

PLANETARY LOVES

Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology

EDITED BY STEPHEN D. MOORE

AND MAYRA RIVERA

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☛ Ghostly Encounters: Spirits, Memory, and the Holy Ghost

MAYRA RIVERA

I pray . . . to be haunted by her slight ghost.

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*

*And indeed He is the strangest
of the Three Persons,
the most estranged.*

*For the Holy Ghost is nakedly a ghost.
Father and Son may be masks
compassionately adapted
to our capacities, but
Person is not persona and
The Ghost is a ghost, no fiction.*
DONALD DAVIE, "The Comforter"

I confess that my interest in haunting has not always been theological. The trope, if not the sense, of being haunted has for me the distinct traces of writers such as Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, and Isabel Allende, to name just a few. Their ghostly narratives exemplify modes of witness in which the past is both ungraspable and unavoidable, haunting the imaginations of subjects who do not neutralize this ambiguity.¹ I think, for instance, of Allende's *Of Love and Shadows*—a story set during the days following the coup against Salvador Allende on September 11, 1973, which bears witness to the defeat of democratic accomplishments in Chile, to the systematic

assassinations and disappearance of citizens. In the story, the protagonist, like the author, is haunted by the events narrated: by vanished hopes as well as vanished bodies.² The memory of these images has something to do with the fact that now, many years later, I'm inspired by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's engagement with ghostly narratives and drawn back to the spirits—intrigued not so much by this or that particular ghost, as by the very structure of haunting and its theological reverberations.

Haunted by the twentieth-century legacy of massive unjust deaths, contemporary culture is crowded with narratives of ghostly encounters. Vanished hopes and vanished bodies are invoked in literary pages and memorial stones, in fictional accounts and historical archives, as we try to envision a different, and seemingly impossible, future. As part of this effort to respond to the past, postcolonial studies—whose "post" marks not a simple departure from the colonial past but the space of questioning—explores the intervals in and between history and narration. This cultural practice entails not merely a different reading or appropriation of history but an investigation of the very dynamics of remembrance: the possibilities and limits of a relation to the past and the responsibilities bestowed by an encounter with its ghosts.

One would expect Christian theology to be well equipped to encounter ghosts. Not only does Christianity proclaim the presence of a Galilean Jew, executed millennia ago, but it even names the agent of Christian traditioning the "Holy Ghost."³ However, spectrality is not what a Christian theologian consciously conjures up when speaking of the Holy Ghost. We cannot claim that mainline Christian theology has been particularly hospitable to the ungraspable and uncontrollable character of haunting. To the contrary, one is likely to be advised against the use of the term Holy Ghost, in order to avoid such spooky associations.⁴ Especially since the Reformation, theology has tried to exorcise the presumed lower spirits. In accord with the Reformation's "general devaluation of the numinous" and its banishing of intermediate beings expressed in the attack on and official rejection of the doctrine of purgatory, theology has eloquently claimed that its Holy Ghost is completely unlike other ghosts, of a different substance entirely.⁵ The Holy Ghost is now seen simply as the third *person* of a wholly divine trinity. In its most common depictions, where it appears as a coherent, timeless presence, the Holy Ghost seems to share nothing in common with those other spirits that haunt the writers I just mentioned. For those spirits, historical time matters, even as they represent the very disturbance of linear

progression. Although the Holy Ghost is depicted in respected theological sources as a figure of relationality⁶—and thus could also be an image of *temporal* relationships—the power of memory has not figured prominently in theological descriptions of the spirit.

This essay reimagines the Holy Ghost in its relation to memories of suppressed pasts as well as unrealized possibilities, inspired by Spivak's discussions of history, ancestors, and memory, in which she invokes the theologically provocative figure of the ghost. After a brief glance at contemporary theoretical debates about the need and viability of remembrance that characterize the cultural moment of the present exploration, we turn to the Bible in search of the Holy Ghost. The Bible offers a diversity of images for the spirit(s)—some of them inspire prophetic boldness, while others are morally ambiguous, or even threatening.⁷ To focus on the relationships between the ghosts, memory, and the Holy Ghost, I rely on the Gospel of John's depictions of an almost-dead Jesus in his close connection with the Holy Ghost. Tracing the unique appearances of this Ghost in John reveals the complexity and irreducible multiplicity of its origins and can help us perceive a multitude of other ghosts, ancient and current, whose appearance may teach us something about the future.

HUNGER OF MEMORY

The dead speak, certainly, who would measure their ambiguity?

ASSIA DJEBAR, "*The Dead Speak*"

Our society is intensely preoccupied with the past, with its preservation and transmission in memory. Vows never to forget, museums and memorials sites, and public apologies for the wrongs of the past are all part of the contemporary cultural scene. A "hunger of memory"⁸ and a pronounced interest in memorializing contrast with future-oriented ideals that have sought salvation in a total break with the past—the kind of narrative exemplified by Friedrich Nietzsche's oft-quoted statement, "against time and its 'it was,' that alone I call salvation."⁹ Today such gestures against the "it was" are likely to be dismissed as naively ignoring the inescapable weight of the past and its demands. Indeed, the prominence of memory in contemporary culture is often read as a symptom of the uncontrollable return of that which future-obsessed ideologies tended to repress: a troubling, but no longer avoidable, reckoning with the past. The demanding memories of

the past—of its horrors and failures—seem to mock the triumphalism of modernity.

The intense concern with memory that we experience can also be understood as a symptom of anxiety affecting a culture that cannot hold on to the present long enough, let alone resist the threat of "socially produced amnesia," as Andreas Huyssen argues.¹⁰ We yearn for the past as we see the present reduced to fleeting moments, instants that turn obsolete at stupefying speed; "finance capital is moving at the speed of mind, at the rate of data," as Spivak remarks.¹¹ W. G. Sebald notes: "[E]verything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life. . . . [T]he world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on."¹² This sense of living in a world of fleeting experiences intensifies the perceived need for memorializing. Alongside the perceptions of a "vanishing present" emerge multiple and conflicting attempts to summon the past, to conjure dead ancestors, as well as countless witnesses claiming to be haunted.

But turning to the past has never been a simple solution. Such efforts are always affected by undeniable loss; the paths are uncertain and the effects ambiguous. The past calls, but we do not know how to respond: What kind of relationship is possible, or desirable? What can bearing witness to the past possibly mean when it is instigated by loss, by absence, marked by uncertainty?

