's ghostly body, Beccah "swam for hours, for weeks, for years" with her dancing mother in the river (213). She "opened [her] mouth to drown...Instead, [she] breathed in air, clear and blue...[she] swam through sky, higher and higher, until dizzy with the freedom of light and air (213). This

“deep river” where Beccah floats with her mother and Induk is a “transnational matrilineage” where Beccah places herself to celebrate the female body as a subversive means of rewriting history. Beccah, the second generation of Korean diaspora, metaphorically connects her body with her ancestors’ dead bodies, and inserts their ghostly memories into the archive of American history. The Korean-American daughter’s—Keller’s and Beccah’s—belated construction of her female ancestor’s trauma opens a possibility of an alternative postcolonial history by rewriting Korean national and Japanese colonial history. Beccah knows her mother’s spectral existence in her hybrid body as “a small seed planted by my mother, waiting to be born” (213).

CHAPTER III

SPECTRAL INDIA: METAPHORS OF HOUSES AND BODIES IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* (1981) AND TRANSNATIONAL INDIAN VISUAL ART

Transnational Unhomeliness: Photographs of Houses and Bodies

Just as Keller and Korean American female artists offer a spectral vision of the homeland based on their inherited memories of comfort women, Salman Rushdie and Indian-based artists such as Sutapa Biswas, Yatin Patel, Surekha and Reena Saini portray their “spectral India” as a nation infested with the ghosts of the traumatic past. These Indian cultural practitioners imagine various images of spectral nation by making their works an archive of broken, destroyed or wounded bodies and houses. Juxtaposing Rushdie’s novel with Indian local and global visual art, I explore the metaphors of spectral bodies and haunted houses in order to present a transnational “uncanny” home as a phantasmagoric space of hybridity, haunting and rebirth. These haunted or haunting metaphors, as liminal manifestations of the nation, serve as narrative spaces where silenced histories are spoken and delivered.

In his essay “Imaginary Homelands” (1981) from the book of the same name, Salman Rushdie explains his motives for writing *Midnight’s Children* by providing a description of a photograph of his father’s house in Bombay, India:

An old photograph in a cheap frame hangs on a wall of the room where I work. It’s a picture dating from 1946 of a house into which, at the time of

its taking, I had not yet been born. The house is rather peculiar—a three-storeyed gabled affair with tiled roofs and round towers in two corners, each wearing a pointy tiled hat. ‘The past is a foreign country,’ goes the famous opening sentence of L. P. Hartley’s novel *The Go-Between*, ‘they do things differently there.’ But the photograph tells me to invert this idea; it reminds me that it’s my present that is foreign, and that the past is home, albeit a lost nation in a lost city in the mists of lost time. (9)

The image of the old Indian house produces a moment when the past and the present meet, connecting Rushdie to the past—his lost home. For Rushdie, the photographed house allows him to access the repressed or hidden past; he declares that he belongs to his homeland India in the past as well as his host country England in present. Rushdie’s photographic image of the old house acquires what Benjamin calls a “dialectical” characteristic. Benjamin defines “a dialectical image” as “an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash. What has been is to be held fast — as an image flashing up in the now of its recognizability” (*Arcades*, 473, N9,7). According to Benjamin, this fleeting image illuminates a historical truth, creating a moment of clash between the past and the present. The dialectical image has the potential to open up history, allowing us to see the past with horror—the past from which “[the angel of history] sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet” (*CH*, thesis IX, 392). This is the past that Paul Klee’s “Angelus Novus” is staring at, as he is

blown backwards into the future.¹³ Here, the past haunts the present like a spectral image revealing a new dimension of history. This process is “not a process of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it” (Benjamin 1928, 31). Rushdie’s old photographic image thus awakens the forgotten or repressed past; as the past is recovered in the very core of the present, it leads us to a new diasporic actuality. Rushdie confronts his diasporic situation—living “in between” the histories and cultures of his homeland and his adopted lands. This epiphanic realization “reverts” the conventional idea: Whereas the present matters as his homeland for Hartley—who is writing, “The past is a foreign country”—the past matters for Rushdie, who claims that “the past is home, albeit a lost nation in a lost city in the mists of lost time” (9).

Rushdie’s photograph is a haunting image. Like a ghost of the past, it returns to him to find something lost—truth or justice. As Rushdie admits, this haunting is inevitable for him as an exiled transnational writer who is “haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back” (10). In exploring Benjamin’s and Roland Barthes’s discussions of photography, Lutz Koepnick also emphasizes the haunting effect of photographic images:

¹³ In “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Walter Benjamin describes Paul Klee’s angel as the angel of history who cannot fly away, or stay, as he is blown backwards into the future. In Benjamin’s description, the angel of history looks horrified or frightened by what he is looking at. His eyes and mouth are open wide. He is ready to fly with his spread wings, but they are helplessly caught by the storm. The angel looks back into the past. What he sees is different from we who perceive “a chain of events”: The angel only sees a “catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it at his feet”—“the pile of debris” that “grows toward the sky” (392). Those catastrophic ruins and debris haunt the angel who is ready to fly away with his spread wings. This haunted angel looks helpless: he wants to stay in order to revive the dead and rebuild the ruins, but he can’t. He cannot fly away either. The storm named “progress” propels him forward, toward the future, a future on which the angel turns his back.

...in the view of Walter Benjamin...Photographs bring death to the photographed, but precisely in transforming history into cemetery, in converting the past into a specter haunting the future, the photographic image can also stimulate a curious solidarity between the dead and the living...Similarly, for Roland Barthes, photographic images do not simply serve as souvenirs but certify that corpses of the past are still alive and with us—as corpses. Photographs are living images of dead things; their primary function is to authenticate rather than to represent the pastness of the past. (99-100)

As Koepnick argues, Benjamin explores “how photographs precisely by disrupting temporal continuity, interconnect different instances of presence, refocus our sense of finitude, and thereby draw our awareness to the many ghosts that populate our own present” (100). Rushdie, who is staring at a photograph, experiences a haunting moment as a disruption of temporal continuity. This haunting moment is the moment of the clash between the past and the present. The ghost of the past brings forgotten corpses to the present as an unknown side of reality, displaying history as “a discontinuous site of magic, epiphany, correspondence, and shudder” rather than as a continuous and linear “chain of events” (Koepnick 100). This process is that of a revelation that is capable of illuminating a historical truth, and a new idea of diasporic actuality—the past as the lost home.

After his first novel, *Grimus* (1975), was accepted for publication, Rushdie went on a trip to Bombay—what he called “my lost city”—where his father’s old house in his

photograph is actually located. This trip to the old house meant not only his journey in search of his lost time and space, but also his lost self. When Rushdie arrived in Bombay, he found his father's name, address and telephone number still existing in the telephone directory. Rushdie confesses: "I felt as if I were being claimed, or informed that the facts of my faraway life were illusions, and that this continuity was the reality" (9). Rushdie experiences a rapturous moment when present and past are confused and crossed: His lost city which belongs to the realm of illusion is transformed into the real, while his exiled life in England turns out to be dream-like. This is an uncanny experience, what Rushdie calls "an eerie discovery" (9). Homi Bhabha describes this transnational uncanny moment as an "unhomeliness" which "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place" (141).¹⁴ Bhabha explains the unhomely in Nadine Gordimer's term, as "the freak displacement" in which profound divisions are re-located: "the border between home and world becomes confused; and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (141). That is,

¹⁴ The original German word that Sigmund Freud used to define the uncanny was "unheimlich," unhomely, the opposite of "Heimlich" or homely (Paranjape 194). In his essay "uncanny," Freud defines the uncanny experience as: "that class of the frightening which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar" (637). Here, the uncanny is a process of 'defamiliarization' like the word's transformation from the meaning 'homely' and 'known' (heimisch) to the 'unhomely' and 'strange' (unheimlich). Noting the prefix 'un' of the word, unheimlich, as "the token of repression," Freud explains male patients' repressed Oedipal complex as "a certain lustful pleasure"—"the phantasy of intra-uterine existence" that is surmounted by the outside world's moral demands (636). Freud also explains his own uncanny experience in a personal anecdote where he returns over and over again to the same red-light district of an Italian city, after encountering "Nothing but painted women...seen at the windows of the small houses" (631). For Freud, who is wandering "deserted" streets, the prostitutes' bodies or his own fear or desire for the bodies deliver the meaning of the uncanny. These bodies, associated with a memory of a "strange" foreign city, haunt him as a moment of the "unhomely" until he writes about it in his article on the uncanny. Here, Freud's uncanny is associated with his cross-cultural experience, his dream-like experience of displacement. It is also a moment of epiphany in that it awakens Freud's hidden desires and fears, from which he acquires knowledge of his own uncanniness.

the unhomely is “the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations,” an “in-between” time and space in which the divisions of private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social are blurred and confused (141).

Rushdie assumes that this transnational unhomely moment is the creative moment when his novel *Midnight's Children* “was really born” (9). Confronting the actual Indian house in the photograph, Rushdie realizes that the house is not his home:

The photograph had naturally been taken in black and white; and my memory, feeding on such images as this, had begun to see my childhood in the same way, monochromatically. The colours of my history had seeped out of my mind's eye; now my other two eyes were assaulted by colours, by vividness of red tiles, the yellow-edged green of cactus-leaves, the brilliance of bougainvillaea creeper. It is not too romantic to say that that was when my novel *Midnight's Children* was really born; when I realized how much I wanted to restore the past to myself, not in the faded grays of my old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor. (9-10)

Confronting a vividly-colored actual house, Rushdie sees the divergence between an actual house and the “monochromatical” version of the house constructed by his memory (9). For Rushdie, this confrontation is a shocking moment of the “unhomely” which can be witnessed in the epigraph of Toni Morrison's novel, *Home* (2012): “Whose house is this? Whose night keeps out the light in here? Say who owns this house? It is not mine. I had another sweeter, brighter...The House is strange. Its shadows

lie. Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?"¹⁵ Rushdie feels the uncanny when he sees the house: he expected to find his lost home, but he meets another world like a stranger's house. In this unhomely moment, Rushdie is awakened to himself as a writer, realizing how he desires "to restore the past" not "in the faded greys" but "in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor" (10). He wants to bring the past alive in the present, summoning the ghosts of the past to live again here and now, just like Klee's angel of history who "would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed" (CH, thesis IX, 392). That is, Rushdie himself wants to become a transnational writer—a liminal narrator of history as "a stranger, a double-agent living between the lines" ("The World and the Home," 143).

Rushdie's desire to revive the past also means that he wants to reconstruct himself as a whole from the debris of the past, to reclaim his exiled self by reviving the lost city Bombay—"a city built by foreigners upon reclaimed land" (10). For him, this lost city becomes "the title" that he is "almost qualified for": it is the city and history that he can "reclaim" (10). Just as he wants to restore the house as an actual one, he wants to restore himself in "vivid color." Although Rushdie acknowledges the impossibility of representation—he can only create "fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones"—he still strives to reconstruct the past by retrieving his memory (10). Like an archeologist who collects "the broken pots of antiquity," he wants to use "memory" as a tool to represent the unrepresentable. For him, memory is "a useful tool with which to

¹⁵ To explain "the unhomely," Bhabha quotes Morrison's song-cycle from "Honey and Rue" in "The World and the Home" (1992). Morrison had written this song cycle in 1992, and used it for her novel in 2012. In some way, this unhomely feeling had been haunting Morrison for 20 years until she wrote her novel, *Home*.

work in the present”: its shreds and fragments have “greater status, greater resonance because they were remains” (12). In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie wants to access the frozen moment of the past through his fragmented memory, but also to reveal its unreliable relation to the past. In this sense, Rushdie’s “my India” is an India “of memory and about memory,” an “imaginary homeland” which only emerges as “a version”—“no more than one version of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions” (10).

Rushdie’s transnational unhomeliness is also manifested in Yatin Patel’s digital photographs of Indian houses, *Sutra*. Orlando-based Indian diasporic photographer Patel provides photographic images of Indian houses in his hometown Ahmedabad, India in his exhibition *Sutra*. Like Rushdie, Patel, who has lived in both India and the Western world, is compelled to explore and travel to his lost time and space, Ahmedabad, a partitioned city. Patel explains the motivation behind his works: “What fascinates me is how, after thousands of years, the original environment and its habitants have organically evolved in time to find a delicate balance between tradition and modernism, without compromise. My work seeks to document this astonishing harmonious paradox” (Patel). Patel wants to express this “harmonious paradox” between the past and the present which involve the moment of “Sutra”—a Sanskrit word which literally means a “thread or line that holds elements together” (YatinPatel.com).¹⁶ For Patel, an exile who experiences temporal and spatial dislocation, the sutra means a hybrid contact zone

¹⁶ Sutra also means canonical scriptures as the records of sermons or oral teachings in Hinduism, Buddhism, or Jainism: In Hinduism, the sutra means the Sanskrit collections of sayings on Vedic doctrine. In Buddhism, the sutra refers to the teachings of Gautama Buddha, and in Jainism, it refers to canonical sermons of the Mahavira.

where the past and present, the eastern and the western, and the living and the dead meet and mingle. This temporal space is similar to what Bhabha describes as a “cultural space—a third space—where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences” (218). Located in his hybrid contact zone, Patel attempts to find his own transnational voice that can deliver the story of his homeland through the photographic images of Ahmedabad—a city “founded in the 1400s” and “home to centuries of fascinating tales” (Patel).

Among others in his Sutra collection, Patel’s work *Time* provides a photographic image of old house that hold the spectral traces of time, history and memory.



Figure 5. Yatin Patel, *Time* (2011), from *Sutra*, Copyright © by Yatin Patel

In Figure 5, Patel uses high dynamic range imaging, a photographic style that allows a greater dynamic range between the lightest and darkest areas of an image. This creative process highlights details of the old house—cracks and stains on the wall, pillar and stairs—as traces of history. This digital style, which regenerates a temporal trace

inscribed in the house, creates an image of uncanny home—a strange, haunted house. No person appears in this photograph, but we see all of the remains of the dead and living people on these walls, pillars, and stairs. Those traces are “remains” or “fragmentations,” what Rushdie describes as “The shards of memory” that “acquired greater status, greater resonance, because they were remains” (12). Rushdie explains: “fragmentation made trivial things seem like symbols, and the mundane acquired numinous qualities” (12). Like Rushdie, Patel not only expresses his transnational unhomeliness, but also attempt to restore the past by collecting the traces of the dead and living bodies as marks on the houses and walls. These remains become symbols and the traces of memories that recover Ahmedabad’s “centuries of fascinating tales” (Patel). The haunted city’s old tales reveal both the photographer’s personal story and his nation’s history.

If the old Indian house in Rushdie’s black-and-white analog photograph offers him access to the past as a frozen moment, Patel’s digital photographic image not only unravels the dialectic by accessing the frozen moment of the past, but also reveals its unreliable relation to the past by bearing the traces of time in itself. The temporal traces appearing on Patel’s photographs show one of the typical characteristics of computer-generated digital photography. Exploring the advance of digital photographic technology, Koepnick explains that digital imaging “transforms an image’s relation to time, finitude, mortality, and memory” (100). According to him, digital images don’t require a single moment of exposure as an “an act of closure whose inherent finality enabled discontinuous contact between past and present times and thus, ironically, opened spaces for experiencing the infinite” (100). By going through a “computer-aided

rendering and re-rendering process,” digital images imply the “process over product,” inscribing temporality in the image’s existence itself. Moreover, digital images imply continuous acts of modification on the side of its producer and its user who can download images anytime and anywhere from global circuits of exchange through the networks of electronic connectivity. Koepnick concludes: “computer-aided images invite the producer to infinite processes of modification. And instead of dispensing mnemonic shudders, digital images enable the viewer to reframe the past from various angles and thereby move beyond the tombs of photographic memory” (101).

Like digital imaging production, Rushdie also wants to inscribe temporality in *Midnight’s Children* by emphasizing a creative process over it, what he calls “the process of filtration itself”:

Time and migration had placed a double filter between me and my subject, and I hoped that if I could only imagine vividly enough it might be possible to see beyond those filters...But as I worked I found that what interested me was the process of filtration itself. So my subject changed, was no longer a search for lost time, had become the way in which we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool.
(23-24)

For Rushdie, “time and migration” serve as “a double filter” which not only determines his perspective, but also manipulates the past by blocking access to certain truths of the past. In his novel, Rushdie wants to inscribe how “time and immigration” remember, manipulate or even create the truth of the past in order to reveal the unreliability of

memory and history. Rushdie himself claims that his focus was shifted from a Proustian “search for lost time” to “the process of filtration itself” (24). He intentionally allows errors of actual historical facts to show how his memory is “playing tricks [on his] brain” to reveal the unreliability of his novel’s production process (24). As Rushdie declares, his focus becomes “the way in which we remake the past to suit our present purposes, using memory as our tool” (24). That is, Rushdie’s creative moment is not the modernist moment when he simply sees the ghost, but rather a post-modernist moment when he sees his own creation of the ghost or he becomes the ghost itself.

Figure 6, Surekha’s *Skin Home* (2009), a series of photographic images of human skin which are incorporated within the geometric shape of house, also echoes an uncanny home in Rushdie’s essay “Imaginary Homlands.” Surekha is an Indian multi-media artist, who was born and lives in Bangalore, India.¹⁷



Figure 6. Surekha, *Skin Home* (2009), from *Surekha*. Copyright © 2013 by Surekha

¹⁷ Surekha works locally and globally, exhibiting her works both in India and in many other countries such as England, France, U.S, Finland, Spain, Singapore, Switzerland, Austria and South Korea.

Surekha's work professes the nature of home, which is perceived, remembered, and expressed through the body. The skin especially serves as a site of perception as a body part through which Surekha receives the inputs of the external world and expresses her interiority. In her interviews with Abhishek Hazra and Veena Shekar, Surekha insists that the body is a focal point in her works that express "the premise of (a) Home, (b) Street and (c) the World" (Surekha). According to her, the body has been "a polyvalent site" that enables her to express her thoughts, "ranging between gender, urban, sociological and contemporaneous issues" (Surekha). Here, the body serves as a vehicle for the expression of the author's self-contained psyche, knowledge, experience and memory that build her version of home.

Figure 6 also represents another uncanny home which is composed of fragmented or mutilated body parts. For her, the houses of the fragmented bodies reflect her home as a site of contestation of personal and collective traumas. Critics in trauma studies such as Cathy Caruth argue that the dying, falling, and mutilated body serves as a place of trauma that leads us to a new understanding of history. Caruth assumes the falling, broken body to be an alternate reference to history, discourse, and language. Analyzing how Paul de Man's figures of falling, broken bodies in his writings effectively indicate his philosophy of the "self-resistant" and "self-referential" nature of theory and language, Caruth argues that "the possibility of a self-knowing, self-referential system of discourse...is contained in its self representation as a human body" (79) For Caruth, "the body, though mutilated," emerges as a figure of "the paradoxical evocation of a referential reality neither fictionalized by direct reference nor formalized into a

theoretical abstraction” (79, 89). In Surekha’s memory work, the bodies serve as “testifying bodies” as narrative sites for history.

Surekha’s *Skin Home* is a part of her continuous exploration of the body as a site of contestation of historical traumas. The author has connected the body with different media such as a sculpture, photographs or video to explore body politics in political and historical contexts.

