HAUNTED: TRACING THE FIGURE OF THE GHOST IN DRAMA

BURCU KILINÇ

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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HAUNTED: TRACING THE FIGURE OF THE GHOST IN DRAMA

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Burcu Kılınç

Boğaziçi University

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Haunted: Tracing the Figure of the Ghost in Drama

In the long interval between the beginnings of the drama and the contemporary stage, the ghost, with its fundamental liminality, remains one of the most ubiquitous and relevant supernatural figures that appear on theatrical space. As a quintessential figure of ‘return’, the ghost, within the plays it appears in, acts as a valid instrument to bring back to surface the unresolved tensions resulting from major social shifts or national cataclysms in order to acknowledge the existence of these tensions and perhaps, even resolve them. The present study explores the manifestations of the ghost on the theatrical stage of three distinct periods, Ancient Greek, Elizabethan/Jacobean England, and Contemporary (post-1960s) American. In the analysis of the selected plays, the figure of the ghost and its function is examined in relation to notions of justice, memory, legacy and identity. The aim of this comparative study is to trace the continuations and the alterations with respect to the conception and the function of the ghost through this historical trajectory, as the figure continues to probe and bring to surface unresolved tensions.

ÖZET

Musallat: Tiyatroda Hayalet Figürü Üzerine Bir İnceleme

Tiyatronun başlangıcı ve çağdaş sahne arasındaki uzun zaman diliminde, eşikte kalmışlığın yansıması olan hayalet, teatral alanda ortaya çıkan en yaygın ve ilişkili doğaüstü figürlerden biri olmayı sürdürmektedir. 'Geri dönüş'ün en saf hali olarak hayalet, içinde bulunduğu oyunlarda, büyük toplumsal değişimlerden ya da ulusal felaketlerden kaynaklanan çözümsüz kalmış gerilimleri tekrar yüzeye çıkarmak, hatta belki de bu gerilimleri çözmek için uygun bir araç olarak hareket eder. Bu çalışma Antik Yunan, Elizabeth/Jakoben ve çağdaş Amerikan (1960'lar sonrası) olmak üzere üç ayrı dönemin tiyatro sahnesinde hayaletin tezahürlerini incelemektedir. Seçilen oyunların çözümlemesinde hayalet figürü ve işlevi adalet, bellek, miras ve kimlik kavramları ile ilişkili olarak incelenir. Bu karşılaştırmalı çalışmanın amacı, hayalet figürü çözülmemiş gerilimleri yüzeye çıkarmayı sürdürürken, bu tarihsel yörüngede hayaletin kavranışı ve işlevi ile ilgili sürekliliği ve değişiklikleri izlemektir.

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To my dearest grandmother, Gülsüm Ölmez…

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 2: DELVING INTO THE ORIGINS OF THE THEATRICAL SPECTRE 11

2.1 The spectral inception 11

2.2 The shade of the past in *The Persians* 14

2.3 Appeasing the spectres of *Oresteia* 29

2.4 Noting the prologue-ghost of Euripides 43

2.5 Cursory exploration of Seneca's hyperbolic ghosts 48

CHAPTER 3: TRACING THE ELIZABETHAN/JACOBEAN GHOST 52

3.1 The Elizabethan/Jacobean scene 52

3.2 Shakespearean hauntings 67

CHAPTER 4: SEEKING THE SPECTRE IN THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEATRE 123

4.1 The contemporary American stage 123

4.2 You can never go home again: David Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* 128

4.3 Digging up the bones in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* 155

4.4 Battle of the spectres in August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson* 182

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION 206

REFERENCES 212

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that from the start, the dramatic genre has been intimately linked with the supernatural. Among the deities, daemons, witches and various other supernatural creatures that deck the stage of Greece, it is unsurprising to find the origins of the spectre, a quintessential figure emerging from the human attempts to delve beyond the limits of mortality to the unknown beyond. The importance of its continual presence in the drama becomes apparent when Derrida, most influentially, turns to Hamlet and the ghost of his father to develop his concept of hauntology. Encountering ghosts in the works that belong to such periods as the Ancient Greece or Elizabethan England is almost expected, considering the pervasiveness of the belief in the supernatural. However, its continual presence in the works of contemporary drama speaks to its importance as a figure and makes it an interesting object of study.

The driving force for this thesis has developed from a curious observation regarding the prevalence of haunting, specifically in the contemporary (post-1960s) American drama. The plays that these observations were based upon do not belong to the tradition of the Theatre of the Absurd, in which irrational elements and supernatural phenomena are likely occurrences; instead, these plays employ the trappings of the traditional realism, even if only to deconstruct the ideological tenets undergirding it. Naturally, variety of questions followed from this observation. How is it that the ghost still remains a relevant figure for an age where naive belief in the supernatural no longer exists? How does the contemporary ghost differ from the appearance of ghosts on stage in previous periods? How do they fit in with the tradition of (new) realism on contemporary stage, the closest parallel to the serious subject matter of tragedy?

In *Theatre and Ghosts: Materiality, Performance and Modernity*, one of the few studies that specifically deal with the ghosts on theatrical space, Luckhurst and Morin (2014) point out that their aim is to

> make a case for the particular advantages of putting spectrality and theatre studies in dialogue and [] stress the illuminating ways in which plays and performance can be newly analysed and understood through a focus on tropes of the ghostly and representations of haunting. (p. 2)

This thesis operates upon a similar concern of enriching and deepening the interpretation of these contemporary American plays that are usually disregarded as lacking in innovation for their seeming adherence to the elements of traditional realism. In order to answer the previously stated questions regarding the figure of the ghost on the contemporary American stage and its similarities as well as differences with respect to its appearance in the plays previous periods, two additional distinct periods of Western dramatic tradition have been selected: Ancient Greek, Elizabethan England.

The value in exploring these two periods, which emerge as the milestones of dramatic tradition, lies in the way of determining the different forms that the spectre assumes and the various connotations it evokes with its presence and thus approach the selected contemporary plays with the arsenal of traces that the figure has garnered through its historical evolution. Therefore, while the thesis has three main chronologically ordered chapters, it is actually distributed along the divide of pre-contemporary, consisting of spectres of Ancient Greece and Elizabethan/Jacobean England, and contemporary, consisting of post-1960s (new) realistic drama. Making up Chapters Two and Three, the pre-contemporary discussion, although employing close readings of selected plays, essentially provides a background for and serves as an introduction to the readings of the contemporary American plays in Chapter Four.

With the periods of study thus determined, certain inquiries as to the nature of the ghost that makes it such a resonant and versatile figure among other supernatural figures needs to be made. Or rather, the question of what makes the ghost so special should be delved into. Blanco and Peeren (2013) consider the ghost to be an "analytical tool that does theory" (p. 1). This remark undoubtedly follows from the liminal nature of the figure, its in-betweenness. "Neither living nor dead, present nor absent", Weinstock points out, "the ghost functions as the paradigmatic deconstructive gesture" (as cited in Luckhurst & Morin, 2014, p. 1). The explorations of the plays in this thesis show that this fundamental liminality of the ghost allows it the power to destabilize dichotomies. Although the changes in context alter the method of ghost's functioning accordingly, in most of the texts discussed the ghost blurs the line between various binary oppositions, initially at least in the favour of the subordinate term, triggering the reappraisal of the privileged binary. These related oppositions mostly occur alongside each other and include the self and the other, the complete vs. the incomplete, the rational vs. the irrational, the natural vs. the supernatural, the remembered vs. the forgotten, the hidden vs. the exposed, the surface vs. the buried and the present vs. the past. In many of the plays, for example, the ghost functions as an appropriate tool for, in Streufert's (2004) terms, "exploring and appropriating the notions of alterity" (p. 192). More frequently, however, the encounter with the ghost prompts re-evaluation and reconfiguration of the 'self', be it individual, communal or national.

Furthermore, the aforementioned power to destabilize makes the ghost a volatile figure for any given ostensibly established order. As any act of establishing order entails attempts at the suppression of the unwanted, the silencing of the other, and erasure of the persons, histories or ideas that present danger to that order. After all, what does not fit, or rather, what threatens the order must be exiled, its narrative suppressed and the traces of its memory erased. Yet, what is thus suppressed is bound to return, to rupture and disturb. The ghost, as a quintessential figure of return, is particularly suitable to embody such rupturing of the artificial stability by bringing to surface what was buried, erased, put out of sight in the process of building that order. As Derrida (1993/2006) reminds us, "a specter is always a *revenant.* One cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back" (p. 11). It will be seen that in many of the plays the ghost 'returns' to chronologically unsettle the linear experience of time and suggest the unending claim of the past on the present, showing that the idea of present unadulterated by traces of times past or times to come is impossible. Moreover, the presence of the ghost in these plays suggests that what was buried can never stay as such and demands that the wrongdoings, traumas, painful narratives of the past should be acknowledged and faced with. Only when the ghosts are faced could the order be re-established or a new and better order be built.

The exploration of ghosts in these plays is also shaped by Streufert's study on plays of ethnic appropriation that oftentimes make use of supernatural elements, and how they appear during times of national crisis. In a parallel manner, the appearance of the ghosts in the plays seems to correspond to periods when unresolved tensions abound due to social shifts or troubling social events. The figure of the ghost is instrumental in bringing these unresolved tensions to surface, either to assay them anew with each exorcism, or to keep them unresolved but acknowledge their presence. Within the plays, according to the demands of the corresponding historical period, these unresolved tensions may present themselves as external hauntings of vengeance where the spectre appears as a separate, objective character with motivations and demands of its own, or more in psychological strain where haunting appears to be that of the psyche of the characters. Commonly, this process of unearthing unresolved tensions brought about by the ghost is given in terms of certain connotations that the ghost evokes through its appearance. These include the demand for justice for a wrongdoing, the importance of remembering the ugly and the painful as well as the concern for attaining 'the truth'. These concerns appear repeatedly with each appearance of the ghost in plays and are reshaped and reworked according to the demands of the historical periods to which the plays belong. What the presence of the ghost ostensibly guarantees in the plays of pre-contemporary periods, such as the eventual triumph of justice, the ultimate revelation of truth, for example, although still raised through the appearance of the ghost, is problematized and made impossible in the contemporary plays that are studied in this thesis. It is the aim of this thesis to trace the continuations, the shifts and the re-workings the figure of the ghost undergoes historically, while it continues to probe, to unsettle the ostensible order and bring to surface unresolved tensions.

With this aim, the second chapter begins with a brief introduction to the origins of the spectre in the Ancient Greek theatrical space and comments upon the connection between the presence of the supernatural on stage and the living belief of the period. While giving a general overview of the figure of the ghost on stage in Ancient Greek and later Senecan drama, the chapter provides a closer reading of Aeschylus's *The Persians,* which is significant as it includes the first manifestation of the ghost on Western stage, as well as Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, which introduces, what I term, the unmanifest ghost in *The Libation Bearers* and the beginnings of the revenge ghost in *The Eumenides*. The ghost in both *The Persians* and *Oresteia* allows for unresolved tensions that trouble national consciousness to come to the surface. In the case of *The Persians*, a celebratory play for Greek martial victories, it is the unacknowledged losses and anxiety engendered for the Greeks during the Greco-Persian Wars. Aeschylus' choice in depicting Darius, the ghost of the late Persian king, as the most Hellenized and venerable character with insight to the 'true' nature of the 'just' victory of the Greeks against the hubristic Persians allows him to negotiate alterity for the Greek polis by allowing them to identify with the ghost. The ghost brings with it the burden of legacy on the present and triggers the voluntary remembering of the glories of a golden past he stands for as opposed to the desolate defeat Persians face at the present. Such identification warns the Greek spectator from assuming hubris, becoming complacent in their own victories, and, through the dirge at the end, allow them acknowledge and mourn their own losses. Whereas, *The Oresteia* deals with the tensions arising from major social changes for the Athenian city-state, that is, the shift from primal to civic justice and the shift from matrilineal to patrilineal society. *The Libation Bearers* introduces the unmanifest ghost, the spirit of the father, although never manifest, marking the land with miasma, which only will only be cleansed when his son will wreak justice on his murderer, his wife Clytemnestra. *The Eumenides* brings, in the figure of Clytemnestra the beginnings of the revenge-ghost, manifest and fully demanding vengeance from the Furies to be brought upon her son, asking blood for blood. The allying of the ghost, who expresses the primal justice and matrilineal society, with the abject Furies, marks her as monstrous danger to be contained. Consequently, the overruling of the ghost's demand in the trial at the end of the play by the goddess Athena's decision functions as an exorcism for the community over the remnant anxieties which trouble their psyche arising from these major societal changes. Each staging of the play allows these anxieties to resurface and allays them anew, thus functioning as a safety valve for the society. In these plays that belong to the Ancient Greek period, the figure of the ghost, while carrying notions of justice, truth, memory and legacy on its trail, functions within an overarching supernatural/divine frame, and as such, a seeming order, or rather a pseudo-order, is always (re)established in the end, a seeming closure is achieved. This form of closural tendency becomes increasingly problematized in the following chapters.

The third chapter turns its focus onto the Elizabethan/Jacobean England. After a brief background regarding the dramatic popularity of the ghost as well as the supernatural belief of the period that included contentions regarding the epistemological and ontological status of ghosts, the chapter moves onto focus on Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. In *Hamlet*, the unresolved tensions that were remnants of one of the biggest social upheavals, England's Protestant Revolution (which not only banished the ghost from the sanctioned belief, effectively turning it into a figure of 'otherness', but also demanded curtailing of mourning rites) come to surface in the ghost's narrative of wrongdoing and injustice. Although the murderer is justly punished at the end of the play amongst an extensive bloodshed, it is the ghost's second injunction to 'remember' that is replicated in Hamlet's own death. In *Macbeth*, the important shift that turned the Elizabethan into a Jacobean, that is the ascension of James to the English throne, is that which occasions the haunting. The change from Tudor to Stuart dynasty brought with it the necessity to renegotiate the boundaries of national identity, in order to appropriate what had been previously regarded as the Scottish-other into the English-Self. In *Macbeth*, this negotiation is made through contrasting the portrayal between the 'monstrous' Macbeth, who as a childless monarch also embodies the anxieties over succession that the reign of Elizabeth gave rise to, overleaping his destiny, and ‘just’ Banquo, to whom James I traces his lineage. Banquo’s return as a ghost to haunt the guilty conscience of his murderer, Macbeth, with images ‘unseating’ that prophesies Macbeth’s eventual fall, functions to demarcate Banquo as the rightful progenitor of the line of kings that is extended to James I. In Shakespeare’s play, the ghost, especially that of the silent Banquo, heralds a shift in the conception of ghost that functions as an externalization of the inner landscape of the characters rather than a distinct character with motives on its own. While only hinted during this period, this conception becomes the prevalent mode of ghost that appears in the contemporary plays explored in this thesis. Furthermore, while in both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* justice appears to have triumphed and a new order rightly established in line with the demands of the ghost, a true closure is precluded through a problematization of this justice and order. In *Hamlet*, the implication of the ‘sins’ of the ghost that lands him in Purgatory as well as the extensive bloodshed at the end of the play questions whether the justice that triumphs at the end of the play is for the ghost of old Hamlet, or for the old Fortinbras, whose son conveniently takes over Denmark without the need of a single battle. Whereas in *Macbeth*, the prophesied assumption of the throne by Banquo’s descendants heralds further violence that will bring about this shift of dynasty from the rightful heirs of the murdered king Duncan to Banquo’s line.

The fourth chapter turns its focus onto the contemporary (post-1960s) American stage. It is in America that Weinstock finds “a land of ghosts, a nation obsessed with the spectral” (as cited in Luckhurst & Morin, 2014, p. 14), and for the plays of this chapter the ghosts help (re)define and renegotiate American identity. As in previous chapters, the presence of the ghost brings to the fore the unresolved tensions that trouble the consciousness of the nation. Both David Rabe and Sam Shepard, in *Sticks and Bones* and *Buried Child* respectively deal with the aftermath of the acknowledgement of the failure of the myth of the American Dream, and question its artificiality by presenting the quintessential American home as haunted, marking it as a site of that unacknowledged wrongdoings. In Rabe's *Sticks and Bones*, the ghost of a Vietnamese girl, Zung, who follows the returning Vietnam soldier back to his home, brings to surface not only guilt and anxiety arising from America's participation in Vietnam War, but also the underlying sense of emptiness arising from the obsession with the image of the ideal and its performance that is endemic to the sense of American identity. The ghost of Zung that silently watches family, is a complex embodiment of what has been 'othered' or ignored in the process of creating this ideal image and demands through her presence the acknowledgment of 'the bad' and 'the ugly' lying underneath this ideal image of America. Her 'exorcism' through strangulation in the end, along with the family-assisted suicide of her 'ally' David shows how dangerous such acknowledgement can be for the identities built upon 'artificial' images that can only be maintained through violent suppression of such acknowledgement so as to remain 'permanently false'. In Shepard's *Buried Child,* the image of the perfect All-American family is further deconstructed as their home is marked as the site of haunting by the unmanifest ghost of the murdered infant. The buried narrative of guilt, incest and infanticide comes to surface through the play and indict the nation of burying and evading its own misdeeds. For both Rabe as well as Shepard, (the practitioners of what Demastes terms 'new realism') the ghost also functions as a tool to destabilize the theatrical realism, and allow them to comment upon the inability of the rationalistic ideology underlying the tenets of traditional realism to account for the irrational and the chaotic that underlies experience. African-American playwright August Wilson, similarly challenges traditional realism through insertion of elements of African-American spirituality, which includes the belief in ancestral spirits, into *The Piano Lesson*. Wilson’s employment of two types of ghosts divided along the racial lines shows that spectral presence could function as a source of strength that arises from active participation in African American community as well as a traumatic signifier of unforgettable narratives of violence and loss embedded within African American history. The ghost of Sutter, the descendant of the white slave owner, suggests the encroaching of the unresolvable trauma of African-American past upon the present. Its exorcism is only possible through embracing of that past not only as a site of oppression for African-Americans, but also as a site that contains narratives of resistance and survival. In all three plays, the ghost becomes less of a distinct character and more read in terms of its effect on the haunted, as the conception of the ghost as externalization of inner psychic disturbances of the characters characterizes the contemporary stage. Furthermore, corresponding to the disillusionment with the metanarratives that makes up the contemporary vision, the presence of the ghost in these plays no longer guarantees the eventual establishment of justice and order at the end of the play. In *Sticks and Bones*, the ghost is “strangled” and put out of sight and its demands of acknowledgement goes unmet. In *Buried Child*, the ‘unearthing’ of the hidden narrative along with the bones of the infant from the site of its burial does not explain the inconsistencies that abound the narrative of the past, neither does it presage Edenic future. As for *The Piano Lesson,* which comes closest to attaining an ostensible closure, Boy Willie’s last words suggest that the successful exorcism of the Sutter’s ghost is not necessarily permanent, and further haunting is possible.

CHAPTER 2

DELVING INTO THE ORIGINS OF THE THEATRICAL SPECTRE

2.1 The spectral inception

Since its inception, the theatrical stage has always been a ground for supernatural manifestations. This is especially true with respect to the serious vein of drama, the tragedy. One should only recall the multiplicity of Gods, Furies, and ghosts, oracles as well as prophetic dreams and omens that deck the host of Ancient Greek plays to be convinced of the truth of this claim. This should come as no surprise, as interest in powers beyond the limits encircling man is deeply rooted in human nature, and theatre as a genre has always been connected to the living stream of human existence closer than any other. In the case of Greek drama however, the very nature of Greek religion itself reinforces the interest. Since the multiplicity of its gods is the concrete embodiment of divine nature, the fact that the plays are filled with many supernatural interventions should come as no surprise.

However, if the aim is to return to the beginnings of drama, there is no need to look further than the very inception to mark the substantial connection between drama and the supernatural. Aristotle finds the origin of tragedy to be improvisations in choral poems honouring Dionysus. About this deep connection with religion Charles Edward Whitmore (1915) remarks:

> The worship of Dionysos[1], centering about the figure of a God scorned, suffering, but ultimately triumphant, and the representation, as we may suppose, in the earliest choral drama of the incidents of his beneficent progress and conquest of humanity, imposed upon the nascent art a

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[1] It should be noted that quotations from Whitmore often contain idiosyncratic use of terms and names, as found in the source. For the convenience of the reader, they are left as found, no use of [*sic*] is made.

> connection with the supernatural world that was never entirely effaced. (p. 18)

At its very roots, then, serious drama was soaked in the supernatural. If the presence of supernatural in drama is expected, the question remains as to how one might approach it. Whitmore, in his seminal study on the supernatural aspect of the tradition of tragedy, answers this question by distinguishing between two classes of dramatic use of the supernatural: intrinsic and decorative. Intrinsic supernatural, which Whitmore considers the superior one, necessitates the supernatural to be closely integrated with the action. It should both secure the "indispensable atmosphere" and "the dramatic coherence" (p. 9). Influencing the action, it is fundamentally different from the decorative supernatural, which ultimately remains superficial. While Whitmore's distinction is useful in approaching supernatural in Ancient Drama, with respect to supernatural in modern and contemporary drama, with its stronger psychological roots, it remains an insufficient tool.

Out of the plethora of supernatural figures, however, one can be singled out as it alone survives the intervening centuries between the inception of the drama and the contemporary stage as a valid dramatic tool. Henry Fielding (1749/1985) once remarked, in his *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling,*

> [the] only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns, are ghosts; but of these I would advise an author to be extremely sparing. These are indeed, like arsenic, and other dangerous drugs in physic, to be used with utmost caution. (p. 362)

Leaving aside his warning, his statement has held true for almost three hundred years since he made it; the contemporary stage is still haunted by ghosts. It is this tenacity of the ghost to survive that makes it a curious figure to explore. The exploration of this figure should evidently begin with the dramatic masters of Ancient Greece: Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides.

Although the potent figure of the ghost has survived the intervening two thousand years, it has a limited appearance in the plays of Ancient Greece. In fact, the ghost as a theatrical figure is only overtly present in three extant plays: two of them appear in Aeschylus' *The Persians* and *The Eumenides*, while the other can be seen in Euripides' *Hecuba*. Although limited in number, all three introduce to dramatic tradition a distinct type of ghost, which is not surprising since one of the fundamental characteristics of the ghost is its indefiniteness from which arises the difficulty of pining it down. Since they are scarce in number, a closer look at each is warranted.

Regarding Aeschylus, Whitmore (1915) proclaims that Aeschylean theatre "attains a height of tragic power never since surpassed" and finds the reason to lie largely in his "surpassingly skilful use of the supernatural which it displays" (p. 91). For him, Aeschylus, "standing nearer to the religious origin, and himself profoundly religious, accepted the supernatural elements without demur, and informed them with a new, intense vitality" (p. 90). Besides being closer to the religious origin however, Whitmore lists a further reason as to why the supernatural is more skillfuly integrated in Aeschylus' plays rather than his predecessors, Sophocles and Euripides. He points out that the temper of the age in which the tragedy began its independent existence was especially favourable to the employment of supernatural, the religious sentiment being triggered by the existing peril of the Persian invasions and the seemingly miraculous repulse of the huge Eastern armaments by the far smaller forces of Hellas (Whitmore, 1915, p. 18).

It is within this charged atmosphere that the first manifestation of the ghost appears on the stage. The earliest extant play of Aeschylus, *The Persians* was first performed in 472 BCE at the annual Dionysia festival at Athens. Curiously, it is also the only historical play surviving intact from the Ancient Greece period. The battle of Salamis, the historical event the play refers to, had taken place only eight years earlier, whereas it had been only eighteen years since the battle of Marathon, the Greek victory that ended the first Persian invasion of Greece. Accordingly, Aeschylus' decision to write a play about the battle of Salamis from the enemy's perspective, a play that is to be produced in a celebration within the heart of the Athenian polis is remarkable.

As it is the first play in which the ghost walks the stage, *The Persians* deserves a closer analysis, at least compared to the other two plays that will be referred to within this chapter. Before embarking upon an analysis however, – *The Persians* being a fairly unknown play for the contemporary audience compared to more famous ancient plays like *Oresteia* and Theban plays – a brief summary might prove helpful.

2.2 The shade of the past in *The Persians*

The play begins with the expository remarks made by the chorus that is made up of old men of Susa. As they wait apprehensively for news regarding the invasion forces led by Xerxes against Greek states, Queen Mother Atossa, the widow of Darius, the late king of Persia, as well as the mother of Xerxes, joins them. Atossa, like the chorus, is also filled with vague fears. She narrates the unsettling dream she had the night before in the hope that the old men would be able to advise her. In her dream, she saw two women, one dressed in Persian dress and the other in Grecian robe, who suddenly begin arguing. To end their quarrel, Xerxes attempts to yoke them into his chariot. The woman in Persian clothes is submissive enough, but the other breaks her reins and overturns the chariot, throwing Xerxes to ground. Then, Darius, the late king, enters to see his son. Noticing his father, Xerxes begins tearing his clothes. Upon awakening, Atossa goes to pray for Xerxes' safety and while she is making a sacrifice, she sees an eagle grasped by a hawk. Feeling that the dream and the omen to be portents for catastrophe, she asks for chorus' advice. The elders advise her to pray to gods and beg Darius from the realm of the dead to intercede on the behalf of the Persians. As they further discuss details concerning the expedition, a messenger arrives to announce the defeat Persians suffered at the hands of the Greek forces in the great battle of Salamis. The catastrophic news of the destruction of the Persian army causes great sorrow among the chorus. Although the Queen is relieved to hear her son Xerxes survived the terrible misfortune, she, too, is saddened greatly by the loss of so many men. Nevertheless, she follows on her previous resolution and retires to make preparations for the offering she will make to gods. Arguably, the climax of the play comes just after, when Queen, accompanied by the chorus, invokes the spirit of Darius in an impressive necromantic scene. It is to the astonishment of audience when the shade of Darius complies by appearing on the stage asking what calamity had occurred to warrant his summoning from the nether regions. When the chorus of elder men are awestruck by his appearance and unable to answer him, Atossa faces the spectre and bravely recounts the catastrophic defeat the Persians have suffered. Darius is not only shocked to hear the devastating losses Xerxes has suffered but more so the audacity of Xerxes in the first place. Darius laments Xerxes' hubris in bridging the Hellespont and criticizes Xerxes' betting all the power and the wealth of Persia in this one expedition. While Atossa tries to defend his son by blaming the evil counsellors for their misleading influence, Darius refuses to exonerate Xerxes and in a long catalogue of past successes, remind his audience that he and his lineage had never endangered the welfare of Persia to such extent. The chorus assents and asks for Darius' advice as to the way this great defeat can be redeemed. Here, Darius assumes a prophetic function, warning that they should never attack Greece, as even the earth is their ally. He urges the elders to teach the youth of Persia, especially Xerxes to stop provoking gods with reckless pride and referring to the Battle of Platea that took place a year following the battle at Salamis, informs them of an impending defeat at the battleground of Platea if they fail to do so. Turning to Atossa, he tells her to prepare clothes for Xerxes and to comfort him upon his return as he foretells Xerxes will soon return with shorn clothes in a distraught state before he disappears into his tomb. This exit is followed by a stasimon in which the chorus sings about the past glories of Persia. At the end of the stasimon Xerxes enters, presumed to have been played by the same actor who played Darius in the previous scene, sorrowful and blaming himself for the loss suffered. The chorus sings a dirge asking what has befallen meanwhile Xerxes mournfully informs them of the loss of man. As he joins the elders in grief the play concludes in almost a ritualistic expression of communal mourning, a significant and poignant expression of sorrow, proving the skill with which Aeschylus can construct a lyric structure.