Exhortations to remember and efforts to preserve and transmit memories do not necessarily recognize the problems entailed in dealing with its legacies. All too often disciplinary and cultural claims to retrieve the past tend to consolidate it as an object of knowledge or as a cultural commodity. Spivak's interrogations of such engagements with the past are woven through her explorations of history as well as her readings of literature. In the chapter on history in *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, Spivak observes that the discussions in that field regarding the relationship between archive and literature, history and language, represent a needed challenge to the hegemonic historiographies that "designated the archives as a repository of 'facts.'"¹³ However, a critical approach to the archival should not imply a mere methodological reversal to privilege literary criticism over historical research. Instead, a careful engagement with "history" should seek to uncover the complicity between literature and the archives, for the production of colonial archives was itself a "construction of a fiction whose task

was to produce a whole collection of 'effects of the real.'"¹⁴ The process of narration implicates the narrator: "The colonizer constructs himself as he constructs the colony."¹⁵ This intimate relationship between the narrator and the documented history is colonialism's "open secret," "one that cannot be part of official knowledge."¹⁶ The effects of the real thus created and the pitfalls of its processes of narration still haunt us.

Desire for an intimate relationship with the past seduces contemporary retrievals of history. Assuming that the past can become a "past present" we may imagine history as "a genealogy of the historian" thus repeating the colonial practice of constructing the self by constructing the other.¹⁷ Such stances fail to recognize the past as wholly Other, Spivak argues. We may recognize the tendency, and the temptation, to assume a position of "sanctioned authority" to construct the past as our own genealogy, not only in the production of historical texts, but in the broader appeals to collective memory in identity discourses.

Remembrance is threatened by the tendency to objectify the past or construe history as a foundation of reified identities and hypercertainties. As Spivak warns us, references to "one's own hallucinatory heritage for the sake of the politics of identitarian competition" can lead to claims of authority founded on a stabilized memory or to the privatization of history.¹⁸ Furthermore, when references to the past promote illusions of certainty, the imperative to remember can ensnare subjects or collectivities in histories of violence. The manipulation of collective memories to justify violence is a (regrettably) familiar strategy, manifest, for instance, as invocations of authorized narratives as "memory" to rally political aggression against other states (as in the case of the U.S. government's uses of the tragedies of 9/11) or against sectors of the population blamed for past aggressions (as in so-called "sectarian violence"). In such cases, objectified memories become the justification for the displaced repetition of past violence. The blood of the martyrs is fetishized to fuel the shedding of more blood.

Keenly aware of the unavoidable difficulties and ambiguities of any efforts to relate to the past and to do justice to its legacy, Spivak warns her readers against seeking the sanctioned authority to fully represent the past. She proposes imagining the relation to the past as a "ghostly agency of haunting."¹⁹ Further she invites us to "pray to be haunted" by the other's "slight ghosts."²⁰ The metaphor of prayer—an unexpected gift for a theological reading—aptly conveys the methodological shift being proposed: prayer locates agency not in the authority of the narrator, but in the relation to

the Other. A prayer implies the possibility of a response from the Other—a response that is never within the control of the one who prays. Thus, prayer is not a pure origin, but simultaneously a witness to having been called—haunted—and an expression of hope for something still to come.

The "ghostly agency of haunting" thus defies predictable chronologies, calling attention to the "irreducible 'out-of-jointness'"²¹ of time. The distinction between this interruptive structure of haunting and the objectifying allusions to the past described above is represented in fiction as a contrast between "traumatic" and "narrative" memory, as Kathleen Brogan describes them. "While traumatic memory is rigidly inflexible, marked by pure repetition, narrative memory—essentially a social act—can be 'adapted to present circumstances.'"²² Traumatic memory and the dangers of inadequate relationships with the past—those that seduce the subject into pure repetition—are dramatized in stories of "possession," which, Brogan argues, should be read as "cautionary tales about the proper function of memory."²³ Possession is the result of the failure to acknowledge the necessary distance from and otherness of the past—a past that cannot be fully present.²⁴ Assia Djebar's "The Dead Speak" expresses this process by asserting that the role of the one who accompanies the dead is to "meticulously reestablish the distances" and "reevaluate the relationships": necessary steps to make possible the emergence of new relationships.²⁵ Just as the agency of haunting displaces the boundaries of the subject—both haunted and praying to be haunted—the unpredictable apparition of the ghost troubles the stability of the frontiers between the past, present, and future. The "present" is exposed to its others, but not possessed by them.

Although narratives of haunting are often associated with traumatic experiences, memory cannot be reduced to horror and trauma. While facing the traumatic legacy of our history is indispensable to "imagine the future and to regain a strong temporal and spatial grounding of life and imagination," memory discourses are also concerned with the future. Collective practices of remembrance may attempt not only to protect the past from oblivion, but also to provide spaces to allow for "individuals to break off traumatic repetitions"²⁶ as well as to reencounter past promises. Spivak conjures up not only the spirits of those victimized by violence but also of those ancestors whose visions of the future were impossible in their own times. Moving beyond exploring how the colonial past continues to haunt the present, Spivak's work asks what kinds of relationships with the past may open new possibilities and what kinds of memory practices avoid the reinscription of

“mere history,” exhorting us to imagine a “counterfactual possible world.”²⁷ Spivak’s readings of Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, Assia Djebar’s *Far from Medina*, and José Martí’s *Our America*, among others, exemplify such a mode of reading (and of relating to the past).²⁸ In these readings, Spivak focuses on the hopes that the authors imagine beyond their own lives. Although such ghostly encounters cannot “‘work’ as the guarantee of a future present,” they might be “the only way to go at moments of crisis; to surrender to undecidability (since the ‘agent’ is the ancestral ghost, without guarantee) as the condition of possibility of responsible decision, to transform religion into militancy.”²⁹ The witness that arises from the experiences of haunting is thus infused with the “humility of the imagination” rather than the certainty of proven facts: witness inspired and always to be supplemented by scholarship.³⁰

There are deep resonances between the anticipatory structure of haunting described in Spivak’s readings and the messianic structures of Jewish and Christian thought, as reimagined in Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* and further elaborated in readings of that book—including Spivak’s own.³¹ As a way of reading that seeks to listen and respond to ancestral ghosts—without guarantee, but inspired by their insistent challenges and elusive hope—haunting suggests further connections with, and possibilities for, a theology of memory and spirit that responds to the challenges arising from postmodern cultures’ hunger of memory. Seeking the ancestral voice of a Christian spirit of memory, I turn—in the anachronistic fashion that suits ghostly encounters—from twenty-first-century concerns to a first-century gospel story that bears witness to its own preoccupations with memory. Rereading that narrative’s disturbed chronology and its ghostly presences and promises we reencounter its unique portrayal of the Holy Ghost as spirit of memory and truth.