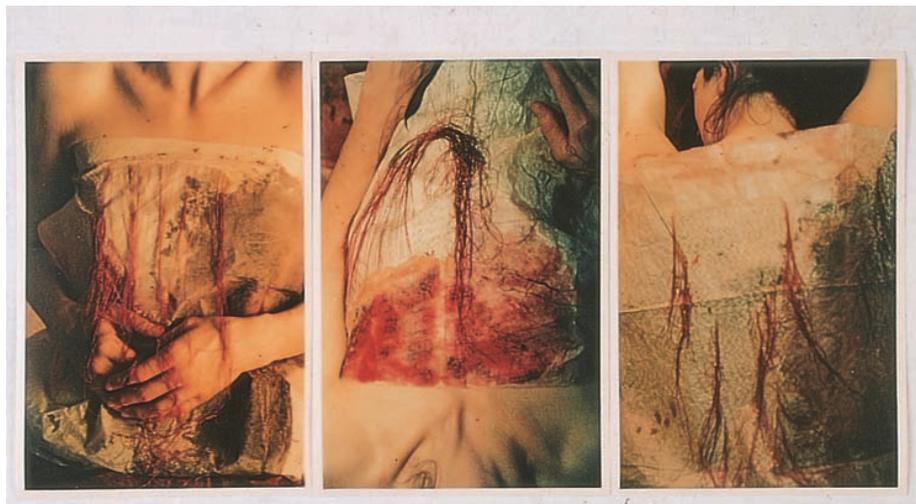


Figure 7. Surekha, *Selving a Body* (1999), from *Surekha*

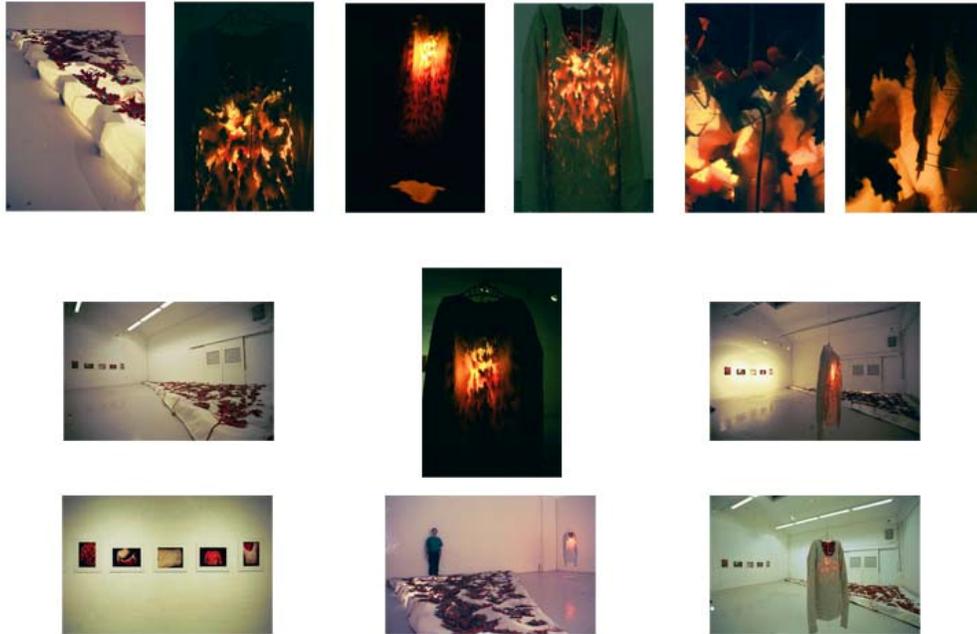


Figure 8. Surekha, *British Make* (2000-2001), from *Surekha*

In Figure 7, Surekha explores clothing as a metaphor for the body by wearing rice-paper costumes. In her interview with Abhishek Hazra, Surekha explains her intent to “extend our notion of the body” by connecting two different things together—such as rice paper and fabric— to give “an impression of the body but which could also have been some strange object” (Surekha). Here, the rice-paper costumes present how her skin carries colonized women’s psychic wounds and memories. These costumes introduce “fragments of autobiographical narratives—women’s stories from almost a hundred years back, where they talk about their experience of wearing a blouse for the first time under the British colonial regime” (Surekha). Surekha also creates an image of the phantom body in Figure 8, a dress made from a 30 year-old ship sail. Lines of poppies are installed inside of the dress. As the interior of the dress glows, the poppies appear as

bloody wounds like the ghostly body's traces.¹⁸ Surekha's phantom body is composed of the objects of historical traumas that haunt the present. Surekha symbolically uses the second-hand sail-cloths and the poppy to indicate British colonial exploitation involving the slave trade and the opium trade. Figure 8 was inspired by the author's visit to the museum ship, S.S. Great Britain in Bristol, the major British port in the slave trade between 1698 and 1807. For Surekha, the old ship-sail cloth brings back Bristol's problematic history: "Bristol's relationship to India" which "was bound inextricably to the slave trade and to colonialisation" (Surekha). The poppy also contains a symbolic meaning related to British colonization in India. The opium trade made enormous profits for the British Empire during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. While British imperialists forcefully converted China to the largest market for opium, they transformed India into a major site for the cultivation of poppy and the manufacturing of opium. In India, opium was the essential commodity that financed the British imperialists as a principal driving force in British colonial economies. In Figure 8, the dress made of the second-hand sail-cloths and the poppy, brings the colonial past to the postcolonial present, creating an alternative historical archive. As the owner of the dress, the spectral body haunts "now" and "here," delivering personal and collective memories to the postcolonial era.

¹⁸ Surekha's dress reminds one of Korean diasporic artist Yong Soon Min's series of reproductions of Korean traditional dress, hanbok, in such works as *deCOLONIZATION* (1991), *Remembering Jungshindae* (1992) and "Dwelling" (1992). In particular, in "Dwelling," Min produces a floating empty Korean dress that exposes its visible skeleton composed of twigs and scraps of photographs above a stack of twelve burning English books. This dress represents an empty dress where colonial women's spectral bodies are lost and displaced, but bears their haunting wounds. The female phantom body as the owner of the empty dress deconstructs western knowledge production—language, discourse, and history. Inside the dresses, the author writes the following: "To us, a birthplace is no longer our home. The place we were brought up is not either" (Min).

Haunted Hybrid Spaces: Methwold Estate, Saleem's Body and India



Figure 9. Yatin Patel, *Approach* (2011), from *Sutra*

As Patel explains, Figure 9 emerges as “the entrance” of a passageway connected to “a selfcontained...microneighborhood” (Patel). As in *Time*, the details of stained doors, deformed dirty walls and fragments of broken passageways evoke the city’s memories and histories, but at the same time this entrance of the passageway leads us into more hidden and secret stories of a “microneighborhood.” Figure 9 reveals the deep consciousness of the lost city by giving a spatial depth as well as a temporal depth to the photographic image of the city.

As Patel leads us to the old haunted houses in his photographic works, in *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie brings us to the old house, Methwold’s Estate, where the young Saleem is born. Introducing Methwold’s Estate, Rushdie describes the moment when Saleem and we as readers are approaching Methwold’s Estate, what Saleem calls “my kingdom” and “the heart of my childhood”: “we are entering my kingdom now,

coming into the heart of my childhood; a little lump has appeared in my throat (104). Just as audiences are entering deeper into a “self-contained and thriving microneighborhood” in Figure 9, so the readers of *Midnight’s Children* are going into Methwold’s Estate, passing by his neighborhood with its “little row of shops”: “Chimalker’s Toyshop, Reader’s Paradise, the Chimanbhoy Fatbhoy jewelry store...Bombelli’s the Confectioners (104). This road “leads us home” to the lost time and space, to Saleem’s hidden past—“the heart of my childhood” (104).

As we follow Saleem to Methwold’s Estate, we confront a phantasmagoric space filled with colonial desires and dreams—“a dream of a British Bombay” (104). The original owner of Methwold’s Estate is William Methwold, an East India Company Officer, who cherishes his imperialist dreams by establishing “conqueror’s houses” in India. The houses in this estate are depicted as a “Roman mansion” or “three-storey home of gods standing on a two-storey Olympus,” named after “the palaces of Europe”—Versailles Villa, Buckingham Villa, Escorial Villa and Sans Souci” (104). Their interiors are filled with Methwold’s colonial legacy—old dusty English pictures, furniture, dresses, and kitchenwares—that Saleem’s mother complains about as “all this English garbage”; Methwold practices his English manners and habits by celebrating the cocktail hour and by practicing “Oxford drawls” (104, 107, 110). The English houses emerge as a contact zone that is filled with fetishized objects and rituals that signify Europeanness. These objects and practices offer Methwold a secure vision of himself as an English master of India. This cultural practice is designed to reduce his imperial

anxiety caused by the menace of cultural differences and to create a narcissistic picture of his imperial self.

Methwold's narcissistic colonial desire is also revealed when he sells Buckingham Villa to rich Indian Muslims, Saleem's parents Ahmed and Amina Sinai. Seventy days before India's Independence, he sells the house at an extremely cheap price, but his contract contains two conditions: "that the houses be bought complete with every last thing in them, that the entire contents be retained by the new owners; and that the actual transfer should not take place until midnight on August 15th" (105). Methwold's unusual conditions reveal his colonial politics, what he calls "game," as the way the Raj "[transfers] power" right before the Independence. Methwold plays a power game to "select suitable persons"—the "good families" including Saleem's—to whom he can "hand everything over absolutely intact" (107). Methwold sees these selected people as "his descendant[s]" who might inherit his British legacies, or as "mimic men" who are "reformed" by mimicking British language, culture and values (Bhabha122). This mimicry, as an effective strategy of colonial power, reveals Methwold's colonial desire for a "reformed, recognizable Other" as a product of his civilizing mission (Bhabha122). Over seventy days, these Indian families are transformed into culturally hybrid beings who are celebrating the cocktail hour, imitating "Oxford drawls" and learning about "ceiling-fans and gas cookers and the correct diet for budgerigars" (109). Rushdie describes this cultural hybridization as he writes, "Things are settling down, the sharp edges of things blurred, so they have all failed to notice what is happening: the Estate, Methwold's Estate, is changing them" (109). Carefully supervising this

transforming process, Methwold strives to construct a harmonious picture of the imperial self by repeatedly saying, “All is well” (109). After India’s Independence, Methwold’s Estate, like newly-independent India, becomes a hybrid space which the colonial past and the postcolonial present inhabit together, being filled with Saleem’s Indian family’s history as well as Methwold’s legacy.¹⁹

Methowold’s Estate also emerges as a hybrid site that the living and the dead inhabit together. Buckingham Villa cherishes the memories and desires of both the living and the dead who claim ownership of the house. This haunting transforms this house into the phantasmagoric space where the present and the past, the visible and the invisible live together:

In the ghost-haze of the dust it sometimes seemed we could discern the shapes of the past, the mirage of Lika Sabarmati’s pulverized pianola or the prison bars at the window of Toxy Catrack’s cell; Dubash’s nude statuette danced in dust-form through our chambers, and Sonny Ibrahim’s bullfight-posters visited us as clouds...we were alone inside the dust-storm, which gave us all the appearance of neglected furniture, as if we were chairs and tables which had been abandoned for decades without

¹⁹ In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie also presents Ghani the landowner’s house and Uncle Mustapha’s Civil Service bungalow as haunted hybrid spaces similar to Methwold’s Estate. Ghani’s house is described as a dark cobwebbed house which is violently disordered. This house is filled with old European paintings which show the blind wealthy Indian landowner’s desires for western arts. This gloomy house leaves Doctor Aadam Aziz “unnerved,” raising an “uncontrollable desire to turn and run away” and finally making him wet his trousers (17-18). Uncle Mustapha’s Civil Service bungalow is also depicted as a place where the colonial past and postcolonial present are mingled: This house is filled with “the aromas of banyan and de-odar mingled with the ghostly scents of long-gone viceroys and memsahibs in gloves” and its signboard “waving in the breeze, just as once signboards had flowered in the garden of Methwold’s Estate” (449).

covering sheets; we looked like the ghosts of ourselves. We were a dynasty born out of nose, the aquiline monster on the face of Aadam Aziz...in the dust storm of the dying palaces. (311)

This place cherishes its residents' dust-covered possessions—the pianola, the prison bars, nude statuette, bullfight-posters—which hold the owners' bodily traces. Like Patel's *Time* and *Approach*, these bodily traces serve as the marks of their memories, desires and emotions, summoning their stories. These lost objects altogether reproduce "the shapes of the past" making this place as a house haunted by the ghost of the past (311). In this haunted hybrid space, the strict border between the living and the dead is obscured. The living —"a dynasty born out of nose, the aquiline monster on the face of Aadam Aziz"—also see themselves as ghosts in this spectral dust storm.

Methwold's Estate represents India's historical present haunted by the past. The silenced past revisits the house and nation like the ghosts or the living-dead who claim ownership of the house. The ghost of Joseph D'Costa is one of the silenced ghosts wandering around Methwold's Estate. Joseph D'Costa is a communist political radical who dreams of a social revolution. He criticizes India's socio-political situation, commenting that "this independence is for the rich only; Riots riots, the poor are being made to kill each other like flies. In Punjab, in Bengal. poor against poor" (116). His radical ideas along with his "virulent hatred of the rich" inspire Mary to switch the baby of a rich family with the baby of a poor family born at the same time. Joseph d'Costa, who is on the police force's most-wanted-list, hides at the clock tower across the road from Methwold's Estate and makes home-made bombs whose explosive power is

enough to “blow this hill into the sea” (168). Mary unintentionally puts him in danger by confessing his identity to the priest who reveals the secret to the police, and by calling the police after she found a shadowy figure around the house. He is killed “in a nearly clocktower”: he is bitten by a snake and shot by the police. Mary is haunted by Joseph D’Costa’s ghost due to her guilt and love for him. Joseph D’Costa’s ghost appears “not as a nightmare, but as a full-fledged ghost”: “Visible (at this time) only to Mary Pereira, he haunts her in all the rooms of our home, which, to her horror and shame, he treated as casually as if it were his own” (234). Mary sees him “in the drawing-room amongst cut-glass vases and Dresden figurines and the rotating shadows of ceiling-fans, lounging in soft armchairs with his long raggedy legs sprawling over the arms” (234). The belongings of the house reflect the ghost’s body as broken and fragmented visions.

Methwold’s Estate is also haunted by a living-dead character Musa, Ahmed’s old Muslim servant. He leaves the house ashamed as he steals the family heirlooms, the silver spittoon and a perforated bedsheet. When his robbery is revealed, Musa shows his hatred and vengeful feeling toward Saleem’s family, saying: “I only took your precious possessions, but you, and your sahib, and his father, have taken my whole life; and in my old age you have humiliated me with Christian ayahs.” (166). Musa returns to the house as a leper just as he cursed himself to assert his innocence. He repeatedly visits Methwold’s Estate as an “explosive ghost” –“Bomb-in-Bombay”–until he is forgiven and cured (164). The strict line between the living and the ghost—or a god—is blurred. Aadam saw God, “Jesus Christ Almighty” (234). Mary believes that Aadam mistakes the ghost of Joseph D’Costa for God. Ahmed confronts a ghostly figure, whom he considers

as Musa. These spectral or living-dead characters indicate double-agents living between the lines of death and life, reality and illusion, and past and present.

Methwold's Estate is allegorically connected to Saleem's body and India, portraying a hybrid postcolonial space. Like Methwold's Estate, Saleem's hybrid body serves as a metaphoric image of haunted hybrid space that is interconnected with his nation. Saleem is born with the other 1000 Midnight's Children at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947—"at the precise instant of India's arrival at India's Independence" (3). As the history of Methwold's Estate is allegorically related to the nation's colonial and postcolonial history, Saleem emerges as an embodiment of the newly independent India. Sharing his moment of birth with India, he becomes "mysteriously handcuffed to history" and his destiny is "chained to" the nation (3). Saleem confesses that he shares his nation's destiny like a conjoined-twin who is "not only [his] twin-in-birth but also joined to [him] (so to speak) at the hip, so that what happened to either of us, happened to us both" (444). As Saleem and his nation share one body and one destiny, *Midnight Children* becomes the story of the nation as well as the story of Saleem. Saleem presents *Midnight's Children* as "our" history, both his and his nation's history that bears collective as well as personal memories.

As the biological son of Methwold and his Indian servant's wife Venita, Saleem emerges as a successor of Methwold. Saleem is secretly switched at birth by Mary and raised as a son of a Muslim Indian family. That is, he is born as an Anglo-Indian who should have been a pure Indian. This birth secret haunts Saleem, delving into the familial dynamics of shame and guilt. Saleem is born a hybrid subject haunted by secrets, shame

and guilt which run deep in the history of family and nation. In fact, Saleem “was not a beautiful baby. Baby-snaps reveal that [his] large moon-face was too large; too perfectly round. Something lacking in the region of the chin. Fair skin curved across [his] features—but birthmarks disfigured it; dark stains spread down [his] western hairlines, a dark patch colored [his] eastern ear. And [his] temples: too prominent; bulbous Byzantine domes” (140). Saleem inherits Methwold’s “western hairline,” “fair skin,” “cucumber nose” and “dark stain” in his face as well as his eastern characteristics such as his “large moon-face” (140). Raised in the Indian family, his western inheritance haunts Saleem’s hybrid body just as postcolonial India is haunted by the legacy of British colonialism. Rushdie describes how Saleem’s western inheritance contains sinister characteristics such as guilt and sin. Saleem’s hairline comes from Methwold’s “center-parting” hairline “whose ramrod precision made Methwold irresistible to women” (105). Methwold’s “irresistible” hairline, as a physical trait “along which history and sexuality moved,” becomes a metaphor of sinfulness, which initiates his illicit love affair with Venita (105). Similarly Saleem, nicknamed Stainface, inherits his English father’s stained face, the metaphor of his western father’s guilt. Saleem’s “rampant cucumber” nose also comes from his biological English father’s “prominent” nose as “the legacy of a patrician French grandmother—from Bergerac!” (105). Saleem describes this hybrid inheritance as the blood of the Bergerac family which “ran amazingly in his veins and darkened his courtly charm with something crueler, some sweet murderous shade of absinthe” (105).

Saleem's haunted hybridity also involves the cultural legacy of India. Saleem and his Indian Muslim family consider Saleem's big nose as a legacy of his grandfather Aadam Aziz's noble "cyranose" —"comparable only to the trunk of the elephant-headed god Ganesh—which "established incontrovertibly his right to be a patriarch" (105, 8). Aadam has a big, sensitive nose that has a power that interprets and predicts historical moments such as the Amritsar massacre. His nose is also described as a source of his religious defiance as "an easy nose to hit a tussock with" (8). When Aadam Aziz kneels down to pray, his nose hits "against a frost-hardened tussock of earth" and three drops of blood fall from his nose. After this incident, Aadam rejects submission: he decides "never again to kiss earth for any god and man." This decision, however, made a hole in him, a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and history. Saleem believes his big snoutnose is inherited from Aadam. Through his nose-given telepathy, Saleem imagines that he is transformed into a divine being who can create history and events. Saleem's nose-given telepathy is also a source of defiance as a medium from which he can detect "profane" "multitudinous" voices that he misunderstood for sacred voices (192).

Just as Saleem invites us to Methwold's Estate, "the heart of my childhood," he also leads us to Alia Aziz's house—"the heart of my Karachi" (352). Alia's house is the place where Saleem's family stays as they move to Karachi in Pakistan and where Saleem spends his "Pakistani adolescence" (104, 352). Saleem depicts this house as "a place of shadows and yellowed paint, across which there fell, every afternoon, the long accusing shadow of the minaret of the local mosque" (352). Alia's house reflects the

atmosphere of Karachi—“a city of mirages...Beset by illusionary sand-dunes and the ghosts of ancient kings, and also by the knowledge that the name of the faith upon which the city stood meant “submission” (353). This house implies Pakistan’s monolithic religious and political atmosphere that proclaims the land of the pure. Saleem, as a hybrid being—who is “forever tainted with Bombayness” and whose head is “full of all sorts of religions apart from Allah’s”—feels accused by this nation’s self-proclaimed purity. Although Saleem resists Pakistan’s oppressive atmosphere, his “Karachi-born view of mosque-shadows” haunts him as a part of his hybrid characteristics (355, 352).

Saleem’s haunted hybridity deconstructs naturalized notions of cultural, physical, and historical identities by making and un-making the myth of genealogy. Just as India is named “a collective fiction,” Saleem is described as a descendant of an imaginary genealogy (125). This imaginary genealogy begins and ends with the name Aadam: from Aadam Aziz, Saleem or Shiva to Aadam Sinai, Saleem’s adoptive son, and at the same time, Shiva’s and the witch Pavarti’s biological son:

Aadam Sinai arrived at a night-shadowed slum on June 25th, 1975...On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India’s arrival at Emergency, he emerged. There were gaps; and, across the country, silence and fears. And owing to the occult tyrannies of that benighted hour, he was mysteriously handcuffed to history, his destinies indissolubly chained to those of his country. Unprophesied, uncelebrated,

he came; no prime ministers wrote him letters; but, just the same, as my time of connection neared its end, his began. (482)

As a son of Shiva and the witch Pavarti, Aadam is “the true great-grandson of his great-grandfather” who has “grotesque ears” instead of a big nose (483). However, as Saleem’s adoptive son—“the child of a father who was not his father”—Aadam is born at the moment of Emergency²⁰, and inherits Saleem’s destiny which is “mysteriously handcuffed to history” (482). This imaginary genealogy, like an imaginary “umbilical cord,” floats between fiction and reality, the present and the past, and the truth and the lie. Through this imaginary genealogy, history not only repeats itself, but it also comes back—like a ghost returning from the grave—to destroy such illusions of genealogy, borders and nation.

Falling Houses, Falling Bodies

Indian-based visual artist Reena Saini Kallat offers a vision of India as falling houses and bodies in her works entitled *Falling Fables* (2011) and *Synonym* (2007) in Figure 10 and 11.²¹ In these works, Kallat presents portraits of bodies and houses crafted as mosaics of fragmented photographs or rubber-stamps in order to regenerate forgotten

²⁰ The Emergency in India is a 21-month period from June 1975 to March 77 when President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, upon advice by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, declared a state of emergency under Article 352 of the Constitution of India. This political action effectively bestows on Gandhi the power to rule by decree, suspending many civil liberties and postponing elections at national and state levels. With Gandhi’s explanation of national security, she outlawed all forms of public protests, arrested political opponents, and pushed leaders of democratic parties into exile. Several other atrocities were reported such as a forced mass-sterilisation campaign spearheaded by Sanjay Gandhi, the Prime Minister’s son.

²¹ Kallat is an Indian female artist who lives and works in Mumbai, India. Her art works have been exhibited both in Mumbai and other cities in the world: Tokyo, Washington, London, Sao Paulo, Konsthall and Seoul and so on (“biography,” *Reena Saini Kallat*).

memories about the people or monuments murdered or destroyed during traumatic historical events in postcolonial India.