Whitmore's (1915) study argues that it is in Aeschylus' oeuvre that the supernatural is more firmly integrated with the action compared to Sophocles and Euripides. The first question to be asked in approaching *The Persians* is to what extent is this true with respect to the first ghost in the history of tragedy (p. 25). Whitmore answers this question by naming the chief interest of *The Persians* as its being "the first known play in European literature to bring the supernatural into even external connection with the action, and that it does grapple seriously with the problems thus raised" (Whitmore, 1915, p. 25). What Whitmore refers to here is the connection between the prophetic dream Atossa has and the following necromantic scene that occurs. When Atossa recounts to chorus her dream that anticipates Xerxes' defeat at Salamis, she sets into motion the supernatural machinery enfolding the play. Her dream about the two women that Xerxes tries to subdue also features the first apparition of Darius, thus justifying the later invocation of his spirit in the impressive necromancy scene. That she sees Xerxes ripping his clothes as he sees Darius witnessing his failure, provides the rationale for the appearance of the ghost, as it is upon hearing her dream that the chorus advices her to pray to gods and do propitiatory sacrifice for the spirit of Darius to ask for his advice. It is also here that the often-made association between dreams and ghosts is first introduced in the dramatic tradition. In the context of the Ancient Greece, this can be partly explained by the belief in the shared origin for the ghosts and some type of dreams: the nether regions. Furthermore, there is also the belief that some dreams are in fact visitations by gods, ghosts or friends. In fact, one such association between the ghost and dreams already appeared in another genre, the epic. In Homer's *Iliad,* the ghost of Patroclus appearing in Achilles' dream, asking for a proper burial, so that he can pass into Hades. To approach this from a more modern context, it is possible to see sleep functioning as a perceptual boundary, a state between death and life. Dreams, hallucinations, then, all occur in this liminal area, where the boundaries remain blurry. In one of his later treatises, Schopenhauer comments upon the nature of what he calls the "dream-organ" remarking:

> [T]he dream, somnambulistic perception, clairvoyance, vision, second sight, and possibly spirit seeing are closely related phenomena. Their common feature is that when we lapse into them, we obtain an intuitive perception that objectively presents itself through an organ quite different from that used in the ordinary state of wakefulness, that is to say, not through the external senses, but yet wholly and exactly as if by means thereof. (Schopenhauer as cited in Schenstead-Harris, 2015, p. 40)

In this sense, the dreamscape is an ideal ground for ghostly manifestations, since the figure of ghost itself carries the ambiguity of being both dead and alive, or rather not so dead and not so alive, a multivalent figure that carries both the idea of death and life. Within the blurry dreamscape, one can never truly ascertain what may be encountered. Looked from a more modern psychological angle, the nether region that host dreams and ghosts, is also the unconscious, where the plethora of repressed material resides. Like ghosts that suddenly become manifest in dreams, this repressed material itself can suddenly emerge to haunt the individual. It is crucial to recognize slippery deferrals between the signifiers here, between the dreams, the unconscious, the ghost, the repressed and the guilt. Although perhaps not so obvious within the context of this play, the connection between the ghost figure and the repressed (and in many cases a complement association with guilt) provides a significant trope used both in modern and in contemporary plays studied in this thesis.

There is also another value present with respect to the ghost-dream connection. Recalling what Schopenhauer calls an “intuitive perception”, it is possible to think of both dreams and ghosts as portents of some form of truth. It is especially easier to trace this connection in the plays of Ancient Greece. Dreams are often prophetic (although at times too obscure to be understood), accurately predicting the future events, functioning as foreshadowing within the dramatic mechanism. In fact, it is through this foreshadowing that the supernatural atmosphere is strengthened. The same is true with respect to the figure of ghost in many cases. Here, for example, Darius effectively proclaims some predictions of his own; but more importantly he is able to see the divine justice at work in Xerxes’ defeat. When he proclaims Xerxes to be guilty of the sin of hubris, he emerges as the one who is able to see the grander truth behind the whole misfortune and able to draw proper conclusions from it. The same connection will appear in different forms later on in this thesis, as, for example, when the revenge-ghost will appear to proclaim the ugly truth that refuses to stay buried.

Having introduced these associations, the climax of the play, the infamous necromancy scene, can finally be explored. The first thing to note is that as a scene of necromancy, it implies that his invokers are calling the spirit, rather than the ghost appearing on his own. This is a significant difference between many ghosts that will function as ‘haunters’ of the characters of the later plays, seeking some form of revenge, retribution for a wrongdoing that has been buried, repressed and/or forgotten. Contrasted with the revenge ghosts and psychological ghosts haunting the modern man, the ghost of Darius here is more associated with the concept of voluntary memory, willing evocation of the past that allows for better awareness of the present and consequently shaping the future in accordance. Therefore, the necromancy scene itself functions less as a terrorizing scene demonizing the Persians than as a tool to introduce the idea of supernatural machinery. Now, Whitmore (1915), in his study argues that the predominant reason for introducing supernatural in literature is to “arouse terror” (p. 4), linking this to the serious intent of tragedy. In *The Persians*, however, the ghost of Darius is not so much terrifying as it is august. This same sense can be found in Whitmore, as he further qualifies the notion of terror:

> I use ‘terror’ as the most inclusive word available, denoting not only the mere shock of physical fear, but the subtler, more spiritual dread, which commerce with the unseen world may provoke; an emotion which may at its highest, as in certain religious experiences, pass into awe, with the element of terror almost or wholly obscured. (p. 4)

It is to this awe-inspiring force that the chorus responds in its inability to muster an answer to Darius’ interrogations. This ‘aweful’ force almost brings to mind Kant’s dynamically sublime, when the human, in recognizing its own inadequacy when faced with a powerful force, affirms the triumph of the supersensuous over the sensuous. In a sense, the difference between the ghost in Ancient drama and the ghost in modern drama explored in this thesis can be found in the effect it evokes in the audience. Whereas the ancient ghost evokes the feeling of dread akin to the Kantian sublime, the modern and contemporary ghost evokes feelings closer to the Freudian *unheimlich/uncanny,* as the ghosts are often linked with what is repressed, that is what was once familiar, and then become forgotten. The ghost of Darius, then, emerges as an awe-inspiring figure, hinting at some supernatural order enfolding the action of the play.

The necromancy scene, however, immediately brings to mind the eleventh book of the *Odyssey,* where Odysseus during this *katabasis* pours libations and performs sacrifices to invoke the souls of the dead. Like Odysseus, Atossa prepares libations to invoke the soul of the dead. In both cases, the libations included the essential elements of milk, honey, water, wine and barley. Unlike Odysseus, however, Atossa's libations did not include blood sacrifice, presumably because the staging of it would be inappropriate. Further, Darius remarks that the offered libations had been helpful in his rising up from the Underworld, paralleling once again the Homeric necromancy scene:

> Oh faithful followers, companions
> Of my youth! O Persian counselors!
> What burden's burdening the city, which
> In lamentation moans, and makes the planes
> Tremble? And terrified I saw my wife
> Beside my tomb, and graciously received
> Her offerings; . . . (Aeschylus, 1959, p. 243)

Another parallel is that both the prophet Tiresias whom Odysseus invokes and Darius have expository function. They provide information to characters, give background information to the audience and both make prophecies. While these comparisons may seem to be significant in themselves, it is just upon these similarities that Paul D. Streufert, in his study on the theatrical ghost in plays of ethnic appropriation, supports his argument that the ghost of Darius becomes a tool in the skilful hands of Aeschylus to negotiate alterity. Taking his starting point from Suzanne Burr's definition of theatrical ghost as both the "shape of dislocation and transience in its earliest formation" and "the quintessential figure of transition" (Burr, as cited in Streufert, 2001, p. 188), Streufert (2001) argues that Aeschylus in *The Persians* and later Shakespeare in *Macbeth* employ ghost characters to "investigate the notions of selfhood and otherness" (p. 115). In these plays of ethnic appropriation, he argues, the Other is represented through the figure of the ghost, which is a figure especially apt for providing a ground for various forms of investigations that emerge with regards to the notions of selfhood that such a representation may invoke. The ghost is a frustratingly elusive figure after all, rather than being fixed down, it "occupies a variety of positions and frustrates many number of dichotomies" (Streufert, 2004, p. 79). Streufert also notes its double nature, remarking: "It is dead and alive, present and absent, Self and Other" (p. 79). The slipperiness of ghost provides an apt commentary about the impossibility of a culture knowing its Other absolutely and intimately. The Other as a ghost, he argues, provides an interpretative puzzle while acting as a mediator "for a society in need of a fresh perspective for self-analysis" (p. 79). It is through the figure of the other, then, an analysis of the self-hood is possible. This also explains why the figure of ghost appear in literary works at moments of crisis for the society to which the work belongs.

Streufert presents an argument that is interesting and relevant in its tracing of the Other in the figure of the ghost. For Streufert (2004), the first thing to note about the play is that the audience would have no trouble identifying Darius as the Persian king in his ghostly form, especially since the Battle of Salamis, which had taken place only eight years prior to the play's first staging, occupied a significant place in the communal memory of the audience (p. 80). Interestingly, although Darius the ghost is a signifier evoking notions of Persia, East, the enemy, Streufert points out that he "appears as the most Hellenized character in the play" (p. 80). To begin with, although an obvious impossibility, Darius prays to the same gods as Greeks, and, as mentioned before, he reads the misfortune within the frame of divine justice, the machinery of sin and retribution ensuring the continuance of order. Having a grander vision, he is able to interpret the catastrophic loss as a punishment for Xerxes's hubris and his overarching ambition. More importantly, however, is the way Darius echoes a Homeric hero as he appears "much like Achilles and Tiresias" (p. 82).

Aside from the previously mentioned connection between the necromancy scenes in *The Persians* and *Odyssey*, as well as the similarity between Darius and Tiresias, Streufert (2004) also finds the echo of the hero-cult tradition reflected in *The Persians*, further emphasizing the 'Greek' in the 'Persian' (p. 83). He makes use of Gregory Nady and Walter Burkert's studies on the hero-cult tradition, noting that by the time Aeschylus was writing the play, the cult of heroes had already transformed from what had initially been worship of ancestors and assumed a more social aspect within the context of the polis Athens, that is, "it lost its familial context and began including all members of a given group" (as cited in Streufert, 2004). The cult-of-heroes implies, then, some sort of group identity, within the context of polis Athens this identity is equal to Greek and references evoking this cult in the play is significant in making the shade of Darius into the self-in-the-Other, especially considering that this play was first produced in Civic Dionysia, what Streufert (2004) calls “the most polis-oriented festival in the fifth-century Athens after the Panathenaea (p. 84). Streufert finds no great difficulty in tracing echoes of cult of heroes to support his argument, as the text abounds with them. Among others, there is “the mingling [of] familial terms and concerns” with political ones (p. 83), perhaps best seen in the usage of kinship terms Mother and Father to refer respectively to Atossa and Darius by the Chorus. Further, Atossa’s prayers, were they to be granted, would be beneficial for both the ruling family and the city-state. That the invocation takes place in front of the funeral mound of Darius gives another clue, Streufert argues, as location was one of the chief physical components of the cult. The location would mark a sacred space, usually where the hero’s remains are buried (p. 84). One another element is the way chorus to invoke Darius’ spirit, Streufert quotes Hall here, pointing out that Greek word for “Come!” has specific resonance, used in Homer exclusively to “exhort an immortal or supernatural being to undertake a terrestrial mission” (as cited in Streufert, 2004, p. 84).

Yet, one might argue, the climax of this invocation, where the chorus call forth Darius by calling him ‘Shah’ (or Pasha in other translations), describing his Persian garb, his yellow slippers, his headdress surely marks Darius most intensely as the other. Streufert recognizes this, but argues that this strong indication of Persian identity in no way cancels out the Greek echo of the scene, explaining the Greek diction is not abandoned by citing the previously mentioned “Come!” (p. 85). He even convincingly argues that the absence of the blood sacrifice might be a deliberate move by Aeschylus in order not to demonize ‘the other’ but honor Darius by its exclusion (p. 86). Looked in the light of Streufert’s argument, it becomes hard to see what Edward Said saw in *The Persians*: “the Orientalizing of the Persians by presenting them as the effeminate, weakened enemy” (Said as cited in Streufert, 2004), the picture of alterity. While the existence of the necromancy scene might arguably be said to mark Persians as the oriental and the demonized Other, such an argument is easily dispelled if one considers yet another Aeschylus play, *The Libation Bearers*, in which Orestes and Electra attempt a necromancy of their own, invoking their father Agamemnon’s spirit, albeit failing to bring up the shade to surface. If necromancy is an acceptable move for Greek heroes like Orestes, there is no reason it should be a demonizing element in the *The Persians*.

All in all, however, Streufert’s (2004) argument that “Aeschylus, in remembering and portraying his polis's recent crisis with Persia, draws parallels between his own mythic Self, imaged here as the Homeric hero-figure, and his idea of the Persian culture, deemed ‘Other’ and ‘Barbarian’ by his own people” is a strong one, backed by convincing examples (p. 83). It also introduces the idea that the ghost could be used as a valid tool to explore alterity, (although not always to “resemble[] and replace[] the Self” (p. 91)), an idea that will be taken up by many playwrights up to the contemporary stage, Zung in David Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones* and Sutter’s ghost in August Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson* being only two examples. The prevalence of this connection between alterity and ghost figure traced in the way “many playwrights understand that identity and otherness as ontological categories that refuse to remain fixed” as well in in the problematization of “the notion of a culture knowing its Self and its Other intimately and absolutely” (p. 91).

The ghost of Darius, even though it is – as far as it can be known - the first ghost in the tradition of drama, introduces other ideas that will be echoed by the later ghosts. One such idea that Darius invokes is the burden of legacy. It is undeniable that the presence of the shade of Darius, who is the “symbol of the economic and martial success of the Persians” (Streufert, 2004, p. 80) is juxtaposed directly with Xerxes, representative of the present, who is also the architect of the calamity and the disastrous present state of things. The word ‘shade’ here, acquires another meaning as the successful legacy of Darius shades over to Xerxes’ present failure, emphasizing the gigantic disparity between the ‘glorious’ past and the dwindled present. The same trope would become relevant in the case of *Hamlet,* where the apparition of the old Hamlet signifies both that “something is rotten in the state of Denmark” (Shakespeare, 2012, l. 1.4.100) and evokes an image of an idyllic past rule which provides a contrast to the present rule of Denmark by Claudius. In *The Persians,* the atmosphere of this contrast is emphasized throughout the play, especially through the chorus made up of older man, which constantly reminds the audience of the past glory of the Persia under Darius, who himself is the fundamental figure of past legacy. Through his catalogue of past successes of Persian Empire under the rule of previous kings, he actively engages in this act of remembrance. That there is a strong connection being made between the image of the ghost and the idea of history is undeniable**.**

Further still, these evocations engage the idea of the connection between memory and the ghost. As Martinovich (2012) notes in many works that approach the ghost figure in literature, “ghosts frequently become a kind of stand in for memory” (p. 19), and this is especially the case with more contemporary works, in which a memory of a past event, oftentimes repressed and buried, returns as spectre to haunt the present. However, she also advises against equating the two so easily, as “memory is faulty, selective, and it fades over time, and the ghost is none of these things” (p. 20). Yet, it is undeniable that the image of the ghost in many cases invokes the idea of memory, which can be thought of as shades of the past haunting the present moment. Like memory, the ghost stages the presence of past within the present to some extent and for that reason, in many cases, the presence of a ghost on stage carries the notions of history and memory in its trail.

What the ghost achieves on stage in connection with the notion of the 'past-in-present' goes even further. If ghost is to be thought as the embodiment of the past, then one should acknowledge that something peculiar happens with respect to the representation and spatialization of time on stage. By materially bringing up the past within the present, the character of the ghost breaks up the linear notion of time, disturbing the chronological notion of the past succeeded by the present, which is succeeded by the future. The lines between the distinct understanding of the past, the present and the future is blurred to the extent that an understanding of time that can almost be called mythical is achieved on stage. The distinct and linear understanding of time is broken to compose an extensive bundle, almost hearkening to the concept of *durée* by Bergson; resulting in a state in which the presence of both the past and the future within the present moment is felt intensively. Within the context of Greek drama, this understanding of time is complemented by the governing supernatural mechanism. The presence of omens and precognitive dreams works to reinforce the presence of the future within the present. The supernatural ghost, who as has been remarked embodies the past on the stage, is further connected with the future by also assuming the role of the oracle, making prophecies regarding the upcoming defeat at the Battle of Platea. The feeling that mechanism of the sin and retribution is in progress, created by the supernatural atmosphere of the play, further complicates the feeling of time, by introducing the action at hand signifies something beyond the individual occurrence, which becomes only a reflection of a grander order of things.

The breaking of linear time by the presence of the ghost will become more prevalent in later plays as the increasing presence of past within the presence will come to be regarded as an obstacle that prevents the haunted from progressing towards the future. The collapse of chronological time and the claustrophobic atmosphere it creates will become a problem to be overcome within the action of the plays that is discussed later on. Even in this play though, one can slightly infer how such embodiment of the past by the figure of the ghost can prove to be problematic.

It has been remarked that Darius, to some extent, works as “a symbol of past glories of Persia” as Whitmore (1915) terms it (p. 24), yet this gains more significance when the original audience of the play is considered. When this play was first performed in 472 BCE at the annual Dionysia festival at Athens, the battle of Salamis (480 BCE) and the battle of Platea (479 BCE) which have marked a turning point in the course of Greco-Persian wars, after which the Greek poleis would take the offensive, occupied a fresh place in the minds of the Athenian audience. The play to some extent was a celebration of the Athenian victory over the Persians. As have remarked before, Aeschylus made an interesting move in writing a play from the enemy’s point of view.

While the presentation of Xerxes’ defeat and his recounting of this catastrophic loss might invoke the image of Greek victory, the presence of the ghost of Darius complicates this self-congratulatory aspect of the play. Darius with his invocation of the glorious past would inevitably remind the Greek audience of their own losses and calamities suffered during the Persian invasion of Greece under Darius. Though it may not be so easily grasped by the modern audience, for its original audience the play must have caused the emergence of a confusing array of feelings. Since Persians had so recently been the greatest enemy of the Greeks, Darius and the notion of Persian invasion he evokes must have been a spectre for the Greek audience itself, haunting their present status as victors. This threat of imperial invasion, a real danger until ten years before the first production, was likely to have been repressed upon the apparent Greek victory. Yet faced with the ‘spectre’, it is likely that the line between ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ was even more blurred, leading Greeks to empathize with the defeated figure of Xerxes, who mourned the calamitous loss of his men, perhaps recalling the lives lost at wars of their own. Furthermore, the contrast between the previously glorious Persia (represented by the ghost of Darius) and the present Persia as the defeated (represented by the broken Xerxes) must have appeared as a cautionary tale for Greeks, warning them of the results of excessive hubris and ambition, encouraging them to take lessons from the mistakes of the past. It appears that, like the undelimitable figure of the ghost, the play evokes equivocal feeling encompassing victorious sentiment, as well the melancholia of loss. About this aspect of the play, Attilio Favorini (2009) remarks that in the play “exultation and mourning, victory and loss simultaneously accrue, the former borne by the play’s magniloquence, the latter by the spectacle of its ghostly and tearful figures” (p. 52). Seen from this angle, the almost ritualistic ending of the play, enacting the communal mourning in an intensely lyrical moment, must have been cathartic for the audience of its time. I believe that the ending of the play has a deep lyrical intensity that would have led the audience to sympathetically and empathetically join the mourning, achieving catharsis described by Aristotle as “by means of pity and fear effectuating its purgation of these emotions” (Aristotle, 1953, p. 24). The invocation of the ghost of Darius, then, is instrumental in helping the audience face their own spectres and exorcise them before embarking towards a healthier future.

2.3 Appeasing the spectres of *Oresteia*

In contrast to *The Persians,* Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* introduces the type of malevolent ghost that will also be called revenge-ghost by many others, especially with respect to its constant appearance in revenge tragedies of Elizabethan and Jacobean England. The malevolent spectre, seeking retribution - a form of justice - for a past deed/wrongdoing, which is often experienced in terms of remnant guilt can be included in the play in two ways: either manifested materially as a character, or not-manifested but making its presence known through the atmosphere of the play. The second type will be referred as the 'unmanifest ghost' in this thesis. For this type of ghost remains unmanifest throughout the play and its presence can only be gleamed in the way it pollutes the air around the characters, in a claustrophobic way making it hard to breathe without being affected by its presence. It is my conviction that this type of ghost is more pertinent to the contemporary plays, which will be encountered in the plays *Buried Child* and *The Piano Lesson* where the ghost's hearsay presence is replaced by a material apparition only in the final scene of the play, one that is only seen by characters and not the audience. Yet, I believe its prototype can be found in Aeschylus' *Oresteia,* especially in the second play of the trilogy *The Libation Bearers*: Agamemnon's unmanifest ghost. It will be replaced by Clytemnestra's manifest ghost that haunts the last play of the trilogy, *The Eumenides.* The ghosts are employed within the larger leitmotif of sin and retribution, demanding justice, wreaking vengeance against not only their immediate murderers but the community surrounding them as well. The trilogy traces the transformation of the understanding of justice: the old form of tribal justice, blood demanding blood, guaranteed by the older set of chthonic gods is supplanted by the civic justice sanctified by the ‘rational’ set of gods, foundation of which is re-enacted in the trial of Orestes.

The Libation Bearers, in essence, carries on the mood set by the first part of the trilogy *Agamemnon,* in which the suggestion of vengeance which may come from the dead was introduced in Clytemnestra’s argument that she was the incarnation of the ancestral curse, slaying in requital for her dead child, Iphigenia, who was sacrificed by her father Agamemnon for the sake of the Trojan expedition. It is in *The Libation Bearers*, however, that this mood appears to govern the entire play, setting the action into motion. Presence, or rather, present-absence of Agamemnon is diffused throughout the entire play, which begins at his funeral mound and ends in a display of his burial shroud. Unlike the ghost of Darius, who was, as noted, only linked to the external action of the play, the unmanifest ghost of Agamemnon is the agent that moves the action. Marking the contrast between the first part and the second part of the trilogy, Whitmore (1915) observes:

> The moving agencies in the Agamemnon are the dead who desire vengeance, and the Erinyes who punish transgression. The second of these is the predominant one, the first being used as a subsidiary, though occasionally it becomes more prominent, as in Klytaimestra's [*sic*] grief for the loss of her daughter, which she alleges in justification of her crime. In the Choephoroi [*The Libation Bearers*], on the other hand, the first agency dominates the early part of the play, and is not at any time overlooked, though it changes its form at the end, when Klytaimestra, not Agamemnon, is the spirit who demands vengeance. (p. 35)

From the outset, Agamemnon’s presence is what sets things in motion and this presence is once again made known through the connection between ghosts and dreams. “[O]nly explicable as a sign that Agamemnon's shade is wroth against her” (Whitmore, 1915, p. 36), Clytemnestra has an ominous dream, in which she gives birth to a snake that drinks her blood along with her milk. In fact, the dream, as Orestes interprets later, is a portent for her approaching murder at the hands of her son. Here, once again, there appears to be a collapse of the chronological time, as the past, the present and the future collapse into one moment in her dream at the intersection between guilt, ghosts and dreams. Upon the disturbance caused by the dream, in fear and feigned repentance, she sends Electra and the chorus made up of slaves to propitiate Agamemnon's spirit by pouring libations over his tomb. This mission occasions the meeting between Electra and her long-awaited brother Orestes. Whitmore remarks: "This part of the drama, then, is strictly conditioned by the supernatural power that has sent Clytemnestra the ominous dream; and it is around the tomb of Agamemnon, a material token of that power, that the action is centered" (p. 36).