JOHN’S GHOSTS

The Gospel of John gives a prominent place to remembrance, which it associates closely with the Spirit; it wrestles explicitly with the problems of its legacy, emphasizing its own retrospective perspective more than any of the Synoptics.³² Completed at some temporal distance from the life of Jesus, and possibly benefiting from other gospel narratives, it is often accused of treating the received traditions with astonishing freedom. Yet its frequent references to memories of the past and its allusions to remembrances that

will only become possible in the future, attest to the gospel’s interest in the power of recollection (*anamnesis*). All of this adds significance to the fact that the gospel introduces a distinctive characterization of the Spirit as a facilitator of memory. John’s Spirit is divine companionship experienced as a kind of remembrance, indeed, as the very possibility of relating to the past. In Jesus’ absence, the Holy Ghost—tellingly named also “the spirit of truth”—will be present among a collectivity-to-come, and will help its members recall what they have heard and seen (John 14:26). Of course, the readers of the gospel have not themselves heard or seen Jesus in the flesh, but they may still be haunted by the events narrated, even when others do not seem to recognize the ghost.

The gospel’s allusions to memory are not limited to the catastrophic event of Jesus’ death, as we shall see. Yet the colonial realities that affected the text’s author(s) and first readers may have influenced the prominence given to death in the story. Such is Tat-siong Benny Liew’s reading of the role of death in John.³³ He observes that in colonial contexts, the colonized might be reduced to what he calls, following Giorgio Agamben, “bare life.” Under such circumstances, the possibility of death becomes an ever-present aspect of life. Liew theorizes that John’s gospel both reflects and attempts to subvert the economy of death that affected its community. Read through the lenses of the real, imminent threats to John’s community, the story’s recurrent references to death suggest links with cultural narratives of haunting such as characterized above, where groups wrestle with their “inheritance of loss.”³⁴ In the case of John, the stark realities of bare life, as Liew describes them, may serve as warnings against the temptation to swiftly absorb the gospel’s spectral images into a domesticated, ahistorical Spirit—even if that tendency were found in the gospel itself.

The Greek word that John uses for the spirit is *parakletos*. Although there has been a lot of speculation about the genealogy of this peculiar word, its origin remains uncertain. *Parakletos* was originally understood as “comforter” or “advocate,” but the term is not used in any of the other gospels, and was simply transliterated in early translations of the New Testament as “Paraclete.”³⁵ In other words, we don’t really know where this “ghost” came from! We do know, however, that the Paraclete/Spirit is closely related to Jesus: it descended upon Jesus at his baptism (and “remained on him”—1:32) and will be “among” Jesus’ followers and “in” them. The Paraclete resembles Jesus, who even refers to it as the “other Paraclete” (14:16), presumably implying that Jesus is also a Paraclete. But the Paraclete is also not Jesus

and will not come until Jesus' death. The close identification between Jesus and this peculiarly fluid Paraclete character offers a key to interpreting John's image of the Holy Ghost.

The Fourth Gospel's "postresurrection" narratives are irresistible sites for a reading of ghostly encounters.³⁶ Yet, even before those ghostly scenes, the gospel exhibits symptoms of haunting; temporal disjuncture is one of those symptoms. Biblical scholars have often observed that throughout the farewell discourse of John's gospel "the temporal focus seems to shift constantly." Indeed, "the whole farewell discourse is out of place in the progression of narrative time." It is, in fact, "an 'anachrony.'"³⁷ It is possible to perceive signs of temporal disjuncture even before that point in the narrative, where the gospel is strangely inhabited by moments that do not belong to its time, perhaps belong to no time at all, subverting the linear progression of the story. The gospel famously begins by narrating another beginning, beyond the confines of the Fourth Gospel itself: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1). It begins by alluding to other creation stories (those of Genesis and Proverbs). The beginning of the story—a story that is already a community's remembrance—is a repetition of other beginnings and of other scriptural proclamations of beginning, of fall into darkness, of the failures of creation as it was expected to be.³⁸ The beginning also anticipates the gospel's story and that which the story proclaims is still to come.

If the temporal dislocations of the Johannine prologue leave the reader perplexed, this effect is only intensified by subsequent scenes, including those in which the very characters of the story seem unable to keep the boundaries between past and present straight. John the Baptist had been sent by God. John was preparing the way for someone who would come after him, but who was nonetheless before him (1:30). John had been waiting, preparing, anticipating the coming of another. John did not know who that other was (1:26), but he did know that the Spirit would rest upon him: the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of truth. In other words, John preceded Jesus and followed him. John himself was confused with another one, with Elijah (1:21), who had come before and was expected to return. Jesus is met with similar puzzlement: Is he a prophet who has returned? Or is he the one who had been calling from the future, the one who would come? *Revenant? Arrivant?* How can we tell the difference?

The temporal complexity of the Fourth Gospel is not settled after the first part of the gospel clarifies (puzzlingly) Jesus' identity as the one who

would come. The disciples keep failing to understand. However, after Jesus is gone, they will remember and finally understand, the gospel repeats (2:22, 12:16, 14:26). Presumably, the words of Jesus, perhaps Jesus himself, will come to haunt them. But will they not be puzzled again, uncertain about whether he comes from the past or the future? Are such uncertainties in the face of the past not intrinsic to what remembering means and will mean?

Despite the uncertainties dramatized in the disciples' struggles to understand the relationship between their present and past experiences, Jesus reassures them (and the readers) that remembering is sustained by the Holy Ghost. Yet the (other) Paraclete will not come until Jesus dies (John 15:26, 16:7, 8, 13). And as the narrative approaches the point of transition, when the spirit of memory comes to live among them, a ghostly aura sets in. Not that such a narrative quality is completely unexpected; Jesus had already made some spooky remarks, such as: "I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. . . . On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you" (14:19). The statement "you in me and I in you," repeated throughout the gospel, is hardly a straightforward piece of information. Its disseminative force can unsettle the seemingly solid boundaries of identity set by the Johannine Jesus' "I am" sayings just as the scenes of Jesus' postresurrection apparitions unsettle the boundaries of identity between Jesus and the "other Paraclete." Indeed, the "I am" shall be interpreted in the light of "you are in me and I am in you."