Figure 10. Reena Saini Kallat, *Falling Fables* (2011), from *Reena Saini Kallat*.
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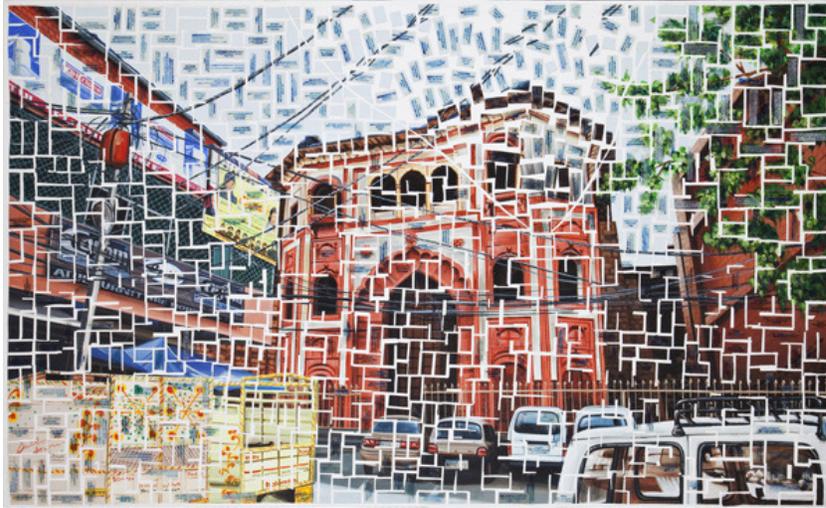


Figure 10 Continued.

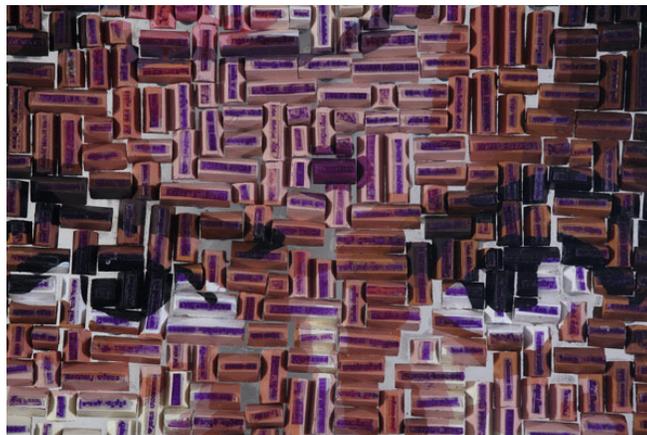


Figure 11. Reena Saini Kallat, *Synonym* (2007-2009), from *Reena Saini Kallat*

In Figure10, Kallat presents mosaic portraits of lost monument sites in Delhi based on her photographs of “architectural ruins that are disintegrating and in a state of collapse” (Kallat). She also creates a sculpture of a fallen pillar made of numerous rubberstamps. These fragments of photographs and rubberstamps hold addresses of destroyed monuments listed as protected sites under the Archeological Survey of India. Similarly, In Figure 11, Kallat produces a series of 6-foot-high mosaic portraits of Indian faces

which consist of hundreds of rubberstamps. These rubberstamps bear the names of missing people who have disappeared “through natural calamities such as landslides, floods, earthquakes; or gone missing during riots or large scale mishaps; names of those abducted or absconding” (Kallat). The fragmented pieces of photographs or rubberstamps represent the memories of the lost, people or objects which have left no traces in history. In Kallat’s works, these fragments of houses and bodies—as fragments of memories of the lost—allow us to discover India as “broken pots of antiquity” whose “quotidian” pieces summon the silenced past (IH, Rushdie 12).

In “Imaginary Homelands,” Rushdie describes “My India” as a nation which “has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity” (32). Rushdie writes: “To my mind, the defining image of India is the crowd, and a crowd is by its very nature superabundant, heterogeneous, many things at once” (32). In Figure 11, Kallat’s portraits comprise “the dense crowd” of hundreds of anonymous ghostly figures: as Adajania describes, “From a distance, they look like burnt, scarred faces; up close, they pixellate, lose definition, hover in a grey zone” (Kallat). In *Midnight Children’s*, Rushdie also describes the crowd of ghostly bodies—hundreds of lost bodies bearing their heterogeneous memories. Just as each of Kallat’s portraits, in spite of bearing hundreds of names and memories, remains anonymous, and only its collection is entitled *Synonym*, Rushdie’s portrait acquires multiple, plural and hybrid characteristics instead of having a single, fixed identity. The title *Synonym* also marks both the possibility and the limit of the representation of “My India,” echoing Rushdie’s attempt to represent the unrepresentable in his reconstruction of his nation and history. The portraits cannot serve

as perfect representations of a nation and history, but only work as their “synonym.” Similarly, they cannot perfectly decode the historical silences of the lost, but can only deliver a “synonym” of the lost voices as they are “wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable only of fractured perceptions” (Rushdie 12). Yet, Rushdie claims that these attempts are also meaningful in that their creation of broken, fragmented portraits manifest their versions of “my India” that reveal their ways of using “broken glass” as “a useful tool” to recuperate history and nation.

In analyzing Kallat’s works, some critics such as Nancy Adajania point out the spectrality of these mosaic portraits. In “The Archives of the Heart,” Adajania calls *Synonym* “an anti-monument” made up of portraits that “appear like ghostly transmissions from another planet.” These spectral houses and bodies haunt Kallat’s art as “specter[s] of forgetting,” in Dunu Roy’s words, as “nowhere people looking for a somewhere place” (qtd. in Adajania) Bearing silenced personal and collective traumas, these fragmentations emerge as nameless falling houses and bodies that hold too many addresses and names. Kallat employs these falling phantom houses and bodies as “keys to a resistance against amnesia” for Indian colonial and postcolonial history (Adajania). Her works summon the ghosts of the past that haunt postcolonial India, whose identities are obscured and forgotten in a grand narrative of India’s history.

In *Midnight’s Children*, Rushdie also presents a mosaic portrait of the spectral nation that is made of fragmented images of falling houses and bodies. In Rushdie’s portrait, dust is a key image that connotes death, a mark of falling-out, destruction, decay and spectralization. Fictionalized bodies and houses disintegrate into the dust—“[s]ix

hundred million specks of dust, and all transparent, invisible as glass”— due to ageing or violence as people are murdered and buildings are destroyed by wars and massacres in postcolonial India (441). Dust also involves forgetting. Here, “specks of dust” mean “anonymous” subaltern subjects as forgetters and those forgotten in the nation (36). As Saleem mentions— “[w]e are a nation of forgetters”—we, as both a crumbling body and one of “specks of dust,” represent an amnesiac nation as a part and whole (36).

Methwold’s Estate is depicted as a dusty falling-down house whose “[n]odding signboards had scarcely been taken down when demolition crews of the Narlikar women moved in” (310). This falling house is disintegrating into particles of the dust, “the dying palaces” (310). This is the place of trauma where Saleem’s family members, “enveloped in the tumultuous dust,” grieve the early death of uncle Hanif (310). Like a ghost, dust “creep[s] under the wet towels,” slyly “follows” in each mourning arrival, “filter[s]” through the very walls to hang like a shapeless wraith in the air, and “deadens[s] the sounds of formal ululation and also the deadly sniping of grieving kinsfolk” (310). As a sign of falling, “[t]he dust affected us all during those forty days” (313). Dust covers the residents’ lost possessions, transforms these memory-inscribed objects into spectral “shapes of the past” (311). This ghostly duststorm makes human bodies look like lost or neglected objects, “neglected furniture”: “chairs and tables which had been abandoned for decades without covering sheets” (311).

As Saleem’s family emigrates from Bombay to Karachi in Pakistan, Saleem imagines the demolition of his “childhood kingdom” Methwold’s Estate on the border between India and Pakistan.

I thought of the demolition crew getting to work, and pictured the machines of destruction smashing into my father's office and my own blue room, pulling down the servant's spiral iron staircase and kitchen in which Mary Pereira had stirred her fears into chutney and pickles, massacring the verandah where my mother had sat with the child in her belly like a stone, I also had an image of a mighty, swinging ball crashing into the domain of Sharpsticker Sahib, and of the old crazy man himself.

(350)

As the demolition crew and machines of destruction demolish his father's office and his own room, the staircase, the kitchen, the verandah, and the domain of Sharpsticker Sahib, Saleem's memories related to those spaces are also demolished and destroyed. Saleem leaves behind his memories as he crosses the national border. This reaction is also revealed when Saleem buries his old tin globe which contains "a Prime Minister's letter, and a jumbo-sized front-page baby-snap, captioned 'Midnight's Child'" in the garden of Methwold's Estate (350). These buried houses and objects, as the emblems of the past, haunt him as a survival of the past: "They may not be holy relics...but they are all that has survived of my past: a squashed tin globe, a mildewed letter, a photograph" (350).

The explosion of Saleem's Pakistan house is another significant falling, death-like moment for Saleem. On the night of September 22, 1965, during the Indo-Pakistan War, bombs fall from the sky, crumble Saleem's family members and their house into dust: "Squashed flatter than rice-cakes, the house crushing in on their heads like a

waffle-iron, while over on Korangi Road a last bomb, meant for the oil-refinery, landed instead on a split-level American-style residence which an umbilical cord had not quite managed to complete” (391). As Saleem’s house collapses, the silver spittoon that once belonged to his grandfather hits Saleem in the head and erases his memory—what he calls, “restoring purity”:

A wondrously worked silver spittoon inlaid with lapis lazuli, the past plummeting toward me like a vulture-dropped hand to become what-purifies-and-sets-me-free, because now as I look up there is a feeling at the back of my head and after that there is only a tiny but infinite moment of utter clarity while I tumble forwards to prostrate myself before my parents’ funeral pyre, a minuscule but endless instant of knowing, before I am stripped of past present memory time shame and love, a fleeting but also timeless explosion in which I bow my head yes I acquiesce yes in the necessity of the blow, and then I am empty and free, because all the Saleems go pouring out of me, from the baby who appeared in jumbo-sized front-page baby-snaps to the eighteen-year-old with his dirty love, pouring out goes shame and guilt and wanting-to-please and needing-to-be-loved and determined-to-find a- historical-role and growing-too-fast...free now, beyond caring, crashing on to tarmac, restored to innocence and purity by a tumbling piece of moon, wiped clean as a wooden writing-chest, brained (just as prophesied) by my mother’s silver spittoon. (392-3)

At the moment his house explodes, Saleem narrates the inevitability of the catastrophic event and his purification. Saleem believes that the Indo-Pakistan war is an inevitable event in order to purify him by erasing his profane memories, desires and fantasies: it is the “Holy war”—the war that “has the power of pardoning sinners” and “cleanse[s] [him] from head to foot” (377). He is “empty and free” from memory and history. His purity appears as an amnesia, as a physical and psychological symptom of trauma. Saleem becomes “un-done” by trauma, transforming into a “memoryless” half-animal, half god-like figure: he is “a man-dog” who has “No memory” as well as “buddah” who is “emptied of history,” being “unable to remember grief, numb as ice, wiping clean as a slate” (401, 403).

Rushdie also creates *Midnight's Children* as a story about broken, wounded and falling-apart bodies. His story also consists of a long list of fragmented and traumatized bodies: Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz's mighty “cyranose” that can detect traumatic historical moments such as the Amritsar massacre, his grandmother Naseem Aziz's secret female body partitioned by the “seven-inch circles” of her father's perforated sheet, Saleem's father Ahmed Sinai's broken big toe and his frozen penis like his frozen asset, his mother Amina Sinai's naked rump like the Black Mango revealing her infidelity, the murdered fisherman Tai's accusing “pointing finger,” Nadir Khan's ghostly feet “frozen” and “captured” by the historical snapshot, Saleem's sister and his forbidden love Jamila Singer's haunting spectral face that brings him “desperate nostalgia and shame,” Joseph d'Costa's ghostly body—his “long raggedy legs,” egg-white eyes, and “the holes in his feet,” the peasant's translucent body “with bullet-hole

in his heart,” the talking pyramid made of dead soldiers’ “six feet and three heads,” the midnight child Shiva’s “biggest knees the world has ever seen,” and Saleem’s own body “mysteriously handcuffed to history” (3, 8, 22, 23, 256, 418). These broken, mutilated ghostly or living bodies speak about the past, reiterating traces of memories.

Saleem introduces an old family photograph that captures the moment when Saleem’s grandfather Aadam Aziz meets Mian Abdullah at the meeting of the leaders of the pro-independence organization. Mian—the Hummingbird, who founded the Free Islam Convocation—stands with his assistant and Amina’s first husband Nadir Khan and Aadam’s Muslim friend, the Rani of Cooch Naheen. The photograph brings the dead to the present, capturing the moment of life of the dead who have already disappeared into history. In the photograph, the photographed subjects—the dead—speak: There is “[c]onversation going on in this photograph, as like expert ventriloquists the optimists meet their leader” (45). They are mute and frozen images, but they speak in Saleem’s imagination. In their unheard conversation, their bodies serve as powerful narrative mediums:

Memory of a mildewing photograph...Aadam Aziz, aglow with optimism fever, shakes hands with a man of sixty or so, an impatient sprightly type with a lock of white hair falling across his eye brow like a kindly scar. It is Mian Abdullah, the Hummingbird...my grandfather’s fist is not clenched, but swallowed up by the hand of the ex-conjurer...And behind them, looking benignly on, the Rani of Cooch Naheen, who was going to white in blotches...“I am the victim,” the Rani whispers, through

photographed lips that never move, “the helpless victim of my cross-cultural concerns. My skin is the outward expression of the internationalism of my spirit.” Yes there is a conversation going on in this photograph, as like expert ventriloquists the optimists meet their leader. Beside the Rani—listen carefully now; history and ancestry are about to meet!—stands a peculiar fellow, soft and paunch, his eyes like stagnant ponds, his hair long like a poet’s. Nadir Khan, the Hummingbird’s personal secretary. His feet if they were not frozen by the snapshot, would be shuffling in embarrassment. He mouths through his foolish, rigid smile, “It’s true; I have written verses...” Where upon Mian Abdullah interrupts, booming through his open mouth with glints of pointy teeth. “But what verses! Not one rhyme in page after page!...” And the Rani, gently: “A modernist, then?” And Nadir, shyly: “Yes.” What tensions there are now in the still, immobile scene! What edgy banter, as the Hummingbird speaks: “Never mind about that; art should uplift; it should remind us of our glorious literary heritage!”...And is that a shadow, or a frown on his secretary’s brow?...Nadir’s voice, issuing lowaslow from the fading picture: “I do not believe in high art, Mian Sahib. Now art must be beyond categories; my poetry and –oh—the game of hit-the-spittoon are equal...And now the photograph has run out of words; now I notice, with my mind’s eye, that all the while the Hummingbird has been staring towards the door, which is past my

grandfather's shoulder at the very age of the picture. Beyond the door,
history calls. (45)

This photograph captures the moment when Saleem's grandfather Aadam Aziz meets Mian Abdullah at the meeting of the leaders of the pro-independence organization. Mian—the Hummingbird, who founded the Free Islam Convocation—stands with his assistant and Amina's first husband Nadir Khan and Aadam's Muslim friend, the Rani of Cooch Naheen. This photographic image, which reveals the relationship between Saleem's family members and historical figures, represents the moment when "History and ancestry are about to meet," as the moment when Saleem's private history coincides with the public history of India (45). This is also another uncanny moment when private space and time meet those of the public; the past meets the present. This photograph brings a portrait of colonial India around 1942: when political and social tensions between Hindus and Muslims increased, and when what Saleem refers to as "the optimism epidemic" affected the nation during the Quit India Movement.²²

The photograph is also infested with ghosts' body parts that talk about their stories: Aadam's fist and shoulder, the Rani's blochy skin and photographed lips, Nadir's eyes, long hair, frozen feet and frown, and Mian's white hair, hands, open mouth and pointy teeth. These photographed body parts not only imply the characters' self-

²² The Quit India Movement was a civil disobedience movement in colonial India founded in response to Mohandas Gandhi's demand for immediate independence of India and to oppose sending Indians to World War II. In March 1942, the British Government sent Sir Stafford Cripps to India with the proposal regarding India's participation in the war on the British side, in turn for a promise of freedom. But, opposed to the British Government's proposal, the All-India Congress Committee proclaimed a mass protest demanding what Gandhi called "an orderly British withdrawal" from India. However, the movement was not able to lead to immediate independence due to heavy suppression by the British and differing social and political interests between Hindus and Muslims. (Mahatma Gandhi News Digest)

contained psyche, emotions, and personality, but also connote socio-political situations that are not verbally spoken. In this photograph, the hummingbird's scar-like white hair and pointy teeth show his charismatic personality and dangerous role as a "single human being" who causes "the optimism epidemic" (45). Similarly, Aziz's fist "swallowed up" by the hand of the ex-conjurer shows how Aziz is enchanted by the Hummingbird's political manifestation. In the case of Nadir, his pond-like eyes and long hair represent his artistic side as a poet, and his feet and frown reveal his uneasiness in discussing his philosophy of art with Mian, revealing discursive tensions between them. Rani's white-blotchy skin connotes her cultural and political hybridity as "the outward expression of the internationalism of [her] spirit," and this hybridity is represented as "a disease which leaked into history and erupted on an enormous scale shortly after Independence" (38, 45). Here, the fragmented body parts become a site of "talking" as a "signifying medium, a vehicle of expression, a mode of rendering public and communicable what is essentially private" (Grosz 51).

Just as houses fall down, so the bodies are falling-apart. In Saleem's view, his grandfather Aadam's sixty-eight-year-old body is falling-apart like a demolished house: "the cracks claimed him, and his legs gave way beneath him as the bones disintegrated, and the effect of his fall was to shatter the rest of his skeleton beyond all hope of repair... The body, too fragile to be transported, was buried in the valley of his birth" (319). In addition to his age and disease, his psychological wound due to his son's suicide accelerates this physical and mental downfall. Saleem sees a "crack-death" in the process toward which Aadam's old body "had begun to crack" and became dust-like

“powder”: “I saw the cracks in his eyes—a delicate tracery of colorless lines against the blue; I saw a network of a fissures spreading beneath his leathery skin...my grandfather’s skin had begun to split and flake and peel...his skeleton disintegrated into powder inside the weatherbeaten sack of his skin” (315).

Saleem also suffers from the sensations of his falling-apart body. He hears and feels the “cracks widening down the length of [his] body” (170):

PLEASE BELIEVE that I am falling apart. I am not speaking metaphorically; nor is this the opening gambit of some melodramatic, riddling, grubby appeal for pity. I mean quite simple that I have begun to crack all over like an old jug—that my poor body, singular, unlovely, buffeted by too much history, subjected to drainage above and drainage below, mutilated by doors, brained by spittoons, has started coming apart at the seams. In short, I am literally disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of acceleration. I ask you only to accept (as I have accepted) that I shall eventually crumbled into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious, dust. This is why I have resolved to confide in paper, before I forget. (We are a nation of forgetters.) (36).

Saleem describes the symptoms of his cracking-apart body: “buffeted by too much history,” it is “literally disintegrating,” and “crumbled into (approximately) six hundred and thirty million particles of anonymous, and necessarily oblivious, dust” (36). Here, Rushdie presents the dust as a metaphor of the voiceless citizens, manifesting his attempt

to represent those silenced or disappearing voices and memories to reconstruct a national history. This description signifies the spectralization of Saleem's body, which becomes "thiner, translucent almost...soon there will be nothing at all" like the spectral dust—"Six hundred million specks of dust, and all transparent, invisible as glass" (441). Saleem manifests his body's spectralization as the exigency of his writing. He should write and "[immortalize] his memories" before his memory fades away because "ghosts, too, begin to forget; that the dead lose their memories of the living" (529, 439).

Like the living bodies, the spectral body also decays and falls apart. However, the spectral body appears as a space of narrative. Joseph D'Costa's spectral body is falling apart. Mary Pereira is "badly shocked by the condition into which [Joseph D'Costa's] ghost had fallen in her absence: It had begun to decay, so that now bits of it were missing: an ear, several toes on each foot, most of its teeth; and there was a hole in its stomach larger than an egg" (289). For Mary, the ghost's broken body becomes the mark of compassion as evidence that he shares pains and responsibility with the living. Compelled by the vision of the ghost's broken body, Mary starts a conversation with Joseph D'Costa's ghost, and understands that his body is decayed by his responsibility for her crime: "Distressed by this crumbling specter, she asked it (when she was sure nobody else was within earshot): "O God. Joe, what you been doing to yourself?" He replied that the responsibility for her crime had placed squarely on his shoulders until she confessed, and it was playing hell with his system." (289). Joseph D'Costa's ghost, as a pseudo-Jesus figure, suffers pain and agony for Mary's sin and makes her correct the consequences of her sin of the past. This haunting or revelatory moment emerges as

a moment of narrative when Mary talks about her silenced pains and confesses her crime—the secret of Saleem’s birth.

In another moment of revelation, Aadam sees Joseph’s decomposing spectral body as the body of God, “Jesus Christ Almighty,” that has “holes in his feet where the snake had bitten him” (234). The spectral figure appears before Aadam as “Someone with shining dust on him, lit by the setting moon” (316). Seeing the spectral body’s wounds, Aadam begins to talk about his own pain and suffering, questioning why his son should die early:

But the someone, the something, cries in a loud startling (and startled?) voice, “Jesus Christ Almighty!” (Amid the cut-glass vases, my grandfather laughs apologetically heh-heh, for mentioning the infidel name.) “Jesus Christ Almighty!” and my father looking, and seeing, yes, there are holes in hands, perforations in the feet as there once were in a ...But he is rubbing his eyes, shaking his head, saying: “Who? What name? What did you say?” And the apparition, startling-startled, “God! God!” And, after a pause, “I didn’t think you could see me” ...And the apparition: “You’re the one whose son died”; and my grandfather, with a pain in his chest: “Why? Why did that happen?” To which the creature, made visible only by dust: “God has his reasons, old man; life’s like that, right?” (316).