The early exposition part of the play exposes the entrenched presence of Agamemnon's spirit, a presence that is experienced like some form of communal disease, a communal pollution. This can in part be explained through the concept of miasma, which is "a contagious power . . . that has an independent life of its own. Until purged by the sacrificial death of the wrongdoer, society would be chronically infected by catastrophe" (Armstrong, 2006, p. 55). True, through the murder of Agamemnon, Clytemnestra accrues miasma, but in reality, her act of murder only intensifies the miasma surrounding the house of Atreus from the time of Atreus' revenge against his brother Thyestes. Miasma, like a disease, is contagious: blood calls for blood; murder necessitates further murder under the law of primitive retaliatory vengeance. Agamemnon's murder is only the latest link to this accumulating ring of violence, which will eventually be solved through rather arbitrary trial decision implementing the rational justice in the last part of the trilogy. In *The Libation Bearers,* though, the foul murder is not allowed to be forgotten through the continual presence of the malevolent spectre, which, like a poltergeist, pollutes primarily the house of the family, both the physical house as well as the genealogical line of the house of Atreus and secondly the community surrounding it. The entrance song of the chorus comments upon this presence, and creates an intense contrast between the ‘ancient splendor’ and the desolate present. Their words evoke a sense that the past, encompassing wrongful deeds, sins and the ensuing guilt, seeps into the present and contaminates it, blocking up any movement toward a future free from this bloody legacy:

> What can atone for blood
> once fallen on the ground?
> Alas for the grief- filled hearth,
> Alas for the buried home!
> Sunless darkness grips the house
> which all men hate, for now
> their master's murdered.
> It's gone—that ancient splendour
> no man could resist or fight,
> no man could overcome.
> Its glory rang in every ear,
> echoed in every heart.
> Now it's been thrown away.
> But each man feels the fear.
> For now, in all men's eyes,
> success is worshipped,
> more so than god himself. (Aeschylus, 2007, p. 71)

Here, the presence of the ghost no longer points to a glorious past, but instead, evoking lingering guilt, contaminates the atmosphere like a disease. Enveloping the house, the quintessential hearth of the family, it returns to haunt not only the individual but the community as well. Evoking Derrida’s notion of the spectre, the ghost is "out of time" because "one cannot control its coming and going because it begins by coming back" (Derrida, 1993/2006, p. 11). It should probably be noted here that, the ghost as an empty signifier, in its appearance in the later plays would itself be haunted by the echoes of earlier ghosts. The echo of the ghost of *The Libation Bearers,* for example, can be seen both in Hamlet’s father, necessitating revenge taken through the hands of the son and in *Buried Child,* where the unmanifest ghost of the dead child, until the extraction of his body, pollutes the house, turning it into a wasteland.

This undeniable presence of past in the present shifts the chronological time off balance, blocking the normal progression of time towards future. The mood of the play is such that the audience feels the characters are trapped within the present mired in the past. However, and this is a big contrast to the plays of our contemporary age that will be studied in the later chapters, there is also a sense of certainty that justice will eventually prevail; this haunting has its plane in an overarching supernatural frame. True, from *The Libation Bearers* to *The Eumenides* the understanding of justice goes through a transformation, changing from tribal justice to civilized rational justice and true as well that the old ghosts necessitating blood vengeance are tamed and replaced with new ones in the process. Yet, there is a sense that everything is working within the overarching frame of exertions of supernatural events and agencies that affect human beings but are yet beyond human control and eventually all will turn out in accordance with necessity. This is in strong contrast to the understanding of contemporary plays that are studied in this thesis, where no such belief or assurance of an eventual resolution is possible. Produced in an age where all the meta-narratives suffered an unredeemable blow, making the belief in an encompassing sense of divine security much harder if not impossible, contemporary plays are mired in uncertainty and the action in these plays traverse along a path at the end of which there is no guaranteed destination. In the plays of Ancient Greeks though, especially in Aeschylus' plays, the evoked sense that justice will eventually prevail does not allow any desolate atmosphere to be so entrenched that can not to be dispelled later on, usually through a recourse to the sense of a larger plane of things. This underlying certainty of resolution can best be deduced from the conflicting words of the chorus:

> My fond heart races once again
> to hear your pitiful lament.
> But as I listen to your words
> I lose my hope. My heart grows dark.
> But then again hope comes to make me strong—
> all my unhappiness is gone.
> I see a bright new dawn. (Aeschylus, 2007, p. 92)

The ghost, then, works within this paradigm, as a cog in the supernatural mechanism. The demand for retribution invoked by his presence is based on a sense of justice enforcement - both guaranteed by the gods and achieved in the name of them. It is precisely why, in the necromancy scene of *The Libation Bearers* Electra, Orestes and the Chorus invoke not only Agamemnon’s spirit to lend them power, but also call upon Earth along with chthonic gods and Zeus, who is the representative of new gods that replaced the earlier chthonic ones. Thus, Electra first addresses her father saying “Hear us now, my father, / as, in turn, we mourn and weep” (Aeschylus, 2007, p. 89) and later follows this by invoking the earth: “O Earth, hear me, and you, / blessed gods in earth below” (p. 92), while Orestes calls for Zeus:

> O Zeus, Zeus, send us
> from the world below
> your long-delayed revenge,
> pay back the wickedness
> brought on by human hands.
> and thus avenge all fathers. (p. 91)

That this justice will eventually prevail is voiced once again by the chorus:

> Justice wields her sword.
> She thrusts it home—
> hungry and sharp,
> it slices deep,
> right by the lungs—
> and so the lawlessness
> of those who flout what's right,
> who violate the majesty of Zeus,
> lies trampled underfoot.

> The anvil of Justice now holds firm.
> Fate hammers out her sword—
> she forges it in time. (p. 94)

Within the context of this play, justice will be wreaked through the hands of Orestes: “At last the brooding Fury comes, / famous spirit of revenge— / leading a child inside the house, / to cleanse the stain of blood, / the family curse from long ago” (p. 103). And so, Clytemnestra’s dream comes true, as the son she gave birth to, kills her and her lover to avenge his father. However, this matricide proves problematic since now, Orestes is the one to encounter miasma by killing his mother. Yet at the end of the play, there is a hint of Apollo's protection that in a way answers Chorus’ question ending the play: “When will all this cease? When will murder, / its fury spent, rest at last in sleep?” (p. 123). Therefore, when Orestes begins to see the Furies, here presumed to be hallucinations of Orestes by the chorus, the sense is not of despair but possibility of cleansing.

Accordingly, as Whitmore (1915) notes, the nature of the dramatic problem changes in the third part of the trilogy. The question is no longer of creating an atmosphere where blood demands blood with no end in sight, but of dispelling it (p. 40). Before that however, there is one last ghost to face, the manifest and embodied ghost of Clytemnestra, the prototypical revenge ghost. Here too, perhaps more intensely, Clytemnestra is connected to the internal action of play, she sets the pursuit of Orestes and his eventual trial into motion by arousing the sleeping Furies, demanding retribution for her death. Two things are interesting here to note: First, although the ghost Clytemnestra is manifest to the audience, she presumably appears to the Furies in their dream, once again consolidating the connection between dreams and ghosts. The second point to note is that unlike Agamemnon, whose diffused presence made itself known through general appeal to justice, Clytemnestra specifically invokes Furies recounting “the offerings which she has made them in time past” (Whitmore, 1915, p. 41). That her ghost is in direct discourse with these ancient and horrific enforcers of justice evokes another image often associated with the transgressive female, that is, the figure of the witch. It cannot be denied that her demand for justice is no less pertinent than her husband’s. Yet within the economy of the play, she is associated with a negative aura, a negativity that is perhaps strengthened by her actual manifestation in the play. In the case of Clytemnestra and the Furies, their manifestation provides an intense spectacle to the play, likely to induce terror, which for Whitmore (1915), as have been remarked, was the primary use of supernatural in literature (p. 4). However, the negative aura surrounding Clytemnestra might also be necessitated by the aim of the play, which is to dispel the cycle of endless murder. Since the play enacts the transition from retaliatory justice to civic justice, fulfilment of Clytemnestra’s desire for justice is an impossibility necessitated by the play’s exigencies. Her voice will need to be silenced so that the drama of reconciliation might be achieved. That the voice that is to be silenced is the voice of a female is suggestive.

Recalling from Streufert’s argument that the liminal figure of a ghost could often be made an apt tool to explore alterity, an approach to the ghost of Clytemnestra, interpreting her as a figure of alterity, the female other, and the matriarchal figure might be possible. Admittedly, such an attempt is likely to produce interesting and no doubt illuminating results; however, an attempt to do so will not be made within the limits of this thesis. Yet it needs to be stated that rather than a figure mediating the other, the ghost of Clytemnestra is there because it is and will be put under erasure, especially because she appears in a play that will argue for the impossibility of matricide. With each production of the play, she might return to haunt the audience, yet her demand ultimately remains unfulfilled. Within the boundaries of the play, she is the matriarchal anti-hero, while her demands for justice dooms her since it strengthens her image as the bad-mother, as her murderer against whom she seeks revenge happens to be her own son. Unlike the ghost of Darius who is rendered in sympathetic terms, the ghost of Clytemnestra remains ultimately the other, simply abandoned without an attempt to interrogate and renegotiate the blurry line dividing the self from the other.

Having made this cursory remark, I would like to dwell upon the interaction between the Furies and the ghost of Clytemnestra, who - unlike the shade of Darius (and to some extent Agamemnon) who was invoked by others - appears on her own, in fact forcefully returns to demand vengeance. She is *out of time* in the Derridian sense, for "one cannot control its coming and going because it begins by coming back" (Derrida, 1993/2006, p. 11). That’s also why she is a force that needs to be dispelled which might be achieved either through appeasing her demand or through rejection of her by making her demand irrelevant and *not-just*. In the shifting notion of the justice and the supplanting of the matriarchal by the patriarchal enacted in the play, the latter force prevails. Clytemnestra does not enact her vengeance herself, but as Streufert (2001) notes, “stripped of [her] physical power, [is] forced to find agents in the physical world to execute [her] wishes” (p. 210). In fact, the ghost needing a material agent to wreak revenge becomes a trope that constitutes the core of Elizabethan and Jacobean revenge tragedy. The difference here, however, is that the material agents themselves are supernatural. Interestingly, there might be a connection between actual manifestation and embodiment of the ghost in the play and the power each ghost possesses within the dramatic tradition. The more a ghost is materialized, the more voice it has, the less power it appears to have. In this context, the ghost of Clytemnestra is a clear contrast to the disembodied ghost of Agamemnon. As has been seen, Agamemnon's vengeance is granted whereas Clytemnestra's demand ends in failure. This interesting correlation between abstractness and increasing power can be partly explained through Whitmore's (1915) argument about the relation between uncertainty and terror:

> [T]he fear of ghosts is the fear of being touched by ghosts. . . . such fear is vague and hard to define. . . . It is in the very uncertainty of the fear that its horror lies; in the sense of some indefinable presence, and in the utter inability to judge of the limits of the power which this presence can exercise, probably for baleful ends. . . . The supernatural terror may accordingly be defined as the dread of some potentially malevolent power, of incalculable capacity to work evil. . . . If now this vague sense of an unlimited hostile power is to take shape in a definite figure, that figure will be effective only in so far as its definiteness does not dissipate the envelope of uncertainty from which all its power of arousing terror derives. (p. 5)

Theatre in its definition involves a visual component, as a play can only be truly realized through its performance. The power of the abstract over the material with respect to the supernatural might be explained in terms of the adequacy of this visual component to sustain the 'suspension of disbelief' that achieves the intense engagement of the audience during a performance. Hence, due to the inherent vagueness of the ghost, it is harder to stage a realistic material ghost without dispelling the illusion than invoking a presence of ghost in the atmosphere surrounding the play. Later, certain mechanisms to project a ghostly image on the stage will be invented, Pepper's ghost being a famous example, precisely to overcome this problem of maintaining illusion. Yet, this connection between abstractness and intensity of power should not be passed unremarked. The more abstract a ghost is in a play, the more power it appears to hold over the characters, the action and to a certain extent, over the audience.

However, it cannot be denied that Clytemnestra, manifests herself as a fully embodied ghost. There have been readings of the play to suggest that Clytemnestra is no objective ghost, but rather a subjective one, a hallucination created by Orestes' underlying guilt. Giritli (2010) makes one such argument in his study on the position of the supernatural in Ancient Greek and modern tragedy. Right after quoting Orestes at the end of *The Libation Bearers,* he asserts:

> Orestes feels a horror which is clear from his words but more significantly, he says at the end "while I still have some self control", which means that he is slowly losing his self-control because of the horror he lives, and meaningfully he claims to see the Furies just after this part. It makes my claim stronger that Orestes himself created the Furies and her mother's ghost because of the feeling of horror and guilt hidden in his unconscious. This feeling of guilt and horror drives him mad step by step and he is aware of the fact that he is losing control over himself, so we can never be sure if the events in the last part of the trilogy really happened or if Orestes was dreaming them. Tragedy had a religious characteristic in ancient Greece and England of the Elizabethan age but then it changed into a secular characteristic in American drama of twentieth century. (pp. 39-40)

While he voices some interesting insights, Giritli misses the distinction between the manifestation of the Furies at the end of the *The Liberation Bearers* and their manifestation in *The Eumenides.* It is true that in *The Libation Bearers* Furies are only seen by Orestes and named as hallucinations by the chorus, while the ghost of Clytemnestra is not present at all. In *The Eumenides* however, Furies and Clytemnestra are materially there, both for the audience and for the other characters in the play, as Furies are seen by the priestess of the temple, Apollo, Athena, as well as the Chorus. While undeniably the ghost with its association with guilt, sin and conscience carries psychological overtones, such internalization of the stage ghosts and delineating them as purely psychogenic is an anachronism forced on the plays at hand. Though these psychological overtones are surely present, the materiality of the ghost and the Furies within the economy of the play should not be disregarded as well.

That aside, it should also be noted that "[t]hough Clytemnestra's ghost never confronts Orestes himself in the *The Eumenides*, her visit to the Furies, the spirits responsible for avenging her death, shows Aeschylus's understanding of the anger of the dead towards the living" (Streufert, 2001, p. 210). From this point on, the burden of Clytemnestra's revenge is shouldered by the Furies, who replace Clytemnestra within the action of the play, ejecting her out. Whitmore (1915), noting that "the ghost of Clytemnestra, after she has roused the Furies, has absolutely no further part in the action" (p. 46) connects this to the more central position of what Aeschylus intended for the Furies, even stating that "the Furies are really the protagonists of the trilogy" (p. 49). If this claim is taken seriously, then it can be argued that Clytemnestra is even more central to action, as she directly influences the protagonists of the play, rather than just physical agents for her vengeance.

The justice demanded by the ghost of Clytemnestra, with its direct association with the Furies is something primal, primitive and violent. Accordingly, under the name of progress, reason, and democracy, this primal justice must be supplanted by a so-called rational form of justice, that will, by dispelling the bloody and murderous atmosphere, create a peaceful and bountiful future. Accordingly, Clytemnestra represents the ghost of both the erased matrilinearity, the m/other under erasure, as well as an old system of justice that was supplanted by a civic justice that was operating during the time the first production of the play occurred. The play enacts this move from a tribal kind of justice to the new rational civic form of justice, and the key event establishing this is Orestes' trial. Admittedly, Clytemnestra gets the short end of the stick; she is the only one to be cheated out of her vengeance over a technicality. That the trial is arbitrary is undeniable: as Greig Henderson (2006) notes as well, the votes are equal, the tie-breaking vote is Athena's, who is born without a mother; further, her vote is declared before the actual voting takes place. Significantly, through the voting, what is rejected and put under erasure in not only the old kind of retaliatory law that was deemed too chaotic for the civic state, but also the importance of motherhood as it is completely reduced to a biological container, replaced by fatherhood which “bestows legal status and identity” (Henderson, 2006, p. 7) under the rule of Law of the Father, the empire of ‘Reason’. As Henderson (2006) remarks: “The liberal civic vocabulary of male supremacy prevails over the conservative domestic vocabulary of female fury” (p. 7). The murder of the mother is sanctified, whereas the murder of the father becomes a blasphemy. One cannot help but be reminded of Irigaray’s remark: “the whole of our culture in the west depends upon the murder of the mother” (as cited in Ellmann, 2014, p. 23) —significantly not, as Freud claims, the father. It is only slightly ironic that the presiding Judge-God over the trial, as well the owner of the tie-breaking vote is a female God. After all, Athena has no mother, born in a peculiar way, bursting from the forehead of Zeus, an example Apollo argues to prove the unimportance of motherhood. Thus, the voice of the female is silenced, and after a bit of struggle, the horrifying, gorgon-like Furies are tamed and changed into Eumenides, the kindly gods protecting the city of Athens. The Furies, of course, with their monstrous appearance represent, on some level, the transgressive female, who strove for equivalence with the male. Losing the valiant fight, their shrewd voices are tamed to repeat benedictions, while their appearances are tidied up and regulated, as they are clad in crimson by the chorus under the orders of Athena. They also represent the older form of justice, which is promptly supplanted by the rational justice, that is established through the first court trial. At the end, they are no longer Furies; they are Eumenides. Their names are erased, just like the other things that were put under erasure, eliminated and sanded out like a fissure from a surface, which should, the empire of Reason demands, be smooth. Like the Eumenides who are now ‘given’ a place underground, these rejected elements, are shovelled under, so that the illusion of perfection could be sustained.

And yet, although the play closes off with peace attained at last through the arbitrary ruling of the jury and the transformation of Furies to Eumenides, there remains a rift that appears to be mended, but is actually only hidden under the shiny veneer. Even though Clytemnestra's ghost, her cause betrayed by the transformation of the Furies, does not reappear to demand justice (since her voice as the mother and the female has been silenced through the patriarchal law ratified by the trial), the audience does not witness her exorcism either. Rather, like the Furies, she is pushed to the underground, and her ghost threatens to erupt and come to surface at some later time, whenever the strict hold of patriarchal reason would undergo some weakness. The same is true for the things that are put under erasure like the older form of justice, as Henderson (2006) remarks about the Furies: "They are, as I have said, the subconscious of the law, a gruesome reminder that beneath the burnished floors of every court of law reside the Furies – vigilantes, lynch mobs, avengers of all stripes" (p. 7). Noting that the play was staged only a few years before "the full establishment of a democratic city-state under the leadership of Pericles", Henderson insightfully argues that although the old tribal modes of justice were a thing of the past, "the emerging civic modes were already under siege" (p. 7). He points out that social-political tensions and conflicts that are ineluctable in any social order are within the borders of tragedy are marked as signs of miasma and pollution. Luke Roman and Monica Roman (2010), suggest the existence of one such socio-political tension connected with the specific court Aeschylus refers to in the play, The Areopagus. According to them, the reform limiting the powers of the Ephialtes brought in year 461 B.C.E., only three years before the play was produced, brought with it some tensions that even led to Ephialtes' own murder (p. 166). It should not be surprising that the Athenian audience themselves were feeling haunted by the ghosts emerging from the cracks. Looked from this political perspective, within the context of the Athenian audience, the ghost of Clytemnestra and the Furies, her associates, are reminders of an early tribal mode of the community, erupting along the lines of crises in the present civic mode of the city-state. Those reminders are brought to surface in the play in an attempt to repress it through the ritual re-enacting of the establishment of rational justice thus releasing the built up tension surrounding the community. Yet, as Henderson (2006) argues, "For Aeschylus, as for every tragic dramatist, a state of social tension and political conflict just is. It is ineradicable and cannot be permanently purged purified by tragic catharsis. . . . Tragedy tries to purge and purify civic pollution, but deep down it knows the truth. Catharsis is transitory; miasma is eternal" (p. 8) Hence presumably the need for repeated production of a play, the making use of its function as a safety valve.

2.4 Noting the prologue-ghost of Euripides

Through Sophocles' plays, Ancient Greek tragedy attained a technical perfection. However, as Whitmore (1915) notes, in his plays "the emphasis is primarily on the mortal participants; the Gods withdraw into their shining heaven, and the 'divine event' to which the whole dramatic creation does after all move is indeed far off" (p. 50). While the supernatural is there –Sophocles accepts it "as a constituent of tragedy as it comes to him from the hands of Aischylos" (p. 61)–, it serves more as a background; its use is mechanical especially in the early plays. It should not come as a surprise then, no ghosts are encounter in his oeuvre. There is one loss, however, that Whitmore remarks should be lamented: the ghost of Achilles that appears in the lost play Polyxena. As no access to it is possible, there remains no choice but to turn to the last apparition from the Ancient Greece period: the *prologue-ghost* of Euripides. The prologue-ghost is a type of ghost introduced by Euripides, usually appearing only at the beginning of the play, mostly having an expository function, not an element shaping the action unlike the intrinsic ghost which is essential to the action.

Critics often comment on the transitive nature of the period Euripides was writing in. Talking about this context, Ernest Heinrich Klotsche (1918) marks:

> A man of a different spirit, and, although contemporary with Sophocles, a man of a different world, is Euripides. The old world was dying, the new world was not yet born. It was an age of intellectual growth, but of religious decay, when most men were disengaging themselves from their traditional belief. The popular religion—the very foundation of tragedy—had been undermined. Scepticism had begun to be busy with the legends which that religion consecrated. Neither Gods nor heroes commanded all the old unquestioning faith, and yet the old religion still kept a real hold on the minds even of the most thoughtful. (pp. 4-5)

Arguing that such a religious decay proved to be a hurdle for tragic dramatists in their approach to the supernatural in their work, he compares Sophocles and Euripides claiming that while Sophocles remained "true to the old faith in the Gods of his age and nation preserves an outward acquiescence in the traditional beliefs", "Euripides, approaching tradition with the liberal frankness of the new age, is by no means favorable to the established religion which had served the two older dramatists so well" (p. 5). Yet paradoxically in his works, Whitmore (1915) marks, there are "a greater number of divine apparitions than in Aischylos and Sophokles together" (p. 63). He explains this paradox simply by arguing that since supernatural does not have a direct effect on action but is related to the plot as a dramatic tool, it frees the limits surrounding the supernatural and increases its appearance.

The proliferation of the supernatural is to such degree that Whitmore points out that he is able to group the gods according to their point of entry to the action:

> We have the God in whose mouth is placed a characteristic Euripidean prologue, and who may fairly be called the prologue-God; the God who appears at the end of the play, with more or less effect on the action, and usually a marked expository function, the familiar deus ex machina; and finally, in only a few cases, the God who intervenes before the action is wholly over. (p. 64)

About this almost purely mechanical use of supernatural Myrtle Seldon Gray (1967) also remarks:

> Euripides was unorthodox from the dramatic as well as the religious standpoints. His plays reflect his increasing rejection of the gods as motivators of human affairs. The gods in his plays are regularly placed in the prologue and have no direct connection with the action of the play. For example, Neptune and Minerva, two prologue gods, have no real effect upon the action of *The Troades.* (p. 14)

That the ghost-type Euripides introduces to the subsequent history of drama is akin to these prologue-gods is not unexpected. In his oeuvre, the ghost primarily has spectacular appeal, whereas its dramatic function is one of exposition. Aside from a couple of descriptions of ghosts in few other plays, the only full spectre in his works is the ghost of the murdered Polydorus in *Hecuba.* Its significance lies in its purpose as “prototype to most of the ghosts of Latin, Italian, Spanish, French, and English tragedy down to the time of Shakespeare”, in the subsequent history of the dramatic ghost (Moorman, 1906a, p. 6). In fact, it was this type of prologue-ghost that Seneca, in his drama, combined with the Aeschylean revenge ghost.

About his expository function, Whitmore (1915) remarks:

> He differs from the Aischylean ghosts in his appearance as speaker of the prologue, with resulting exposition. His first lines . . . are not without impressiveness; but he at once drifts off into the customary account of his ancestry and previous career. At the end, he speaks of Achilles' demand for the sacrifice of Polyxena, and of his own desire for burial, declaring that when it is granted he will appear to his mother, whose enslaving he laments; but this, as the issue proves, refers only to the discovery of his body, which is later washed ashore. This expository function at once distinguishes him from

> the ghosts in Aischylos; even [Darius], as we noted, does not appear solely for the purpose of imparting information. It is precisely in virtue of this trait, however, that Polydoros, through Seneca, becomes the ancestor of many ghosts in Renaissance tragedy. (p. 89)

Polydorus then appears primarily because his body lies somewhere undiscovered, so in need of burial rites, he wanders around, unable to affect any change on his own. Although his appearance is a direct manifestation for the audience, for Hecuba this appearance takes place in a dream, consolidating the connection between dreams and ghosts have been marked before. The first impression to be got from the appearance of the ghost, as Burr (1987) notes, is one of "dependency, waiting and yearning", "the dependency of a disembodied soul on the potency of souls still in mortal form" (p. 3). Like Clytemnestra, he seeks a physical agent; yet, his motive is not one of revenge. The ghost type Polydorus introduces evokes "an image of dislocation, of a soul in transition from one state to the next, from tangible form to impalpability" (p. 3). The moral necessity behind his appearance was the prevalent belief that the dead lacking proper burial rites are unable to move onto Hades, echo of which was seen in the previous mention of *Iliad.* The prevalence of this belief was likely to be the reason behind the success of the ghost, "as the ghost was 'dramatically true' in those days" (p. 5).