The Jesus that appears to the disciples in the "postresurrection" scenes has distinctively ghostly features: he appears (or reappears) as the one who departed. Jesus had been unjustly executed. After he gave up his spirit, his friends diligently procured the body, wrapped it with spices in linen cloths, and placed it in a nearby tomb.³⁹ Jesus' friends had thus taken the first steps toward distancing themselves from the living Jesus and from a past shared with him: burying him, remembering him in a way made possible only by death. However, that which had made that distance appear as an absolute separation—the stone closing off the tomb—would not be in place for too long.

It is Mary Magdalene who first comes to Jesus. But her work of mourning is interrupted. For mourning is tied, Jacques Derrida observes, to attempts to "ontologize remains, to make them present, in the first place by identifying the bodily remains and by localizing the dead."⁴⁰ And Jesus' body had not stayed in place. And "nothing could be worse, for the work of mourning,

than confusion or doubt."⁴¹ Mary sees that Jesus is no longer there; in fact, both the stone and the body of Jesus are no longer in place: a negative apparition, as it were. But with the separating stone removed, Jesus is unrecognizably "there," elsewhere and otherwise; their relationship has changed.

Summoned by Mary Magdalene to the empty tomb, John and Peter saw and believed—even though we cannot be sure just what they believed, because we are told that they still "did not understand the scripture" (20:8). Meanwhile, Mary wept. I am tempted to imagine the disciples' apparent ease of "belief" as a forward-moving attitude (as if following the advice to move swiftly "against time and its 'it was'"⁴²), impatient with Mary's slowness and her need for a time for mourning. It is perhaps hard to conclude, as Ernest Renan did, that Mary's tears were able to effect Jesus' resurrection, but they at least seem to have brought about a transformed vision.⁴³ The fact is that it is only after Mary's mournful tears that she is able to recognize Jesus, whom she had previously mistaken for a gardener. Thus the story seems to confirm Fredric Jameson's observation, that "only mourning, and its particular failures and dissatisfactions . . . opens a vulnerable space and entry-point through which ghosts make their appearance."⁴⁴

This gardener-looking Jesus—a body conspicuously linked to the earth, to dust⁴⁵—is evidently not quite the same person that they had known and followed. "There is something disappeared, departed in the apparition itself, as reapparition of the departed."⁴⁶ As Jesus' relationship with his disciples is reconfigured, the absolute separation marked by the stone is replaced by a more intimate, if elusive, boundary: Jesus' own body. Jesus cannot be grabbed: "Do not hold on to me," he says, "because I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17). The relationship between Mary and Jesus has changed, and Jesus' body exhibits the ungraspable nature of his now spectral presence. Mary's witness will not translate into solid evidence.

Jesus' ghostly body appears again, this time to the other disciples. While the disciples are locked inside a house, Jesus, presumably walking through the wall, appears in their midst. "Peace be with you," he simply says. But this time he directs their attention to the marks of the trauma that preceded the encounter: he shows them "his hands and his side" (20:20). The wounds in Jesus' body are traced on the pages of a text that, as Liew suggests, is in turn responding to life in the death zone of colonialism by inscribing and describing it. The surprisingly fluid materiality of a body that is undeterred by closed doors is nonetheless indelibly marked by history—and so are the

readers haunted by his story. In this scene, it is only after revealing the wounds in his admittedly strange body that his disciples are able to recognize him. Jesus' wounds, like Mary's tears, open a "vulnerable space" for the apparition.

The not-quite-solidly-embodied Jesus breathes the Holy Ghost on the disciples and they are sent forth. From this point onward the Spirit of truth will help future followers remember. The Spirit will further allow the disciples to forgive and to refuse to forgive—a power inextricable from that of memory. Yet this is hardly a simple narrative ending. There are other appearances: another recorded walk through walls not only to show the wounds but to have them *ouched* by the still doubtful Thomas; and many other unrecorded ones, according to John (20:30; 21:25). The encounters spill over the limits of the canonical memory—necessarily and unpredictably.

The qualities of the promised comforter, the *other* Paraclete, are not unlike those of a ghost—or a spectral Jesus. It is experienced "lightly, yet in the most tangible of ways, given and known as the lightest possible touch, the movement of air by the body."⁴⁷ Karmen MacKendrick's reading of this text's subtle image of inspiration, suggests a delicate balance between freedom and will, where each of the (ghostly) encounters affords the follower just what she or he needs to sustain her or him. "Each of the faithful is drawn into a curious combination of presence and absence. . . . No one comprehends Christ, no one has proof; each has exactly enough to sustain faith." The disciples find "faith rather than proof, the memory of contact rather than the grasp of vision."⁴⁸ Revelations of empty tombs, an ungraspable earthy body recognizable through teary eyes and felt in its woundedness: these do not add up to material evidence. Yet the mysterious quality of a ghostly body is too often replaced by straight arguments for hyperpresence predicated on both Jesus and the knowledge gained through the agency of the Holy Ghost—solid knowledge that replaces spectral memory. Still, despite its admittedly triumphant tone, and the subsequent exorcism to which it has been subjected, the gospel's witness is marked by a vital prohibition: "Do not hold on to me."

John's Jesus is not the Holy Ghost, yet his self-representation as the other Paraclete reminds the reader of the continuity between the process of remembering Jesus and the agency of the Holy Ghost. In the stories of postresurrection encounters, when Jesus inhabits the "seam between past and present,"⁴⁹ between life and death, he appears like a specter: "a phenomenal and carnal form of the spirit."⁵⁰ As a specter, Jesus materializes the

disciples' past. Or perhaps the ghostly Jesus is "just the sign, or the empirical evidence if you like, that tells you a haunting is taking place."⁵¹ The apparitions reveal a way of remembrance. Recalling the apparitions, committing the stories to writing, the gospel also points to other encounters, unrecorded, beyond the text. I imagine these encounters as sharing with the ones recorded a structure of remembrance: resisting the temptation to objectify the past or bypass the work of mourning, transgressing strict boundaries between the present and the past, reconfiguring relationships while remaining faithful to the marks of history, even to those that do not translate into solid evidence.