The vision of the broken body, although Mary’s and Aadam’s reaction toward it is different, provides a communicative moment when the traumatized characters speak

their hidden stories of pain. This communication is meaningful in that it reveals hidden parts of history. Different from Mary, Aadam is frustrated by God's indifferent attitude to his tragedy: "God has his reasons, old man; life's like that, right?" (316). Harboring a "passionate, drolling desire for revenge" toward God, Aadam "fought all [his] life": he refuses to immigrate to Pakistan, "a country built especially for God"; he leaves his family and goes to Kashmir on Christmas Day to steal "the holy hair of the Prophet Muhammad" from the Mosque's inner sanctum as his act of revenge (317-8).

Saleem's falling-apart body oscillates between life and death, denoting both decay or forgetting, and a possibility of a prophetic narrative. At the end of this novel, Saleem prophesies the death of his physical body on his 31st birthday—the 31st anniversary of his nation's independence—describing the moment of his body's final explosion. This is also an explosive moment in Saleem's prophetic vision and writing. Saleem's death scene is interconnected to a scene of the rebirth of his spectral body. In his prophetic vision, he sees growing crowds—the living and the dead—inside and outside of his body "without boundaries," who undo him by "pushing" "crushing" and "trampling" to make him one of them, the anonymous ghosts, the "specks of voiceless dust" (533). Saleem's "drained," "cracked," and "emptied" body finally emerges as the body of "an explosive ghost," "the bomb in Bombay," whose "bag of bones" is "falling down down down" (533). Saleem's falling-apart body is ready to explode under the pressure of the "six-hundred-million" Indian ghosts who inhabit his body. These ghosts are "the flooding multitudes, their masses identities" that have their own memories and identities. This last scene also reveals a moment when Saleem is overcome by these

crowded specters' "annihilating" power. He emerges as a metaphor of a nation, a phantom body whose boundaries are falling apart.

Trauma and Bodily Spaces

India-born British female artist Sutapa Biswas produces a series of black and white photographic images in her 1992 London exhibition *Synapse*. Synapse is a medical term that describes "the anatomical relation between nerve cells—the junction or connection that allows the transmission of essential coded information from cell to cell" (Walsh and Chandler). Biswas employs the term "synapse" as a metaphor for her work, defining it as a place of encounter: "Synapse is a place where two people meet. Synapse is a place where two ideas meet. Synapse is a gap across which two people's ideas meet. Synapse is a place" (Biswas). For Biswas, Synapse is an in-between space where two cultures—Europe and Asia—meet, letting memories and desires pass without constraints. In the *Synapse* of installation, Biswas wants to transfer her memory of India to the West by employing her own body as an inscription of memory that tells hidden sides of India.

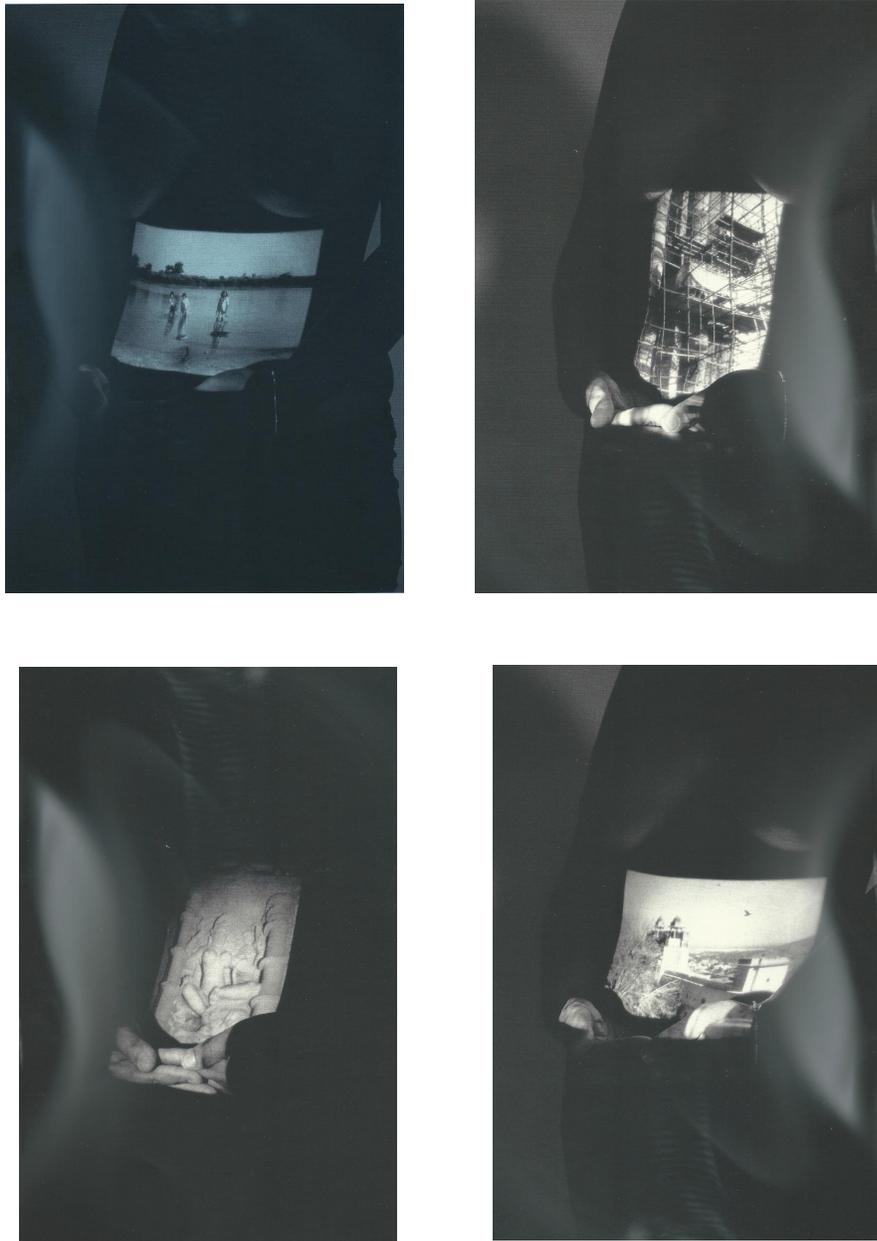


Figure 12. Sutapa Biswas, *Synapse I* (1992), from *Synapse: New Photographic Work*, Copyright © 1992 by Sutapa Biswas

In Figure 12, the artist reveals a ghost-like female body—her own body—that acts as a screen onto which each photographic image of India—slides taken in India—has been projected. Her interlocked hands hold these fleeting images of memory:

a family snap shot, scaffolded facade of a building, a fragment of Indian Hindu and Buddhist temple sculpture, and an edifice in a landscape. The images projected on the body present the fragments of remembered India as spectral images of family figures, temples and landscape. As Moira Roth writes, the artist's body is "a touchstone for memory of India" that leads audiences to "a complex psycho-geographic journey" to India as well as their own nations (Roth 38). In this journey, we join the artist's mapping of a nation as a haunted and haunting space.

Referencing the first image—the family snapshot image—of *Synapse I*, Ian Baucom reads the multitude of "literal and epistemological" frames that enclose the Indian family figures as multiple, shifting "cultural locations" that constitutes a space of postcoloniality (Baucom):

If the undeveloped sandy beach and the wooded coastline invoke the anthropological at its primitivizing worst, and the precise cropping of the image alludes to the primness of the gallery, then these innermost and outermost containing devices confront a third way of holding these figures, an intermediate, memorializing frame. For, as we scan the shadowy space between the landscape enclosing these untimely baigneurs and the mounted photograph's edge, we note the enveloping presence of another female body....Positioned in a multitude of framing spaces, the bathers, like the cultural locations they occupy, also inhabit a shifting series of moments. For if the gallery, the family-album, and the anthropological treatise all too frequently "make their objects" through

acts of temporal displacement, through technologies of display which worship the pastness of the past, then the recollection of these three figures in the womb of the fourth discloses our bathers as subjects not only of a then and a now but of a yet-to-be.[1] And it is as we attend to the serial temporality of these subjects that the two fragments of text I earlier promised begin to bear on this photograph's charting of a distinct and uncanny region within the dispersed territories of the post-colonial.

(Baucom)

Referencing Biswas's photographic image, Baucom describes postcoloniality as a non-normative space where the diaspora moves not only through space, but through time as well, connecting the past, present, and future to form "subjects not only of a then and a now but of a yet-to-be" (Baucom). In particular, Baucom discovers a spectral female body—"the shadowy space" between the enclosing landscape and the photograph's edge: "This fourth, barely visible figure, hands crossed at her waist, acts as a screen onto which the central image has been projected. Cradling this water scene, Mary to a Pieta in which three bathers replace the incarnation of the Trinity, this anonymous woman forces us to consider the figures broadcast on her unclad body as something more than pieces of fieldwork or aesthetic artifacts, to view them also as the spectral inhabitants of a guardedly intimate, intra-uterine space" (Baucom). Baucom describes this framing female body as an "intimate, intra-uterine space" that "broadcast[s]" the subjects as its "spectral inhabitants," but also as itself a spectral body, a "barely visible" figure or "the shadowy space" whose boundary is blurred and obscured (Baucom). In his reading, this

spectral female body emerges as a postcolonial “uncanny region” like a phantom womb where these three diasporic figures emerge as spectral subjects “not only of a then and a now but of a yet-to-be,” experiencing a temporal and spatial dislocation.

Baucom reads Biswas’s photograph as an epiphanic image of uncanny postcolonial space, gendering that space as a spectral female body—a mother’s phantom womb that bears diasporic subjects like embryos. Baucom’s reading of Biswas’s photograph also recalls Sigmund Freud’s idea of the “uncanny” in his 1919 essay of the same name. In his essay, Freud defines the uncanny experience as: “that class of the frightening which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar.” To experience something as ‘foreign, and yet familiar’ may result in feelings of discomfort and alienation. Freud also manifests the “uncanny” as gendered, as a figuration of the womb or female genitalia:

If often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about female genital organs. This unheimlich place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lives once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that ‘Love is home-sickness’; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: ‘this place is familiar to me, I have been there before,’ we may interpret the place as being his mother’s genitals or her body (637).

Here, the uncanny is a process of ‘defamiliarization’ like the word’s transformation from the meaning ‘homely’ and ‘known’ (heimisch) to the ‘unhomely’ and ‘strange’ (unheimlich). Noting the prefix “un” of the word, unheimlich, as “the token of repression,” Freud explains male patients’ repressed Oedipal complex as “a certain lustful pleasure”—“the phantasy of intra-uterine existence” that is surmounted by the outside world’s moral demands (636). Feminist scholars including Helene Cixous and Julia Kristeva have challenged Freud’s idea of the “uncanny,” focusing on the social and psychological positioning of women. They criticize Freud’s gendered notion of the uncanny, exposing the anxious masculine suppression and projection of destabilizing uncanniness within the self. That is, here the womb or the female body as an uncanny Otherness, is a double—me and yet not me—fear of, or desire for the womb.

According to Baucom, the spectral female body in Biswas’s photograph appears as a place of unhomeliness, what Bhabha describes as the “in-between” time and space in which the historical past—the colonialist past—continuously intrudes on the postcolonial present, blurring its boundaries. This phantom “intra-uterine space” emerges as an uncanny home, where diasporic subjects float over non-normative time and space. In this unhomly space, diasporic subjects become what Hamid Naficy calls “interstitial creatures, liminars suffused with hybrid excess” who live “in between” the multiple histories and cultures of their homelands and their adopted lands, as well as “in between” the past, the present, and the future (208). This uncanny space is haunted by a female ghost’s womb that holds the diasporic subject in a state of becoming, and hence not fixed into any stable formulation.

As Baucom reads Biswas's photograph as an epiphanic image of uncanny postcolonial space, gendering that space as a spectral feminine body, Rushdie presents his version of India as an uncanny home by employing a metaphor of a phantom womb. In this womb-like space, Saleem, a postcolonial subject, grows like an "embryo" being in a state of becoming, and hence not fixed into any stable formulation. In *Midnight's Children*, this womb-like bodily space emerges as a series of intimate "confined spaces"—a womb, the wash-room, the washing-chest, the operation room, and the abandoned hut and the basket—in which Saleem grows, learns and transforms:

...our hero is greatly affected by being shut up in confined spaces.

Transformations spring upon him in the enclosed dark. As a mere embryo in the secrecy of a womb (not his mother's), did he not grow into the incarnation of the new myth of August 15th, the child of ticktock—did he not emerge as the Mubarak, the Blessed Child?" In a cramped wash-room, were name-tags not switched around? Alone in a washing-chest with a drawstring up one nostril, did he not glimpse a Black Mango and sniff too hard, turning himself and his upper cucumber into a kind of supernatural ham radio? Hemmed in by doctors, nurses and anesthetic masks, did he not succumb to numbers and, having suffered drainage—above, move into a second phase, that of nasal philosopher and (later) tracker supreme? Squashed, in a small abandoned hut, beneath the body of Ayooba Baloch, did he not learn the meaning of fair-and-unfair? Well, then —trapped in the occult peril of the basket of invisibility, I was saved,

not only by the glints of a spittoon, but also by another transformation: in the grip of that awful disembodied lioness, whose smell was the smell of graveyards, I discovered anger. (439)

These womb-like spaces revisit him to offer a lesson-learning process through which he acquires knowledge about himself and the world. This learning process involves a haunting that Gordon defines when she says that “Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition” (8). Saleem acquires this “transformative recognition” by internalizing a spectral perspective—“how ghosts see the world” (438). This spectral perspective leads Saleem to a new understanding of specters, himself, and the world. In this uncanny region, Saleem grows from “a mere embryo” to “supernatural ham radio,” “nasal philosopher,” “tracker supreme” and a prophetic writer who rewrites history from a spectral perspective (439). By acquiring “the characteristics of ghosts,” he also experiences his bodily transformation from the physical body into a liminal body—a haunting ghost “unable to live or die in peace” (533).

These haunting uterine spaces are also traumatic spaces that exert an undoing power in the formation of subjects’ identities and histories. Saleem is taught and trained by confronting traumatic undoing moments while going through his personally “destined” tragic events involving postcolonial Indian history. Saleem is born and swapped with Shiva at the moment of India’s independence; family members are killed by bomb attacks during the Indo-Pakistan war; he is forced to have a nasal operation in

the operation room at the moment India's defeat by China; his family is killed and he is brain damaged by a bomb attack during the Indo-Pakistan war; finally, Saleem is forcefully sterilized by Indira Gandhi's government during the State of Emergency (1975-1977). By participating in these collective traumas of the nation, Saleem is transformed into a liminal narrator who can access the nation's hidden memories and pains.

In *Midnight's Children*, Rushdie describes moments when Saleem experiences this trauma-activated transforming process in confined "intimate, intra-uterine" spaces. The washing-chest is one of the womb-like spaces where Saleem is re-born into a liminal being. This confined space is the space of his inner-exile where a nonconformist nine-year-old Saleem finds comfort by being alienated from a demanding outside world.²³ In this "finest of hiding-places," Saleem feels "safe from all pressures, concealed from the demands of parents and history" (177). In this washing chest, Saleem unwillingly witnesses the secret scene in which his undressed mother is masturbating, whispering her ex-husband's name, Nadir Khan. Saleem is traumatized by his mother's sexuality, watching her naked rump, "gigantic, black Alfonso mango" (184):

In the washing-chest, unnerved by the vision, I wrestled myself...under
the thunderclap influence of the Black Mango, my nerve
cracks...shattered by two-syllable voice and fluttering hands, devastated
by Black Mango, the nose of Saleem Sinai, responding to the evidence of
maternal duplicity, quivering at the presence of maternal rump, gave

²³ In his study of Spanish novels, Paul Ilie defines inner exile as "the isolation endured by distinct groups vis-à-vis each other with respect to an entire culture" (qtd. Zatlin 3). Phyllis Zatlin applies this inner exile to unconformist heroes and heroines—especially adolescent characters—as a form of their "psychological aberration" or "the individual retreats" within themselves that can cause them to lose all communication with the outside world (Zatlin 3).

away to pajama-cord and was possessed by a cataclysmic—a world-altering—an irreversible sniff. Pajama-cord rises painfully half an inch further up the nostril. But other things are rising, too: hauled by that feverish inhalation, nasal liquids are being sucked relentlessly up up up, nose-goo flowing upwards, against gravity, against nature. Sinuses are subjected to unbearable pressure ... until, inside the nearly nine-year-old head, something bursts. Snot rockets through a breached dam into dark new channels. Mucus, rising higher than mucus was ever intended to rise, Waste fluid, reaching as far, perhaps, as the frontiers of the brain ... there is a shock. Something electrical has been moistened.

Pain.

And then noise, deafening many-tongued terrifying, inside his head! ...

Inside a white wooden washing-chest, within the darkened auditorium of my skull, my nose began to sing. (184)

This shocking scene traumatizes Saleem's mind and body, producing mental and bodily nervous reaction and pain: "a cataclysmic—a world-altering—an irreversible sniff" (184). Feeling detached from reality, Saleem starts to see and hear from ghosts. For Saleem, this traumatic moment is when he is transformed into a new being, connected to spectral reality by "a pajama cord" (184). From this moment, the pajama cord haunts Saleem, creating an unseen and untold family line. He becomes a medium—"All-India-Radio"—with the spiritual power to communicate with the "profane," "multitudinous"

and “dust-like” voices of the people in India and the 1,000 midnight’s children who were born at the moment of India’s independence (190).

Rushdie presents the broken-down clocktower as another one of the uncanny spaces where Saleem exercises his newly-given power and develops his social consciousness. Saleem, who is banned from the washing-chest, steps out of Methwold’s Estate and enters this new “secret hideout,” discovers “the world” from the clocktower (197). The clocktower is another womb-like space, a “refuge from grown-up voices” where Saleem is transformed into a socially-conscious liminal being “in the solitude of rusting time” (197). In fact, this old tower is also a traumatized place where the radical socialist Joseph d’Costa hid and was finally killed by the police. Saleem describes this space as “the tower which had once filled choc-a-clock with the explosive devices of Joseph D’Costa’s hatred” (199). In this intra-uterine space, Saleem is transformed into a socially conscious liminal being as he “[takes] [his] first tentative steps towards that involvement with mighty events and public lives” (197).

Saleem channels the “politics” of his community and nation through “the random processes of [his] mind-hopping” (198). In the clocktower, Saleem, sitting on his servant’s straw mat with his eyes closed, embarks on “frequent psychic travel”: “I...let my newly-awakened inner ear...rove freely around the city—and further, north and south, east and west—listening in to all manner of things” (204, 197). For his study of the nation, this spectral narrator “leaps into,” “invades” or “occupies” the minds and bodies of political figures involved in India’s general election: “I occupied, briefly, the mind of a Congress Party worker, bribing a village schoolteacher to throw his weight

behind the party of Gandhi and Nehru in the coming election campaign; also the thoughts of a Keralan peasant who had decided to vote Communist...I deliberately invaded the head of our own State Chief Minister...I became Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister” (198-9). Through this psychic mind-hopping, Saleem discovers the political crises and corruptions prevalent right before the general election by seeing, smelling and feeling history through the bodies that he occupies (198).

As his psychic trip progresses, Saleem wants to fulfill his narcissistic desire, seeing himself as an omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent ghost— an un-empathetic and almighty god. (199). He retains his body, but his spirit can go everywhere he wants, and then know anything he wants. In Saleem’s imagination, he is an incarnation of a mighty ghost who acquires unlimited knowledge, awareness and understanding. As an omnipotent ghost, Saleem even exerts his “power-over-event” by controlling people’s minds and bodies, social events, arts and history: “Because the feeling had come upon me that I was somehow creating a world; that the thoughts I jumped inside were *mine*, that the bodies I occupied acted at my command; that, as current affairs, arts, sports, the whole rich variety of a first class radio station poured into me, I was somehow making them happen” (199). Indulged in his narcissistic inner world, Saleem is excessively preoccupied with his “imaginary” power, creating himself as “the puppet-master”— “Sin, the ancient moon-god...capable of acting-at-distance and shifting the tides of the world” (199).