About the practicality of the expositionary function of the type of ghost of which Polydorus is the prototype, Moorman (1906a) says:

> Euripides departs from the Aeschylean practice of introducing a ghost into the drama during the course of its evolution; the ghost of Polydorus is a prologue-ghost, and its function is to acquaint the with the chain of events which lead up to the point at which the tragedy begins, and also to indicate in some measure the direction in which the tragedy shall move. Nothing presents greater difficulty to a playwright than the exposition of a drama by means of its first scene. To place the audience in full possession of the situation of affairs, to foreshadow the course of the action, and at the same time to reveal the character of the persons by means of dramatic dialogue, is a task which makes no small demand upon a playwright's art. The Euripidean prologue-ghost, therefore, which removes so much of this initial toil, may be

> regarded as a most ingenious labour-saving machine. At the same time, by virtue of its supernaturalism, it produces in the spectators a tension of nerve which makes the sympathetic following of the play more easy. (pp. 85-86)

With respect to its comparison with the previous ghost, it is possible to mark a similarity between Darius of *The Persians* and Polydorus. In terms of dramatic function, they both offer exposition to the audience but “the latter does so more meta-dramatically” (Streufert, 2001, p. 215). For Whitmore (1915), in the case of Darius, the expository function is more justified since his first function “of presenting in a visible figure an image of the past glories of Persia” necessitates his second, “that of supplying information which shall give us a proper knowledge of those glories”, redeeming the expository function as “a distinct product of the deeper purpose, and is far removed from a mere purveying of facts” (p. 93). The expository function in this case satisfy a need as “the average Athenian of the day cannot have had much detailed knowledge of the Persian empire, and needed a recital of the kind which Dareios [*sic*] gives, in order to appreciate the changes which the defeat of Xerxes involve” (p. 93). The undue amount of space occupied by this expository function is explained in terms of the “novelty of the subject, and the relative inexperience of [Aeschylus] in the management of the supernatural” (p. 93). This is in contrast to Polydorus’ expository function as much of the information he provides “is not necessary for the purposes of the drama in which it appears” (p. 93). A further similarity is that both Darius and Polydorus act as seers: Darius predicts the Persians lose Platea, while Polydorus foreshadows “his own play’s plot, claiming that his hidden body will soon be found and his mother Hecuba will seek vengeance for his murder” (Streufert, 2001, p. 215). Whitmore notes that while Darius appears in contrast to mortal characters, which increases his impressiveness already established by choral incantations, Polydorus appears alone, and consequently can make no use of such contrast. For Whitmore (1915), this constitutes a “fundamental defect in the conception of the isolated prologue-ghost” (p. 93), a defect that will be repeated in Seneca and his followers. As for the differences, there is a significant one. Unlike Darius, who being properly buried and mourned, needed to be summoned in a necromantic séance for his appearance to be possible, Polydorus, like Clytemnestra returns on his own and as Streufert (2001) notes, is imagined “much like a spirit in limbo, roaming and crying for burial” (p. 215).

Due to the mechanical nature of the prologue-ghost, a closer analysis of the play will not be made. In the case of the Euripidean ghost, however, its significance as being a prototype for prologue-ghost should not be disregarded. Through Seneca, who combines it with revenge function of the Aeschylean ghost, and his followers, the prologue-ghost will be inherited by Elizabethan playwrights, who are known to have taken Euripides and Seneca for models.

2.5 Cursory exploration of Seneca’s hyperbolic ghosts

Roman tragedy is usually accepted to be synonymous with Senecan tragedy. When it comes to Seneca, the playwright of the only Roman tragic works preserved in completion, critics agree on two points. Firstly, Seneca is important in the history of dramatic literature not because of the intrinsic merit of his plays, but his influence on later writers, especially during the Renaissance when he was regarded as one of the chief tragic masters, if not even superior to the Greek predecessors. Secondly, the way to understand Seneca and his use of the supernatural lies in acceptance of his “flair for the melodramatic” (Mendell, 1941, as cited in Gray, 1967). Based upon Greek originals, his tragedies are

> characterized by a preoccupation with horrific crimes and the tyrannical abuse of power. His protagonists are driven to murder by inordinate passions such as vengeful rage, lust and sexual jealousy [. . .] they are driven by passions which seem humanly uncontrollable (ghost, Furies, and meddlesome divinities spur them on) and are often cursed by the consequences of evils rooted in the past; thus despite their energies and their willfulness they seem more the victims than the responsible agents of their fate. (McAlindon, 2002, p. 4)

This might be partly explained by the presupposition that Seneca's plays were likely to be closet-dramas: that is, written not to be staged, but only recited. **S**eneca's penchant for the pompous rhetoricity would certainly support this inference. Partly though, it is explained through the Roman frame of mind, "which . . . finds expression in a love of bloodshed and corruption for their own sakes" (Whitmore, 1915, p. 100). About the Roman attitude and the context, Brander Matthews (1903) remarks:

> When at last the empire solidified itself upon the ruins of the republic, and the eagles of Rome were borne almost to the confines of the world, the cosmopolitan inhabitants of this immense realm were never educated to appreciate the calm pleasures of theater. They were encouraged to prefer the fierce joy of the chariot-race, the brutal delight of the arena, and the poignant ecstasy of gladiatorial combat. (pp. 107-108)

Concerning the use of the supernatural, making use of Whitmore's argument, it has been remarked that Euripides came close to a purely mechanical use of it; yet, it is Seneca's use of the ghost that emerges at the end of this trajectory. Stating that "in Seneca the supernatural has lost all connection with religion, and become a mere decorative survival" (Whitmore, 1915, p. 97), Whitmore marks Euripides as the source of the supernatural Seneca adopts, yet he claims this adaptation is shaped in accordance with Seneca's own taste. Accordingly, *deus ex machina*, which had been prominent in Euripides, is dropped out, while, Whitmore remarks, the *prologue-god*, the type of ghost that appears only in prologue, is no longer made use of except in a single instance (p. 98).

One distinguishing feature of Seneca's drama is the extensive use of erudite allusions in his plays. Prominent among such allusions are the references to the lower world. These include the famous sinners Ixion, Sisyphus, Tantalus, Tityus as well as references to nether rivers Acheron, Styx, Lethe and Phlegethon. In terms of such allusions, Seneca's tragedy stands in stark contrast to Ancient Greek plays, where such allusions are very rare. In Seneca, though, such allusions occur on all possible occasions, but more specifically, they can be encountered in the mouths of the ghosts. According to Whitmore (1915), this interest in violent and bloody depiction stems from the Roman attitude that has been alluded previously. He also connects to this attitude the "conception of the ghost as showing the marks of the ill-usage which his body received in death" (p. 104), which had been only slightly present in the primitive Greek conception. Pointing out that the Roman attitude was attended with indifference to bodily corruption, he points out the interest of macabre in the Roman ghostly imagination and marks "the conception of the spectre as skeleton" as distinctly Roman (p. 106). In an attempt to explain the extensity of such allusions and the macabre imagination with respect to the ghosts, he puts forward an interesting theory. As the ghost has primarily a spectacular and mechanical function in Seneca's plays, its power "is not exhibited in action, and alluded to, if at all, only in terms of such absurd hyperbole as to destroy all plausibility". Furthermore, its status mostly as a prologue-ghost who appears alone denies it of any possible contrast with mortals that might contribute to the sense of his ghostliness. To mend this flaw and to assure us of its ghostliness, Seneca makes use of such extensive allusions, all the while proving his erudition. To put it in other words,

> the Senecan ghost is a mere decorative figure, who has to assure us of his identity by an elaborate description of the underworld, (a contrast blunted, by the way, by the frequency of such allusions in the plays at large), and with a supposed power which we do not see in action, and which, on account of the

> absurd manner in which it is described, cannot impress us (Whitmore, 1915, p. 107).

Due to this mechanical nature of the ghost, the value of Senecan ghosts for the study at hand only lies in its influence on the revenge ghost trope prevalent in Elizabethan drama. As such, instead of a close analysis of Senecan ghosts, a overall understanding of its aspects will be sufficient. Talking about general aspects of Senecan ghosts, Gray (1967) notes that the ghosts “are used to warn loved ones of impending danger. They demand recognition. They may be the personification of wickedness. As in Greek tragedy, they may demand revenge” (p. 13). Having a melodramatic vein, he adds ghosts to plays that did not have them, giving more forceful roles to the ones he accepts, emphasizing the importance of prophecies, soothsayers as well as powers of witchcraft. Overall, as can be seen in his interest in violence and blood-revenge, his primary use of supernatural is as spectacle.

Whitmore, on the other hand, finds in Seneca the advancing of the mechanical use of supernatural foreshadowed in Euripides to its logical end. Aside from trying to make up for his lack of imaginative powers through the use of erudite allusions, he claims that Seneca makes “the ghost, his favorite super natural being, a mere decorative figure, without any influence on the action, but sufficiently unlike any Greek type to be, at first sight, striking” (Whitmore, 1915, pp. 108-109). What makes Seneca so open to imitation, for Whitmore, is these traits, precisely because of their externality.

All that being said, it should be noted that the importance of Seneca lies in his later influence in Renaissance and through Renaissance, the Elizabethan drama. He is best remembered and imitated for the revenge-ghost, which becomes a common trope to be encountered primarily in the revenge-tragedies of the Elizabethan England. It is spectral imagination of that period that will next be explored.

CHAPTER 3

TRACING THE ELIZABETHAN/JACOBEAN GHOST

3.1 The Elizabethan/Jacobean scene

The previous chapter has provided a broad look at the initial sightings of the ghost on the dramatic stage. Diving back to the beginnings of the dramatic tradition has brought to the fore different types of ghosts haunting the stage and various associations they carry along. Aside from approaching ghosts with respect to their effect on and connection to the action of the play, thus grouping them as intrinsic and extrinsic/mechanical, the second chapter also provides certain connotations the ghost brings to the surface that will constitute the initial step of our exploration of the ghost figure in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth.* A brief listing of these connotations may be warranted then, before stepping into the third chapter. It was seen that the ghost is essentially a liminal figure, destabilizing definite limits, remaining in the blurry lines in between. This attribute connected it with the similarly liminal state of sleep and consequently to dreams and the unconscious. It also evoked the notions of guilt, sin and repression in connection with the ideas of revenge and justice. The ghost is also a figure that brought the past onto the present in an untimely manner, thus destabilizing the chronological notion of the time as well as blurring the lines between the past, the present and the future within the bounds of the play. The ghost inevitably evokes the notions of memory and history, which could be filled with glorious events towering over the present, or misdeeds that bleed into the present. Lastly, as a liminal figure, the ghost provides an apt tool for exploring the notions of alterity, often prompting the re-evaluation and renegotiation of the lines dividing the ‘self’ from the ‘other’.

According to Whitmore, there is a continuous development of the use of the supernatural when one reviews the tragedy at its chief periods and there is a real causal connection underlying the two (Rudwin, 1917, p. 310). Whitmore remarks that “the two epochs at which tragedy has chiefly flourished — the Attic and the Elizabethan —are those in which the supernatural is most diffused in tragedy, and also attains its highest development and expression” (p. 356). In fact, it can be said that the reason that these two periods achieve a momentous standing is precisely due to the use of the supernatural. Most would agree indeed, that “the highest” expression of both tragedy and the supernatural took place within the works of Shakespeare. In his review of Whitmore’s book, Rudwin (1917) joins issue with Whitmore and argues that the usage of the supernatural in the two chief periods of the history of tragedy does not necessitate that supernatural is essential to the tragedy as Whitmore puts forward. Instead, Rudwin explains the connection to the supernatural of the Attic and Elizabethan drama by pointing out their origin. He argues, the power and depth of their drama lies, “not so much [in] the presence of the supernatural, as [in] the fact that in their use of the supernatural they were in harmony with popular belief” (p. 312). Rudwin asserts that the chief value of the Elizabethan dramatists rested on their “artistic use of the popular superstition of the time” and through use of it they instilled life into the Senecan ghost (p. 312). The harmony between the life and the drama is the secret underlying the monumental dramatic achievement of the Elizabethan Age (p. 312). This remark prompts an important concern to our exploration, especially in regards to Chapter Four, which will deal primarily with the figure of the ghost in chosen contemporary plays, produced in a *post-God-is-dead* era. The expected connection between the belief of the age and the use of supernatural will constitute a problem to be reckoned with. As this concern will be dealt later on in Chapter Four, it would be better to leave it aside for the moment and focus instead to the beliefs of the Elizabethan age. Since Shakespeare was not writing in a vacuum, a cursory look both at the beliefs in the supernatural of the period and the supernatural dramatic tradition of the era will prove useful in the exploration of the figure of the ghost in the Shakespeare's oeuvre.

3.1.1 The views of the supernatural in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods

A.T. Johnson (1959) remarks that the new Enlightenment philosophy that cast all in doubt was never fully understood by the Elizabethan or Jacobean who could never fully grasp the implications demanded by the change from anthropocentric to heliocentric universe. Although the theory demanded otherwise, man felt himself still the center of the universe with the heavenly bodies orbiting around him and supernatural powers vying for his soul. For him, the earth he stood on and all the elements around him were filled with spiritual presences, good or evil. These powers infused the daily life of men and they participated fully in the affairs of men (p. 7). In fact, before the Enlightenment, Astle claims, this acceptance of supernatural as a part of life meant that witches, ghosts and God co-existed with men and women (p. 168). Cumberland Clark (1931) defines the prevalent belief in supernatural in these terms:

> The almost universal belief in the presence and power of the unseen touched national life at every point. Customs were formed by it. Conduct was dictated by it. It was more powerful than sovereign or feudal lord to exact implicit obedience from the mass of the people (p. 19).

Perhaps this powerful entrenched nature of belief in supernatural was the reason that when Protestant Revolution banished certain forms of credulity theoretically, like belief in ghosts, it failed to erase them from the popular memory and lore. Stoll (1907) pointing out the widespread supernatural belief of the age, remarks:

> It was the day when, of high degree or of low degree, devils and demons, like angels, were numbered up into the hundreds of thousands, and every man, like Marlowe's Faustus attended by his own; when sickness, even by physicians, was held to be a sort of demoniacal possession; when one of the controversies raging was not whether ghosts appeared or miracles took place, but whether the former were devils or souls from purgatory and whether the latter were the doing of heaven or of hell; when witches, by storms and contrary winds, impeded the progress of royal personages and were discoursed upon and legislated against by the king on the throne and the dignitaries and worthies of his realm; when so trifling a circumstance as a jackdaw's entering the window of Westminster Hall actually found record in the minutes of the House as a sign from heaven. (pp. 232-233)

The belief in supernatural was the great equalizer for society as “superstitious credulity [was not] limited to those who were ignorant and illiterate. All classes were beneath its spell from the nobles of the Court to the vagabonds” (Clark, 1931, p. 19). This meant the supernatural belief infused every level in the social hierarchy, even monarchs could not escape its hold. Especially the Elizabethan belief in astrology provided a considerably powerful political instrument for the monarchs. Astrology was used to predict and determine suitable dates for political and important events. Henry VII, Henry VIII and Elizabeth I all had court astrologers. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have picked the date of her coronation in 1558 from a horoscope cast for her by John Dee who worked as Elizabeth’s personal astrologer, navigator, mathematician and magician. Dr. Dee apparently used his magical powers for wartime success as he even cast a spell on the Spanish Armada in 1588. King James I is known to have been very interested in the topics of the supernatural; he even penned *Daemonologie* six years before he came to throne of England to refute the scepticism regarding the existence of witches. Even Lord Bacon, who incredulously doubted the Copernican system of astronomy was not exempt from the hold of the supernatural. Schelling (1903) notes that Bacon "shared with his royal master King James a belief in many the popular superstitions of his day" (p. 32).

James I's famous *Daemonologie* was not the only work written on supernatural matters. Elizabethan and Jacobean England saw the publication of many pseudo-scientific works. Among them were *A Discourse Concerning the Subtle Practices of Devils by Witches and Sorcerers* (1587) and *A Dialogue Concerning Witches and* Witchcrafts (1597) by the clergyman George Gifford, *The Discoverie of* Witchcraft (1584) by Reginald Scot and a treatise witchcraft called *Daemonologie* by James IV of Scotland (later James I of England). In *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* by the daemonologist Reginald Scot, took a sceptical view of the witchcraft accusations then prevalent in England and more so in the continent. Both Gifford and Scot agreed that most likely "women claiming to be witches were oftentimes melancholic thinking to ride the air or change shape when they were more likely having vivid hallucinations while lying in their beds" (Roychoudhury, 2013, p. 213). Although Scot strove "to display the shallowness of the evidence on which witches were convicted, [he] did not venture to deny the existence of witchcraft" (Schelling, 1903, p. 32). However, even his tempered rational approach to the witchcraft accusations managed to provoked James I's ire, James I wrote his *Daemonologie* in response to such scepticism, that is, against

> the damnable opinions of two principally in our age, whereof the man called Scot, an Englishman, is not ashamed in publike [*sic*] to print to deny, that ther [*sic*] can be such a thing as Witch-craft: and so mainteines [*sic*] the old error of the Sadducees, in denying of spirits (as cited in Wilson, 1935, p. 63).

After James I came to throne and several years following Scot's death, he even ordered all copies of Scot's books to be burned by the public hangmen (p. 63). This tension between Scot and James I shows that the belief in witches and witchcraft was one of the most prevalent and debated supernatural beliefs of the period. Any attempt to consider fully the extent of the witch delusion emerging in the period within the trajectory of this chapter will be unsuccessful, as the literature of the subject is immense. Although it would be beyond the limits of this thesis to embark upon a comprehensive discussion about the matter, a cursory look at the problem might prove useful, as one of the plays that will be explored in this chapter, *Macbeth*, contains 'witchly' figures.

The Elizabethan age saw the onset of the witch trials that had appeared already by the last two decades of the sixteenth century. Considering that Protestant Revolution brought with it an intense preoccupation about damnation and salvation, it is not surprising that people began to seek various signs of salvation but more so of damnation, discovering along the way the witches residing among them. Johnson (1959) demonstrates the incredible prevalence of the belief, remarking:

> No nation of Western Europe, the adherents of no religious creed, no rank of society, no learned profession, seems to have been free from the delusion, the terror, the cruelty of the creed. Kings, clergy, judiciary, and parliaments devoted their best efforts to the attack on witchcraft, which flourished the more (p. 8).

Even the members of Royal Society, Johnson points out, accepted the belief in the late seventeenth century. Furthermore, refusal to believe in witchcraft was dangerous as it could be construed as the rejection of the Bible as well. Joseph Glanvil, whose published attacks upon sceptics culminated in his *Sadducismus Triumphatus* (published in 1681), writes that those who doubt witchcraft "may well disbelieve Angel or Spirit, Resurrection of the Body, or Immortality of the Souls" (as cited in Johnson, p. 8). The belief in witchcraft was almost universal at every level of the social scale, the imaginations of the common people being no exception. The common people who believed to have suffered personal harms, such as illness, or loss of property made most of the accusations. Schelling (1903) points out that "the popular belief in witchcraft, from a harmless white magic, useful for the discovery of things lost, for the mixture of love philters, or for effecting simple cures, came to be regarded as a dreadful and alarming evil, spread [] like the plague" (p. 48). When the author of *Daemonologie,* James I, came to the English throne giving the belief in witchcraft a royal sanction, the witch that so occupied the popular imagination entered as a motive into the English plays. In fact, Shakespeare in *Macbeth* coloured the Weird Sisters under the light of the witch lore to give their conception a more familiar light for audience to decode them.

Another debate on supernatural that was brought on after the Reformation, or rather, England's Protestant Revolution, and perhaps the one more relevant to the thesis at hand, was regarding the status of the ghost. Protestant Revolution brought a firm change in the ontological and epistemological status of the ghost along many other previously held beliefs, however the socio-cultural imagination was unable to immediately let go of old beliefs and many of them survived long after the official shift in the religious doctrine long after. The established ghost-lore of the popular imagination was among those survivals and when it came in contact with the banishment declared upon the ghost by the new doctrine, conflicts arose that were not to be so easily resolved.

Nearly a century ago, Dover Wilson (1935) in his delineation about the ghost scene in Hamlet, showed that there had been three competing schools of thought regarding the nature and origin of the ghost in the seventeenth century. The first is the Roman Catholic view that ghosts were the spirits of the dead, who resided in Purgatory and were allowed to return for some special purpose. The purpose should be furthered by the pious that encountered the ghost, so as to afford the wandering soul rest. After the concept of the Purgatory had been eliminated by the Protestant

Revolution, there emerged a need to find an appropriate space to place the too-often-encountered apparitions and occurrences supported by the Bible as well. Thus, the second view was that the Protestants who came to the conclusion that these were spirits, mostly devils, but might occasionally be angels as well and certainly not human spirits. Lastly, there was the sceptical view that doubted the existence of the ghosts and the possibility of spirits assuming material form. Sceptics explained the ghosts either as "illusion of the melancholic minds" or "flat knavery on the part of some rogue knave" as was suggested by Reginald Scot (p. 64).

The Catholic view was defended by figures such as La Loyer and Father Taillepied in their counter-Reformation writings. Within England itself, an eminent Catholic Thomas More, wrote *Supplication of Souls* in 1529 defending the notion of Purgatory out of which spirits of the departed may return to the terrestrial regions. Purgatory, in the eyes of many Catholics, had the advantage of being reasonable. For More, one could base the concept of Purgatory on reason alone as if one presupposes the immorality of the soul and the Goodness of God, even "a very child may see" in the light of reason, "the purgatory must need [*sic*] appere [*sic*]" as a consequence" (Battenhouse, 1951, p. 186). Undeniably, once Purgatory is allowed an imaginative space, there was no definite reason to reject the possibility of ghosts residing there and occasionally making some terrestrial appearances as well. From the Catholic view, aside from the damned or blessed -who went straight to their designated place be it heaven or hell, never to return-, there was one other group of the dead that were sent to Purgatory. These might be sent back for a specific purpose and such return was seen as a special miracle, a sign of God's extraordinary providence (West, 1955, p. 1109). The assumed connection between an apparition and divine sanction theoretically meant that the ghost's main purpose was as an exemplary. Many times this meant they upheld Church’s moral teaching. Sir Thomas More explained that many of the ghosts appeared to their friends to testify regarding the help they have received from "pilgrimage, alms, deeds and prayer, and especially by the sacred oblation of that holy sacrifice offered for them in the Mass" (as cited in Battenhouse, 1951, p. 164).

Louis Lavater, a Swiss Protestant reformer, in his *De Spectris Lemuribus* (1570) provides a source for Catholic doctrine regarding ghosts as he expounds on it before proceeding to demolish it. The initial concern for a Papist when encountering a ghost is to distinguish the good ghosts, which come out of Purgatory "partly for the warning of the living, and partly to pray aide of them," from the evil ghosts who come out of Hell for some time, their purpose being “the instructing and terrifying of the living" (as cited in Battenhouse, 1951, p. 164). The good spirit can be distinguished from the evil one by ascertaining whether it says or does anything that varies from the doctrine. Both types of spirits necessitated different responses from the ones who encountered them. Good spirits were to be questioned further as to learn whether any succour may be provided them by “prayers, suffrages, almsgivings and masses”; whereas protection through fasting prayer, cross, holy water and calling in a priest was necessitated against the evil ones.

Lavater himself espoused the staunch Protestant belief and acknowledged the existence of spirits, giving details as to “to whom, when, where and after what sort spirits do appear and what they work” (as cited in Moorman, 1906b, p. 198). Yet, he argued these spirits were “not the souls of dead men as some thought”, but “either good or evill [*sic*] Angels” with purpose to lure a man into mortal sin, since it is attested in the Scripture that the devil has “power to appeare [*sic*] shape of a faithfull [*sic*] man” (as cited in Moorman, 1906b, p. 199).

Such definite clear-cut lines between the conceptions of ghosts is, of course, not tenable in practice. One of the accusations the Protestants levied against the Catholics was that in the conception of Purgatory and its attendant ghosts, Catholics merely imported into Christianity a pagan notion that had no warrant in the Scripture (Battenhouse, 1951, p. 185). Battenhouse shows that this charge to some extent was true as the Catholic conception of the ghost relied at least partly on classical tradition which, bolstered by the revival of an interest in the ancients around this time. As Catholics admitted unconventional purgatories, the lines between the pagan and Catholic were oftentimes blurred. By now, it should be clear that the notion of the ghost, in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth century was controversial, often conjuring conflicting notions of Catholicism, Protestantism and paganism whenever it appeared.

Theoretical arguments were also unable to erase the existent popular ghost-lore from the everyday life of the people more than it was able to prevent further spectral encounters. Moorman (1906b) argues that it was, in fact, upon this popular lore that had its basis in the common primitive beliefs of European nature that the theologians of the Roman Catholic Church found support for its doctrine. Among the common beliefs was that “the ghosts of criminals, suicides, or murdered persons, walked the earth after death, [] sometimes entered compacts with the living, [] appeared at midnight and ‘faded on the crowing of the cock’, and that at their approach the lights grew dim” (Moorman, 1906b, p. 197). Gray (1967) in her thesis gives a concise summary of the prevailing popular view at the period:

> The prevailing view of the time was that ghosts were spirits, sometimes good, more often evil, that had returned from hell or purgatory. The spirit was believed to have had some mission on earth that could only be carried out by some supernatural force. The uneducated believed that the ghost was actually the spirit of some deceased person who left his grave in order to appear on earth to impart a message of impending danger, civil strife, or personal harm

> to someone. They also believed that the ghost of one who had been murdered was doomed to walk the earth until the murder was avenged. (Gray, 1967, p. 7)

Theological disputations instead of quenching the interest seem to have furthered it since the ghost came to enjoy a popularity such as it had never known before. This literary popularity was not limited notable space it occupied in the non-dramatic poetry of the time and its appearances in popular chapbooks. Especially after the influence of Seneca began to infiltrate literary imagination and theatrical stage, the ghost has become a vogue figure haunting the Elizabethan drama. In a sense, with the abolition of Purgatory by the advent of Protestantism, the Elizabethan stage ended up receiving the banished ghosts, as such the Elizabethan stage will be explored next.