The Spirit of truth comes forth from a wounded body—a Spirit that is also said, at the beginning of the gospel, to have rested upon this man. A Spirit flows from the returning departed to send forth the disciples. Thus the narrative ends with another beginning, a repetition that is also a first time. Other singularly wounded bodies witness spectral visitations, from multitudes of wounded, departed ones. As Liew suggests, "John ends by foregrounding his corpus as but traces of the departed. . . . Our attention is turned away from the corpus back to . . . the corpses."⁵² Or perhaps our attention turns not simply to the lifeless body, but to the ghosts and their hopes—from a departed one to multitudes of ghosts, to bear witness, to be witnesses who, still refusing to see gravestones as markers of absolute separation, are called and sent forth.

INCALCULABLE VISITATIONS FROM THE PAST

There is no inheritance without a call to responsibility.

JACQUES DERRIDA, *Specters of Marx*

Millennia later, inheritors of the gospels continue to be haunted, to pray to be haunted by the spirit that rested upon Jesus. The Spirit? Spirits? Apparitions recorded and unrecorded. Among the inheritors of the gospel, and of their calls to responsibility, we place "political theologians" who, challenged to respond to the monstrous death and unbearable disappointments that marked the twentieth century, returned to the narrative of the crucified one in an attempt to remember toward a different future. Seeking the memory of Jesus, political theologians tried to open a space in Christian theology for other memories and other ancestors, to listen to the forgotten dead and be haunted by their witness. Although they were not invoking the figure of the Holy Ghost, these theologies located memory, suffering, and narration

at the very heart of Christian theology.⁵³ Their work, like a work of mourning, opened vulnerable spaces for apparitions, conjuring memories of the departed one, inviting ghosts to show their wounds and proclaim messianic hopes.

The term "dangerous memories," coined by Johann Baptist Metz and adopted by many liberation theologians, is emblematic of theologies that sought to articulate the relationship between the memory of the crucified Jesus, a "*particular memoria passionis*," and the "memory of suffering accumulated through history."⁵⁴ Such memories are perceived as much more than reminders of victimization; they make demands on us: "they flare up and unleash new dangerous insights for the present," breaking through prevailing structures of plausibility.⁵⁵ Dangerous memories are sources of power to sustain a political imagination that can resist absorption into the restrictive grasp of economic-technological controls.⁵⁶

Memory appears as "dangerous and *incalculable visitations from the past*" with a "future content"⁵⁷—suggesting a temporality consonant with the anachronism of haunting described above. As Metz describes it, Christian memory resists the presumed linear progression from the past to a predictable future. Indeed, the history of human suffering is not a preamble to a history of freedom, but an inner aspect of it.⁵⁸ Time is here not teleological, but eschatological.⁵⁹ The call to respond to both "the sufferings and hopes of the past and the challenge of the dead" entails "not only a revolution that will change the things of tomorrow for future generations, but a revolution that will decide anew the meaning of our dead and their hopes," Metz asserts.⁶⁰ This would be a transformation of the imaginary not unlike what Spivak calls, following Derrida, a "teleiopoetic imagination"—a relation to past witnesses that bears a messianic structure, "affecting the distant other," "future companions," "unknowingly, with no guarantees."⁶¹ In contrast to attempts to invoke biblical narratives in order to set limits to theological memory, Metz's statement suggests an inherent openness of both the past and the future which call for new decisions.⁶² Theology thus conceived entails "creative remembering" grounded in a re-understanding of history in which "vanquished and forgotten *possibilities* of human existence—to which we give the name 'death'—will neither be revoked nor sublated by the course of future history."⁶³ The "contra-factual" faith of a theology stirred by the past into creative remembering toward a future is necessarily open-ended. Its goal is "opening up of a liminary time into a counterfactual possible world"—Spivak's description of haunting.⁶⁴

Theological appeals to “dangerous memories” may, however, be tempted to lose sight of the unrealized hopes and the agency implicit in “creative remembering” by focusing exclusively on suffering and victimization.⁶⁵ An exclusive emphasis on victimization may objectify the remembered past as facts obsessively repeated—a danger that may have affected even John’s uses of memory. In Liew’s reading, the Gospel of John ultimately fails to escape the colonial logic of death in and against which it struggled.⁶⁶ The text’s obsession with death and its sacrificial logic, he argues, was locked in destructive repetitions—not unlike that described by narratives of possession I referred to above. To avoid falling into the regressive patterns that affect so many appeals to memory, theology needs to recognize that it “acts contra-factually,” as Metz observes. An ethical relationship with history avoids attempting to assimilate the past as an “object of knowledge” or to shield it from time. As Kwok Pui-lan argues, “The historical imagination”—out of which postcolonial theologies are constructed—“aims not only to reconstitute the past, but also to release it so that the present is livable.”⁶⁷ Distance is necessary in order for new relationships to emerge. Spivak offers an enticing image: in the process of narration a “fissure can open in what is merely ‘history,’ and the ghost can dance in the fault.”⁶⁸ The ghost dance describes the movement of that relationship with the past that does not objectify it as “mere history,” but opens it to that which is yet to come.

Read through the lenses of the haunting, what Metz describes as “incalculable visitations from the past”⁶⁹ can assume the image of ghostly appearances that may “say something about what to do with the future.”⁷⁰ Haunting, as Spivak uses the trope, resonates with Metz’s interest in conjuring vanquished possibilities, interpreted as “an attempt to establish ethical relationships with history as such.”⁷¹ Yet haunting evokes a less determining structure than Metz’s phrase “future content” suggests, thus avoiding the positivist implications of predictions that have at times shadowed liberation theology’s appeal to the reign of God. Even in its indeterminacy as a structure, however, haunting shares the anticipatory aim of political theologies. Haunting further highlights how such relationships with dead ancestors or forgotten possibilities overflow the boundaries of strictly rationalistic explanations.⁷²

Haunting necessarily exceeds the conventional boundaries of theological discourse, as the specters thus conjured cannot be kept inside or outside dogmatic walls. Indeed, as Marcella Althaus-Reid suggests, popular discourses in Latin America have often seen the transgressive appearances of

spectral visitations from the past. The “sense of displacement and destruction” in Latin America has “produced a ghostly conviviality of simultaneous religious and economic signs,” Althaus-Reid observes. “Basically in Latin America people die hard. There is a political tradition of rebellious bodies in the popular discourse of justice that . . . displaces death and life alongside issues of justice. In Argentina, for instance, our dead usually refuse to die. Instead of resting in peace they struggle to resurrect at any inconvenient time, either completely or partially.”⁷³ The chaotic and disruptive character of this ghostly multitude cannot be gathered neatly as a body of evidence to found reified identities and hypercertainties—religious or political. Thus, while I have referred to the Gospel of John to trace the emergence of a memory-facilitating Holy Ghost, I try to resist the temptation to gather all suffering, all memory, and every single spirit under one event (or one figure) in isolation from others. Remaining faithful to “dangerous memories” entails acknowledging their plurality and irreducible ambiguity. Theology must not obliterate the uncertainties of the constructive theological process—or its risks. Witness, we must ever remind ourselves, is the result of being haunted by spirits, rather than possessing them.