Saleem, who considers himself a god-like supernatural being, loses his power after a forced nasal surgery in the Ear Nose Throat Clinic’s operating room. In this

operation room, Saleem, “[h]emmed in by doctors, nurses and anaesthetic masks,” is forced to receive an unexpected operation, which has “the effect of breaking whatever connection had been made in a washing-chest; of depriving [him] of nose-given telepathy; of banishing [him] from the possibility of midnight children” (348). If the washing-chest serves as a space of trauma that activates Saleem’s psychic ability, the operating room undoes it: “what began in a washing chest ended on an operation table” (347). Saleem sees this traumatic moment as a moment of undoing when he can not hear “voices” in his head: “Silence outside me. A dark room (blinds down). Can’t see anything (nothing there to see). Silence inside me. A connection broken (for ever). Can’t hear anything (nothing there to hear)...Drained. I have been drained. The parahamsa, grounded (For good)” (348). For Saleem, this traumatic undoing moment is another moment of metamorphosis. In the operating room Saleem experiences a significant transformation: Saleem acknowledges that he is “[moving] into a second phase, that of nasal philosopher and (later) tracker supreme” (439). Saleem acquires “a hypersensitive nose” that brings out a “science of nasal ethics”: “the powers of sniffing out truth, of smelling what- was- in- the- air” (439, 354, 352). Armed with his nose-given ethics instead of nose-given telepathy, Saleem declares “my invasion of Pakistan” that is, his exile from his nation India (352). In Pakistan, a nation of self-claimed purity, Saleem smells sins, corruptions, and deceptions by smelling “the secret aromas of the world” — aromas of good and evil, love, hate, and ghosts.

As seen in Saleem’s case, the character’s traumatic undoing moment is paralleled by his physical and psychological wounding. In the novel, Saleem loses his hair when

the geography teacher Zagallo insults him and pulls out his hair in front of the class. Saleem also loses his finger when Fat Perce, one of his classmates, bullies Saleem when he wants to impress a girl. These violent events of mutilation lead to a painful undone moment: Saleem, who is rushed to the hospital, finds he is not his parents' biological son because his blood type does not match that of his parents. A ten-year old boy with a bandaged hand meditates on this undone moment as a consequence of his wounding to his life and history: "The body, on the other hand, is homogeneous as anything. Invisible, a one-piece suit, a sacred temple, if you will. It is important to preserve this wholeness. But the loss of my finger...not to mention the removal of certain hairs from my head, has undone all that" (271). In the process of Saleem's spectral transformation, a traumatic undoing moment continuously returns to him, leading him to the next stage of his growth.

Rushdie subsequently presents another confined space, the Sundarbans region where Saleem learns the lessons of the ghost and has an experience of being a spectral body. While the buddah—the name given to Saleem—conducts his mission with Pakistani troops, he and his teenage comrades, Ayooba, Shaheed and Frooq, are trapped in this confined space—"the jungle which is so thick that history has hardly ever found the way in" (413). The Sundarbans is an enormous jungle on the border of Bangladesh and India. This is a nightmarish contact zone, a space of hybridity, where life and death and past and present meet and mingle. The Sundarans is also a haunted space which is filled with the ghosts of the past who revisit the four boy soldiers to teach them the lessons of the past. Ayooba, Shaheed, Frooq and the buddah are tormented by "the

terrible phantasms of dream-forest,” confronting ghosts or hallucinating sounds and visions of the past. These soldiers witness spectral victims whom they killed or arrested during the military mission: Ayooba sees a spectral peasant “with a bullet-hole in his heart and a scythe in his hand”; the four soldiers hear ghostly sounds of “the accusing eyes of the wives of men they had tracked down and seized, the screaming and monkey-gibbering of children left fatherless by their work” (418). The jungle also provides them illusory images of their families as “the double-edged luxury of nostalgia”: Ayooba confronts “a white-wraith-like monkey with the face of his mother”; Farooq sees his brother “running wildly through the forest”; Shaheed meets “a monkey with the face of an ancestor” and his father who “had instructed him to earn his name” (418-9). The revisiting specters teach the young soldiers “shame” and “responsibility” for their misdeeds in the past (419). In doing so, these specters lead the soldiers toward “a new adulthood” by demanding that they re-appreciate the past (419).

This spectral lesson—“a new adulthood”—exerts a destructive power on the young soldiers’ bodies as well as their psyches. In this phantasmagoric haunted space, the boys’ bodies become vulnerable to the spectral jungle’s undoing power. Their bodies are falling apart not only due to the treacherous weather, diseases and jungle-insects and animals, but also at the hands of the ghosts that usurp their desires, dreams and memories. Ayooba, Shaheed and Frooq, who desperately want to escape from “the lamentations of families” and “the accusing, pain-filled voices of their victims,” stop their ears with poisonous mud and become deaf (420). Saleem’s and his colleagues’ falling-apart bodies become spectral bodies “as hollow and translucent as glass” while

staying at the ancient Hindu temple, dedicated to the goddess Kali (422). Every night in the temple, the four soldiers make love with the female ghosts, the “naked and identical daughters of the forest” (422). While they indulge in sexual pleasure with the female ghosts, they are “forgetting reasons and implications and deafness, forgetting everything” (422). Finally, they find they are becoming ghosts themselves as their bodies become so “transparent, that it was possible to see through their bodies, not clearly as yet, but cloudily, like staring through mango-juice” (422).

This pattern of undoing culminates in Parvati-the-witch’s wicker basket, the space that teaches Saleem a spectral point of view—“how ghosts see the world” (438). After Saleem escapes from the Sundarbans, he—as a prisoner of the Indo-Pakistani war—meets Parvati-the-witch, and crosses the Indo-Pakistan border hidden in her magical basket. That is, Saleem, transported by the magical basket, returns to the land of his birth as a “passportless” spectral citizen—“in law an illegal immigrant” (447). Saleem transgresses the geopolitical border of the two nations as well as the borders of the reality and fantasy, human and ghostly, and life and death. He emerges as a liminal being— “[p]resent, but insubstantial; actual, but without being or weight” (438). Saleem is magically transformed into one of “the specters of wickerwork,” feeling the sensation that his body has “vanished,” “disappeared” and “dematerialized” (438). Saleem is “invisible”: his body “was in the basket, but also not in the basket” (438).

In the basket, Saleem acquires “the characteristics of ghosts” by internalizing a spectral point of view. The spectral perspective leads Saleem to a new understanding of specters and of himself. He realizes that a ghost, like the living, has its own memory.

Ghosts can convey their “memory of invisibility” as they remember and forget in their afterlives: “ghosts, too, begin to forget; ...the dead lose their memories of the living, and at last, when they are detached from their lives, fade away—...dying, in short, continues for a long time after death” (438-9). Through his own experience of “ghostly time-and-space” in the basket, Saleem also realizes how ghosts undergo “awful disembodied loneliness” and “the silence of grave-yard-reeking isolation” (439). Saleem perceives this loneliness or silence as an “unfairness” imposed on the ghosts. In the basket, Saleem, as one of the ghosts, cries out against the “unfairness” of the destinies of ghosts, nations, and himself. Acknowledging that he and his nation share the destinies like conjoined-twins who are “not only twin[s]-in-birth but also joined to (so to speak) at the hip,” he discovers his “wrath” toward the inevitability he has “blindly accepted” as his destiny: “*Why, alone of all the more-than-five-hundred-million, should I have to bear the burden of history?*” (444, 440). At this moment of resistance to his fate, he decides to “choose [his] own, undestined future” –“a better future” for him and for his country (440).

Saleem returns to India as a ghost-like illegal immigrant who wanders the nation. Picture Singh describes Saleem’s return as his re-birth: he “tumbled out” into the magicians’ ghetto, “falling like a baby out of Parvati’s basket” (444-445). Saleem is born again as a “passportless” revengeful ghost—a radical revolutionist, a successor of Joseph D’Costa’s ghost who decides to “save the country” (444, 440). Saleem participates in political and social life. He joins a communist movement centered on the magicians at the ghetto, attending political rallies to protest the corruption of Indira Gandhi’s

government. Yet Saleem confronts another moment of undoing: Just as Saleem discovers himself as a divine being in the clocktower, and confronts the undoing moment of the nasal operation when he is “drained above,” so he confronts the undoing moment of a forced sterilization operation—“drainage below” (505). Saleem’s revolutionary attempts turn out to be a failure as the ghetto is destroyed and Saleem is forcefully sterilized by the Widow under the name of a “civic beautification program” (1975-1977). This physical wounding drains his anger, desire and ambition: “Tonight, as I recall my rage, I remain perfectly calm; the Widow drained anger out of me along with everything else” (440). Looking back to Saleem-at-twenty-four, Saleem confesses: “My dream of saving the country was a thing of mirrors and smoke; insubstantial, the maunderings of a fool” (475).

These repeated moments of undoing harshly teach Saleem “the lesson of No Escape,” declaring, “I should have known: no escape from past acquaintance. What you were is forever who you are” (423):

In the Widows’ Hostel, I was taught, harshly, once-and-for-all, the lesson of No Escape; now, seated hunched over paper in a pool of Anglepoised light, I no longer want to be anything except what who I am. Who what I am? My answer: I am the sum of total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of every thing done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I’ve gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each “I,”

every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. Although now, as the pouring-out of what-was-inside-me nears an end; as cracks widen within—I can hear and feel the rip tear crunch—I begin to grow thinner, transcendent almost; there isn't much of me, and soon there will be nothing at all. (440-1)

The lesson of “No Escape” means the inevitability of his existence as a historical being. Asking “who what I am?” Saleem claims his spectral subjectivity as a part and whole: He is an entity of multiple ghosts of the past, whose body “grow[s] thinner, transcendent almost,” and at the same time each individual subject of “the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us”—the national population figures of India—can claim an identity of his own (441). Saleem emerges as an embodiment of the nation and the world—a space haunted by the past. The past—things, people and events that influenced him—defines Saleem as a liminal writer. Saleem's act of writing is an act of releasing the ghosts inside him, an act of a “pouring-out of what-was-inside-me” (441). Saleem is transforming into a ghost writer whose inspiration comes from specters of the past who are merged into him.

Rushdie dramatizes the narrator's spectral liminality as a narrative power. The narrator Saleem's spectral liminality is critical in his re-writing of history and nation. Saleem plays the role of a spiritual medium who lives between the lines of the dead and the living. In fact, Saleem's writing process is described as a kind of spiritual trance: he vacates himself as an empty body like “an empty pickle-jar” and waits for his body to be filled with “Anglepoised light” and visited by visions of the dead, that is, a spectral

vision of the past (14). While writing “[his] long-winded autobiography,” Saleem travels through the past and the present, summoning the original moments when traumatic historical events happened (529). Saleem invites the ghosts of his family to the present moment, or visits the past by casting himself “as a ghost”:

Doctor Aziz felt, in the pit of his stomach, a sensation akin to weightlessness.

Or falling.

(...And now I am cast as a ghost. I am nine years old and the whole family, my father, my mother, the Brass Monkey and myself, are staying at my grandparents’ house in Agra, and the grandchildren—myself among them—are staging the customary New Year’s play; and I have been cast as a ghost. Accordingly—and surreptitiously so as to preserve the secrets of the forthcoming theatricals—I am ransacking the house for a spectral disguise. My grandfather is out and about his round. I am in his room....He strode up on stage and unghosted me right in front of everyone. My grandmother’s lips were so tightly pursed they seemed to disappear. Between them, the one booming at me in the voice of a forgotten boatman, the other conveying her fury through vanished lips, they reduced the awesome ghost to a weeping wreck. (28)

While writing about his life, Saleem often falls into another realm of time crossing the strict borders of past and present, life and death. The reader is not certain whose body is “falling”—Aadam’s or Saleem’s. The distinctions between the living and the ghosts, life

and death, and the past and present are blurred and absurd. This summoning act involves haunting as a form of communication, or as Jacques Derrida puts it, the way “to learn to live with ghosts, in the upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship” (23, xvii). What this liminal character Saleem wants to achieve through this haunting is the postmortem communication that links the living to the dead, and the postcolonial present to the colonial past.

Through his trauma-driven transformation process, Saleem also finds his purpose in writing that offers a “meaning” to his existence. Saleem compares his writing to pickle making, “my special blends”: “in which, [he is] able to include memories, dreams, ideas, so that once they enter mass-production all who consume them will know what pepperpots achieved in Pakistan, or how it felt to be in the Sundarbans” (530).²⁴ These thirty jars “stand upon a shelf, waiting to be unleashed upon the amnesiac nation” (530). Saleem desires that his special blends can deliver a historical truth—“the authentic taste of truth”—“the most exalted of possibilities: the feasibility of the chutnification of history” (529, 531). With an understanding of “the inevitable distortions of the pickling process,” he reconciles with this “certain alteration, a slight intensification of taste” for his work to create a possible truth: “The art is to change the flavor in degree, but not in kind; and above all (in my thirty jars and a jar) to give it shape and form—that is to say, meaning” (531). Saleem, as an artist, defines this process as an “act of love” (531).

²⁴ Saleem’s special blends also allude to Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* as each jar of pickles is labeled as one of the chapters of Rushdie’s novel: “Movements Performed by Pepperpots,” for instance, or “Alpha and Omega,” or “Commander Sabarmati’s Baton” (442).

Rushdie concludes the novel with Saleem's prophetic vision of the future for the nation, dramatizing a spectral vision through his phantom body:

I shall have to write the future as I have written the past, to set it down with the absolute certainty of a prophet...outside the window there will be fireworks and crowds...the dense crowd, the crowd without boundaries, growing until it fills the world, [that] will make progress impossible...I am alone in the vastness of the numbers...I see familiar faces in the crowd, they are all here, my grandfather Adam and his wife Naseem, and Alia and Mustapha and Hanif and Emerald, and Amina who was Mumtaz, and Nadir who became Qasim, and Pia and Zafa...there is Jamila...from another direction, the direction of Haji Ali's island tomb, I see a mythological apparition approaching, the Black Angel, except that as it nears me its face is green its eyes are black, a center-parting in its hair, on the left green and on the right black, its eyes the eyes of Widows; Shiva and the Angle are closing and closing, I hear lies being spoken in the night, anything you want to be you kin be, the greatest lies of all, cracking now, fission of Saleem, I am the bomb in Bombay, watch me explode, bones splitting breaking beneath the awful pressure of the crowd, bag of bones falling down down down,...no Mercurochrome, only a broken creature spilling pieces of itself into the street, because I have been so many too-many persons, life unlike syntax allows one more than

three, and at last somewhere the striking of a clock, twelve chimes,
release. (532-3)

The moment of his physical body's death means the moment of birth of his spectral body as a final stage of his transformation. Saleem's body is overwhelmed by the crowd of ghosts, "the dense crowd, the crowd without boundaries" which fills the world, [that] will make progress impossible" (533). In fact, the boundary of his body is obscured because the ghosts are inside and outside his body. With "the awful pressure of the crowd," Saleem's body becomes fissured and finally blown off into pieces into the street like "the bomb in Bombay" (533). The ghosts of the past are released at this destined time, creating a phantasmagoric future scene in which the past and present and life and death are mixed and confused. These ghosts "trample" Saleem, "reducing [him] to specks of voiceless dust" (533). This is the lesson of No-Escape: Saleem—as one of those who are "both masters and victims of their times"—is destined to be the ghosts of the past who are "unable to live or die in peace" (533).

Saleem's falling-apart body dramatizes a spectral vision of the nation, whose boundary is crumbled, undergoes spectralization and finally is exploded by "the awful pressure of the crowd" of the ghosts of the past. These ghosts transgress boundaries between nations, the past and present, and life and death. As Saleem's materialistic body, especially his skin, becomes fissured and blown off with the body's explosion, the boundaries of nation become obscured. These images of Spectral India reflect Rushdie's and Saleem's desires to wake up their home—an "amnesiac nation"—by

regenerating spectral traces of the people, objects, and monuments destroyed during traumatic historical events in postcolonial India (530).

CHAPTER IV

DEAD BODIES' RETURN: TRANSNATIONAL COMMUNICATION IN *ANIL'S GHOST* (2000) AND SRI LANKAN CONTEMPORARY ART

Remembering the Civil War: The Aham-Puram Exhibition and *Anil's Ghost*

In 2004, the Colombo-based Theertha International Artists' Collective²⁵ and the Jaffna-based Tamil artists held the Aham-Puram Exhibition at the re-built Jaffna Public Library in Jaffna, Sri Lanka. In this exhibition, 72 experimental artworks representing traumatic memories of the Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009) were shown to the public. The artists in the exhibition developed aesthetics that focus on the trauma of the war, “aligning personal pain with that of society, and thus the artist portrays himself/herself as the suffering individual on behalf of others implying a self-inflicted, vicarious punishment” (Weerasinghe 188). By dealing with intense personal experience, suffering and trauma, these artists represent the destructive effects of the war on individuals and their consciousness towards society and the nation. These art works are closely related to the “90s Trend” in Sri Lanka—“the socially critical/interventionist art” that emerged in the 1990s in the context of the chaotic socio-political situation of the war (Perera). Explaining that Sri Lankan art became “contemporary” in the early 1990s, Josephine Breese argues that the “90s Trend” is “a revitalisation of art, characterised by a heightened awareness of the theoretical and conceptual,” as well as “as a social and

²⁵ Theertha International Artists' Collective is an artist-led visual arts organization that supports the needs of local and global Sri Lankan art communities. Theertha propagates the '90s Trend in Sri Lanka. The organization also focuses on transnational interactions through arts as a part of the international NGO network Triangle Arts Trust that includes Asian art communities in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh.

political sounding board” (The White Review). The Sri Lankan Civil War was “the subject of explicit political protest in art...Art was no longer considered a pursuit outside society. Sensitivity to context became a priority, as compulsively communicated through the artwork itself” (Breese).

Since 1983, Sri Lankan history includes a brutal war between the Sinhala-dominated government and Tamil anti-government insurgent groups, especially the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers) that fought for the creation of an independent Tamil state. The war was an outcome of the inter-ethnic tension between the majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils since the colonial period.²⁶ After Sri Lanka’s independence in 1948, violence and political struggles between the two ethnic groups become more intense as the Sinhala-dominated government implemented various discriminatory legislations such as the Ceylon Citizenship Act (1948)²⁷ and the Sinhala Only Act (1956)²⁸. In 1983, the Tamil Tigers launched an attack on the Sinhalese military and killed 13 soldiers. In revenge for the dead soldiers, mobs of mainly Sinhalese attacked Tamil civilians and their properties.²⁹ This riot, called the anti-Tamil pogrom or the Black July pogrom, is generally considered the beginning of the civil war. After a 26-year war, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers in 2009, bringing

²⁶ Sri Lanka has been a colony at Portugal, Holland, and Britain, one after another from 1505 to 1948.

²⁷ This act deliberately discriminated against the Indian Tamil ethnic minority by making it virtually impossible for them to obtain citizenship in the country. Approximately over 700,000 Tamils were made stateless. Over the next three decades more than 300,000 Indian Tamils were deported back to India.

²⁸ In 1956 Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike passed the “Sinhala Only Act,” an Act which replaced English with Sinhala as the only official language of the country. This was seen as a deliberate attempt to discourage the Sri Lankan Tamils from working in the Ceylon Civil Service and other public services. The Tamil speaking minorities of Ceylon (Sri Lankan Tamils, Indian Tamils and Sri Lankan Moors) viewed the Act as linguistic, cultural and economic discrimination against them. Many Tamil speaking civil servants/public servants were forced to resign because they weren't fluent in Sinhala.

²⁹ Estimates of the death toll for the anti-Tamil pogrom range between 400 and 3,000. 8,000 homes and 5,000 shops were destroyed and 150,000 people were made homeless (Buerk, BBC News)

the civil war to an end. The war caused significant hardships for the people and the economy: an estimated 80,000–100,000 people were killed (ABC Australia) and costs exceeded \$ 200 billion during the war (AEI).

The Sri Lankan Civil War was a violent ethnic conflict that not only damaged economic and social foundations, but also left scars on the nation's collective psyche. The war caused a national trauma: Sinhalese artist Jegath Weerasinghe says, "1983 was a turning point... We like to be very silent about it. It is like this major stigma in your background" (Harrison). Daniel Sheridan defines a national trauma as "an occurrence that tears a hole in the discourses of nationhood, an occurrence that reveals the nation's coherence to be nothing more than a fiction" (3). Individual, collective, and national trauma, although not interchangeable are mutually implicated in that the "nation" is an "important mirroring function for the stability of the subject" (2-3). Sheridan argues that national trauma is "a shattering of the mirror that stabilizes the nation which subsequently calls the formation of the subject into question" (3).

The venue of the Aham-Puram Exhibition, the Jaffna Public Library, as well as the city of Jaffna, had been sites of national trauma and of ethnic conflicts and political violence during the Civil War. Jaffna, with a majority Tamil population, became a war-torn area partly run by the Sri Lankan military forces, the Tamil Tigers and the Indian military units that occupied the city in 1987.³⁰ The war led to huge damage to civic and civilian properties in the city. The Jaffna public library was also set on fire and

³⁰ In 1987, Indian forces attacked the city Jaffna to search for the rebels. It led to incidents like the Jaffna university helicopter and the Jaffna hospital massacre in which patients and medical workers were killed by the Indian Army. More than 200 civilians were also killed during their attempts to take over the city.

completely destroyed on 8 December 1985 by Sinhalese civilian thugs. The 95,000 volumes of the Public Library were destroyed by the fire. As the library also held valuable collections regarding the political and social history of the Tamil people, its burning was referred to as “cultural genocide” in many Tamil popular and nationalist publications.

The Aham-Puram Exhibition, staged at the historical site of the Jaffna Public Library, proclaims an aesthetic and political statement through which the artists memorialize the tragic history of the war based on their personal and collective traumas. Among the exhibited art works, Figure 13, *History of Histories* manifests a methodology through which Jaffna artists reconstruct a silenced history of Jaffna.³¹



Figure 13. *History of Histories* (2004), from *Artists Remember, Artists Narrate*, Copyright © 2012 by Sasanka Perera

³¹ Art work images from the Aham-Puram Exhibition (from Figure 13 to Figure 20) are adapted from *Artists Remember, Artists Narrate*. Copyright © 2012 by Sasanka Perera.