3.1.2 The spectral dramatic background

Chapter Two showed that there is a fundamental connection between drama and the supernatural in Ancient Greek, connected to drama having roots in religion. An analogous connection exists in the context of England since English drama has its roots in mystery and miracle plays. Both types were performed in cycles and both dealt with religious topics, and in late Middle Ages morality plays joined them. The interest in supernatural inherent in these forms of drama is evident from the terms themselves. The supernatural figures prevalent in these modes of drama included God, angels, the devil and his demons. Christ was the central figure of the mystery plays and the subject matter was biblical, with the purpose of intensifying belief. After it was taken over by secular organizations, English drama began to gradually undergo an increasing secularization, and this decline in religious drama was simultaneous with the revival of classical drama in Renaissance England (Gray, 1967, p. 17). Whitmore (1915) suggests the miracle plays constituted the source of the native method in the dramatic handling of the supernatural that implied a vital connection between the supernatural and the action (p. 203). However, the miracle plays show no example of the ghost, which became the most popular supernatural figure of the Elizabethan drama (p. 205). Whitmore comes to conclude that as a dramatic figure, the Elizabethan ghost was initially derived in imitation of Seneca (p. 207), whose works were translated into English around 1559 and achieved great popularity. Renaissance brought an interest in classical works, however, in terms of theatre, the primary influence upon Shakespeare and his contemporaries was Seneca and his closet dramas, not the classical Greek tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides (McAlindon, 2002, pp. 3-4). Seneca’s plays readily found many imitators and became the model for the Elizabethan tragedy of revenge. Seneca’s influence was also seen in the Elizabethan drama in its dramatic handling of the supernatural. Whitmore (1915) notes that the “example of Seneca made the supernatural an acceptable feature of serious drama” (p. 207). When this interest was combined with and shaped by the already existing native tradition, the supernatural came to be an important part of the Elizabethan drama, acceptable to both learned and popular audience. Senecan influence was both in terms of thematic and stylistic concerns. Aside from the division of the play into five acts, the introduction of the ghost and the chorus, erudite allusions to underworld, Johnson (1959) remarks that Seneca provided “sensational themes, murder, revenge, treachery, adultery, incest; horrible and unnatural actions . . .; supernatural characters . . .” that Elizabethan dramatists adapted. Seneca’s plays emphasized blood revenge for murder along with the sense of religious duty in carrying it out: revenge prompted by a ghost, who sometimes speaks the prologue, but is not active in pursuing the revenge (p. 6). Senecan ghosts, as was showed, are mostly decorative figures detached from the action with expository function. When they appear, they bring abundance of erudite references to the underworld along with them. Their appearances are limited to the prologue and although revenge was an integral part Seneca's tragedies, keen desire for revenge on the part of the ghost remained an aspect largely obscured in them. Whitmore (1915) concludes that the ghost brought onto the English stage through the influence of Seneca became a figure of much greater significance than his classical prototype as native interest in the supernatural took hold of it. Appearing infrequently in the classical ghosts, the desire for revenge becomes the dominant trait of English successors. Accordingly, the developed revenge-ghost is an Elizabethan creation (p. 233).

Elizabethan dramatic ghosts were Stoll (1907) notes, 'ghosts with a purpose' and they did not appear for mere uncanny and melodramatic effect. These purposes were from of old the special purposes of the ghost of folklore. They came, above all, "to wreak revenge by appearing either to the victim or to the revenger; or . . . to protect some loved one; or . . . to prophesy; or to crave burial; or simply, in the capacity of an omen of death, to appear". (p. 203)

The fact that the ghost has arrested the Elizabethan dramatic imagination from the start is evident in one of the earliest translations, Jasper Heywood's translation of *Troades*, which dates from 1559. Whereas in the original the mere description of the apparition of the ghost of Achilles is given, Heywood 'improves' the original by making the ghost actually appear in the beginning of the second act, to give a long Senecan prologue-speech with revenge as its undertone (Moorman, 1906a, p. 89). After the initial period of translations of Senecan drama, learned Latin tragedies that took Seneca for model, the ghost become a part of the vernacular plays as well and between 1580s and 1590s took a definite place among dramatic figures of Elizabethan revenge tragedy. If it did not appear directly in the play, frequent allusions to it showed its importance as a revenge-spirit. Its sheer popularity can be attested by recourse to a brief list of the some plays it appeared such as *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587), *Spanish Tragedy* (c.1586), *Locrine* (c. 1586), *Alphonsus* (1587), *The Battle of Alcanzar* (1597), *Antonio's Revenge* (1602), *Bussy D'Ambois* (1600), *Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1613), *Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), *The White Devil* (1612), *Second Maiden's Tragedy* (1611, *Changeling* (1622) alongside Shakespeare's *Richard II* (1595), *Julius Caesar* (1599), *Hamlet* (1602) and *Macbeth* 1606). Its widespread and oftentimes mechanical popularity is even satirized in the prologue of the 1599 play *A Warning to Fair Women*: "Then, too, a filthy whining ghost, / Lapt in some foul sheet, or a leather pilch, / Comes screaming like a pig half-stick'd, / And cries, Vindicta! —Revenge, revenge!" (as cited in Whitmore, 1915, p. 235).

Whitmore (1915) notes that the tendency toward a freer handling of the source material and the figure of the ghost, present from the beginning, can be found in the translations, in Latin tragedies composed on the Senecan model and in the first strictly Senecan ghost, Gorlois, appearing in the *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587). Gorlois is different from its models in terms of the allusion of the Chorus to his activity, its reappearance at the end of the play and the accentuation of his desire for revenge (p. 213). As the ghost becomes appropriated to the English stage and each writer added to its conception, it increasingly left aside its extraneous cast, its expository nature and began to take part in the action. The erudite allusions to the underworld increasingly lost their connection with the supernatural, became a common decorative device and eventually were replaced by native allusions to death (Whitmore, 1915, p. 220). This independence of attitude on the part of the Elizabethan dramatists gains an increasing force after the appearance of two important plays, anonymous *Locrine* and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*. In *Locrine*, for the first time, the ghost of Albanact becomes an actual partaker of the action, sets a train of events in motion with the aim of causing the downfall of his enemies and even interacts with them. *Locrine* also introduces the cry "Vindicta" that becomes the customary 'leitmotiv' accompanying the appearance of a ghost (p. 215). Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, on the one hand establishes the pattern of Elizabethan revenge-tragedy, and on the other hand introduces an even more different conception of the ghost. Andrea's ghost and Revenge serve as the Chorus in the tragedy and constitute the frame narrative of the play, while dialogues between the two serve as interludes between acts, providing commentary on the action. Unlike the prologue-ghosts of Euripides and Seneca, he is not confined to the prologue and appears elsewhere. The action is conceived as under Revenge's direction, so although Andrea does not directly participate in it, he is intimately concerned with the action. At some point in the play he becomes disillusioned with the lack of intensity in carrying out of his revenge, calls on Revenge to awake, and rebukes him for his indifference. At the end of the play, Andrea exults in the downfall of his enemies and declares that he will continue his revenge on his enemies in the underworld (p. 217). Kyd's originality in conception sets up an example and is only a harbinger of more to come, especially at the hands of Shakespeare. It is with Shakespeare that the treatment of supernatural reaches its highest form and it is in his works that the ghost is endowed with new dignity.

3.2 Shakespearean hauntings

The Elizabethan dramatists inherited the Senecan conventions regarding the ghost. Their innovation lied in their taking the convention of the Senecan ghost and making it unconventional. In their works, a new humanized model of the ghost with its own attendant mythology supplanted the old prototypical ghost. The ghost in Shakespeare's hands, however, reaches its highest level of expression and as Burr (1987) notes by becoming "a figure of increased depth and complexity, yet drawing on associations to horror and to the spirit of revenge" it takes on a new life (p. 4). Yet, the ghost of Hamlet is so outstanding among the other Elizabethan ghosts that oftentimes Shakespeare's less prominent ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* are overlooked. Before delving into the ghost of Hamlet in *Hamlet* and Banquo in *Macbeth*, a step will be taken into the spectral Shakespearean zone through these minor ghosts in the next section.

3.2.1 Shakespeare's minor ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar*

The first thing to note about Shakespeare's *Richard III* is that unlike its predecessor *The True Tragedy of Richard III* that remains content in merely describing the ghosts of Richard's victims that trouble Richard on the eve of Bosworth, it actually brings the procession of ghosts on stage, albeit within the framework of a dream. This interlocking dream that connect both Richard and Richmond's fates, once again plays on the connection between the ghost and the dreams which was remarked upon in the second chapter. The dreamscape becomes a liminal ground in which interaction between the real world and the world of the dead can be established, where future events may be foretold. Through the ghosts, Richard and Richmond learn about their respective loss and victory on the Bosworth Field where they will face each other the next day. Further, there is actually an implication that it is through appearance of the ghosts and their intent to “sit heavy on [Richard’s] soul” (Shakespeare, 2018, 5.3.124) that the result of the battle will be determined. They appear to be revenge ghosts, Senecan in tone yet without erudite references to the underworld but with the intention of seeing the downfall of their enemy Richard and thus seeing to the victory of the righteous Richmond.

Yet, most critics are inclined to read the procession of ghosts as the subjective embodiments of Richard’s guilty conscience. That the ghosts appear in a dream and not outright like ghost of Clytemnestra supports this subjective reading to some extent. However, Shakespeare also makes use of some folkloric signs that suggest ghosts are to some extent objective, at least insofar as they are agents of divine intercession in the name of justice. In accordance with contemporary superstitions the ghosts appear at the midnight hour while the “lights burn blue” (5.3.192) at their arrival. Aside from these signs which suggests that ghosts are ‘real’ and not just hallucinations is the fact that Richmond himself sees the ghosts in a complement dream, but for him they have no curses, only good cheer. For Moorman (1906b) these ghosts are “conceived by Shakespeare as the instruments of that primeval, amorphous power of Nemesis which will not let the criminal triumph in his wickedness, but demands an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” (p. 193). Whether they are instruments of primeval Nemesis or instruments of divine justice, their appearance evokes the idea of retribution for a past crime that is usually connected with the figure of the ghost. Yet, as Richard himself remarks they are also subjective conjurations by his “coward conscience” (Shakespeare, 2018, 5.3.191) and as Gray (1967) remarks, “it is through Richard's conscience that the ghosts have a dramatic effect upon the play" (p. 57). His succeeding speech lays bare his bewildered state of mind. With his spirit sapped by these forces of his conscience, Richard heads on to his battle with Richmond quite demoralized and unmanned. For Whitmore (1915), *Richard III* marks the "passing over into the domain of the psychological"; our interest is no longer solely in the ghosts and their words, but also in the result of their apparition on the mind of Richard" (p. 229). In *Macbeth*, this psychological undertone will be further developed with the ghost of the Banquo who remains silent throughout the episode, despite all the invocations. It is in the modern and contemporary works, however, this shift into the psychological domain will become dominant and the ghost will be present through its effects, as the focus shifts onto the ones haunted. The ghosts in *Richard III* embodies the early instance of the dilemma that the Shakespearean ghost presents, the dilemma of being "at once the embodiment of remorseful presentiment and the instrument of divine justice" (Moorman, 1906b, p. 192) which lies beneath the many critical discussions regarding the ghost's objective or subjective status.

Unlike *Richard III,* the ghost in *Julius Caesar* is weaved into a broad supernatural atmosphere surrounding the play from the beginning until the end which manifests itself as prophetic dreams, astrological omens and unnatural happenings. From the beginning the audience is sprung into this supernatural world as the future warnings regarding Caesar's impending death invade the present of the play. The warning "Beware the ides of March" (Shakespeare, 1992, 1.2.21) of the Soothsayer is publicly disregarded by Caesar, whereas it continues to occupy the back of the minds of both Caesar and the audience. All the remaining portents that appear until the assassination of Caesar are inevitably read within the shadow of this initial prophetic warning. This forewarning is followed by certain unnatural happenings, interpreted by Casca as ". . . portentous things / Unto the climate that they point upon":

> A common slave--you know him well by sight--
> Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn
> Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand,
> Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd.
> Besides--I ha' not since put up my sword--
> Against the Capitol I met a lion,
> Who glared upon me, and went surly by,
> Without annoying me: and there were drawn
> Upon a heap a hundred ghastly women,
> Transformed with their fear; who swore they saw
> Men all in fire walk up and down the streets.
> And yesterday the bird of night did sit
> Even at noon-day upon the market-place,
> Hooting and shrieking. (1.3.15-28)

Casca here evokes the idea that was prevalent in Elizabethan times that there is correspondence between the human world or the state and the natural world. A disorder in nature is thus suggestive of disorder in society. The transgression of moral and natural boundaries within a society provokes accordingly or is foretold by the transgression of the limits in the natural world, manifested as unnatural happenings that Casca is describing.

The same thunderous night can be read as "a very pleasing night to honest man", like how Cassius sees himself. Interpreted by Cassius, these "instruments of fear and warning / Unto some monstrous state" pertains to the thunderous nature of Julius Caesar himself, which needs taming by assassination. The following reference to the abnormal occurrences by Calphurnia told along with her prophetic dream, however, suggests Cassius might be doing a misreading by not recognizing the thunder is a sign of warning against the conspiracy and not for it:

> There is one within,
> Besides the things that we have heard and seen,
> Recounts most horrid sights seen by the watch.
> A lioness hath whelped in the streets;
> And graves have yawn'd, and yielded up their dead;

> Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,
> In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,
> Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;
> The noise of battle hurtled in the air,
> Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,
> And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets. (2.2.14-24)

It is interesting to note here that sightings of ghosts are counted within the unnatural happenings, signalling that there is or is to be some misdeed within the mortal world. This association will be repeated in both Hamlet and Macbeth and its echoes will also be relevant for the contemporary plays that will be dealt with in the fourth chapter. Obviously foretelling the impeding assassination of Caesar, these events "beyond all use" further emphasize that the fabric of the play is so soaked in supernatural that Caesar's ghost in the second half of the play is to an extent necessitated by the dynamics of the play itself.

The ghost appears at Sardis to Brutus in his tent while he remains in a liminal state between sleep and consciousness. This liminal state seems to be the root of the conflicted readings of the ghost by many critics. Subjected to the various readings, the ghost is identified by some, like Stoll, as an objective ghost, signalled by the ill-burning taper and the midnight hour of its appearance, whereas others, like Bradley see in him the subjective embodiment of Brutus' sense of failure. Seen in the light of the supernatural undertone of the play, he is more likely to be an actual apparition rather than a subjective hallucination of Brutus. In either case, though, his promise of seeing Brutus in Philippi is an omen for the upcoming downfall of Brutus and his co-conspirators.

The tent scene has its roots in Shakespeare's source material Plutarch's *Parallel Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Shakespeare's addition to it lies in his identification of 'thy evil spirit' as Caesar himself, referred as such not only in stage directions but by Brutus on the eve of his suicide: "The ghost of Caesar hath appear'd to me / Two several times by night; at Sardis once, / And, this last night, here in Philippi fields: / I know my hour is come" (5.5.20-23). Upon this identification depends the unity of the play. Critics[2] have commented on the fact that the two parts of the play, divided as before and after Caesar's assassination, are united by the Caesar as the revenge-ghost. In fact, considering that Brutus is also central to the drama and that it is his downfall that the tragedy explores, without this unification, the titling of the drama as *Julius Caesar* rather than *Marcus Brutus* cannot be justified. In Whitmore's (1915) words, "The revenge-ghost is thus the unifying principle of the tragedy, to which Julius Caesar, dominating the first part by his presence, actual or divined, and the second by his survival as a spirit eager for revenge, has rightly given his name." (p. 248). Even in the first part of the play, Brutus desires that as conspirators their aim is to "stand against the spirit of Caesar," however, it is through the murder of the bodily Caesar they can achieve their end. Ironically, it is Caesar's spirit that will haunt Brutus in the name of vengeance. In his monologue after Caesar's assassination, Anthony's reference to Caesar's spirit invokes the idea of revenge pertaining to Caesar's ghost for the first time: "Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge. / With Ate by his side come hot from hell, / Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice / Cry " Havock," and let slip the dogs of war" (3.2.299). Brutus attests to power of this vengeful spirit at the sight of his downfall ere his suicide saying "O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet! / Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords / In our own proper entrails" (5.4.106). Although Caesar's ghost does not directly affect the action, in the implication that his spirit brooding over the action, it becomes integral to the play itself, while his omnipresence is felt by all whose conscience is burdened by Caesar's fall, as well as the audience.

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[2] Helen Stewart in *The Supernatural in Shakespeare* (1908/2016), Charles Whitmore in *The Supernatural in Tragedy* (1915) among others engage in this reading.

Both ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* are revenge ghosts albeit they differ from the Senecan ghost and its adaptations in some respects. They are not merely used as prologue ghosts to set a brooding atmosphere and provide the exposition; they do not make use of the overused convention of erudite allusions to the underworld. Instead, they reinforce the idea of retribution and justice. While the procession of ghosts remains a bit mechanical, in *Julius Caesar,* Whitmore (1915) remarks, Shakespeare employs a "wholly novel handling of the revenge-ghost", infusing new life into old deadening devices (p. 246). Yet, it is in *Hamlet* that the ghost acquires a whole new complexity the effects of which will remain for the centuries to come.

3.2.2 "'T'is strange:" Haunting *Hamlet*

In *Hamlet,* Shakespeare introduced what is perhaps the most controversial ghost in the literary history. The ghostly figure of King Hamlet, from its first appearance onwards, not haunted only the play *Hamlet,* but as the spectral touchstone, haunted all the other dramatic spectres following it. It is crucial to note that the ghost is the most significant feature of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that is not found in the play's original sources. Accordingly, a brief look into the background of the play will prove useful before the exploration of the ghost of King Hamlet is delved into. Although it is not possible to give an exact date, it is supposed that, *Hamlet*, "or in its original title, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark"* was likely first completed and performed between the years 1599 and 1602 (Hunt, 2007, p. 30). The original story line of the play is traced back to the late twelfth century, to the story of Amleth in Saxo Grammaticus's *Historiae Danicae.* This was later picked up and translated by Francois de Belleforest as the story of Hamblet in his *Histoires Tragiques* (1572). Hunt notes that it is unlikely that Shakespeare reworked Saxo's material and suggests that his source was either Belleforest or more likely, the missing play of 1580s, the *Ur-Hamlet.*

Ur-Hamlet itself remains a spectral ancestor to *Hamlet*, but the perceived similarities between *Hamlet* and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* —"a secret murder, a ghost, demands for revenge, feigned madness, the genuine madness of a female character, the hero's delay and self-reproach, etc." (p. 23) — suggest that either Kyd was the author of the missing play, or both *Hamlet* and *Spanish Tragedy* had the missing play as their source. For our purposes at least, it is important to note that there was no ghost in Saxo's Amleth and Belleforest's Hamblet. In both stories, the knowledge of King's murder by his brother was public; therefore, although there was no need for a ghost to relay the information, there was a need for feigned madness so that the avenger son could hide his intentions within a hostile court. Most likely, however, there was a ghost in the *Ur-Hamlet,* considering that Thomas Lodge in his *Wit's Misery, and The World's Madness* (1596) makes a curious remark about "the Visard of the ghost, which cried so miserably at the Theatre, like an oyster-wife, 'Hamlet revenge'" (p. 25). Even if the ghost does not seem to be original addition by Shakespeare, it is an Elizabethan creation. Its appearance is necessitated by the Elizabethan interest in Senecan revenge-tragedy and the speculations about the ghost that occupied the Elizabethan mind.

The majestic and sombre figure that appears in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, of course, is much different than the ridiculed figure likened to an 'oyster-wife' that seems to have appeared in *Ur-Hamlet.* As Johnson (1959) remarks, the ghost of King Hamlet is a figure of "far more dignity and personality than other dramatic ghosts" (p. 12). Further still, he is integral to the play's action so much so that Wilson (1935) remarks that "the ghost is the linchpin of Hamlet; remove it and the play falls to pieces" (p. 52). Throughout the play, the ghost remains the driving force of the play. Initially, he provides the information of the regicide that had taken place, which is bound to remain unknown otherwise. As previously mentioned, in the Danish sources, this regicide is committed openly, known to all, thus the ghost is not needed to reveal it. Unlike the other Shakespearean ghosts who appear unto the victim of the revenge, the ghost of King Hamlet appears to his son, whom he deems as the avenger of his cause. The ghost accounts not only for providing the motive for revenge, however, the ambiguity as to its ontological nature accounts to some extent the delay in the pursuit of revenge as well. Although convinced that the ghost is the late King Hamlet in their initial meaning, Hamlet begins to have doubts as to its true nature; this can be perceived in his remark:

> The spirit that I have seen
> May be a devil, and the devil hath power
> T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuses me to damn me . . . (2.2.627-632)

Consequently, before pursuing the demanded revenge in order to "have grounds more relative than this" (2.2.632-633) Hamlet decides to make use of the play, "The Mousetrap", where he hopes to "catch the conscience of the King" (2.2.634) and test the truth value of ghost's story. This doubt as to the true nature of the ghost, then, do account at least partly for the much-debated delay. Regarding this pervasive influence of the spectre on the play, Draper (1934) remarks: "Ghost . . . is the incentive force that starts Hamlet on his career of taking, or delaying to take, condign revenge" (p. 75). For Flatter (1949),

> he is there not in person, but in principle, . . . not visible all the time, but all the time perceptible – by the task he has laid on his son's shoulders. . . . He is the originator of the task – and what happens with the task, its ups and downs, the near miss, the near fulfillment, that is the play. (p. 6)

This ambiguity regarding the ghost's nature that allows ghost's influence to invade the whole of the play is essentially connected with the controversies surrounding the concept of the ghost in the Elizabethan period. This ambiguity has also been the ground upon which many critics focused in their readings of the play regarding the ghost. Most critics discussion explored the figure of the ghost with respect to either its phenomenological, in other words, psychological nature –that is, whether the ghost is real, or whether it is a figment of a wrought imagination— or its ontological and moral nature —whether it is a purgatorial Catholic ghost, a paganesque ghost or a devil in disguise with the aim of leading Hamlet to damnation—. These studies took as their basis the Elizabethan spiritual-lore, which, as has been remarked in the introduction of this chapter, pointed out by Dover Wilson, consisted of three contrasting views as to the nature of the spectre, which might be a hallucination, a spirit from purgatory or devil in the form of a dead human. The readings that took the ghost to be subjective is a later phenomenon in the history of Shakespearean criticism, appearing in the post-romantic era, especially in the uncertainty-laden early twentieth century. The first scholar to suggest that the ghost was likely "a subjective ghost evolved from [Hamlet's] own inner consciousness" was Charlotte Carmichael Stopes (as cited in Hunt, 2007, p. 143), but a more direct study on the subjective nature of the ghost came from W.W. Greg, who became the main figure of the subjective ghost camp[3], through his article "Hamlet's Hallucinations" (1917). Most critics, however, argued the objectivity of the ghost, chief among them was Dover Wilson, whose study *What Happens in Hamlet?* (1935) was conceived as a response to Greg's reading. Once the objectivity of the ghost is ascertained however, the question as to the ontological nature of the ghost remains to be grappled with.

Wilson (1935), pointing out that Shakespeare strove "to strike the Christian note in the very first scene" preparing for the (re)appearance for the ghost, identifies the ghost as "Catholic" who "comes from Purgatory" (p. 70) to Protestant Denmark. In fact, Wilson claims, that the otherworldly visitor is "the only non-Protestant in the play" (p. 84). West (1955) remarks that Wilson means that ghost is Catholic both in the sense of having a purgatorial origin, and being of Roman faith (p. 117). I. J. Semper, despite having trouble with the vindictiveness the ghost shows, also identifies the ghost as Catholic, thus from purgatory, and even goes far as to declare the prince Hamlet Catholic as well (Battenhouse, 1951, p. 178). Battenhouse notes that most of the arguments for a Catholic ghost are grounded in the assumption that the ghost comes from purgatory, and in the care the ghost shows for the Catholic sacraments (p. 162). Indeed, the ghost mentions the limits surrounding his appearance, saying he is "Doomed for a certain term to walk the night / And for the day confined to fast in fires / Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature / Are burnt and purged away" (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.15-18), and shows his dismay at being "Cut off, even in the blossoms of my sin, / Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled, / No reck'ning made, but sent to my account / With all my imperfections on my head (1.5.83-86). Countering the Catholic ghost assumption, Battenhouse

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[3] Among others who have suggested the subjective nature of the ghost can be counted Heinrich von Struve, H. M. Doak in the 19th century (as cited in West, 1955, pg. 1107).

(1951) instead argues for a pagan ghost, which would be considered as coming from hell in the eyes of Elizabethan audience. Noting that the description of purgatory as the ghost gives it, fit better to the descriptions of pagan hell, which is considered purgatorial in classical doctrine (p. 163).

Battenhouse, to buttress his argument for the pagan ghost, puts forward multiple points. Firstly, he notes, contrary to what may be expected from a Christian ghost, there is a lack of supplication on the part of the ghost for his own soul (p. 163); indeed, instead of asking for succour for his state, the ghost replies to Hamlet's "Alas, poor ghost!" (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.8) with a resolute " Pity me not" (1.5.9). Another point for Battenhouse is the ghost's preoccupation with revenge. In spite of the proviso "Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive / Against thy mother aught" (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.92-93), the ghost primarily asks Hamlet to "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.31). In order to show the incompatibility of this command to Christian doctrine which counts the execution of private revenge as a sin against God, Battenhouse (1951) gives the example of the Elizabeth revenge-ghost designed according to Christian doctrine in Cyril Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1610) who asks his son to "leaue reuenge vnto the King of Kings" (as cited in Battenhouse, p. 169). The justice the ghost seeks, accordingly, cannot be Christian justice; instead, Battenhouse argues, has the resonance of "pagan demand for natural justice" (p. 191). According to Battenhouse, the ghost unfolds a tale that lacks Christian understanding. He explains that the incompatibility of the Christian expectations with the pagan attributes of the ghost as being due to palimpsest nature of the text of *Hamlet.* Confronted with a source material with Pre-Christian background, which remained essentially unchanged except for the addition of Senecan revenge-ghost in *Ur-Hamlet,* Shakespeare takes it upon himself to make it relevant for his own age and maintain its sub-Christian character in his retelling of the tragedy:

> The dramatist's resolution of the problem of adaptation. . . was to maintain for his Renaissance prince-hero an outlook which is ignorant of the Christian resurrection and hence of the lore by which the supernatural may be safely tested; to maintain for his Ghost, at the same time, a pagan character but one deceptively embellished with some superstitious touches of nominal Christianity. (Battenhouse, 1951, p. 192)

Battenhouse provides a convincing argument for the readers to at least doubt the Christian nature of the ghost. Yet, as West (1955) notes, most of the points he makes can be used to argue for a more Protestant outlook, thus marking the ghost a devil in disguise vying to get Hamlet’s soul (p. 1110). Indeed, considering Renaissance pneumatology in even greater detail than Wilson, Prosser argues such in identifying the ghost as a malevolent figure when considered in light of certain signs as to the where, when, with who and how ghost speaks (as cited in Hunt, 2007, p. 149). Seeing the merit in Prosser’s argument, Hunt even supplies a detail Prosser seems to have missed. He draws out attention to the second appearance of the ghost and argues that the ghost’s choice of appearing only to Hamlet and not Gertrude paints Hamlet as crazy in Gertrude’s eyes, thus sets the direction of the action that culminates in the “stark horrors of the final scene” (p. 151). Be that as it may, not many are eager to accept ‘the ghost is a devil’ theory, as not only that essentially the ‘truth’ revealed by the ghost ends up being true, but also the dramatic intuition of readers remain against such reduction of the tragedy into a moralising-sermonising tract condemning Hamlet’s descent into evil.