SPIRIT DANCING IN THE FAULT

So you are my witnesses, declares the Lord. And I am God [Isaiah 43.12]. That is, if you are my witness, I am God, and if you are not my witness, I am, as it were, not God.

SIFRE DEUTERONOMY 346, Finkelstein edition

The spectral memory that I have tried to summon up in this short exploration of the Gospel of John is necessarily hybrid, not appearing independently from the well-known metaphysical statements of the gospel, but contaminating them. Its witness is thus marked by the uncertainties of remembrance even as it continues to be stirred by a longing to relate to the past, calling on the Spirit for help to remember the events narrated. The gospel’s depictions of the Holy Ghost, like its witnesses, are unfinished. Being inextricably linked to the memories of the departed, the Holy Ghost bears the marks of its relations to death and loss. This Holy Ghost appears as a figure of the divine at the fissures of history, conjured up to comfort or advise those visited by ghosts. It is a spirit among worldly ghosts.⁷⁴

In this theology, the Holy Ghost names the divine in the relationships with the past, with ancestors, and with their ever multiple inheritances. It

is not a thing that can be determined by ontological definitions or abstracted from the complexities of history, but we can nevertheless call it *divine*, inasmuch as it saves possibilities of the past. This image of the divine at the interstices of history is not a figure of synthesis that reduces the alterity and plurality of the past or of ancestral memory. According to the biblical witness, the arrival of the Holy Ghost sparks multiple, dissonant voices to speak in tongues. Thus the Holy Ghost would not replace cacophony with univocity, for it is not a figure of presence, but of the quickening that continues to infuse divine breath in what may otherwise be mere history, only dust. We may indeed call it the Spirit of truth that blows from the past, appearing occasionally as/in spectral bodies to incite memory and enliven hope.

Animating ghosts to dance in the faults of history, or of ontology, the Holy Ghost incites those still alive to become witnesses. Without such witnesses there is no dance—and, as it were, no God. It is perhaps the lure of the ghost dance that draws readers to texts, to the rhythmic motions of reading and the never-ending task of interpretation. Indeed, Christian theologies have, throughout the centuries, claimed that any reading of scripture must happen “in the Spirit.” Inheriting the gospels, as well as the practices of reading of Jewish, Christian, and pagan ancestors, biblical exegetes credit the Holy Ghost not only as the agent that makes possible interpretation—consistent with its role as agent of memory—but also as the one who lures them into that role. In the practice of reading, through calling on the Holy Ghost, texts become sites of multiple meanings, beyond the purview of the author. The reader enters the dance. As Liew describes the task, “In memory of John’s memory of Jesus, we must not only recall but also rework what John has written.”⁷⁵ Spivak’s assertion that hauntology is a name for reading resonates with the narrative text(tile) of Christian interpretation.⁷⁶

The possibility of establishing relationships with the past assumes a cosmology that exceeds postmodern culture’s vision of a world constantly draining itself as its objects lapse into oblivion, for in this theology the past is not simply nothing. An inspirited cosmology, where the incalculable past may still visit the present and the dead may speak, implies a nonreductionist view of history and of worldly life. Such a world must be conceived beyond the limits of reason alone, and beyond the calculation of global capital. This is perhaps a theological translation of Spivak’s planetarity. This theology of the Holy Ghost conceives the cosmos, like planetarity, as open toward a

space of detranscendentalized alterity. While resisting the idealistic dreams of otherworldly existence, this view also seeks to avoid the objectifying and totalizing tendencies of rationalism; it finds alterity in history, agency in the quite Other. Imagining this world without literalizing ghostly figures in closed metaphysical systems would be the risky but unavoidable task of theology.⁷⁷

As we conjure dreams of planetary love and justice, the Holy Ghost might become a theological figure of that relationship with the past that embraces in humility memory’s irreducible uncertainties. This theology of the Holy Ghost affirms the divine implicated in the possibility and the processes of remembrance. Such an image would need to remember the multiplicity of spirits and the “specific corporeality of the ghost[s] . . . in the current global conjuncture,” to quote Spivak once more.⁷⁸ Attuned to the voices of particular ancestors, it would also recognize the cosmic web in which history and memory are inscribed. Resisting the homogenizing force of the single ontological persona and moving beyond its anthropocentric images, the relationality of the Holy Ghost extends to a plurality of ancestors, some of whom do not bear human forms. The Holy Ghost also dances among the nonhuman victims of ecological genocide; their ghosts may visit us as we seek to imagine a different future for this planet. The Holy Ghost inhabits the fissures of a planetary past that cannot be reduced to human history. May we pray to be haunted.

91. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.
92. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, 82.
93. *Ibid.*, 97.
94. Robert Gooding-Williams, *Look, A Negro! Philosophical Essays on Race, Culture, and Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 107-8.
95. Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, 74; emphasis mine.
96. David Kyuman Kim, *Melancholic Freedom: Agency and the Spirit of Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 77.
97. Jacques Derrida, *Demeure: Fiction and Testimony*, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 31.
98. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 5.
99. Spivak, Afterword to *Imaginary Maps*, by Devi, 201.
100. Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*, 86.

GHOSTLY ENCOUNTERS: SPIRITS, MEMORY,
AND THE HOLY GHOST | MAYRA RIVERA

The epigraph poem is "The Comforter," by Donald Davie, from *Collected Poems* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 412-13. My thanks to Joe Driskill for sharing this poem with me.