Figure13 consists of 500 transparent plastic bottles that contain personal war memories of Jaffna. In each of these containers, the top was cut off, and a personal item that belonged to a victim of the war was deposited, and sealed off with the top portion of the bottle by re-inserting it neck down into the bottle. These 500 bottles contain objects such as “an electrical plug, a camera, scissors, a doll’s foot, a baby’s pair of shoes, ID cards, an army arrest certificate, fragments of artillery shells, sea shells, masonry, wood work, broken spectacles, sand, pieces of clothing, family photographs, Saiva and Catholic figurines, newspaper clippings, books, and a bottle of Old Spice” (Ambalavanar 2004). Shanaathanan explains the motif of Figure13 in relation to Hindu religious Saiva practice: “Like a local Hindu madipichchaikaran who goes from door-to-door and collects rice in order to organize an offering at the temple as part of his vow, we collected materials from 500 houses (randomly chosen within the Jaffna peninsula). These materials represent the owners’ history and memories of the last 20 years of their lives in this land” (Shanaathanan 2004). During the collecting process and the exhibition, the Jaffna artists created a communication space where forgotten memories stirred anew, and silenced personal stories of suffering were told and shared in public. According to Shanaathanan, while the artists collected the objects from Jaffna households, they shared with Jaffna citizens their traumatic memories of the war related to the gathered objects. This action of sharing, like sharing food for a temple offering, serves as a collective offering of trauma and memory to reconstruct the history of Jaffna and Sri Lanka.

History of Histories' intention of constructing a communicative space is closely connected to that of the Aham-Puram Exhibition. "Aham-Puram" is a Tamil phrase meaning "inner-outer," "insider-outsider" "personal-public" or "home-the world" (Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan 2004). Jagath Weerasinghe and Thamotharampillai Shanaathanan, the Shinlhala and Tamil artists and the co-curators of the exhibition, explain that the origin of the word is from a literary concept in Tamil Sangam literature. Sangam poetry of the second century AD has two categories: the inner field (aham) and outer field (puram). Aham topics deal with "inner life, private life and, more specifically, All aspects of love" (Savelyeva). Puram refers to "outward life, public life, political life and more specifically heroism, war" (Savelyeva). Even though the two concepts have opposite meanings, the classification is not rigid, depending on its use in a specific context.

Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan interpret these concepts in relation to the socio-political construction of "insider-outsider" in the context of colonial and postcolonial Sri Lanka. According to them, the socio-political consciousness of "insider-outsider" has been constructed by "the social hierarchies constituted by the traditional caste system," linking to "the social anxieties created by several centuries of colonial rule" (Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan 2004). In the post-independence era, the notion of "insider-outsider" is an "expression entangled with Sri Lanka's ethnic and religious identities" (Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan 2004). The Sri Lankan Civil War also was

an ethno-religious conflict of “insider vs. outsider,”³² since nationalist doctrine on the unity of the Sinhala Buddhist was prevalent in postcolonial Sri Lanka. There have been nationalist debates centered on the Mahavamsa, an important text in Theravada Buddhism, serving as “the warrant for the interlocked beliefs that the island and its government have traditionally been Sinhala and Buddhist, and that a person cannot be Buddhist without being Sinhala” (Kemper 2). Concerning this politicization of Buddhism, S. Tambiah explains it in relation to “Buddhist nationalism” as an “objectified and fetishized” form of religion in which “important tenets of their religion regarding detachment, compassion, tranquility, and nonviolence the overcoming of mental impurities are subordinated and made less relevant to Sinhala-religio-nationalist and social reform goals” (1992, 92).

Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan argue that the Aham-Puram Exhibition attempts to construct a communicative space between insiders and outsiders by incorporating and transgressing boundaries of ethnicity, class, and religion. To construct a communicative space, they emphasize the inter-dependancy and interchangeability of the aham-puram as a process of reconstructing history and national identity: “the existence and meaning of aham is dependent upon and inclusive of puram. Therefore, an insuppressible yearning to grasp the subtleties of aham takes us to the wider world of puram” (Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan 2004). In particular, Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan describe collective traumatic war memories and experiences as a key in

³² Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious nation, but “[m]ost members of the majority Sinhala community are Theravada Buddhists. Most Tamils, who make up the largest ethnic minority, are Hindu” (International Religious Freedom Report 2007).

this communication, arguing that “years of social chaos and violence” and “an endless process of losses and sufferings” offer “newer meanings” to the notion of aham-puram. They see that the trauma of the war lead Sri Lanka to “the transition phase of aham-puram”—a hybrid or in-between phase of national identity (Weerasinghe and Shanaathanan 2004).

In *Anil's Ghost* (2000), Sri Lankan-origin diasporic writer Michael Ondaatje also attempts to find the meaning of aham-puram. If Sri Lankan artists of the Aham-Puram Exhibition strive to find a new meaning of the aham-puram in order to build a bridge between ethnic and religious communities in a nation, Ondaatje wants to do it at the level of the home and the world. Just as Sri Lankan artists employ traumatic memories of the Sri Lankan Civil War as a focal point in their reconstruction of history and identity, as well as their depictions of communicative moments, Ondaatje presents *Anil's Ghost* as a collection of fragmented traumas that delivers transnational communicative moments between the local and the global. In his “Author’s Note,” Ondaatje defines a political crisis from “the mid-1980s to the early 1990s” as the setting of *Anil's Ghost*, introducing the novel as “a fictional work set during this political time and historical moment” (1). He invites his readers to the narratives of traumas filled with voices of the living and dead victims. In eight sections which are subtitled “Sarath,” “Grove of Ascetics,” “A Brother,” “Ananda,” “The Mouse,” “Between Heartbeats,” “The Life Wheel” and “Distance,” the third person narrator tells the characters’ individual stories related to their traumas suffered during the war. Ondaatje also adds italicized narratives between sections of the novel: anecdotes about known or unknown characters, the lists

of those who have disappeared, descriptions of the geological map of the nation, and a personal letter. In particular, the intermittent stories describe moments of violence: the destruction of the Buddhist statues in which their “[h]eads [are] separated from bodies. Hands broken off”; the murder scene of a government official on a train; the moment of a victim’s abduction that nobody witnesses; a survivor’s memory about his lover’s suicide (12). These fragmented scenes, as descriptions of intense moments of trauma, haunt the characters and their narratives in the novel. By portraying the novel as a collection of traumatic memories of Sri Lankan victims and survivors, Ondaatje not only offers moments of communication between transnational readers and Sri Lankan fictional characters, but also reconstructs Sri Lankan postcolonial history by giving voices to the silenced.

Ondaatje’s transnational subjectivities and cultural hybridities also provide a unique perspective on the “inter-dependancy and interchangeability” of the aham-puram communication (93). Ondaatje, born to Dutch parents in 1943 in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), has a polyglot family ancestry of Dutch, English, Sinhalese, and Tamil. At the age of ten, he moved to London, and at nineteen, he immigrated to Montreal, Canada where he took citizenship and began his writing career. As a Sri Lankan-Dutch resident of Canada, his works are deeply concerned with the cultural dynamics between the home and the world, articulating transnational/transcultural constructions of individual and collective identity. In *Running in the Family* (1982)—the fiction based on his first trip to Sri Lanka after twenty-five years of absence—Ondaatje examines hybrid ethnic identities in Sri Lanka, commenting that “Everyone was vaguely related and had

Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations” (*Running in the Family* 41). As his rediscovery of his family history which is connected to Sri Lanka’s colonial and postcolonial history—his hybrid bloodline as well as his grandparents’ tea plantation in Colonial Sri Lanka—this fiction is considered his “gesture of forgiveness and benediction to the ghosts of his past” (Anthony R. Guneratne). Commenting on Ondaatje’s complex cultural background, Victoria Cook writes: “As a product of this somewhat “colonial” background, Ondaatje’s position enables him to explore, in depth, the conflicts and contradictions of the type of identity that incorporates a colonial past and a post-colonial present” (6).

The protagonist Anil Tissera in *Anil’s Ghost* is a Sri Lankan diasporic woman. Like Ondaatje, Anil is born in Sri Lanka, and moves to Britain and the United States for her education and career. Anil returns to her homeland after fifteen years as a transnational subject with “her passport with the light-blue UN bar” (9). As a forensic pathologist who works for Amnesty International, Anil appears as a westernized outsider who understands Sri Lankan war trauma as one of the transnational crime scenes that she witnessed in Guatemala or as a moment that could be compared to “the darkest Greek tragedies” (11). Cook argues that Anil conveys “a transnational perspective; she does indeed cross and re-cross many ideological boundaries, but she does so as a migrant returning to her once colonial homeland (7). According to Cook, Anil’s multicultural identity “demonstrates the possibility of a fundamental parity between various nationalist discourses, ascribing multivalency to each of the cultures she encounters” (7). In fact, Anil appears as a hybridized character who transgresses notions of cultural,

socio-political and national identities. Anil does not show binary assumptions about Tamil or Sinhala politics, as she emerges as a diasporic character who can no longer fluently speak Sinhalese, the language of her family, who can also understand a little Tamil from her close relation with her ayah, Lalitha (23). Sri Lankan-born Anil somewhat represents Sri Lankan nationality, but she foregrounds her westernized perspective shaped by a Western education in science, culture and ethics. Anil's gender identity is also problematized in Sri Lanka as well as the West. She crosses boundaries of conventional Sri Lankan notions of gender as a prize-winning swimmer and strong-willed girl who adopted a masculine name, which she "bought" for herself from her brother. But, at the same time, Anil's female body is continuously objectified and fetishized by Sri Lankan or Western male characters as that of "[a] girl insane, a druid in moonlight, a thief in oil" (181). Cook concludes: "[t]he language of transnationalism, which Ondaatje speaks through Anil, incorporates the contradictions and paradoxes that are displayed in human and cultural diversity" (7). Ondaatje manifests his transnational approach by portraying cultural clashes and ambivalent identifications in Anil as a process of forming her multicultural identity.

Ondaatje also portrays the dynamics between *aham* and *puram* through Anil and her interactions with Sri Lankan local characters. Anil is teamed up with Colombo-based archaeologist Sarath Diyasena and meets other Sri Lankan local characters in her investigation to find the identity of the skull which is victimized by political murder possibly sponsored by the government. In particular, Ondaatje foregrounds trauma as a focal point in *aham* and *puram* communication by portraying how Anil interacts with

traumatized local characters and how their traumas connect with each other. Ondaatje presents communicative moments when Anil listens to each local character's traumatic memories of the war: Sarath carries the traumatic memory of his wife's suicide and his witness of an abduction scene; an epigraphist Palipana remembers his murdered brother, living an isolated life with his niece Lakma who is traumatized by the massacre of her parents; a Netra(eye) ritual painter Ananda is suicidal due to the memory of his abducted and murdered wife, Sirissa; Sarath's brother and doctor Gamini carries his memory of incestuous lover's suicide as well as of wounded children at the insurgent camp during his own abduction. By hearing these characters' hidden personal traumas, Anil becomes deeply involved in the collective traumas of the Civil War. This trauma-based communicative process enables Anil to be transformed into a transnational agent who can speak for the dead in Sri Lanka not as a "foreign authority," but as one of the "murdered hundreds of us" (232). As we can see, Ondaatje and Sri Lankan artists in the Aham-Puram Exhibition build cultural spaces of aham-puram conversation on a national or transnational level based on their shared historical traumas of the Sri Lankan Civil War. By sharing the hidden, silenced history of postcolonial violence and atrocities of their homeland, these cultural practitioners attempt to connect to each other in a network bound by history and trauma, and through this communication or connection, they renew the meanings of national or transnational identities.

Bodies as History Texts: Historical Trauma in Sri Lankan National and Transnational Art

In Sri Lankan artists' trauma-based communication, the body becomes an important site where trauma is inscribed and remembered, challenging language's limited ability to refer to trauma. For the artists, dead bodies are readable history texts that enable us to access Sri Lanka's amnesiac history involving violence, murders and massacres during the war. Especially scars and wounds, as Kathryn A. Burnett and Mary Holmes argue, "provide a medium by which the body 'speaks' through its coded and signified aspects" (21–22).³³ These bodily wounds contain traumatic memories and pains, allowing bodies to speak their personal and collective traumas. Sri Lankan local and global artists such as Bandu Manamperi, Janani Cooray, Pradeep Chandrasiri, R. Veidehi and Kali Arulpragasam present their own bodies or the replicas of the bodies as the place of their intimate experiences of suffering and trauma which are interconnected to the official history of the war. One of the Sri Lanka's leading artists, Bandu Manamperi, staged his performance, *Bandaged Barrel Man* (2004) at the exhibition's opening ceremony.

³³ Beginning with the notion that scars and wounds are sites of memories and emotions and voices, Kathryn A. Burnett and Mary Holmes argue that "bodies speak 'social codes' and are therefore 'intertextualized' and 'narrativized'" (21–22). Dennis Patrick Slattery also points out that bodily wounds become both "the trace of memory" and "the place[s] of dialogue and of narrative" (14).



Figure 14. Bandu Manamperi, *Bandaged Barrel Man* (2004)

Figure 14 shows how Manamperi's performance foregrounds the author's own body as a symbol of the war trauma that haunts the nation. While the official opening ceremony unfolds, Manamperi, whose body is covered with white bandages and scar marks, walks around the auditorium, carrying a corroded tin barrel. Sasanka Perera describes Manamperi's performance as a "haunting presence" that signifies "a visual and performative intrusion of disturbing memory" (37). In fact, his performance is inspired by his personal experience as he faced political violence "initially as an observer in society of the time, but later as a very young individual in state detention" (Perera 37). Manamperi writes: "I have lived in a situation where war and violence have taken place. The close proximity to intense violence has made me witness the destruction and chaos it has created over the years. It has managed to reduce the human being and everything humanity has built, physically and emotionally, into mere rubble and ash" (Manamperi

2005). The personal and collective traumatic memories, produced by death, violence and destruction during the war watch and are watched in the form of this artist's representation of a wounded haunting body. As a materialized form of the haunting past, this ghostly wounded body carries emotional and ethical burdens—like his tin barrel—that the artist and his contemporaries bear as survivors of the war.

If Manamperi employs his own body as an emblem of trauma, as the haunting past that burdens Sri Lankan history, another bandaged body series, *Bandaged Body: Body in Ash* (2003) in Figure 15, manifests his transnational perspective that connects the home and the world. *Bandaged Body: Body in Ash* was performed in Burraborang, Australia. Manamperi explains the motif of his performance as his witnessing of the aftermath scene of a bushfire when he drove from the Sydney International Airport to Burraborang. This transnational scene of destruction takes the artist to his memory of the nation as a traumatized time and space: “This scene got etched in my memory very strongly. I remembered various violent incidents during the 1980s and 1990s in Sri Lanka. They were mostly organized political violence directed at people. During that time, there were burnt bodies scattered along the roadside. As a person who went through those violent incidents, seeing the big burnt trees renewed the memories of those burnt bodies. I felt the violence in both the burnt trees and the burnt bodies” (Manamperi 2005). Manamperi connects burnt trees in South Wales, Australia with burnt bodies in Sri Lanka as a scene of destruction of and violence to both nature and human beings.



Figure 15. Bandu Manamperi, *Bandaged Body: Body in Ash* (2003)

In Figure15, Manamperi incorporates a religious-cultural offering for mourning the dead and burnt victims and nature. He wraps the burnt pieces of wood as well as his own body in white cloth whose color connotes death in Sinhala culture. The artist carries the burnt pieces of wood on a tray to a fireplace and hangs them on the wall, and then creeps into the fireplace and rolls upon the ash. After he comes out of the fireplace, he carries the tray to collect some personal items from the audience for an offering to the fireplace alter. Manamperi describes his own performance in the fireplace as “an embryo in a womb” (Manamperi 2005). His

performance expresses his re-birth as an artist-medium who links the living and dead, and the local and global.

As Manamperi shows, Sri Lankan artists variously represent their traumatic history: they not only embody the ghost of the past themselves who haunt the present, but also they play a role of the spiritual medium who mourns the dead victims of the war, summoning their spectral bodies and voices. Tamil diasporic female artist R. Vaidehi portrays the ghost of the past in her works based on her experience of the war in northern Sri Lanka and her traumatic dislocation as a member of the Tamil diaspora.

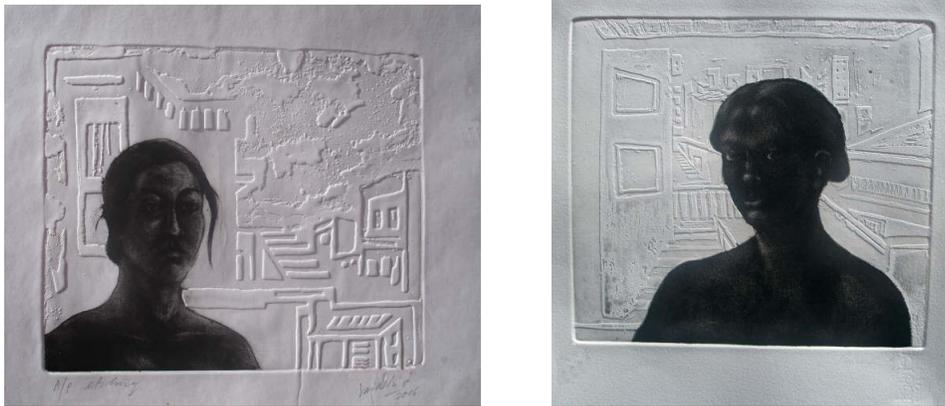


Figure 16. R. Vaidehi, *Awaiting I* and *II*

The two portraits in Figure 16 foreground dark-grey female bodies against the background of white etched buildings. While the female figure in *Awaiting I* has an emotionless face and vacant gaze that reflect her traumatized psychic and frozen emotional responses, the other female figure in *Awaiting II* shows a direct gaze to the audience, capturing their attention. These body images, dissociated from the

background, appear as the image of a ghost that travels through time and space, trespassing the borders between the living and the dead. For Vaidehi, her home Sri Lanka is a haunted place where spectral female bodies, figures for her traumatic memory of home, wait for her. Perera argues that these haunted images of female ghosts reflect Veidehi's own subjectivity as a dislocated Tamil refugee in the contexts of Sri Lankan Civil War as well as in a transnational context. Her works depict the situations of the war where people were forced into refugee camps and exile while their "social and historical locations are constantly in a state of flux, forcing the individuals to 'repeatedly reposition one's self'" (Perera 2009: 73). Perera notes, "similar to an autobiography, the artist's own self becomes the allegorical content referring to personal pain and collective anxiety of a community which has been made refugees and members of a scattered Diaspora" (Perera 2009: 73).

Sri-Lankan local artist Janani Cooray, in her performance, *Pasting the Pieces* (2004), portrays herself as an artist-medium who mourns the dead by carrying a replica of the charred corpse as a symbol of Sri Lanka's traumatic past.



Figure 17. Janani Cooray, *Pasting the Pieces* (2004)

As Figure 17 shows, Cooray’s performance basically consists of carrying a charred body upon which the artist is pasting multicolored layers of cloth. During the opening ceremony of the Aham Puram exhibition, Cooray engages in her performance as if untouched by the happenings around her. Anoli Perera reads this performance as a depiction of a “parallel reality” in which a burnt city “offers burned bodies to mothers” and a “demented mother” mourns over the dead body and pastes colorful pieces of cloth on a body as an act of “hope, survival and defiance” (Perera). Emphasizing the “disconnection from the reality” and “madness” in this female figure, Perera asks the question, “who actually is mad – the society who churn out charred dead bodies or the ‘demented’ mothers who are trying to grapple with their sorrows and hold on to a continuously betrayed hope as a tactic of survival?” (Perera). In her performance,

Cooray displays herself as a spiritual medium, like an insane mother who mourns over her child's dead body. As Ambalavanar interprets, Cooray's performance shows a preparation of "the dead for burial - an act of love amidst the brutality of the violence" (Ambalavanar 2004).

In Figure 18, *Broken Hands* (1997), Pradeep Chandrasiri creates his own version of the shrine to mourn victims of the civil war. As an artist-medium like Chandrasiri commemorates the dead with burning oil lamps, beetle leaves and broken hands set on charred remains of charcoal, nails and firewood. These materials connote cultural meanings of death and mourning for the dead. The beetle leaf and oil lamp are often used at funerals: Sri Lankans traditionally chew this leaf during the long night when relatives stay in the presence of the body of the dead.



Figure 18. Pradeep Chandrasiri, *Broken Hands* (1997)



Figure 19. Pradeep Chandrasiri, *The Broken Hands in the Burnt House* (1997)

In Figure 18, the broken hands, being sculpted from terra cotta, become a central image as a metaphor for the artist's traumatic memory and experience. Chandrasiri explains that the broken hand image is inspired by his own civil war experience at the detention camp: "During my captivity in the detention camp, one of my hands was violated. Because of this experience I proclaim that for me, the form of the hand becomes a crucial object within my art....In one way, it symbolizes my protest against violence and terror. I use it also to remember or renew my own memories of the past. I also use it in the meaning of parting and as a symbol of hope" (Chandrasiri 2002: 124). In Chandrasiri's work, the broken hand is a haunting image that continuously appears in his series of works. In Figure 19, Chandrasiri combines the image of the broken hands with a Tamil civilian's house burnt down during the anti-Tamil pogrom in 1983. Based on his memory of the pogrom when he was eleven years old, Chandrasiri expresses his mourning of the dead bodies of the victims, offering replicas of his body part—broken hands.