A more elegant solution, one that I am inclined to agree with, comes from West (1955), who argues for an intentionally ambiguous ghost created by Shakespeare to mirror the uncertainty inherent in the raw state of real life experience with the supernatural. “[B]y reminding the audience that apparitions were a subject of current and serious experience and speculation" (p. 1114), Shakespeare reinfuses dramatic vitality to figure of the ghost, which had become an increasingly deadening Senecan convention by the time he was writing. For West, Shakespeare's consistent inconsistencies in his presentation of supernatural come from his design and for this reason conflicted readings of ghost as strictly Catholic, pagan or a devil, while expectable, are not tenable. West delineates the weak point in each theory remarking:

> [If] he wanted the apparition understood to be a devil, he must have eliminated the ghost's concern for Gertrude . . . Pneumatology attributes many sleights to devils, but never the sleight of prescribing Christian forbearance . . . if he wanted us to recognize it as a ghost from a paganesque purgatory, he must have eliminated its words on Catholic last offices. [And], if he wanted us to regard it without impediment as a saved Christian soul acting as an instrument of God's wrath and justice, he must have eliminated the ghost's personal vindictiveness. (pp. 1110-1113)

West's elegant compromise is perhaps the most satisfying argument for many readers. However, the deliberate ambiguity surrounding the play appears to be significant not only in providing a dramatic vitality, but also in instigating the reassessment of notions of the justice the ghost demands and the order re-established at the end of the play.

The play opens with the question of the identity of the apparition occupying the minds of sentinels who have perceived it twice and Horatio who has come to witness it himself. The pervasive question that opens the play and remains undetermined throughout is given in the first line "Who's there?" (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.1.1). The atmosphere is one of uneasy expectation; what they and the audience are preparing to witness the 're-apparition' of "this thing" (1.1.26), "this dreaded sight" (1.1.30). Horatio, as has many critics remarked, is a stand in for the audience in his healthy scepticism in approaching the ghost; consequently, when he is convinced of the objectivity of the apparition despite his misgivings, the audience has no choice but to regard it as "something more than fantasy" (1.1.64). The ghosts expected ‘re-appearance’ soon following their discussion is proof enough for its objective reality, however, there remains the problem of determining its nature and purpose. Its appearance disturbs the natural order of experience leading Horatio to question ‘it’ “What art thou that usurp’t this time of night / Together with that fair and warlike form / In which the majesty of buried Denmark / Did sometimes march?” (1.1.54-57). Corresponding to the popular belief, however, the ghost disappears with the crowing of the cock before the witnesses are able to decipher this figure. That job remains Hamlet’s, who will choose to call him as “‘Hamlet,’ ‘King,’ ‘Father,’ ‘Royal Dane.’” (1.4.49-50), instead of ‘it’, ‘this thing’ and ‘thou’.

The ghost is a sign to be deciphered, even if one leaves aside the concern for his true nature. Horatio tries to determine the reason of its appearance and by making use of the popular ghost lore lists possible reasons. Accordingly, there might be some good deed to benefit both the doer and the ghost, or the ghost might have some foreknowledge concerning his country’s fate that can be avoided, alternatively the ghost might be haunting the premises because he might have treasure buried. His address remaining unanswered, Horatio is sure of only one thing: “This bodes some strange eruption to our state” (1.1.80). The primary character of the ghost, then, is its function as an omen that there was/is/will be an event, a misdeed that provokes this natural disturbance. That the ghost appears in his public capacity as king with ‘fair and warlike form’ and ‘martial stalk’ further suggests that this concerns the whole state. Considered within the frame of whole of the play, the ghost in this scene can be interpreted as three-folded sign that conflates the chronological understanding of time into a single immensity encompassing the past, the present and the future. First of all, the ghost’s appearance signifies a foul misdeed done in the past, the murder committed by Claudius that refuses to stay buried. Claudius’s transgression goes beyond simple murder in its immensity and goes beyond natural boundaries in encompassing primal sins of fratricide and incest as well. More importantly though, the fratricide is also a regicide, thus the order breached is not only natural morality, but the divine order as well. In the political ideology of the early modern period, which as a continuation of medieval political theory, the king was seen as the minister of God in the mortal realm; as one ordained and anointed by God, his authority had as its basis the divine right of kings. Further, there existed an analogy of state as family with the king as its patriarch that had its basis on the medieval concept of two bodies of the king: 'the body natural' which is mortal and 'the body politic', "the sacramental and immortal body that partook of divinity" (Hattaway, 2002, p. 115). This co-relation between the physical and political body meant that if the sacred order is violated, it is the whole realm that will face the repercussions. That the ghost appears initially within the battlements, reinforce this connection between the body of the king and the well-being of the whole state. With this in mind, the enormity of Claudius' transgression appear more clearly; he not only killed Hamlet's father, but he cut the head of the state as well. The natural and the divine order is breached in such a perverse way that it demands the unnatural appearance of the ghost, which is necessarily invested with political significance. This foul dead committed in the past, like a buried pestilence poisons the state in the present; as Marcellus remarks "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.4.5). With the violent act breaching the order, the state of Denmark becomes a "warlike state" (1.2.9) infested with violent power-relations, betrayals, courtly intrigues. The ghost also signifies the present political threat that is the cause of "strict and most observant watch / So nightly toils the subject of the land" (1.1.82-83), the threat of young Fortinbras closing in on Denmark. Accordingly, he is also an omen for things to come, be it the eventual loss of kingdom to Fortinbras, or the violent final scene in which nearly the entire dramatic cast expire. By appearing as a three-folded sign in Hamlet, the ghost invites an interpretative reading requiring consideration of multiple time frames, almost resembling of the tradition of allegorical interpretation of the divine text. Once again, then, the figure of the ghost can be seen as bringing on the erasure of the lines between the past, the present and the future.

The function of this ghost is different from other Shakespearean ghosts, he does not provoke confession and acceptance of a wrong-doing but instead is revelatory, bringing to surface what remains hidden. This is due to the difference in its choice of the haunted, unlike Julius Caesar, Richard's victims and Banquo, the ghost of King Hamlet does not trouble his wrongdoer, the victim of his revenge, but instead appears to his son, bestowing upon him the duty of the avenger. Laying open the foul murder that infects the land like a pestilence, the Ghost, who carries a moral weight, leaves Hamlet with two injunctions. His first injunction is to "Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder" (1.5.31). The ghost relays on his son the ancestral burden of revenge, just like the way the implied ghost of Agamemnon relied on Orestes for the completion of his own revenge in *The Libation Bearers*. It is a common theme; after all, we are, in a sense, all haunted by our fathers/ancestors in the way we inherit their ideals, prejudices, repercussions of their actions. In modern and contemporary plays that are studied in this thesis, this type of haunting appears to be more prevalent although not always as obvious. In *Hamlet*, there is a debt to be paid to the ancestors and the duty falls on the son. The demand of revenge, as discussed, conflicts with the Christian ideal of leaving revenge unto God, however, Sister Miriam Joseph (1961) argues Hamlet's case might be justified. Referring to St.

Paul, she argues that God repays evil-doers in this life “through rulers, his ministers” and it is justified to kill an evil-doer if it befits the common good, analogous to the way a cankerous member has to be excised before it infects the whole body (p. 500). Likewise, Claudius, the dram of evil that poisons the state of Denmark, turning its royal bed into “A couch for luxury and damnèd incest” (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.90) should be cut off, if Denmark is to be saved from corruption. Since Claudius usurped his position as the king through regicide, the authority to punish and to kill lies in Hamlet, who would have been elected the king had not Claudius “Popped in between th’ election and [Hamlet’s] hopes” (5.2.73). Therefore, Hamlet has to be the one to grapple with this burden of the past. The ghost, as the embodiment of an unresolved past, is a figure of blockage that occupies both the present and the future. If the present is to be experienced in its own terms, freeing future from being an “uncanny iteration of an unfinished past lingering in a haunted present” (Derrida as cited in Campana, 2014, p. 812), the ghost of the past has to be exorcised or appeased first. The ghost disturbs the seeming ‘ideal order’ Claudius strives to establish, revealing what is lying underneath the façade and repression. Denial of the past, burying it from sight will not help, it needs to be reckoned and grappled with. The ghost ‘means’ that “the time is out of joint” and it is Hamlet who is “born to set it right” (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.210-211).

Despite his initial recoiling from the enormity of the task given to him, Hamlet is also, paradoxically eager to accept it and “with wings as swift / As meditation or the thoughts of love, / May sweep to [his] revenge . . .” (1.5.35-37). His eagerness is understandable if considered in the light of his first soliloquy, which lays open his disillusionment with the world. With the death of King Hamlet, the authority that stabilized Hamlet’s grounding, Hamlet loses part of his identity as well. When King Hamlet is buried and Claudius takes his place, the possibility of another King Hamlet –Hamlet as the King, is interred with the body of his father, leaving Hamlet in the wake of his inability to resist the authoritative forces surrounding him. Faced with the shocking suddenness of death, "[t]he undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler returns" (3.1.87-88), and the way it goes unnoticed by others, Hamlet finds no value in the world:

> How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
> Seem to me all the uses of this world!
> Fie on 't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden
> That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature
> Possess it merely . . . (1.2.137-141)

Further still, his sense of identity seems to have taken quite a blow. Seeing his incompetence against his uncle's courtly authority and more philosophically, against death, Hamlet cannot imagine himself in the role of the hero: "My father's brother, but no more like my father / Than I to Hercules" (1.2.157-158). When the ghost offers a narrative that can possibly give shape to the chaos Hamlet finds himself in, even if it he is to be casted in the hoary role of avenger, Hamlet cannot help but find relief in the revelation, responding with a resonant "O, my prophetic soul!" (1.5.48). He feels compelled to answer what he deems the sounding call beckoning him to his fate, "My fate cries out" (1.4.81). Death is made sense of within a narrative of murder and given a possible correction: revenge. The ghost chooses to impart this mission to Hamlet in private, and his remark "I find thee apt" (1.5.39) before revealing the secret, illustrates that Hamlet has passed the audition and is being cast in the role of the hero of a revenge-tragedy. The ambiguity surrounding the ghost remains, however, since the ghost provides one narrative frame to account for the rank, unweeded garden while it disturbs another one: Alexander lived, "Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander/ returneth to dust" (5.1.216-217). He is, after all, a returning visitor, coming from “The undiscovered country from whose bourn / No traveler returns” (3.1.87-88). As a liminal figure, it destabilizes while it stabilizes and by returning from death, “it betrays the lie of homogeneous, linear time and demonstrates rather its nature as something accretionary, ontologically impure, and ultimately gothic. (Schenstead-Harris, 2015, p. 77).

Although the ghost begins his narrative with the command of revenge, he bids goodbye with another order: “Remember me” (1.5.98). *Hamlet* is a drama that is obsessed with remembrance as it is about revenge. It is telling that the commandment Hamlet chooses to write in the “table of his memory” is not ‘revenge!’ but ‘remember!’: “Now to my word. / It is “adieu, adieu, remember me.” / I have sworn ’t” (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.116-118). In Elsinore under the rule of Claudius, where mourning is banned, speech regulated and silence enforced, remembering becomes a form of revenge that Hamlet employs. In his denial to “cast [his] knighted color off” (1.2.70) and refusal of seems for “that within which passes show” (1.2.88) Hamlet differentiates himself as the ‘other’ to the court even before he puts on his antic disposition. Ghost’s choice of Hamlet as his confidante appears more apt if Hamlet’s status as the ‘other’ to the court is considered. Even when he is not aware of the ‘truth’ behind his father’s death Hamlet is an avenger in his refusal to relinquish ‘the story of the buried majesty of Denmark’ to the streams of Lethe. In fact, he is almost obsessed with the necessity of remembering: “O heavens, die two / months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there’s / hope a great man’s memory may outlive his life / half a year” (3.2.137-147). Yet what is it that he truly remembers? Many critics, following Lacan’s reading had commented on Hamlet’s ‘melancholy’ – subsequent to his failure to mourn— in both psychoanalytic terms and from a more metaphorical stance. It is not my intention nor within my expertise to further comment on the pathological nature of Hamlet's obsession. However, one does not need extensive psychoanalytic knowledge to observe Hamlet's memory of the dead king is unhealthy and not very realistic. The father he remembers is too perfect to be a flesh and blood; he is more Hyperion than human. Consequently, Hamlet is also drowning in a surge of nostalgia of the 'perfect past' under this gracious figure, especially compared to the rotten state under the "bloat king" Claudius which can only be read in terms of a 'fall'. That Claudius strives to blot out completely this past in his attempts to build a new and authoritarian regime, further incites Hamlet's obsession about long gone golden past. Cousins's (2018) remark sheds some light about Hamlet's nostalgia:

> His decision to idealize his father conveys Hamlet's almost idolatrous sense of him as having been a more than human figure. The analogy with Hyperion suggests that King Hamlet was the heart of his son's world and was perceived by him as its source of light and life . . . a benevolent sun king ordering what has become, in his absence, an 'unweeded garden'. (p. 94)

This idealization of the father figure, inevitably leads him to see himself in the light of a failure in comparison with the martial prowess and the golden legacy of the celestial king, paralyzing him with this awareness from further action. Reminiscent of the way Darius embodied the past glories of Persia weighing upon the present failure of Xerxes in *The Persians,* Hamlet the Senior loads an ancestral burden that further locks Hamlet in his self-deprecation. Claudius is not the only one that fails to compete with the golden figure of the dead King, his son is unable to rise up to the golden level of the celestial king. However, this failure to be Hercules is something Hamlet has to reconcile himself with and he will achieve this by the end of the play, and grasp the pointlessness of "[t]he imminent death of twenty thousand men / That for a fantasy and trick of fame / Go to their graves like bed" (Shakespeare, 2012, 4.5.63-65).

In this fantasy about the Hyperion power, one can also sense an anxiety about the loss of the divine right of kings and unproblematic succession. The Hyperion father with the celestial bed is an image belonging to the idealized past which perhaps never existed in the first place. The present, on the other hand, is a stage to the authoritative figure of the usurper Claudius, with his constant surveillance and corrupted court, trying to establish his power like his predecessor, and yet unable to do so as can be seen in his anxiety to keep Hamlet under stern vigilance. The over-idealized nature of the father, however, problematizes the idea of the absolute power in the first place, especially considering that the majestic king holding the ‘divine right’ was eliminated in a rather domestic and inglorious manner: through his brother pouring poison into his hear while he was sleeping in his garden.

Hamlet’s inability to come to terms with this loss borders on pathological and prevents him from engaging in the present and moving forward to future, both before and after he assumes the role of the revenge. His infamous delay is partly a result of ghost’s “questionable” nature and partly Hamlet’s inability to move a step forward. If the blockage barring the smooth progression of time from the present to future is to be regained, Hamlet has to acknowledge the loss and come to terms with it. Ghost’s revelation of regicide helps Hamlet to put this death into a narrative shape. However, Hamlet cannot truly come to terms with this loss until he is able to accept his father as he really was and recover another hidden history. The journey towards this ‘healing’ which will mostly resolve with Hamlet’s mourning of his ‘substitute father’ Yorick in Act 5 Scene 5, is initiated by the ghost’s appearance as well. While the ghost provides the narrative of the murder, he also disturbs Hamlet’s s image of the perfect father. If this ghost is truly able to return from his purgatory to give out his injunctions, one question remains to be answered: What is this Hyperion of a figure doing in Purgatory in the first place? What are those blossoms of sin that remains without “reck’ning made” (1.5.85) due to his untimely death which sends him to his account “With all [his] imperfections on [his] head” (1.5.56)? Kearney (2005) calls on the impossible nature of the ghost’s call for remembrance:

> Yes. But what is he to remember? His father's glories as illustrious monarch, faithful to his people, spouse and son? Or the exact hidden details of his untimely murder? No. The irony is that the first thing father tells son is *what he cannot tell him* (p. 158).

The ghost speaks first about a story it cannot tell:

> I am thy father's spirit,
> Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
> And for the days confined to fast in fires
> Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
> Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
> To tell the secrets of my prison house,
> I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
> Would harrow up thy soul ... (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.9-16)

Ironically, the ghost is unable to ‘reveal’ neither the secrets of his prison house nor what the foul crimes were that condemned him to Purgatory, leaving Hamlet in an impossible bind. Although he is asked to remember, he is not given the whole ‘truth’ that should be remembered, but should work with the narrative of murder that he is given. Although he aims to restore this history of his father through revenge, his delay and his need to be sure allows him to employ more creative means, ‘The Mousetrap’. Neill (1992/2012) points out that the play-within-the-play gives “a public voice to the Ghost’s silenced story. But it is only a metaphoric revenge” (p. 332). And it fails in restoring the story to this history as well since no one but Hamlet, Horatio and the target, Claudius is aware of the true meaning of the story. Further, ascertaining the veracity of the ghost’s words, does not help Hamlet in seeing his father without the over shining idealism he is covered in. The generational secret that is covered up by the surface story of injustice of the regicide needs its own exorcism if one is to reach a higher understanding of the self. Although, the foul crimes of Hamlet Sr. and the secrets he is forbidden to tell remain unexpressed onto the final scene, it finally imparts its force by complicating the justice established.

The ghost, then, besides being a figure of calling for revenge, is a figure of necessity of remembering. Memory is a tricky thing in Elsinore, but if the healthy flow of time is to be restored, there needs to be a union between remembering and forgetting, between the goddesses Mnemosyne and Lesmosyne/Lethe. There needs to be a balance between Hamlet's obsessive distorted remembering, bordering on melancholia and Claudius' eagerness of complete erasure of the inconvenient past. The stories that remain untold have to be restored to history, the loss needs to be truly acknowledged and finally the compulsion to remember must be overcome with a healthy dose of forgetfulness. Only then, can the past turn into a restorative force, a grounding, thus not an obstacle standing before the present and the future.

As remarked previously, one of the concerns regarding the ghost was whether it is real or a hallucination. Although the ghost of Act 1 is predominantly accepted as objective due to the multiple witnesses, the appearance of the ghost in Act 3 Scene 4 remains more debated. Although his appearance to only Hamlet can be explained in terms of 'selective apparition' –meaning he chose "to present himself to the person with whom he is most concerned" (Whitmore, 1915, p. 257) –, it still has a more peculiar tone than its initial appearance in the first Act. His timing is less than ideal as he appears before Hamlet in his rage does harm to his mother but not before he in reaction kills Polonius in cold blood. Further, while he does not offer any information not already given, and as Hunt suggests, his 'selective appearance' leads Hamlet to be perceived as mad in the eyes of his mother who can see "Nothing at all; yet all that is I see" (Shakespeare, 2012, 3.4.151). Further, the choice of place for this appearance is significant for its interiority as well: unlike the first act, the ghost appears not on the battlements but ‘within’ the castle, inside Gertrude’s closet. Regarding this subjectivity, Burr (1987) remarks: “Though the Ghost of Act One is, admittedly, an objective presence, his reappearance in Act Three is another kind of return, a revenant in which now it is unclear just whether he is a projection of Hamlet’s disturbed psyche or still the objective father-ghost of the earlier Act”. It is both the same ghost and “the image of Hamlet’s inner doubts and anxieties” (p. 7). In fact, in this scene, Hamlet seems to be giving cues to ghost as what to say: “Do you not come your tardy son to chide, / That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by / Th’ important acting of your dread command?” to which the ghost replies “Do not forget. This visitation / Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose. / But look, amazement on thy mother sits” (Shakespeare, 2012, 3.4.122-128). The ghost’s reply is an echo of Hamlet’s self-blame with regards to his tardiness. Yet, Hamlet in his tardiness is an echo of the ‘revenant’, whose ‘untimely’ appearance sets the time ‘out of joint’. There are further similarities between the ghost and Hamlet earlier in the play as well. In his meeting with Ophelia Hamlet echoes the ghost’s appearance, he is described as “Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, / And with a look so piteous in purport / As if he had been loosèd out of hell / To speak of horrors” (2.1.90-94). Reversely, the Ghost echoes Hamlet “in his existential malaise . . . in his misery and doubt, . . . [in] hatred of Claudius as well as [in] his tortured nostalgia for Gertrude’s former innocence” (Burr, 1987, p. 7). Hunt (2007) perceives the similarity as well remarking that:

> the imagery of decay, disgust, bestiality, and incest that oozes from Hamlet’s meditation in 1.2—“things rank and gross in nature . . . a beast that wants discourse of reason . . . increase of appetite . . . incestuous sheets”— is remarkably similar to that of his father, in his first postmortem encounter with his son in 1.5: “Shameful lust . . . Lewdness . . . lust . . . prey on garbage . . .

> the Royal bed of Denmark . . . a couch for luxury and damned incest." (p. 137)

With this in mind, it is possible to see in Hamlet the ghost an embodiment of Hamlet's inner fears and doubts. That at times he serves as externalization of Hamlet's superego is best obvious in the concern he shows for Gertrude's soul in Act Three Scene Four. While he reflects Hamlet's self-guilt in being unable to complete his revenge in a timely manner, he also bars Hamlet from hurting his mother, giving Hamlet's desperation for his mother's redemption and affection a royal/divine pass. In other words, the ghost can be considered, at least partly, as "represent[ing] the internal reality of Hamlet's psyche, a subjective phenomenon projected as objective form" (Hunt, 2007, p. 154). His ambiguous nature here is a further continuation of Shakespeare's previous ghosts in *Richard III* and *Julius Caesar* that walked in the line between the outer and the inner, being "at once the embodiment of remorseful presentiment and the instrument of divine justice" (Moorman, 1906b, p. 192). In Shakespeare, especially in *Hamlet,* a certain refashioning of the conception of the ghost appears, emerging as a psychological strain added onto the figure of revenge ghost as symbol of 'wild justice'. In modern and contemporary plays studied in this thesis, the ghost will mostly be read in psychological strain, thought in terms of externalization of the inner rather than as a distinct, objective figure with motivations on its own. Hunt (2007) observes that "Hamlet marks a turning point in the historical process whereby reality becomes internalized" and sees in the ghost a "representation of this process" (p. 153). In a play where the hero declares "for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so" (Shakespeare, 2012, 2.2.268-269) and who "could be bounded in a nutshell and count [himself] a king of infinite space" (2.2.273-274), the possibility of the ghost's being merely "the very coinage of [Hamlet's] brain" (3.4.156) is not easily dismayed. At the very least, the ghost retains its ambiguity by giving ambivalent signs regarding its reality. Burr (1987) too, stresses this doubleness evoked by the ambiguity of the ghost:

> in many ways the Ghost seems to rise up out of the cosmic silence Hamlet experiences, even as his "words, words, words" rise up to fill— and not fill— the vacuum within and without. The Ghost's close association to Hamlet's mind is thus not attenuated by the stage trappings of supernatural horror that Shakespeare also exploits; the silent, tormented Ghost becomes a striking image of Hamlet's mental dividedness while retaining his supernatural power for an Elizabethan audience (p. 9)

Referring to Dover Wilson's famous remark that Shakespeare humanized the Ghost, Burr suggests that it could be read both that Shakespeare gave the Ghost recognizable human attributes and that "Shakespeare humanized the Ghost by linking him to Hamlet, thereby establishing an intriguing ambiguity over the Ghost's origins, an ambiguity that continues to provoke controversy today" (p. 8). In the light of this Neill's (1992/2012) observation that *Hamlet* is drama of multiple levels comprising of revenge play and psychological drama and that Shakespeare gave a striking twist to what had been a brutally straightforward narrative by adding onto it the focus upon the perplexed interior life of the hero seem even more relevant.

In *Macbeth* Shakespeare will lean further towards the psychological strain in his conception of the completely 'silent' ghost, whose existence is best understood through its effect on his victim. It is important to recognize however, Shakespeare, especially in his conception of the ghost, occupies a mid-space between the ancient and the modern, between the certainty of objective reality and the awareness of the inescapability of subjective experience.

In the previous chapter, it was seen that the liminality of the ghost allows it to be used to investigate the notions of selfhood and otherness. In *Hamlet* the conspicuous ambiguity of the ghost, along with the controversies surrounding the concept during the period allows it to be a shifting container of various 'others' as well as making it as a marker of otherness. As Bottez (2012) remarks, the Ghost in *Hamlet*, “as a blend between pagan and Christian creeds, a cocktail of Catholicism and Protestantism”, is a figure of otherness (p. 39). In the earlier discussion about the critical views surrounding the ghost’s true nature, it was shown that the ghost carried conflicting signs that led it to be read as Christian, pagan, a Protestant devil or ambiguous combination of both. Based on non-Christian sources, the existence of pagan elements in the play is unavoidable. Yet, it is surprising that the ghost, which had been missing in these non-Christian sources, is decked with paganistic elements as well. Battenhouse (1951), if it is recalled, pointed out that the ghost fails in multiple points as a Christian ghost and argued that many of the details the ghost gives as to his residing place and his demand for revenge mark him as coming from pagan hell/purgatory instead of a Christian one. For Battenhouse (1951), this paganistic undertone was reflection of the interest in the old religion that offered itself as an alternative to the decaying faith in the Elizabethan period where “Senecan morality-and, more broadly, the whole outlook and thought-world of the ancients-was being revived and taught, often as confused with or substituted for Christian thinking. The social fabric of Christendom along with its orthodox Faith was in decay, while classical paganism and oriental mysticism were recrudescent” (p. 191).