1. Sandra Cisneros commented in a lecture in 1986, "If I were asked what it is I write about I would have to say I write about those ghosts inside that haunt me, that will not let me sleep, of that which even memory does not like to mention." Sandra Cisneros, "Ghosts and Voices: Writing from Obsession," *Americas Review* 15, no. 1 (1987): 73.
2. Allende claims to have had no empirical knowledge of the mass grave at a mine in Chile that she describes in *Of Love and Shadows* until long after the novel was published, when the priest who had discovered the site asked her how she had found out about it. She explains: "The dead told me, I replied, but he did not believe me." Isabel Allende, *Paula: A Memoir*, trans. Margaret Sayers Peden (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), 284-85.
3. Translation is a central part of the story of this character, to be sure, but what would traditioning entail if not the accumulation of marks of such translations and displacements?
4. For instance, in a recent and invaluable eco-pneumatology, Mark Wallace laments the "mistaken" translation of the Hebrew and Greek terms (*ruach* and *pneuma*) as "Holy Ghost" rather than "Holy Spirit." "The Spirit is to be understood as God's visible and benevolent power in the cosmos, not a spook or a ghost," he argues. "The Spirit is not a heavenly phantom," he protests

- (Mark I. Wallace, *Finding God in the Singing River: Christianity, Spirit, Nature* [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005], 7). Stephen D. Moore adds a key element to this discussion: "for Anglophone mainline Protestants the term 'Holy Ghost' tends to conjure up Pentecostals and other biblical literalists clutching their King James Bibles in which the archaic translation 'Holy Ghost' is forever enshrined. There's a class element in play here, in other words" (personal communication).
5. David L. Miller, *Hells and Holy Ghosts: A Theopoetics of Christian Belief* (New Orleans: Spring Journal Books, 2004), 111.
 6. For Augustine, for instance, the Spirit is love itself, the bond of intertrinitarian relationships (*De Trinitate*).
 7. For a comprehensive survey of images of the Holy Spirit in both testaments see Michael Welker, *God the Spirit: A Theology of the Holy Spirit*, trans. John F. Hoffmeyer (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004).
 8. I borrow this phrase from Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory: The Education of Richard Rodriguez* (Boston: David R. Godine, 1982).
 9. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1977), 251-52.
 10. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsest and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 6.
 11. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Extempore Response," in the present volume.
 12. W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz* (Munich: Hanser, 2001), 24, quoted in Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, xiii.
 13. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 203.
 14. *Ibid.*
 15. *Ibid.*
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. Thus, Spivak resists descriptions of the historical tasks that rely on metaphors like the psychoanalytic transference, attractive as they may seem, because they place the critic/scholar in the position of the analyst, given the "sanctioned authority" to effect the "cure" (*ibid.*, 207).
 18. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Ghostwriting," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 70. Spivak further explains: "Cultural memory is a privatization of history and it happens with an insistent collective remembrance 'this really happened, this really happened'; one can be deeply suspicious of cultural memory" (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "More Thoughts on Cultural Translation," *Translate.epicp.net*, 2008).

19. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 70.
20. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, 207.
21. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 66.
22. Kathleen Brogan, *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 9.
23. *Ibid.*
24. For an affirmative theological reading of spirit possession as a way in which ancestors participate in the present, see Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2008), 101-23.
25. Assia Djebar, "The Dead Speak," in *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 1992), 79.
26. Huyssen, *Present Pasts*, 9.
27. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 79.
28. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 39-46, 91-100; Spivak, "Ghostwriting."
29. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 71.
30. *Ibid.*, 79, 71. Spivak further insists that the structure of haunting does not even depend on whether the ancestors are real or imagined.
31. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994).
32. Peter Stuhlmacher, "Spiritual Remembering: John 14:26," in *The Holy Spirit in Christian Origins: Essays in Honor of James D. G. Dunn*, ed. Graham N. Stanton, Bruce W. Longenecker, and Stephen C. Barton (Grand Rapids, Mich., and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans, 2004). "Certainly, all Gospels were written from the perspective of hindsight, but John is the only evangelist expressly to thematize this viewpoint" (Udo Schnelle, quoted in Stuhlmacher, "Spiritual Remembering," 61).
33. Tat-siong Benny Liew, "The Word of Bare Life: Workings of Death and Dream in the Fourth Gospel," in *Anatomies of Narrative Criticism: The Past, Present, and Futures of the Fourth Gospel as Literature*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Stephen D. Moore (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 167-94.
34. Kiran Desai, *The Inheritance of Loss* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2006).
35. The only other use of the word *parakletos* in the New Testament is in 1 John 2:1: "[W]e have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."
36. The term "postresurrection," commonly used to describe these sections of the Jesus story, seems to occlude the spectrality that I seek to foreground in this reading, placing Jesus decisively beyond, rather than in-between, life and death.

- I retain the term here (in quotation marks) only to reflect the scholarly convention.
37. Gail R. O'Day, "'I Have Overcome the World' (John 16:33): Narrative Time in John 13-17," *Semeia* 53 (1991): 153, 157.
 38. It is also, from the beginning, an announcement of impending death as soon as it names Jesus the "lamb of God," as Tat-siong Benny Liew observes. Indeed, Liew argues that John's Gospel is intensely concerned with, if not obsessed by, death—a mark of the colonial context in which it was produced, but also of the text's "desire to get out of the 'death zone'" (Liew, "Word of Bare Life," 179-80).
 39. These details suggest parallels in form between John's story of these ghostly encounters and the tale of the grateful dead. See Miller, *Hells and Holy Ghosts*, 140.
 40. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 9.
 41. *Ibid.*
 42. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 251-52.
 43. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1002.
 44. Fredric Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," in *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida's Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinker (London and New York: Verso, 2008), 43.
 45. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Noli me tangere: On the Raising of the Body*, trans. Sarah Clift, Pascale-Anne Brault, and Michael Naas; *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 27-30.
 46. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 6.
 47. Karmen MacKendrick, *Word Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of Flesh* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 29.
 48. *Ibid.*, 44, 47.
 49. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 78.
 50. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 6.
 51. Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 8.
 52. Liew, "Word of Bare Life," 191.
 53. Johann Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Mathew Ashley (New York: Herder & Herder, 2007), 105.
 54. *Ibid.* On the importance of dangerous memories for liberation theologies, see Sharon D. Welch, *Communities of Resistance and Solidarity: A Feminist Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1985), 32-54.
 55. Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 105.