While Chandrasiri represents the national and collective trauma of the war through the replicas of a body part that indicates his intimate moment of mourning, Jagath Weerasinghe provides comparatively distanced and intellectual socio-political critiques in his reconstructed Buddhist shrine for dead and lost bodies. In Figure 20, Jagath presents a buried site of Buddhist worship as a place of both holiness and trauma.



Figure 20. Jagath Weerasinghe, *Yantra Gala and the Round Pilgrimage* (2004)

The “Yantra Gala,” the traditional stone base on which Buddha statues are placed, occupies the center as a discarded form. Surrounding this structure, raw rice is scattered on the floor, intermingled with the nametags of sites of well-known places of Buddhist worship, as well as of violent death and torture. Weerasinghe shows how the religious worship site is used as a place of torture, murder and burial, revealing his despair about failures and corruption of institutionalized religion: “[t]he most unbearable truth that

comes out of this situation is that most of the now established religions and humanitarian traditions are incapable of helping, healing or saving the people caught in this tragic situation. These religious traditions have now become so institutionalized and they function as part of the establishment that justifies human right violations” (Weerasinghe 1997). Weerasinghe explains that this work was inspired by the ceremony for a group of parents whose children had disappeared and were murdered in 1989-90 at torture camps at Embilipitiya in the south of Sri Lanka. Weerasinghe expresses his guilt, anxiety and powerlessness as an individual who witnessed extreme political violence, but failed to change its direction. His work remembers the lost or killed bodies, offering his mourning ritual to the bodies buried under the worship site.

Kali Arulpragasam is a British Tamil jewellery designer and artist working in London, New York and Los Angeles. She is part of the Tamil Diaspora as her family fled the civil war in Sri Lanka in the 1980s when she was ten years old. As the founder of the jewellery label “Super Fertile,” Arulpragasam has experimented with politically conscious approaches and aesthetics for her art jewellery. In 2011, Arulpragasam launched her “Murder” collection, connecting her childhood experience of the war in Sri Lanka to transnational political violence—“genocide, suicide bombing, executions, raids” (Arulpragasam).



Figure 21. Kali Arulpragasam, *the Murder Collection* (2011), photographed by Amarpaul Kalirai, from *Super Fertile*, Copyright ©2015 by Kali Arulpragasam



Figure 21 Continued.



Figure 21 Continued.



Figure 21 Continued.

In her catalogue for the Murder Collection, Arulpragasam displays photographic scenes of horror and death in which victims in a dark cell are tortured and about to be murdered. In these photographs, Arulpragasam uses powerful images of wounded and tortured bodies echoed by the jewelry decorating the victims' bodies: the jewelry pieces represent "Bullet wounds to the head, machine gun fire to the body and knife slashes to the throat and ears" (Arulpragasam). The artist manifests her motif of the collection as an ethical message to her transnational audience. She explains: "The idea behind the Murder collection was to put on full display in a highly artistic way the horrific acts that are committed in the name of religion, justice, nationalism, political affiliation, retribution, etc....If there is any lesson to learn from history, it is that we must never let violence against anyone go unchecked" (Arulpragasam). Arulpragasam foregrounds issues of global justice by selecting models that represent ethnic and age diversity in order to "heighten the global cry and suffering" (Arulpragasam). However, apart from

Arulpragasam's manifestation of global justice, the photographic images of the collection elicit a westernized gaze that objectifies wounded and tortured bodies, providing western customers with the secret pleasure of watching eroticized wounded bodies. The irony occurs when possible witnesses of these violent scenes are also Western customers who want to buy Arulpragasam's jewelry pieces as their objects of desires. Arulpragasam's ethical manifestation offers these customers consent to enjoy their forbidden desires for wounded bodies without guilt and shame, satisfying their fantasies that they, as neo-colonial subjects, can control these transnational wounded bodies.

Bodies and Aham-Puram Communication in *Anil's Ghost*

The Sri Lankan artists mourn the dead and wounded bodies of victims of the war. Bodies, as a central presence in their art works, serve as spaces of communication by foregrounding the vulnerability and mortality of human beings, who can be injured, burnt, mutilated and murdered. By reminding us of human weakness and vulnerability through speakers and listeners, the body in pain opens a conversation. The body also becomes a communicative space by lending tangibility to trauma, feelings of pain and suffering, and wounded psyches in specific socio-political situations. As Elaine Scarry observes: "If the felt-attributes of pain are (through one means of verbal objectification or another) lifted into the visible world, and if the referent for these now objectified attributes is understood to be the human body, then the sentient fact of the person's suffering will become knowable to a second person" (12). Here, the bodies deliver an

experience of pain and suffering which is essentially unobjectifiable. As Scarry argues, the unrepresentable or inexpressible can be shared with others by narrating the human body in pain and its affects.

The body also emerges as a central image and a metaphor in *Anil's Ghost*. The novel is woven around the plot of “witnessing the body,” especially the body which is “injured, mutilated and murdered; caressed, cured and recreated; abducted; disinterred and investigated” (Marinkova 112). According to Milena Marinkova, the novel “attends to ‘the body witnessing,’ an enabling act of presencing those that have been silenced by History makers. The presencing of the body and presencing through the body affectively detour the instrumental use of the corporeal” (110-1). Marinkova suggests that Ondaatje’s emphasis on the body—“the intimate and the interpersonal”—“bears active witness to the affective powers of the body to presence voices that have been muted by dominant discursive regimes” (111). If the Sri Lankan artists employ visual images of wounded bodies, Ondaatje uses language to describe those broken bodies as a metaphor of history, nation and trauma. Being related to the process of Anil’s transnational communication and her identity formation, the body serves as a focal point in the trauma-based aham-puram communication, connecting the past to the present, the living to the dead, and the home to the world.

In *Anil's Ghost*, Sri Lanka is remembered by Anil through an anatomical term, “amygdale”—the almond-shaped knot of nerve bundle in the brain which houses fear and trauma. Anil, who is dissecting a body at Guy’s Hospital in London, learns the word amygdale from her professor as “the darkest part of the brain” and “a place to house

fearful memories” (134). For Anil, this word “sounds Sri Lankan, the name,” the name of a “bad god” who governs the nation and its people. (135). This body part invokes her home as a nation of fear where executions, mass murders, and political killings were committed by all sides—“the insurgents, or the government or the guerilla separatists” (17). The fearful and painful memory is both personal and collective, as human beings all have an amygdala, but “[a] knot in this person is different from a knot in another, even if they are from the same family” (134). This body part revisits the diasporic subject Anil like a haunting ghost from her home, providing a continuous re-enactment of memory that underlies an unconscious search for located, homely affirmation and re-connection” (Burrows 162). Anil always “remembers the almond knot. During autopsies her secret habit of detour is to look for the amygdala, this nerve bundle which houses fear—so it governs everything” (135). The word “amygdale,” as a haunting ghost, affects her “habituated physical act, an investigative methodology as a reader of the intricacies of dead bodies” (Burrows 162).

As the word “amygdale” haunts Anil, so the novel manifests a bodily haunting—the returns of the subalterns’ lost or dead bodies. *Anil’s Ghost* opens with a fragmented scene in which the forensic team from Amnesty International is excavating dead bodies of the subalterns—the victims of genocide and massacre in Guatemala. These bodies appear as “submerged bones” from a hidden site of an abduction and a mass murder (7). The families who search for their lost members “never leave,” being afraid that they might forcefully lose the bodies again by the government. The dead bodies’ return brings the memories of their family members’ everyday lives as well as the nation’s silenced

history. This crime scene in which the dead bodies return as lost evidence is followed by another transnational body's return—Anil's return to her homeland after fifteen years. When Anil returns to Sri Lanka, arriving at Katunayyake airport, she met a young official who calls her return “a return of the prodigal” —the return of the lost (10). The aspect of Anil's “loss” denotes her emotional distance from the nation. Anil returns to her homeland as a westernized outsider who conveys her transnational memory and experience as she “lived abroad long enough to interpret Sri Lanka with a long-distance gaze” (11). Anil cannot connect Sri Lanka's national trauma to her own personal trauma. She interprets traumatic incidents in her homeland as transnational crime scenes, part of her global human right investigations. For Anil, the dead bodies found in Sri Lanka—“Heads on stakes. Skeletons dug out of a cocoa pit in Matale”—are not so different from the lost bodies in transnational crime scenes in Guatemala, the Congo, and other traumatized zones of the world (11).

In spite of this emotional distance, the body becomes a communicative space that links Anil to the dead bodies of victims. Anil's diasporic female body is metaphorically connected to the returned dead bodies in Sri Lanka. While investigating the evidence of skeletons discovered in an ancient burial ground that points to a government killing, Anil lays down next to the dead bodies “wearing just her red kickers” to trace her shape in relation to those of the skeletons: “She began removing her clothes, her back to him, then lay down next to the skeleton of Sailor....He was using the felt marker to trace her shape....She could feel the pen move around her hands and alongside her waist, then down her legs, both sides, so he linked the blue lines at the base of her heels. She rose

out of the outline, turned back and saw he had drawn outlines of the four skeletons as well” (61). Aligning the outline of Anil’s naked body with those of the skeletons, Ondaatje highlights the body as a link that connects Anil and Sri Lanka. Anil feels her connection with dead bodies not only as they share a human condition that is vulnerable to death, but also as they share subaltern subjectivity as a wandering female diaspora. Presenting their subaltern existences outside of the power system—from the home and the world—Ondaatje portrays how bodies become spaces of communication that connect Anil to her homeland.

After her arrival in Sri Lanka, Anil investigates the dead bodies of the subalterns victimized by political killings and violence of the war. The first corpse has two broken arms but undamaged fingers, the second “frail fractures on the rib cage” (14). The first man had been killed as his arms were raised in the supplication of prayer; the second had been pushed out of a helicopter at a height of at least five hundred feet and had hit the water below, belly-down, so that the wind had been knocked out of his body, displacing all his organs (14). These bodies manifest the reality of Sri Lanka where on-going killings are an everyday reality: “the freshness of the body” declares it is “still someone” (13). Sarath calls Sri Lanka a “fearful nation” where “[t]he bodies turn up weekly now. The height of the terror was eighty-eight and eighty-nine....people just disappearing. Or bodies kept being found burned beyond recognition” (17). The nation is a “self-burying motion”: “There are so many bodies in the ground now, that’s what you said...murdered, anonymous” (157, 53).

The skeleton named Sailor, which Anil and Sarath find in Bandarawela, emerge as the subaltern that represents thousands of disappeared victims who were killed, buried and silenced during the civil war. Sailor becomes a center of their search for the truth and justice during their investigation of governmental crimes. Anil discovers that Sailor is “not prehistoric” as its “bones were still held together by dried ligaments, partially burned” (50). Sailor is a “traceable” victim of a murder committed by the government, as he is found in “a restricted area—accessible only to the police or the army or some high-level government officials” (52, 89). Ondaatje presents diverse methodologies of reading bodies through the characters that witness and investigate the skeleton Sailor. A forensic pathologist, Anil and her partner archeologist Sarath are readers of the dead bodies. Anil’s work is based on “A mind of science” (178). Anil reads physical traces and traumas on Sailor’s skeleton—“trace elements” of soil and the “twist” and “transverse cracking” in the bone. These physical traumas reveal the moment of Sailor’s death when he was burned alive, buried, and moved to a government-protected monk’s burial midden (51). Anil also investigates the body to theorize details of age, posture, height, weight and the place he lived (176). She finally discovers Sailor’s profession as a mine worker through “evidence of physical stress or trauma in those bones [that showed] what the person’s profession had been”—“his arms stretched out, reaching up or forward,” “a man static and sedentary” (177-8). Sarath also uses a strict scientific means of investigation as he reads dead bodies. He reads traumas on the bones, investigates soil traces in the bones, and photographs the skull. Sarath also discovers Sailor’s first burial place and his hometown by comparing “samples from the first burial site” (152). He

finally figures out the original burial place, drawing “a rectangle with a red felt pen on the glass that covered the map. Weddgala to the west, Moragoda to the east. Ratnapura and Sinharaja” (153).

Anil’s and Sarath’s socio-political values and beliefs are reflected in their investigations of the subaltern’s dead bodies, revealing their perspectives toward them. While Anil and Sarath both depend on the method of scientific investigation, their political perspectives toward the dead bodies appear different. Anil, in searching for Sailor’s identity, shows her firm belief in western rationalism, global justice and human rights. For Anil, Sailor is the “representative of all those lost voices”: as “[one] village can speak for many villages,” [o]ne victim can speak for many victims” (56, 176). Acknowledging the reality that “in all the turbulent history of the island’s recent civil wars, in all the token police investigations, not one murder charge had been made during the troubles,” Anil desires that this subaltern’s dead body can speak silenced history and bring justice to the victims (176). By identifying the victim Sailor, she wants to discover stories of the subalterns’ lost bodies which are killed, buried and silenced by the government’s hegemonic political violence. With the certainty of scientific investigation and global justice, Anil says to Sarath, “we can prove this don’t you see?... it’s traceable” (52).

Sarath is skeptical about Anil’s certainty and positivity regarding the truth and justice. He believes that her positivism does not work properly in Sri Lanka, a nation traumatized by the horror of civil war killings. Sarath points out: “Terror everywhere, from all sides. We wouldn’t have survived with your rules of Westminster then” (154).

Sarath also understands the possible dangers of Anil's certainty as he "had seen truth broken into suitable pieces and used by the foreign press alongside irrelevant photographs. A flippant gesture towards Asia that might lead, as a result of this information, to new vengeance and slaughter" (157). Sarath rather understands the "old and accepted balance" of truth and justice as he discovers a mother figure bent over a child painted on rock: "Those images in caves through the smoke and firelight. The night interrogations, the vans in daylight picking up citizens at random. That man he had seen taken away on a bicycle. Mass disappearances at Suriyakanda, reports of mass graves at Ankumbura, mass graves at Akmeemana. Half the world, it felt, was being buried, the truth hidden by fear, while the past revealed itself in the light of a burning rhododendron bush" (156). Sarath believes that the truth is silenced by fear and horror, but it "[reveals] itself" at the right moment of historical discovery.

During their investigation of Sailor's identity, Anil and Sarath travel to consult with Sarath's mentor Palipana. Palipana was a renowned scholar in a nationalistic group that eventually wrestled archaeological authority in Sri Lanka away from the Europeans. His world view is centered on Asia by regarding "Europe simply as a landmass on the end of the peninsula of Asia" (79). However, Palipana loses his reputation when he is accused of forging the evidence for his translations of the interlinear texts of the Sigiri rock graffiti. Palipana's failure to quote legitimate and objective sources is considered a forgery, but it is a true liberation for him—"not a false step but the step to another reality, the last stage of a long, truthful dance" (81). During his last years, Palipana

retreats from the world with his niece Lakma, and finds “the hidden histories, intentionally lost, that altered the perspective and knowledge of earlier times” (105).

As a reader of bodies, Palipana approaches the body as a part of nature and history: “[F]or him, now, all history was filled with sunlight, every hollow was filled with rain. Though as he worked he was conscious that the paper itself that held these histories was aging fast. It was insect-bitten, sun-faded, wind-scattered. And there was his old, thin body. Palipana too was now governed only by the elements” (84).

Considering the body as a part of nature, he proposes the embodied forms of history: his epigraphistic method works “[to] study history as if it were a body” (193). Palipana also approaches the body with his “locally inherited skill,” as in the way in which he touches and feels discovered runes with “his fingers,” “bare arms” and “the side of his face” (83). Palipana reads Sailor’s skull with his bodily touch: “his fingers, beautiful and thin, moving over the outlines of the skull Sarath had given him, his long fingernails at the supraorbital ridge, within the orbital cavities, then cupping the shape as if worming his palms on the skull, as if it were a stone from some old fire”(87).

Anil and Sarath also work with the eye-painter Ananda Udugama who is employed to rebuild the head of Sailor. Ananda is a ritual artist for Netra Mangala, the eye-ritual in which an artist paints the eyes of the holy figure, especially, of the statue of Buddha. Ananda’s artistic skill is described as sacred and spiritual: “he is brought in only to paint the eyes on the Buddha image....Without the eyes there is not just blindness, there is nothing. There is no existence. The artificer brings to life sight and truth and presence” (98-9). Sarath hopes that Ananda will bring life to Sailor as he does

for the holy figure. In fact, Ananda's work is described as a combination of art and ritual. Just as Sri Lankan artists Bandu Manamperi and Janani Cooray play their roles of spiritual medium who mourn the victims by embodying or shaping the body of the ghost, Ananda rebuilds Sailor's dead body based on his communication with the ghost. Ananda works with recorded special shamanic music in a room whose wall is charcoaled with mysterious Sinhalese words, Makamkruka and Madanaraga. Makamkruka means "churner, agitator"—"someone who perhaps sees things more truly by turning upside down. He's a devil almost, a yaksa, who guards the sacred spot in a temple ground"; Madanaraga means "'with the speed of love,' Sexual arousal" (165).

Ananda's work is also based on his understanding of locality—how neighborhood, social and food environments influence villagers as well as Sailor's body. Before starting his work, Ananda spends time in Sailor's village to investigate the village people and their physical characteristics: "He chatted with anyone who sat near him, with its distinct behaviour, its local body postures and facial characteristics. He wanted to discover what the people drank here, whether there was a specific diet that would puff up cheeks more than usual, whether lips would be fuller than in Batticaloa" (167). Ananda discovers unique physical traits for the villagers that Sailor might have. To build the head, he also uses local materials: three sacks of mud, kite papers, suet, food dyes, old turntables and various household objects from the village. Ananda's restoration skill is also inherited from his father and grandfather who were the craftsmen who painted eyes of Buddha statues. Anil describes his "technique of face reconstruction" as producing "a five-and-dime monster" which is collaged with "various

household objects” (167-8). Anil, with her western scientific education, sees Ananda as a “noncertified person” whose skill is derived from “historical cartoons or Dioramas” (161). For her, Ananda’s work is incomprehensible. Anil is cynical and sarcastic about Ananda’s working style: most of the night, Ananda is drunken, half-naked and passed out. Anil cannot understand the music from the gramophone: “A tenor burst into song, sang with energy for a few moments, then slowed before the song ended” (167).

Yet as Anil confronts the local characters—Sarath, Palipana, and Ananda—they share and revise each other’s values and perspectives. Through this process, Anil’s western certainty and positivity are shattered when she confronts “local” characters’ experiences of chaos and terror. In this communication, the body serves as a focal point in their experience of trauma, linking the dead and living and the home and the world. Sarath confesses to Anil about the abduction scene that he witnesses, in which two insurgents carried a victim’s body on a bike for an execution:

‘I was in the South...It was almost evening, the markets closed. Two insurgents I suppose, had caught a man....When they took off, the blindfolded man had to somehow hang on. One hand on the handlebars, but the other he had to put around the neck of his captor. It was this necessary intimacy that was disturbing. They wobbled off, the man with the rifle following on another bike.....The blind-folded man had to balance his body in tune with his possible killer. They cycled off and at the far end of the street, beyond the market buildings, they turned and

disappeared. Of course the reason they did it that the way was so none of us would forget it.' 'What did you do?' 'Nothing.' (154-5)

Witnessing the abduction in a street, Sarath is disturbed by the intimacy between the bodies of the killers and the victim. This intimacy reveals human beings' cruelty toward another without any self-conscious emotions of shame, guilt and remorse. Sarath feels despair not only toward the society being numbed to cruel violence by fear, but also toward himself as a powerless individual who cannot make any change. Anil indirectly experiences Sarath's trauma as well as collective fear and horror as a "national disease" (53). This experience provides her with a deeper understanding of her home and its people. By sharing his traumatic memory with Anil, Sarath has an intimate moment with Anil based on their understanding of Sri Lanka's political chaos as well as his burdens of guilt and despair.

The dead body also emerges as a link that connects the home and the world. In particular, Sailor's skull becomes a center of aham-puram conversation by connecting Anil and Ananda. For Anil, dancing is a ritual that reveals her inner desire and suffering. During her investigation trip, Anil often dances alone to a "furious love song" (182). For her, dancing is the way in which "[she] is waking every muscle in herself, blindfolding every rule she lives by, giving every mental skill she has to the movement of her body....It feels as if she could eject herself out of her body like an arrow" (181). Her dancing body reveals her emotional side as a failed and traumatized lover: "[i]t is for her in this state no more than sweat, no more than a cut foot she earns during the dance, and she will not stop for any of these, just as she would not change herself for lover's howl

or sweet grin, then or anymore” (182). At the moment of dancing, Anil also feels a connection to Sailor not as hard evidence, but as a living body. She undresses herself and unpins the sheet for Sailor to get rid of her feelings of claustrophobia: “But undressing in her room she thought of him under the claustrophobia of plastic and went out and unpinned the sheets. So the wind and all the night were in Sailor” (169). They are both lost bodies: Anil feels compassion toward Sailor’s skull and wants to give him comfort and freedom. She sees the skull as someone who is “on a wooden table washed by the moon” after “the burnings and the burials” that he experienced (169).