In his idealism, for example, Hamlet compares his father to Hyperion and not a Christian figure. More importantly the call for justice the ghost voices does not seem to be divine justice, but a more abstract principle of justice that had as its basis the natural conscience of man and not the divine Word. It appears to be the same type of retaliatory justice occupying the Senecan plays where blood demands blood in an unending cycle, albeit a bit modified in the proviso “Taint not thy mind” (Shakespeare, 2012, 1.5.92). These elements mark the ghost as a figure of the pagan other, especially resonant in the comparison between ‘golden past’ long gone and the rank present that lacks splendour. The ghost is a slippery figure however, remaining to be fixed down strictly as the pagan other. The concern the ghost shows for the Catholic offices he was deprived of and his narrative of purgatorial fires he is confined to also mark him as the Catholic other. Claudius on the other hand, in his penchant for maimed rites, his forbidding of mourning on the grounds that it is “a fault to heaven, / A fault against the dead, a fault to nature” (1.2.105-106), his inability to kneel in prayer emerges as a Protestant figure. With this in mind, the story of change from the old king to the new one taken on a new meaning as a parallel to process of Protestant Reformation. Watson (2004) draws attention this parallel when she remarks:

> Just as the two fathers represent not only doubling but loss and replacement, so the succession of churches also signifies doubling, loss, and replacement. The two fathers, furthermore, differ in their associations with changing rites, religious practices, traditional customs, and church furnishings. These fathers who compete for Hamlet's compliance evoke some conflicts between old and new church requirements, conflicts which in turn make Hamlet's indecision more understandable (pp. 477-478)

For Watson, this doubling, loss and replacement erupts within through the verbal play that destabilizes both the narrative of order Claudius tries to establish and the play in general as well. Watson underlines that “the Reformation was not yet deeply rooted in English popular culture by the end of the sixteenth century” (p. 478) and one of the practices that proved hardest to be eliminated from the popular mind was concerning the dead and the rites of mourning owed to them. Parallel to Claudius’ desire to cut off the past, both by killing the old king and forbidding mourning,

> the Reformation attack on the cult of the dead . . . was an attempt to redefine the boundaries of the human community, and, in an act of exorcism, to limit the claims of the past, and the people of the past, on the people of the present. (Duffy as cited in Watson, 2004, p. 484)

In *Hamlet*, such repression of the past is embodied in the figure of the ghost, who is not only the other but also ‘self-made-into-other’. The attempt to cut off the past inevitably makes it into an ‘other’, which had been previously the self. It is against this self-made-into-other that the self of the present (Claudius’ regime) defines itself. This demarcation of the self runs into a problem as the past is glorified into a golden age, which, perhaps, had never existed in the first place, leading the present to be seen only in terms of failure of achieving such glory. In Hamlet’s obsession with his father’s memory bordering on pathological melancholy, the disastrous effects of complete repression and erasure of the past can be seen. Not only it leads to an idealization of a golden past that obstructs true comprehension of the loss but also since the ghost does come back to haunt, it is unable to achieve the desired erasure in the first place. *Hamlet* shows us that the erasure of the past without acknowledgement of the loss and substitution is problematic, if not impossible. Watson (2004) finds in Shakespeare “an author willing to give up old beliefs but unwilling to drop old meanings: signification brings past and present together as theater, and denying the past is impossible, just as we cannot deny the shadows of our parents” (p. 491).

Haverkamp (2006) defines Hamlet’s mission as “the righteous act [Hamlet] is called upon to perform, the act which, once done, will restore order and the equilibrium of power in the state” (p. 173). The ghost indeed marks a violation of an order consisting of natural, ethical, and social codes of behavior. Its return is both a sign that the order is broken and that it needs to be restored. Hamlet assumes this mission of setting the time that is out of joint right. Yet the end of the play presents a rather gruesome sight. Regarding this aspect, Prosser remarks that:

> Hamlet may have ultimately won the battle within himself, but he dies with the blood of eight men on his hands, five of them innocent victims, helpless

> bystanders who were pointlessly struck down because they came between two mighty opposites. Hamlet’s revenge has led to the destruction of two entire families and to the abandonment of the State to a foreign adventurer. (as cited in Hunt, 2007, p. 151)

Faced with the excessive destruction at the end of the play, one cannot but wonder whether the order really restored after all. If so, whose justice is this that is seen dispensed at the end of the play? Is it the revenge for personal wrongs demanded by the ghost? Is it vengeance against the ghost for his buried secrets? Or is it the order demanded by the Providence? Battenhouse (1951) pointed out that since the ghost had limitations of merely human passions he cannot be considered as the true mediator of Heaven's will (p. 191). As such, if we see Claudius ending up “justly served”, killed by the “poison tempered by himself” (Shakespeare, 2012, 5.2.359-60), it can be the result of justice demanded by the ghost only to the extent it conforms to plan of the Providence. After his transformative sea-journey experience Hamlet's identification of his position as the “scourge and minister” of the heavens may not be as central as he thought after all. He is not the figure that is destined to set everything right in a heroic manner, but part of something bigger and unforeseeable. Many see in Hamlet’s curious remark “There’s a divinity that shapes our ends, / Rough-hew them how we will—” either an “agnostic yielding to fate” (Watson, 1990, p. 215) or “Calvinist acceptance of providence” (Low as cited in Watson, 2004, p. 489). Whichever it is, it is the result of Hamlet’s growth of understanding. After the sea-voyage, but more importantly after his mourning for the substitute father Yorick and his understanding that all men die, even the mighty father, Hamlet is able to move beyond his obsessive idealization of father and thus his ego-centric role of the hero for one who accepts his part within a larger plan. This larger plan encompasses a parallel justice served for another father, whose son claims “rights of memory in this kingdom” at the end of the play. Haverkamp (2006) reads in the revenge of Hamlet an “anamorphosis” of another revenge, conditioned on the proviso “there is always another history buried in History” (p. 174). This hidden history is the one that cannot be expressed by the ghost, thus cannot be ‘remembered’ by Hamlet. For Abraham (1988) the secret that the ghost reveals to Hamlet, is a cover for another, “one genuine and truthful, but resulting from an infamy which the father, unbeknown to his son, has on his conscience” (p. 189). As Abraham suggests and Haverkamp develops, the secret is intricately connected with the justice enacted at the end of the play. Haverkamp (2006) argues:

> The structure of the secret is laid bare in the story of the Prince’s alter ego Fortinbras and is comprehensible when viewed from the margins of the story. Fortinbras and Hamlet, in strict parallel, are both born upon the same day, both lose their fathers to murder, and both lose their rights to succession to their father’s brothers. Both of the stories are furthermore complementary (though no longer parallel) in that one father (old Hamlet) overcomes the father of the other (old Fortinbras) through treachery, and both display inverse complementarity in that the ghost appears at the same time as Fortinbras, and the murder of old Fortinbras is committed by the same means of a poisoned blade in a duel. (p. 183)

The link between the old king Hamlet and the old Fortinbras is established in the beginning of the play, since, as Horatio marks, the ghost appears in the same armor he had on when he conquered Fortinbras. For Haverkamp, in the prehistory of the play, the old Hamlet, “has the treacherous murder of Fortinbras’ father on his conscience and the usurpation of the Norwegian throne” (p. 180) even though the Danish side acclaims him a hero for the same conquest. I also agree with Haverkamp (2006) in his suggestion that if the order established “ends up having to do with revenge at all, the revenge cannot be that of old Hamlet but, rather, of Fortinbras on old Hamlet” (p. 180). Unlike Haverkamp, who argues that the old Hamlet’s revenge is “exposed as a sham of justice” (p. 181), I find that the retribution for old Hamlet’s murder as part and parcel of a larger justice that encompassed both his and Fortinbras’ revenges. Seeing that Polonius is accidentally slain as he was spying, Laertes "justly killed with [his] own treachery" (Shakespeare, 2012, 5.2.337), Claudius "justly served" (5.2.359), it is impossible to deny a form of just retribution surrounding the happenings. Further, Hamlet's own death is a sign that "blood will have blood" and that the pursuit of revenge will only ensure the continuation of the repetitive cycles of mimetic desire and revenge and not an escape from it. Haverkamp (2006) suggests that "in the execution of this revenge, the vengeance of another avenges itself upon Hamlet, and thus he pays, through the justice that he allows to be passed upon his father, for the injustice of the same father" and argues that Hamlet realizes the secret of the ghost "only in death" (p. 183). The importance of Fortinbras' conquest is that it manages to escape from this repetitive cycle since the need for bloodshed is eliminated and he is neatly handed the kingdom upon his arrival.

Upon first glance, similar to the classical plays in Chapter two, Shakespeare seems to have given *Hamlet* a seemingly neat closure, with the seeming order restored, and justice, one larger than initially expected, prevails. However, *Hamlet* ends with a sense of incompletion that prevents a complete closure. In this respect, *Hamlet* is only a harbinger to the contemporary plays in Chapter Four, for which the lack of closure and as of overarching sense of uncertainty is an endemic feature. Hamlet's last words, "the rest is silence" is symptomatic of certain incompletion, a sense-of being cut-off, more importantly a sense of necessity for more to be said. Neill (1992/2012) argues that Hamlet's consoling fatalism, or his acceptance of Providence, does not "survive the final slaughter" (p. 332). Instead, as Neill suggests, Hamlet is tormented by a sense of incompleteness as can be perceived in his address: "You that look pale and tremble at this chance, / That are but mutes or audience to this act, / Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, Death, / Is strict in his arrest), O, I could tell you— / But let it be" (Shakespeare, 2012, 5.2.366-70). The justice and the order established in the end does not provide a satisfying narrative for Hamlet. It is simply not enough. The inadequacy destabilizes the closure achieved by justice and order as well as the concepts themselves. As he approaches his imminent death, Hamlet can only find the remedy for this inadequacy by echoing the second injunction of the ghost, the necessity for remembrance. Preventing Horatio from committing suicide, he asks his friend to tell his story. After all, only through telling of stories, we remember and mourn the dead. Only through remembering, can we take on death and continue forward. In the end, the command 'Remember!' ends up being stronger than the injunction 'Revenge!'.

3.2.3 "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow": Destroying the time in *Macbeth*

Another Shakespearean play that deals with the supernatural extensively is *Macbeth*. Although the precise date cannot be determined, most likely, Shakespeare composed and produced the play between the years 1603 and 1606. The year 1603, for the play, emerges as an important one, marking the year of ascension James VI of Scotland to the throne as James I of England. This shift from Elizabethan reign to the Jacobean one, brought with it not only influx of Scottish subjects, but an interest in things Scottish as well. Shakespeare as a playwright was directly affected by this change as Shakespeare's company, The Lord Chamberlain's Men changed into The King's Men under the new king's patronage. It was most likely this environment that led Shakespeare to turn to Scottish history for material. *Macbeth* has as its primary source Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, Ireland,* first published in 1577. Rather than similarities, though, the divergences from the source

Shakespeare makes is more significant for interpreting the play. Some of these alterations, like disregarding Banquo's role in Macbeth's treachery, were most likely made with political considerations in mind, as James I "used this ancestral figure as a potent tool of legitimization, tracing his ancestry through Banquo, and even beyond him, as far back as the mythical Fergus" (Keman as cited in Streufert, 2001 p. 237). What is more relevant to our topic at hand is the departures Shakespeare makes from the source material in terms of the use of supernatural. While the source material supplies Shakespeare with the passing reference to Weird Sisters, nowhere in Holinshed the ghost of Banquo, who appears three times in the play, can be found. Yet unlike the ghost in *Hamlet*, the ghost's appearance is placed within a larger but predominant environment of supernatural that shrouds the play. For that reason, it is important to first explore the Weird Sisters, with whose appearance the play begins.

From the beginning of the play, the audience introduced into a world where the seams remain visible, and what should be invisible to mortal eyes rendered visible to the audience. Their appearance with thunder and lightning right from the beginning sets the tone of ambivalence that shrouds the play, reflected in their axiom: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.1.12). Lamb deems them mysterious figures:

> They are foul anomalies, of whom we know not whence they are sprung, nor whether they have beginning or ending. As they are without human passions, so they seem to be without human relations. They come with thunder and lightning, and vanish to airy music. This is all we know of them. (as cited in Johnson, 1959, p. 16).

The nature of Weird Sisters is one of liminality, as they elude normal classifications and ontological distinctions. Both earthly and un-earthly, these creatures unsettle distinctions. As Banquo describes them, they "look not like th' inhabitants o' th' Earth / And yet are on 't?" (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.3.42-43). Further, they defy the categories men and women: “You should be women, / And yet your beards forbid me to interpret / That you are so” (1.3.47-49). As Johnson (1959) notes, their origin lies in the suggestion Holinshed gives to Shakespeare:

> But afterwards the common opinion was, that these women were either the weird sisters, that is, (as ye would say) the goddesses of destinie [*sic*], or else some nymphs or feiries [*sic*], indued with the knowledge of prophesie [*sic*] by the necromanticall [*sic*]science, because everie [*sic*] thing came true as they had spoken. (as cited in Johnson, p. 16)

Although their source conception does not mark them as Witches, Shakespeare makes certain alterations to give them a more familiar guise and endows them with certain trapping of the witches of his day. Gray (1967) notes that while they differ from English witches, it is possible to find elements inspired from records of Scottish witch-trials, fitting as the play is based on Scottish history (p. 67). Whitmore (1915) marks this outer trapping as superficial which is employed so that the “audience could readily accept them, and by this acceptance they were led to Shakespeare's deeper conception” (p. 256). Considering King James I’s interest in witches as evidenced in his *Daemonologie,* Shakespeare’s revamping of the Weird Sisters is an apt choice on his part; yet it creates an ambiguity as to their true nature and effect that enriches rather than impoverishes their conception. Wilson justly remarks on this ambiguity in saying these beings are "too witch-like to be Norns, too norn-like to be witches" (as cited in Johnson, 1959, p. 16).

Weird Sisters also occupy in an indeterminate space in another sense. Marchitello (2013) points out that “they are clearly not imaginary, but only uncertainly or obscurely real” (p. 436). As Greenblatt (2013) remarks, *Macbeth* manifests an understanding of witchcraft that is “constructed on the boundary between fantasy and reality, the border or membrane where the imagination and the corporeal world, figure and actuality, psychic disturbance and objective truth meet”

(p. 193). As Banquo is the first one to see them, it is impossible dismiss them as Macbeth’s hallucination. Yet, there is undeniably a certain affinity between the Weird Sisters and Macbeth as evinced by Macbeth’s initial line “So foul and fair a day I have not seen” echoing the Sisters’ gnomic axiom (1.3.39). Although they seem to enjoy Macbeth’s fall they have foreknowledge of, they do not actually tempt Macbeth, nor supply him with fearful actions he will commit. Rather, in their hailing of Macbeth as “Thane of Glamis, . . . Thane of Cawdor, . . . that shalt be king hereafter” (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.3.51-53) they only bring to surface, his “black and deep desires” (1.4.58) that had hitherto laid dormant, resurfacing “things forgotten” (1.3.167). Considering this, Bradley notes (1957/1992) that it is possible to interpret the witches as “representations of thoughts and desires which have slumbered in Macbeth’s breast and now rise into consciousness and confront him” (p. 303). Bradley finds the interpretation that sees the source of Sisters’ great influence on the action to be their function as “merely symbolic representations of the unconscious or half-conscious guilt in Macbeth himself” inadequate (p. 298). It is, after all, hard to deny their ‘objectivity’, since they are witnessed by not only Macbeth but also Banquo, who questions them concerning his own future.

This initial set up marks Banquo not only as a witness but as a foil to Macbeth as well. He faces the same challenge as Macbeth, the possibility of a “royal hope” even if it is not intended for his person but for his posterity. It is his response that distinguishes Banquo from Macbeth and paints him in an idealistic hue, as befitting the ancestor of James I. Rather than getting caught in a rapture that transports him from his present surroundings to let him entertain black desires, he remains vigilant of the possibility that “[t]he instruments of darkness tell us truths, / Win us with honest trifles, to betray ’s / In deepest consequence” (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.3.136-139). In Act II, upon waking up from his dream of Weird Sisters, to avoid temptation, he renders his sword to Fleance, as his future hope depends on the death of the current king as well. After the prophecy regarding Macbeth's kingship come true, he is tempted to hope that these figures may prove to be his oracles as well and set him up in hope. However, he eschews temptation with a concise "But hush, no more" (3.1.10).

So does Macbeth, initially. Although he is shaken to the core by the resurfacing of his fatal desires and the idea of a regicide, he regathers his shaken single state of men by coming to an unburdening conclusion: "If chance will have me king, why, chance may / crown me / Without my stir" (1.4.157-159). Yet, this attitude of 'que sera sera' soon leaves its place to Macbeth's desire for wrenching of time to live "[t]he future in the instant" as Lady Macbeth terms it (1.6.66). Campana (2014) draws attention to Banquo's conception of the future, which, he argues, relies on the idea of organic growth that reinforces "a linear reading of unfolding time" (p. 827). As he explains, "if all life were organized into moments, each of which might grow into timelines, prophecy would constitute knowing what parts of the past or present would come to fruition. The future, then, would be the predictable consequence of past or present circumstance" (p. 827). So when the Banquo asks the Weird Sisters "to look into the seeds of time /And say which grain will grow and which will not" (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.3.61-62), the audience gets the sense that out of many alternatives of future that the present supplies, some will come to fruition and some will not. As one disturbed by the pressure of the passage of time between thought and action, Macbeth cannot be content with letting the seed of future kingship grow organically in the unfolding time. Instead, he strives to live the future in an instant and remain in that instant by stomping out alternative futures inscribed in other seeds of time. There remains an obstacle in the way of his desire for disjunction of time, as it is never easy to completely eschew the moral ties and order that keeps the society one lives in together, giving reign to unleashed hidden desires instead. The ambiguity of grammar in Macbeth's lines "My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical, / Shakes so my single state of man / That function is smothered in surmise" (1.3.52-154) opens up a stimulating slant. What he may dare do in his enraptured state is a fantasy so horrible that shakes his single state of men, requiring him to not only murder Duncan, but his 'thought' as well. True, by killing Duncan he will be mastering the time and bending it to his own convenience. Yet, this act requires him to murder the ideal self that is 'Macbeth the loyal warrior' along with the safety of the ordered state, both of self and of society. Lady Macbeth seeing this hesitation as weakness and calls him on it: "When you durst do it, then you were a man; / And to be more than what you were, you would / Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place / Did then adhere, and yet you would make both" (1.7.56-59). Lady Macbeth proves a forceful and convincing ally, and this sets Macbeth on his quest of achieving mastery of time.

Deciding he must overleap the step of Malcolm being named the heir to the throne, Macbeth decides to take the matter into his own hand and commit the actions that he believes will bring future kingship to the instant. Still, finding no other motivation than his ambition, and being aware of the multiple moral violations he is about to commit, Macbeth finds himself fantasizing about "pure action", with no thought process leading to it, and no repercussions following it: "If th' assassination / Could trammel up the consequence and catch / With his surcease success, that but this blow / Might be the be-all and the end-all here" (1.7.2-5). For Tarantelli (2010), this shows that "Macbeth's phantasy is that of control over the future, which implies the destruction of time except as the extension of mere sameness, an infinite repetition of the success of the assassination" (p. 91). Although Macbeth soon finds out that such a pure action defined by its instantaneity is impossible, that all actions have consequences one needs to face, nevertheless he continues to pursue this fantasy, meanwhile getting himself caught up in a cycle where he commits purposeless murders to retain his power and hold over time.

Finding himself led by hallucinatory daggers, which are soon replaced by material ones, Macbeth plays his part in the ritualistic theatre that designates him as the "withered murder" moving towards his design like a ghost (Shakespeare, 2013, 2.1.64). The deed he is about to commit, Macbeth is aware, transcends the moral boundary on multiple levels: "He's here in double trust: / First, as I am his kinsman and his subject, / Strong both against the deed; then, as his host, / Who should against his murderer shut the door, / Not bear the knife myself" (1.7.12-16). He violates the familial bonds tying him to Duncan, betrays his king as a loyal subject and eschews the ancient rule of *xenia* that demands from the host the protection of his guest. His most crucial violation, however, is the act of regicide. Instead of using violence in the name of king as a loyal thane, Macbeth will use violence on the king to establish himself as one. As previously discussed in the context of Claudius killing the old King Hamlet, the act of regicide was seen almost as a sacrilege in the Early Modern society, an act against God and the order of nature. In *Hamlet* it proved to be an act that unsettled the natural order of things, causing disruptions of nature to emerge, the ghost being one of them. It was an act that effected the whole of the state, causing the state to rot and fester until the restitution of order is achieved. In *Macbeth*, an analogous situation is encountered. Ide (1975), for example, taking in account of the dissociation of the self that Macbeth displays in his monologue just before he kills the king, sees in regicide a black liturgy and argues that the act is tantamount to sacrilege:

> His parodic sacrifice fulfils the pattern of black ritual the larger drama had established and undoes the sacramental relationship between God and King, God and Scotland. Duncan's bloodletting has loosed a graceless and godless reign of sin, tyranny, and death on Scotland. The regicide has been a "sacrilegious Murther" indeed, a Black Communion with Macbeth as High Priest. (p. 348)

Emma Smith points out in Shakespeare source material, Holinshed's *Chronicles,* Macbeth is not a regicide who takes the crown from a Holy King Duncan, but rather a warlord who takes the power from a weakened warlord that became the king in the same way and in turn has his power taken away by yet another warlord. The politically unstable world of Holinshed's Macbeth is already a violent one, where different warlords fight over for position of power and where there is no principle of rule other than strength. Holinshed's Macbeth is not someone who unsettles the order by interrupting the rightful succession, but someone whose rise to kingship is inevitable in a society where might makes right (Smith, 2010). It is possible to see the echoes of this original conception of violent society as found in Holinshed in the glorification of extreme ruthlessness by King Duncan and other thanes in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. To Captains praise of Macbeth's violence,

> For brave Macbeth (well he deserves that name),
> Disdaining Fortune, with his brandished steel,
> Which smoked with bloody execution,
> Like Valor's minion, carved out his passage
> Till he faced the slave;
> Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
> Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,
> And fixed his head upon our battlements. (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.2.18-25)

Duncan's exclamation "O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!" (1.2.26) proves this point. The only difference of course, in regicide the lauded violence is against rather than for the king. As Smith remarks, in Shakespeare, the original story is sacralised and the sense of moral outrage and disturbance brought on by the regicide is entirely Shakespeare's invention (Smith, 2010). Macbeth kills not the "weak, young king whose heirs were themselves young children used as both political symbols and political pawns" (Campana, 2014, p. 825), but the holy king with "silver skin" and "golden blood" (2.3.131) who "[h]ath borne his faculties so meek, hath been / So clear in his great office, that his virtues / Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against / The deep damnation of his taking-off" (Shakespeare, 2013, 1.7.16-20). The regicide is both a crime against the divine order, leading the murderer to damnation and is a crime against nature itself. As in Hamlet, nature responds to this violation is in the shape of various unsettling disturbances. As Snyder (2013) points, the "natural universe in the play is essentially attuned to the good, so that it reacts to the unambiguously evil act of killing Duncan with disruptions that are equally easy to read" (p. 204). Murder takes place at night, when "Now o'er the one-half world / Nature seems dead" (Shakespeare, 2013, 2.1.61-62). After the murder, Lennox describes, "the night ha[d] been unruly", there were wild winds, "Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of / death" and even an earthquake (2.3.61-69). A falcon, a bird belonging to a high order, is eaten by a mousing owl, a lesser bird, in the same way holy King Duncan is overthrown by ambitious Macbeth. Throwing the natural order like Macbeth, Duncan's horses turn wild and eat each other. As Snyder points out, perhaps the most important omen is that overthrowing of the day by the night. The absence of the sun in the morning after King's murder can be gleaned from Ross' lines: "Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act, /Threatens his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day, / And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp" (2.4.7-9). "The daylight has been murdered like Duncan," (Snyder, 2013, p. 204), engulfing Scotland into a moral darkness, seen in terms of a "sickly weal" that needs to be purged (Shakespeare, 2013, 5.2.32). Although, as previously noted, glorification of male violence is present in the play's Scotland as well, the play also suggests that turning of this violence against the king that is the problematic origin of violent Scotland, "Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rent the air / Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems /A modern ecstasy" (4.3.193-195).

Apart from disturbing the natural order through regicide, Macbeth also disturbs the natural order of succession by usurping the throne when 'seeds" of Duncan, Malcolm and Donalbain turn into patricides by escaping the Scotland. Wrenching time and place to bring his 'seed' of future to fruition, Macbeth now is reminded of the other future promise the Sisters made to Banquo. As Macbeth lacks 'seeds' in the shape of sons, his hold on the throne can only last as long as his own life. Banquo, on the other hand, is blessed with descendants that will eventually take the crown from Macbeth. By jumping the life to come and being the agent in making his future hope into present, Macbeth finds out that yet another future event threatens his absolute power. His disappointment, regret and anxiety regarding the unbearable situation is obvious:

> For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;
> For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered,
> Put rancors in the vessel of my peace
> Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
> Given to the common enemy of man
> To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings. (3.1.70-75)

Campana (2014) in his study, talks about a line of thought that identified children "with the future projected by the laws of paternal sovereignty or as the markers of particular linear timelines" which lead critics like Carol Rutters to see in *Macbeth* "a war against children who represent specific and anticipated bloodlines and futures" (as cited in Campana, 2014, p. 826). Following that thread, as a childless king, Macbeth has no hold over the future which threatens to unseat him eventually. His only solution to this dilemma, albeit an impossible one, is to attempt at cutting off the future to maintain his hold over a constant present. As he passed the point of no return and damned himself through regicide, the only course available for him is to move forward in violence. For this both Banquo, “[t]he spring, the head, the fountain of . . . blood” (Shakespeare, 2013, 2.3.115) and his son must be eliminated.