56. Ibid., 101.
57. Ibid., 105; my italics.
58. However, like some of the Marxist utopianisms with which they danced, the founding fathers of Latin American liberation theology often dreamt of, "announced and called for a presence to come"—fully, without specters (Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 101). The controversy around utopianism in liberation theology is well known, and still controversial. Ivan Petrella's recent manifesto faults Metz for lacking a specific program, reacting against Metz's insistence that *memoria passionis* rejects any attempt by any subject, nation, or race to "define itself as this subject [of divine will]" (Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology: An Argument and Manifesto* [Aldershot-Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004], 127-28).
59. Metz's conceptualizations of time and memory are deeply influenced by Walter Benjamin's work. Cf. Steven T. Ostovich, "Epilogue: Dangerous Memories," in *The Work of Memory: New Directions in the Study of German Society and Culture*, ed. Alon Confino and Peter Fritzsche (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 239-56.
60. Metz, *Faith in History*, 109.
61. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Touched by Deconstruction," *Grey Room* 20 (Summer 2005): 99.
62. For a recent depiction of theological narrative (of Exodus and Christ's passion) as "regulative memories," see Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2006).
63. Metz, *Faith in History*, 109f.; my italics.
64. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 79.
65. See Susan Abraham, *Identity, Ethics, and Nonviolence in Postcolonial Theory: A Rahnerian Theological Assessment* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 30-38.
66. Liew, "Word of Bare Life."
67. Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 37. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza puts it: "History is best figured not as an accurate record or transcript of the past but as a perspectival discourse that seeks to articulate a living memory for the present and the future" (*In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* [New York: Crossroad, 1994], xxii).
68. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 82.
69. Metz, *Faith in History*, 109.
70. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "'The Slightness of My Endeavor': An Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak," *Comparative Literature* 57, no. 3 (2005): 259.

71. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 70. The call to be haunted by forgotten possibilities is beautifully illustrated by Spivak's reading of Virginia Woolf (and of José Martí) in Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*.
72. Spivak, "The Slightness of My Endeavor," 259.
73. Marcella Althaus-Reid, "Feetishism: The Scent of a Latin American Body Theology," in *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at the Limits of Discipline*, ed. Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 144.
74. John D. Caputo has proposed a hauntological hermeneutics based on the secret, the "solemn silence," that characterizes both the dead and God. The secret, he argues, "takes up residence" in this excess. But for Caputo the spectral qualities that I have been tracing here belong to "another ghost" who disturbs the Holy Ghost. Thus he follows the Derridean model, seeking to identify a messianic structure that troubles concrete messianisms, leading him to assert that "the messianic specter disturbs the concrete messianisms with the spectral thought that they are a historical garment" (John D. Caputo, "Hauntological Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Christian Faith: On Being Dead Equal before God," in *Hermeneutics at the Crossroads*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, James K. A. Smith, and Bruce Ellis Benson [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006], 103). I'd like to avoid establishing a separation between the messianic and its "historical garment" that could lead to imagining an ahistorical Spirit. It is evidently not Caputo's intention to establish that division, as he clarifies in the text, but his insistence that we are all "dead equal before God or death" (99) seems to reinscribe the classical distinction between the plurality of history and the uniformity of the divine. I am grateful to Marion Grau for alerting me to this text.
75. Liew, "Word of Bare Life," 192.
76. Spivak, "Extempore Response," in the present volume.
77. Reading process theology through the African religious sensibilities of womanist theologies, Monica Coleman develops a metaphysical framework for the possibility of ancestral immortality and memory. In process metaphysics, each entity becomes, at each moment, in relation to past becomings, embracing or rejecting elements of the past. The past leaves its traces on the new—even if the past is negatively incorporated. Process theology further asserts that as entities pass away, their objective existence is immortalized in God. "When a human being dies," Coleman suggests, "she becomes an ancestor. Inside the being of God, this ancestor has actuality. . . . [T]he ancestor can be said to 'commune' with other ancestors" (*Making a Way Out of No Way*, 117). As past

experiences become part of Godself, they also become part of the present through God's relation to it, to the extent that the present opens itself to it. In this view, the ancestors' activity becomes part of divine agency to which the present can relate. Through ritual practices persons may "position themselves 'to hear the voices'" of particular ancestors. In this reading of ancestral agency, the divine is an agent of memory where nothing is lost (119).

78. Spivak, "Ghostwriting," 67.

EXTEMPORE RESPONSE TO SUSAN ABRAHAM,
TAT-SIONG BENNY LIEW, AND MAYRA RIVERA |
GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

1. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: J. Currey, 1986).
2. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Verso, 2005).
3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Afterword to *Imaginary Maps*, by Mahasweta Devi, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
4. William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part I, 3.1.2:
Glendower: I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
Hotspur: Why, so can I, or so can any man;
But will they come when you do call for them?
5. Located in Brooklyn, the college is named after Medgar Wiley Evers, the slain African American civil rights leader. Professor Spivak was honored by the college on November 5, 2007.
6. Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1993); *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).
7. William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 1.1.42.
8. Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, 225.
9. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," in *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*, ed. Sarah Harasym (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 158.

PLANETARY SUBJECTS AFTER THE DEATH OF GEOGRAPHY |
JENNA TIITSMAN

1. Rama Lakshmi, "India Call Centers Suffer Storm of 4-Letter Words, Executives Blame American Anger Over Outsourcing," *Washington Post*, February 27, 2005, A22.

2. President James Buchanan to Queen Victoria, 16 August 1858, in Henry Martyn Field, *History of the Atlantic Telegraph* (London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1866).
3. For discussion of the representation of South Asian religions in European narratives of religious origins, see Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and "the Mystic East"* (New York: Routledge, 1999), and Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).
4. For more on this definition of postmodernism, see Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991).
5. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 72.
6. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet/Imperative zur Neuerfindung des Planeten*, ed. Willi Goetschel (Vienna: Passagen, 1999), 46.
7. *Ibid.*
8. Thomas Tweed, *Crossing and Dwelling: A Theory of Religion* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006), 133.
9. Spivak, *Imperatives to Re-Imagine the Planet*, 46.
10. *Ibid.*, 36.
11. Randall Styers, *Making Magic: Religion, Magic, and Science in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 17.
12. See Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).
13. Jonathan Z. Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 269.
14. *Ibid.*, 271.
15. Styers, *Making Magic*, 5.
16. Herbert of Cherbury, *De Veritate*, trans. Meyrick H. Carré (1625; Bristol: University of Bristol, 1937).
17. *Ibid.*, 291.
18. David Hume, *Dialogues and Natural History of Religion*, ed. J. C. A. Gaskin (1757; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 141-42. For further discussion of Hume's role in the development of the category of religion, see Smith, "Religion, Religions, Religious," 273-74.
19. Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W. D. Halls (1923-24; New York: Routledge, 2002), and Edward Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (1871; New York: J. P. Putnam's Sons, 1920).