Sailor’s skull also becomes a medium that breaks down the cultural communication barrier between Anil and Ananda. Anil witnesses how Ananda treats Sailor as “someone with charms and flaws, part of a family, a member of a village” (170):

Now Ananda picked up the skeleton and carried it in his arms. She was in no way appalled by what he was doing. There had been hours when, locked in her investigations and too focused by hours of intricacy, she too would need to reach forward and lift Sailor into her arms, to remind herself he was like her. Not just evidence, but someone with charms and flaws, part of a family, a member of a village who in the sudden lightning of politics raised his hands at the last minute, so they were broken. Ananda held Sailor and walked slowly with him and placed him back on the table, and it was then he saw Anil. She nodded imperceptibly to show there was no anger in her. Slowly rose and walked over to him. A small

yellow leaf floated down and slipped into the skeleton's ribs and pulsed there. She saw two moons caught in the mirror of Ananda's glasses. It was a ramshackle pair—the lenses knitted onto the frame with wire and the stems wrapped in old cloth, rag really, so he could wipe or dry his fingers on them. (170)

Although Anil has forgotten “the subtleties of the language” that she once shared with Ananda, she begins to see a mutual communicative ground—their intimate bondage to Sailor. Ananda's way of treating Sailor eases Anil's hostility toward Ananda as she understands his feeling about Sailor. She begins to see the hollow sadness in Ananda's face below this drunk's sentiments. Ondaatje describes this communicative moment through the image of the “small yellow leaf [that] floated down and slipped into the skeleton's ribs and pulsed there” (170). Anil and Ananda as “a ramshackle pair” share this moment by seeing the dead body together (170).

Anil's and Ananda's mutual understanding is developed into a deeper communication through Sailor's face as reconstructed by Ananda. Finally when Anil sees Sailor's rebuilt head, she is stunned by the peacefulness and serenity—“a calm Ananda had known in his wife, a peacefulness he wanted for any victim” (187). Anil learns that Ananda carries a traumatic memory of his wife Sirissa, who was abducted by the Sri Lankan army as a part of “the campaign to wipe out insurgent rebels and their sympathizers” (185). She understands that Ananda's work is work of a mourning for the dead. While watching Sailor's face together, Anil and Ananda have a moment of communication through bodily touch: “He moved two steps forward and with his thumb

creased away the pain around her eye along with her tears' wetness. It was the softest touch on her face....Ananda's hand on her shoulder to quiet her while the other hand came up to her face, kneaded the skin of that imploded tension of weeping as if hers too was a face being sculpted, though she could tell that wasn't in his thoughts" (187). Anil feels Ananda's touch as her Tamil ayah Lalitha's or mother's comforting touch, "a way she could recollect no one ever having touched her, except, perhaps, Lalitha. Or perhaps her mother somewhere further back in her lost childhood" (187-8).

Sarath's brother, the doctor Gamini, also witnesses how wounded or dead bodies serve as a communicative space that can overcome cultural, ethnic, and political differences. During the war, Gamini confronts thousands of bodies damaged by grenades, public bombs, stabbings and bullets. His everyday life is filled with amputating or sewing up the dead and wounded bodies. Gamini also witnesses an insurgent camp "full of wounded boys" whose "bodies [were] in the hut. Rags knotted around the wounds, no painkillers, no bandages"(218-9). Gamini treats the bodies with a professional mind without being emotionally and politically involved. He has a detached attitude toward the dead bodies of political killings: he covers "the faces on the photographs" to get rid of possible "danger of his recognizing the dead" (212).

However, the bodily wound that evokes his own traumatic memory becomes a link that connects him to another. Gamini feels comradeship with a Tamil woman, a wife of a staff member in his hospital, when he performs surgery on a dying boy's body. This feeling is developed into sympathy and love as he sees her "scar at her wrist" that reminds him of his lover, Sarath's wife (246). Gamini is traumatized by his lover's death

as he cannot save her when she was brought to the hospital unconscious after swallowing lye. For him, the scar on the Tamil woman's wrist is a sign of suffering and pain that leads him to the memory of his love and loss. The scar that carries their traumatic memories provides a moment of understanding. Gamini says to the woman: "You look, at some moments, like my brother's wife" (250). The woman answers to him: "You are going to be my husband's brother, then. That's how I'll treat you. That's a kind of love" (250). The Tamil woman embraces Gamini's pain and suffering without judging his morality or ethics. The bodily wound and scar, as signs of suffering, serve as a communicative space where the characters start a meaningful conversation.

Gamini also witnesses his own brother Sarath's dead body at his hospital. Sarath, who wanted to protect Anil and her research from the government's control and violence, helped Anil to escape Sri Lanka with her evidence. Sarath was captured, secretly tortured and killed by the government. His dead body was delivered to his brother Gamini as one of the unknown victims of the war. In front of the dead body, Gamini begins "a permanent conversation" with his dead brother by examining, cleaning and dressing his wounds and scars. Ondaatje describes this conversation as a moment of "pieta between brothers" (290):

But this was a *pietà* between brothers. And all Gamini knew in his slowed, scrambled state was that this would be the end or it could be the beginning of a permanent conversation with Sarath. If he did not talk to him in this moment, admit himself, his brother would disappear from his life. So he was too, at this moment, within the contract of a *pietà*. He

opened his brother's shirt so the chest was revealed. A gentle chest. Not hard and feral like his own. It was the generous chest of a Ganesh. An Asian belly....Sarath's chest said everything. It was what Gamini had fought against. But now this body lay on the bed undefended. It was what it was. No longer a counter of argument, no longer an opinion that Gamini refused to accept. Oh, there seemed to be a mark like that made with a spear. A small wound, not deep in his chest, and Gamini bathes it and taped it up. (288-289)

A *pietà* is an image from Christian art that represents the Virgin Mary holding the dead body of Jesus after the Crucifixion. It depicts Mary's sorrow and mourning over her son's dead body. In this brother's *pietà*, Gamini experiences a moment of the communion between the living and the dead as he begins a meaningful conversation with his brother that he has never had before. For Gamini, Sarath was "too much of an older brother" whom he fought against (288). Gamini also secretly fought against his brother because he loved his brother's wife. In this conversational moment, Sarath's wounds open a moment of forgiveness that allows Gamini to mourn his brother's death. Sarath's wounds become a medium that tells these brothers' memories and feelings as well as their love and hate.

In *Anil's Ghost*, Ondaatje criticizes the politics and religions of the nation by foregrounding wounded or destroyed bodies: the bodies of the suicide bomber R—, of President Katugala and of the Buddha Statue. The body of suicide bomber R—is

described as “the weapon” and “the aimer” a bomb-like body aimed at the president on National Heroes Day:

R—wore denim shorts and a loose shirt. Underneath these was a layer of explosive and two Duracell batteries and two blue switches. One for the left hand, one for the right, linked by wires to the explosives....R—had more clothing on above the denim shorts. Four Velcro straps held the explosives pack to his body, and along with the dynamites there was the great weight of thousands of small ball bearings....The bomb would destroy whomever he was facing. His own eyes and frame were the cross-hairs. He approached Katugala having already switched on one of the batteries. One blue bulb lighting up deep in his clothing. When he was within five yards of Katugala he turned on the other switch” (292-4).

The terrorist’s body is consumed or destroyed after completing its function in a political mission. The terrorist R’s body shows how the body is objectified and manipulated for political purpose, losing its value as a human body. With an explosion of the suicide bomb, the President’s body is “shredded...into pieces” (294). His body cannot be found: “So each hospital waited for the possibility that his wounded body would be brought in. But it never arrived” (295). The body parts of the bomber and the president spread on the street as a mixture of blood and flesh: “Some flesh, probably from the bomber, was found on the wall of the building across the street. The right arm of Katugala rested by itself on the stomach of one of the dead policemen. There were shattered curd pots all over the pavement” (295). Through the destruction scenes, Ondaatje insists that political

discourses of any side—the government or the insurgents—cannot offer a meaningful vision for the nation or provide any healing moments for its traumatized people.

Ondaatje presents another destruction scene of the body: the statue of the Buddha at the field of Buduruvagala. The body of the statue is destroyed by the thieves: “the torso leapt towards the earth and the great expressive face of the Buddha fell toward and smashed into the ground” (300). The broken body of the statue is a mere “broken stone”—“the destroyed god” that can be replaced by another one (301). But because this field of Buduruvagala is used as “a killing field or a burial ground,” Buddha’s broken body is mingled with the dead bodies of buried victims of the war (301). Ondaatje shows that Buddhism, as an institutionalized Sinhala nationalist religion, also loses its spiritual and moral value as a guide for the nation. As Jagath Weerasinghe portrays in *Yantra Gala and the Round Pilgrimage*, this site of Buddhist worship which turns into a place of trauma and suffering represents the despair and guilt of the people in the nation.

By juxtaposing Anil’s diasporic body and Sarath’s Christ-like body, Ondaatje explores the possibilities and limitations for his examination of aham-puram communication between the home and the world. Anil and Sarath identify Sailor’s skull at the third plumbago village in Sri Lanka. Sailor’s name is Ruwan Kumara. He is a toddy tapper and mine worker who is abducted by outsiders who wipe out rebel sympathizers. Sailor, no longer one of unknown dead bodies but an identified victim, becomes crucial evidence that can prove governmental crimes such as unlawful killings and abductions. Yet, the body of Sailor is confiscated by the government so that the truths that Sarath and Anil have unburied are in danger of being silenced. During the

process in which Sarath and Anil attempt to protect Sailor, they revise their perspectives toward each other. Sarath initially considers Anil's diasporic female body as the body of an outsider: the body of "[a] girl insane, a druid in moonlight, a thief in oil" that he secretly watched from the dining room window (181). However, when Sarath watches Anil protesting in front of governmental and military officials, when he witnesses Anil's "quiet explanations, her surefootedness, her absolute calm and refusal to be emotional or angry," what he sees is "a lawyer's argument and, more important, a citizen's evidence" (271). Sarath listens to what Anil says: "I think you murdered hundreds of us. Hundred of us" (271). For Sarath, Anil is not a simple outsider. Anil's statement proves that "[f]ifteen years away and she is finally us" (271).

While Anil is investigated by the government, Sarath understands Anil's life and her research are in danger. He puts his life in jeopardy to provide a way for Anil to escape Sri Lanka with her evidence, Sailor. Without letting Anil know, Sarath, just before his torture and death, tracks down Sailor's body and delivers it back to her on the boat. Anil discovers a tape recorder secretly buried in the rib cavity of the body. Anil presses the button and listens to whispering voice of the dead Sarath who speaks uncannily through the dead body of Sailor (284). Sarath's "voice...is very clear and focused. He must have held the recorder close to his mouth as he whispered" (284). Anil is "listening to his voice again. Listening to everything again" (284). Sarath becomes Anil's ghost that repeatedly whispers to her, carrying personal as well as collective traumas. Sarath, who sacrifices his life for the historical truth and for the silenced victims, thus becomes the Christ-like figure is delivered to his brother Gamini, a

crucified Jesus in his brother's pieta whose death serves as a bridge between the home and the world in the hope of true communication. As the followers of Jesus keep His ghost in them, Anil and Ananda carry Sarath's ghost and possibly speak his story as a voice of the silenced victims in the nation.

Ondaatje concludes the novel by presenting a construction and reconstruction of two Buddha statues: the destroyed body of the Buddha statue that replaces the broken body. As this field of Buduruvagala is used as "a killing field or a burial ground" where the bodies of abducted victims are tortured, killed, and buried, Ananda first deals with the bodies by "tagging them, contacting civil rights authorities" (301). To rebuild the broken body, Ananda collects, divides and knits the broken pieces of the body of Buddha—the feet, the limbs, the hips, the torso between shoulders and neck to the head (302). Just as Ananda rebuilt the face of Sailor, he now recreates the face of god by bringing together "one hundred chips and splinters of stone" (303). He stares "the lidded grey eyes" that once belonged to a god (304).

The novel ends with the Netra Mangala ceremony where Ananda performs an eye painting ritual for the new Buddha statue. In this ritual, Ananda emerges as a medium-artist who mourns victims of the civil war. Ananda, who draws the eyes of Buddha, wears Sarath's cotton shirt as his expression of mourning as well as a mark of carrying the ghost. With Sarath's ghost in him, Ananda acquires doubleness of human sight and divine sight. Through human sight, he sees "all fibres of natural history" – "the smallest approach of a bird, every flick of its wing, or a hundred-mile storm coming down off the mountains" (307). His divine sight allows him to see another "angle of the

world,” revealing the moment of Sirissa’s death: “The tiniest of hearts in them beating exhausted and fast, the way Sirissa had died in the story he invented for her in the vacuum of her disappearance” (307). Ananda emerges as a medium for hybrid divinity—Christian and Buddhist—that connects the divine and the mundane, the living and the dead, and the home and the world. Ananda’s body becomes a dwelling place of Christ-like Sarath whose ghostly voice revisits the local and diasporic characters who carry his spirit. His body also holds the divine sights of the Buddha statue that resemble “the pure sad glance” that he finds in the “great scarred face” of the old Buddha statue as well as dead victims buried under worship places (307).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost*, the ghosts of Sailor and Sarath, the victims of political violence during the Sri Lankan Civil War, haunt postcolonial Sri Lanka as metonyms of collective national traumas. These ghostly figures emerge as subaltern ghosts, representing thousands of disappeared victims who were killed, buried and silenced during that time. In Keller's *Comfort Woman*, these subaltern ghosts appear as colonial female ghosts, those of Korean comfort women—sexual slaves for Japanese imperial armies during World War II. The former comfort woman Induk emerges as a collective body of the colonized female ghosts that haunt their female descendants—Soon Hyo/Akiko and her mixed-blooded Korean American daughter Beccah—requiring them to remember the communal past that has been excluded from national and colonial history. Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* portrays these subaltern ghosts as colonial and postcolonial subjects whose subalternities are variously manifested in their socio-political conditions of colonization, gender and class. These ghosts revisit the author as figures of colonized ancestors, war-victims, peasants, prostitutes, servants, mothers, and failed revolutionists who were victimized during India's traumatic history. Rushdie especially portrays the ghost of Joseph D'Costa as a radical communist who was expelled and murdered by the government due to his hatred of the rich and his dream of social revolution. The ghost of Joseph D'Costa brings to the present the hidden side of reality by revealing the secrets, crimes, guilt and desires of a family and a nation. As emblems of lost subaltern histories, these haunting ghosts not only reveal the empire's

and the nation's symptomatic failure to deal with such histories, but also resist the deliberate "forgetting" that constitutes unifying, hegemonic national and colonial historiography and identification.

These subaltern ghosts' haunting is not limited to literary works, but appears widely in cultural artistic productions. Just as writers make these phantom subjects of history speakable through language, visual artists offer audiences the multi-sensational experience of subaltern ghosts with images, sounds, materials and colors in their sculptural installations, paintings, performances, video clips, films, and jewellery art collections. Like Keller's novel, the Korean-American female artists' works—Yong Soon Min's *deCOLONIZATION* and *Remembering Jungshindae*, Soo Jin Kim's *Comfort Me*, and Miran Kim's *Comfort Women*—display various images of comfort women's ghosts and their haunting in order to represent the inherited memory and trauma of their homeland. Indian-origin artists Sutapa Biswas, Yatin Patel, Surekha and Reena Saini share the vision of "spectral India" with Rushdie, creating pictures of the nation as a liminal space haunted by the ghosts of traumatic national past. Sri Lankan local and global artists such as Bandu Manamperi, Janani Cooray, Pradeep Chandrasiri, R. Veidehi and Kali Arulpragasam manifest subaltern ghosts in their works as symbols of the historical trauma of the war as well as of an ethical burden that haunts the nation. These artists, like Ondaatje, attempt to create a space of aham-puram conversation on a national and transnational level based on their shared historical trauma.

These cultural practitioners present subaltern ghosts' haunting as a form of postmortem communication in which transactions take place between the speaker and

the listener, the dead and the living, the past and the present and the local and the global. In this communication, the writers and artists foreground spectral or wounded bodies as a focal point in their visual and verbal representations. Bodies serve as spaces of communication that not only convey the vulnerability and mortality of the human beings, but also lend tangibility to trauma, pain, suffering, and wounded psyches. Especially, in their representations of Asia's histories, lost, burnt and mutilated subaltern bodies emerge as markers of colonial and postcolonial violence, manifesting hidden personal and collective traumas. Keller's *Comfort Woman* and other visual art works show how female diasporic subjects imprint their collective traumas upon their female bodies as a basis for their shared histories and identities and how these bodies serve as sites for narrative strategies for an alternative transnational history. Just as Keller portrays intimate connections between Induk's spectral body, Akiko's shamanic body and Beccah's hybrid body to represent a generational haunting between colonial and postcolonial/transnational female characters, Min, Soo Jin Kim and Miran Kim memorialize colonial female ancestors' wounded and spectral bodies to construct a "transnational matrilineage" through which the Korean-American daughters convey the voices of the dead. Similarly, in the works of Rushdie and Indian-origin artists, hybrid, traumatized and spectral bodies become mediums of narratives, being metaphorically associated with India and Indian history. In Rushdie's novel, Saleem's traumatized body serves as a somatic medium that tastes, smells and feels trauma and history, enabling him to communicate with the ghosts of his ancestors and the survivors among the 1,000 midnight's children. His falling-apart body also dramatizes a spectral vision of the

nation, whose boundary is finally exploded by “the awful pressure of the crowd” of subaltern ghosts (533). These images of Spectral India are also manifested in Yatin Patel’s *Sutra*, Surekha’s *Skin Home*, Reena Saini Kallat’s *Falling Fables* and *Synonym* and Sutapa Biswas’s *Synapse* as fragmented or phantasmagoric images of haunted houses and spectral bodies that regenerate traceless traces of the people, objects, and monuments murdered and destroyed during traumatic historical events in postcolonial India. Ondaatje and Sri Lankan local and diasporic artists portray how dead bodies serve as a medium of conversation, linking the personal and the public, the past and the present, and the local and the global. Especially, they consider bodily scars and marks as sites for witnessing trauma, metaphorically connecting the disappeared bodies of the victims with the lost and silenced history of the oppressed. Just as Ondaatje’s novel manifests how fictional characters—Anil, Sarath, Ananda and Gamini—decipher the wounds and the dead bodies to excavate buried personal and collective history, so the works of Sri Lankan artists—Bandu Manamperi’s *Bandaged Barrel Man*, Janani Cooray’s *Pasting the Pieces*, Pradeep Chandrasiri’s *Broken Hands*, R. Vaidehi’s *Awaiting I and II* and Kali Arulpragasam’s *Murder Collection*—transform the bandaged, burnt, mutilated and tortured bodies into a readable history text that enables us to access Sri Lanka’s amnesiac history.

These communicative moments are often manifested as historical revelatory moments in which the haunted subjects can achieve historical insights—“knowing what has happened or is happening”—as “a transformative recognition” (Gordon 8). This revelatory moment reminds us of what Benjamin calls “Messianic Time,” when “the

revolution irrupts in the relationship within which subject and object, present and past, meet in a historical perception” (Lucero-Montano 8). The Asian cultural practitioners dramatize this moment as the moment of encounter when subaltern ghosts, in forms of martyred ghosts or Christ-like figure, meet the historical agents—often spiritual mediums or prophets—to illuminate a hidden historical truth, and a new idea of transnational identity and historiography. These encountering moments are often described as moments of salvation or healing as these subaltern ghosts display their wounded bodies as evidence that they are traumatized for the living. The works of Keller, Rushdie and Ondaatje clearly describe these revelatory moments with the irrupting images of the spectral wounded bodies. In Keller’s novel, Induk, whose body is skewered by a pole as a result of her resistance against the Japanese colonial atrocities, emerges as a martyred ghost or pseudo-Jesus figure that haunts the shamanic medium Soon Hyo/Akiko. By “seeing” Induk’s wounded body in her trance and by offering her own body to the ghost as its dwelling place, Soon Hyo/Akiko becomes a powerful historical agent who can offer a counter-history through the voices of the dead. In Rushdie’s novel, Joseph D’Costa’s spectral body that has “holes in his feet where the snake had bitten him” haunts Saleem’s family as the Christ-figure who suffers for the characters’ sins of the past (234). This ghost returns to the present as a bomb, a hidden force that compels the characters’ and nation’s destinies by revealing a hidden side of reality. The protagonist Saleem, as a successor of Joseph D’Costa, suffers from the sensation of a falling-apart body as he writes his autobiographical fiction. Ondaatje also brings Sarath, who sacrifices his life for the historical truth of the war victims. Sarath’s

tortured dead body is remembered and celebrated by his followers—Anil, Ananda and Gamini—who carry his spirit to deliver subaltern voices in the nation and the world. Keller's, Rushdie's and Ondaatje's metaphoric usages of subaltern ghosts show how Asian cultural producers desire to serve as a bridge between the generations, nations, as well as the West and the East in the hope of meaningful communication. These cultural producers attempt to offer a fuller understanding of Asia to the transnational world by presenting metaphors of wounded bodies in order to visualize fear, pain and suffering that Asian communities bear as the consequences of colonialism and its aftermath of violence.

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