As Banquo functions as a foil to Macbeth in the capacity of loyal thane that does not succumb to the temptation, killing him implies to certain extent decimating the warrior ideal that was dealt the first blow by Macbeth’s regicide. This irremediable loss of the ideal warrior further condemns Macbeth into a meaningless living that is not supported by enrichening grand-narratives, which may serve to explain Macbeth’s final “tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow” speech. It is not as, Cartelli (1983) suggests, “a psychological freedom” that emerges from “Macbeth's tough-minded estimate of a life demystified of its comfortable illusions and pleasant fictions” (p. 395) that is seen at the end of the play, but a deadly ennui that demands acts of violence as a remedy to enliven the lacklustre act of existence without those pleasant fictions to distract from emptiness. From this perspective, within the economy of the play, murder of Banquo emerges more important than Duncan’s, justifying to certain extent Banquo’s necessary (re)appearance as a spectre.

The ghost’s initial appearance in the third act directly follows the scene of the recounting of his murder by the three murderers. Preparing us for his (un)timely appearance at the banquet, the scene opens up with the murderer entering to relay to Macbeth about their partial success in killing Banquo but not being able to prevent his son, Fleance from escaping. Although “safe” from Banquo and his suspicion regarding Macbeth’s involvement in regicide, Macbeth is not safe from the onslaught of future since Banquo's son remains alive. Informed with his partial failure, Macbeth goes to join the others at the banquet table upon Lady Macbeth's reminding of the waiting guests and starts upon a hypocritical taxing of Banquo in his speech: "Here had we now our country's honor roofed, / Were the graced person of our Banquo present, / Who may I rather challenge for unkindness / Than pity for mischance" (Shakespeare, 2013, 3.4.46-49). Much to his dismay, Macbeth finds the table full, his seat occupied by the ghost of Banquo at the place reserved for Macbeth.

Many critical discussions of this scene considers the ghost in terms of its subjectivity or objectivity. Unlike the ghost in Hamlet, however, several critics read the ghost of Banquo as simply a hallucination on the part of Macbeth. For Bradley (1957/1992), one of the most prominent critics arguing for subjective interpretation, "Shakespeare (1) meant the judicious to take the Ghost for a hallucination, but (2) knew that the bulk of the audience would take it for a reality" (p. 470). Stewart (1908/2016) regards the ghost "as psychological phenomena or mental hallucination" resulting from "the oppression of a guilty and sensitive conscience, and the ecstatic or highly concentrated state of his mind" (p. 56). Despite its material reality for the audience, for these critics, ghost serves as the outward projection of Macbeth's internal guilt and apprehension. Bradley (1957/1992) demonstrates that there are multiple arguments that support a subjective reading of the ghost. The most prevalent one however is the fact that the ghost appears only to Macbeth and none of the audience within the play. Although, as previously also mentioned in *Hamlet,* this can be accounted for with the concept of 'selective apparition', a crucial difference separates the ghost of Banquo from the ghost of Old Hamlet. Banquo appears to the wrongdoer, the guilty party and not to the revenger. This and its pervasive silence that distinguishes him from all the other ghosts that have been encountered so far, makes him an apt figure to embody Macbeth's internal guilt that is burdening his conscience projected outwards. Further, its appearance and disappearance seem to coincide with Macbeth's wishes. He appears when invoked by Macbeth who wishes "the graced person of [] Banquo present" (Shakespeare, 2013, 3.4.47), disappears with his challenge "If thou canst nod, speak too" (3.4.84), reappears with another invocation "And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. / Would he were here!" (3.4.109-110) and finally leaves the scene completely with Macbeth's "Hence, horrible shadow! / Unreal mock'ry, hence!" (3.4.129-130). For other critics including Stoll and Moorman, this coincidence of ghost's (dis)/appearance with Macbeth's wishes may also be used to argue for a reading at the other end of the spectrum. Stoll (1907) argues that an objective reading of the ghost restores to us "the effect of ironical reversal", suggesting to the Elizabethan audience "that Banquo was getting even" by playing the part of "objectively ironical nemesis" (p. 207). As such, Macbeth's words of are "words of impiety, of a classical Infatuation and Insolence, and they are answered from the other world" (p. 209). For Stoll, ghost embodies the "nemesis as a personal revenge" (p. 209) much in line with other Elizabethan revenge ghosts, signifying "blood will have blood" (Shakespeare, 2013, 3.4.151), however one can also see it as playing its part in the larger framework of justice meted out to transgressors shaping the play, a continuation of earlier disturbances of nature. Macbeth himself comments upon the unnaturalness of the ghost, going so far as to argue for the naturalness of his act of murder:

> The time has been
> That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
> And there an end. But now they rise again
> With twenty mortal murders on their crowns
> And push us from our stools. This is more strange
> Than such a murder is. (3.4.94-99)

There is no reason eliminate one reading over the other in so rich play as Macbeth. As in *Hamlet*, the figure of the ghost remains, then, indeterminate, occupying a line between psychological and material, inner and outer, ancient and modern. It is at once an outward projection of inner guilt and an instrument of divine justice or embodiment of personal nemesis.

As in *Hamlet*, the ghost functions as a three-fold sign, merging the past, the present and the future into one through its both timely and untimely appearance. As mentioned previously the ghost appears just in time to attend the banquet he was bid not to fail, albeit in a non-material form. His appearance is also untimely, because through his appearance the past encroaches upon the present, disturbing the flow of time and proves that the dead do return. As Marchitello (2013) argues "[f]or Macbeth, the past that might haunt the present, like the ghost of Banquo haunting the banquet and Macbeth's conscience alike, is intolerable because it is always untimely" (p. 448). The secret does not remain buried and will out; blood will have blood. Macbeth had previously attempted to be the agent shaping the future and eliminating alternating futures to maintain omnipotent hold over the present. This eruption of past into the present in the figure of the ghost deals a blow to Macbeth in his fight against the time. Haunted by the guilt of the past event, Macbeth has two choices in front of him. He can either face his past, try to make amends with it or he can attempt to eliminate its hold over present by cutting it off, ignoring it completely through shutting down his conscience. The first option is untenable, as for the crimes Macbeth commit, no retribution seems possible, as implied by the complete silence of the ghost. The second choice of eliminating retrospection, however, will further lead Macbeth into the ennui that drives his meaningless violent acts. The ghost is a figure of displacement. The ghost's present unseating of Macbeth at the banquet table is also a sign of his future unseating as a King. Banquo's descendants will lay their claim to the future, not Macbeth, despite all of his attempts at establishing an eternal present.

One distinguishing feature of the ghost of Banquo that separates him from all the other ghosts discussed so far is its immense silence. For Stoll (1907) he, "though bidden, does not speak simply because he has nothing to say", for "revenge is in the hands of others than his friends and kin -Malcolm and Macduff- and is for other causes" (p. 218). The importance of his presence is conveyed through the effect he has on Macbeth, reinforcing the psychological undertone of the play. The ghost's silence inversely causes Macbeth to pour forth words, which almost ends up as a confession of Banquo's death and his role in it. Faced with the ghost, Macbeth is unmanned, his composure lost, his authoritative hold over present weakened. Ghost's silence gives him an advantage of retaining his dread force, which decreases the more material the figure of the ghost becomes. Silent ghost, as the marker of our entrance to psychological territory will be the main conception decking the contemporary plays that will be explored in Chapter Four. The indeterminate spectre of Macbeth, at once a figure of psychological disturbance and of retribution, through its silence acts as a harbinger of the modern ghost, much more than any other previously explored in this thesis.

Banquo's ghost also constitutes an example of what Whitmore terms 'intrinsic supernatural' that is defined by motivating the action of the play: its shattering effect on Macbeth leads him to seek out the Witches, "for now [he is] bent to know / By the worst means the worst" (Shakespeare, 2013, 3.4.166-167). It is interesting that Macbeth thinks that he will be able to find the Witches; this implies witches might be more connected to Macbeth's internal vision than previously thought. The three apparitions the Weird Sisters provide Macbeth although in different vein from the ghost of Banquo are still spectres of foreboding future that Macbeth in his desperation misreads. Although the Weird Sisters revel in their mischief of providing Macbeth with illusions to lead him into defying fate, they remain equivocal beings as their pronouncements are not lies but metaphoric truths. Perhaps, what in conception had been impartial creatures of fate can only appear under the superficial trappings of witches within the dark world that Macbeth brings about. It is Macbeth's failure of metaphorical understanding of their equivocal truths that drives Macbeth to spurn the fate in his security. Stuck on denotations, he believes that if he is to remain safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, he would be safe forever. As Snyder (2013) notes, it is ironic that Macbeth, who has been the disturber of natural law, should lay his trust in the same law in interpreting Weird Sisters' prophecies:

> His security is ironic because for Macbeth, of all people, there can be no dependence on predictable natural processes. The "rebellious dead" have already unnaturally risen once: fixed trees can move against him as well. And so, in time, they do. Outraged nature keeps matching the Macbeths' transgressions, undoing and expelling their perversities with its own. (p. 206)

His desire to know more than what the Weird Sisters are willing to provide him with, shows that Macbeth's actual worry is regarding his loss of claim on the future due to lack of heirs. His question "shall Banquo's issue ever / Reign in this kingdom?" (Shakespeare, 2013, 4.1.116-117) is answered by the show of eight kings "too like the spirit of Banquo" (4.1.127) with Banquo's ghost as the attendant spectator. Regarding this third appearance of the ghost Streufert (2001) remarks "in no other scene does Shakespeare so closely connect his ghost with James I" (p. 235). The eight king that Macbeth describes as "who bears a glass. / Which shows me many more; and some I see, / That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry"

(Shakespeare, 2013, 4.1.134-136) is James I, the ghost's descendant, the current king of England for Shakespeare's original audience. Ide (1975) points out, "Banquo and his royal lineage threaten Macbeth's lease on life and on the crown. They represent the earthly retribution Macbeth had feared" (p. 352). Faced with the future he was trying to eliminate that still hold true as shown by the processional apparitions, Macbeth resolves to go further in his fight against time. By eliminating both retrospection and prospection, Macbeth hopes that he will be able to cut off the hold of the past and the future over 'his' fantasy of eternal present:

> Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits.
> The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
> Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
> The very firstlings of my heart shall be
> The firstlings of my hand. (Shakespeare, 2013, 4.1.164-168)

His first deed after this resolution is to order the seizing of Macduff's castle and the slaughter of his wife and his children in an attempt to cut off yet another alternative future. His abandonment of the past and the future uproots him and engulfing him in unordered chaos, drives him to purposeless destruction. That this meaningless violence is not enough to fill the emptiness he is feeling, is the truth Macbeth finds out at the end:

> Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
> Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
> To the last syllable of recorded time,
> And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more. It is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing. (5.5.22-31)

Destroying all the order in his transgression to take his fate into his own ambitious hands, Macbeth can no longer find any meaning in the act of living and is bankrupt. Since comfortable illusions of valour, loyalty, divine sanction no longer insulate

Macbeth’s vision from the dread emptiness he perceives as the essence of life, time can only be experienced in melancholy as deadening repetition of the same moment, with no healing power. Although “aweary of the sun / And wish[ing] th’ estate o’ th’ world were now” (5.5.55-57), when faced with his upcoming death, Macbeth cannot help but feel the need to grasp at the ethos of brave warrior: “Blow wind, come wrack, / At least we’ll die with harness on our back” (5.5.58-59).

There remains a question to be considered in the exploration of the ghost that will initiate the next point concerning the idea of otherness in connection with the figure of the ghost in *Macbeth*. Why is it (only) Banquo’s ghost that visibly haunts the stage and not Duncan, whose murder has been deemed almost a sacrilege against the divine order? Streufert (2001) thinks that it is due to Shakespeare’s motivation to keep James I’s ancestor Banquo on the stage in the audience’s view (p. 239). As previously remarked, James I, in order to legitimize his claim, traced his lineage back to Banquo, whose ghost, in the play, comes to be the political sign for the Stuart dynasty. As Campana (2014) points out, *Macbeth* has always been thought in close connection with James, “either because it confirms his lineage, treats his near assassination, considers his vision of kingship, or conveys something about the politics of his attempt to unify England and Scotland” (p. 824). In the previous plays, the ghost was shown to be as a suitable figure for exploring notions of alterity due to its liminal conception. At the beginning of the 17th century, the biggest renegotiation of alterity that England came to face had been the enthronement of the national Other, James IV the Scot as James I of England. James I’s investiture, which marked the abatement of the anxiety created by Elizabeth I’s lack of heirs, brought with it not only renewed interest in absolute monarchism with the concept of divine kinship, but the increasing influx of Scots to England led also to certain re-emergence anti-Scot statement, a remnant from Elizabethan age. The reign of the Calvinist King James I was also rife with acute conflicts between Catholic and Protestant of the era, exacerbated with the ascension of the anti-Catholic King, who construed the monarchy as divinely ordained and absolute (Streufert, 2001, p. 140). All these undercurrents are present in Macbeth, as many critics have noted, it deals extensively with issues of accession, sovereignty and, as Streufert (2001) points out, "legitimization of the new Scottish/English monarch" (p. 68).

Macbeth is a play that ultimately depicts the national other, yet with the ghost of Banquo, such strict delineation between the Self and the Other becomes untenable. Banquo does not only begat kings for Scotland, but as the show of eight kings illustrate, he is the symbolic patriarch of the Stuart dynasty as well. As such, his prophetic ghost which foretells the future kingship, should be painted not in terms of the Other, but as Other as Self, or Other-made-into-Self. For Streufert (2001), Shakespeare is able to solve this dilemma and celebrate the Scottish Other as the English Self, through reconfiguring alterity not in terms of nationality but of theological salvation. He points out that, "[t]he Self/Other dichotomy configured exclusively by the Nation had now broken down to include other dichotomies, especially Protestantism versus Catholicism and the underlying implication of salvation versus damnation" (p. 140). As Shakespeare exploits tension in *Macbeth,* by redefining the true marker of the Self is as election, while a "group outside of divine protection and regulation" (p. 163) constitutes the Other.

In order to maintain this formulation of alterity Macbeth has to be made into wild and violent Scot, standing outside both political and theological boundaries that separates the Self from the Other. As previously remarked, Banquo functions as a foil to Macbeth, and as such, his success in not succumbing to the horrid suggestion that so shakes Macbeth when faced with similar prophetic promises acquires a new significance. It is significant to note that Banquo who was an accomplice of Macbeth in Holinshed, is whitewashed in Shakespeare as loyal thane who does not cleave to Macbeth's consent, who would fight "[a]gainst the undivulged pretense . . . Of treasonous malice" (Shakespeare, 2013, 2.3.153-154) had not the claimant he is prepared to champion left the field before the battle began. Unlike Macbeth, he is able to read the witches and their possible purposes astutely and retain his defenses against possible damnation. In contrast, Macbeth is made into a figure that certainly incurs damnation by killing the virtuous King Duncan who had been "so clear in his great office", his ten years of humane and successful rule following "the feeble and slothful administration of Duncane" (Holinshed as cited in Kastan, 1999, p. 158) mentioned in *Chronicles* has no place in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. His murder of Duncan is interpreted almost as sacrilege, "Confusion, hath made his masterpiece. / Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope / The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence / The life o' th' building" (Shakespeare, 2013, 2.3.76-79). Macbeth's monstrous defying of theological and natural order looses a graceless reign of sin, tyranny, and death on Scotland: "His silver skin laced with his golden blood, / And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature / For ruin's wasteful entrance" (2.3.131-133). Leaving aside his link with the Witches, Macbeth's crime of regicide marks him as the "play's central figure of damnation and alterity" (Streufert, 2001, p. 153). Beside the act of regicide, among various signs of his damnation are his link with Witches, his inability to say 'Amen', his figuration as "Devilish Macbeth" (Shakespeare, 2013, 4.3.136) by Malcom and "helhound" (5.8.4), the knocking at the gate and the porter scene signifying the eventual arrival of retributive forces. In this conception of Macbeth as the damned Other, the political otherness in terms of nationality of James I is downplayed, as the liminal figure of Banquo's ghost signifying James' ascendancy, is reconfigured as Self-in-the Other. Streufert (2001) finds in *Macbeth* a Calvinist system of predestination in which God, is in control "of all aspects of the aspects of the human world, determining both good and evil, Self and Other" (p. 143). As such, he perceives in the play, "punishment of the wicked in Macbeth's fall and the justification of the elect in the promise of the rule of Banquo's ancestors" (p. 143). It is the presence of ghost that allows us to see fall of Macbeth resulting from (super)natural agency. This is certainly in line with Tennenhouse's assertion that "nothing that can disrupt the progress of the crown from Banquo to James; all the elements of nature, like those of the theatre, join to put Malcolm on the throne" (as cited in Kastan, 1999, p. 153). Streufert's conclusion is that, Shakespeare in *Macbeth*, handles the dilemma of the blending of nation 'Self' with an 'Other' monarch "by replacing one means of distinguishing selfhood from alterity with another" (p. 163), asking his audience to interpret "the Scottish Protestant in general, and James in particular, as a theological Self than a national Other" (p. 143). The Scottish other is celebrated as the English Self in Shakespeare's positive portrayal of Banquo/James.

There certainly does appear to be a force drawing towards a closure in the reestablishment of the order with the reinstatement of rightful ruler Malcolm at the end of the play. Scotland is cured of the lawless reign Macbeth loosed upon when he transgressed established boundaries (political, theological, and natural). "Time is free" (Shakespeare, 2013, 5.8.66) Macduff declares who "was from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped" (5.8.19-20), as he approaches the new king with the head of the tyrant in his hands. Not only "Heaven, virtue, divine kingship return to Scotland" (Ide, 1975, p. 385), but Macbeth's perverse fight against the chronological time in his fantasy of eternal omnipotent present also come to an end. As Macbeth has no heirs to avenge him, there will be no further blood. Yet does the play actually end with a seamless closure? If the end of the play is considered and the similarity of the situation with the beginning of the play is notice, the answer appears to be no. As Sinfield (1992) remarks, the play closes with a repetition of the initial situation: "Macduff at the end stands in the same relation to Malcolm as Macbeth did to Duncan in the beginning. He is now the kingmaker on whom the legitimate monarch depends, and the recurrence of the whole sequence may be anticipated" (p. 102). For Sinfield, *Macbeth* deals with anxieties regarding violence exercised under absolutist ideology, in particular "the threat of split between legitimacy and actual power—when the monarch is not the strongest person in the state", which leads to the blurring of the line separating absolutism and tyranny (pp. 96-97). Macbeth's fault lies not in being violent, but rather using violence against the sovereign, and not for the sovereign. Rather than being "an extraordinary eruption in a good state" (p. 99), Macbeth is an example of the violence ready to emerge from the unsteadiness informing the political system at a deeper level. As such, the resolution at the end of the play does not herald eternal peace any more than beginning of the play did.

Further, one more difficulty questions the seeming order established in the end. If the natural hierarchy and just succession is restored at the end when Malcolm is hailed the King, what does this mean for the Stuart dynasty heralded by the figure of the ghost? In other words, is the ghost exorcised, or does it remain behind to haunt Scotland, until a new act of violence establishes the 'seed' of Banquo as Kings? As, Kastan (1999) points out, there is an "embarrassing surplus" of two dynastic genealogies that vie for legitimacy:

> If the Stewart line is seen to derive from Banquo, then Malcolm's claim to the throne and James's own seem to conflict. The play offers two seemingly

> incompatible sources of legitimacy: it is Banquo who will plant the "seeds of kings" (3.1.69) that will flower into the Stewart dynasty, but the play asserts as well that Malcolm's restoration of the line of Duncan re-establishes legitimate rule in Scotland. (p. 154)

The doubling of the initial situation at the end of the play, then, suggests the possibility of the cyclical repetition of the violent action initiated by Macbeth, which leaves the symbolic order closing the play haunted. In both *Hamlet* and *Macbeth,* the symbolic closure that appears to complete the action is both bolstered and destabilized by the figure of the ghost that does not reappear to show its satisfaction at the end of the play, thus suggesting further haunting is possible.

CHAPTER 4

SEEKING THE SPECTRE IN THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEATRE

4.1 The contemporary American stage

Jumping forward almost four hundred years and a continent away, the fourth chapter engages with the plays of the contemporary American drama, more specifically, three plays that belongs to the post 1960s American stage. As may be recalled, the previous chapters dealt with the plays that belonged in periods where belief in supernatural was entrenched in the daily lives of the people living in these periods. As such, the presence of supernatural in the plays previously discussed is to certain extent necessitated by this widespread belief.

The plays discussed in this this chapter, however, belong to a period of doubt, incredulity and scepticism with respect to phenomena that cannot be made sense or buttressed by scientific explanations. Even the often consolatory faith in the divine has taken an irrecoverable hit as the ideas and insights of Darwin, Freud, Marx and Nietzsche, or rather ‘the four bearded god-killers’ as they are sometimes dubbed, imbedded itself into the twentieth century mind-set. The destruction wreaked by the World Wars only strengthened the loss of belief in any form of metanarratives that serve to explain the chaos underlying the existence for the twentieth century man. An effusive reaction to this destruction of certainties and the resulting anxieties came in the form of the Theatre of the Absurd. Absurd, the practitioner Ionesco explains “is that which is devoid of purpose. ...Cut off from his religious, metaphysical, and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (as cited in Esslin, 1960, p. 671). Whereas, the American absurdist Albee finds that the Theatre of the Absurd, arises from “man’s attempt to make sense for himself out of his senseless position in a world which makes no sense- which makes no sense because the moral, religious, political and social structures man has erected to ‘illusion’ himself have collapsed” (as cited in Amacher, 1969, p. 32). It is easy to finds inexplicable phenomena, such an endlessly growing corpse in an apartment, appearing in plays belonging to this school of theatre as a reflection of the absurd framework, which eschews the formal considerations of realistic theatre all together. But a truer comparison with the appearance of the supernatural in tragedies of Ancient Greece or Elizabethan England is only possible with plays that adopts at least on surface the conventions of the realistic form, the signature style of the American stage, which endeavours to present ‘real life’ on stage and to maintain verisimilitude as much as possible. The three plays of this chapter belongs to this period of uncertainty and takes place in a post-absurd theatrical world chronologically. As such, it is interesting to see the figure of the ghost still appearing in these plays when ingenuous belief in supernatural is, if not impossible, then at least improbable.

Divested from the bolster of living belief, the figure of the ghost and its implications the plays undergo some changes. In parallel to the incredulity towards supernatural phenomena, the ghost in these plays occupies the terrain of the psychological, an externalization of the inner landscape of the characters rather than a distinct character with motives on its own. The shift towards the psychological for the figure of the ghost, as was seen previously, was present in Shakespeare’s ghosts, especially in the silent ghost of the Banquo. In the three plays explored in this chapter, the ghost appears, or makes its presence known silently and is dispersed throughout the play. As such, the focus turns onto the ‘haunted’ instead of the ‘haunter’, where ghost becomes relevant through the effect it wreaks on those that encounter it. As it emerges, the ghost brings to surface all that is put under erasure in the psychological landscape of those that are haunted— be it guilty conscience, the unpleasant realities that are steadfastly ignored or the trauma arising from the unresolved past. Destabilizing the artificial sense of order achieved through evasion of the undesired, the unresolved and the painful, the ghost demands acknowledgement, threatens unearthing of the buried; while the encounter with the ghost compels reappraisal of the sense of self built upon that feigned order. As it is, there seems to be a shift from the figure of the revenge ghost to a more interior type of ghost, which has been heralded by the ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth.*

The abatement of the revenge aspect does not necessarily mean that the ghost no longer carries the connotations of sin and retribution. As it is, the presence of the ghost still signals a wrongdoing that needs to be exposed and grappled with. However, unlike in the plays of the previous chapters, there is no longer an intimation that justice will prevail and all will turn out in accordance with necessity. With metanarratives that gives order to the human experience toppled down, the presence of the ghost can no longer herald the eventual restoration of ostensible order and the prevailing of justice; it is no longer part of an overarching divine plan that can right the wrongs. While the order established at the end of Shakespeare’s plays was shown to be problematic as well, it is in the plays of this chapter, especially in *Sticks and Bones* and *Buried Child,* that the lack of closure and justice becomes especially prominent. In a similar vein, the presence of the ghost as a vehicle for truth, while still present, is increasingly problematized in the contemporary plays explored in this chapter as well. For, these plays belong to a contemporary world where a single objective ‘truth’ is no longer possible and multiple subjective ‘truths’ abound. As the naïve limitation of signifiers as ‘justice’ and ‘truth’ with a single denotative signified is no longer tenable, the connection between the ghost and these signifiers is altered, destabilized and ultimately deconstructed in this chapter.

Another aspect to consider is that the three plays in this chapter all belong to and depict the twentieth century America. Therefore, the haunting in these plays takes place in the heart(h) of American society: the American home. As such, the haunting of the family has ramifications beyond the limits of the home and is a marker for corruption in American society. Something, it heralds, is rotten in the United States of America. One of the sources of the corruption or even deception for America is indubitably the American dream that provided a vision of and the mission for the ideal America. By the 1970s however, the myth of ‘American Dream’ takes its place among the metanarratives that have collapsed and as a reflection of that, the haunting in these plays deals with as much as the failure of ‘American Dream’ as the impossibility of it in the first place. Further, if the tendency of the figure of the ghost to appear in moments of crisis for the nation is recalled, it is not surprising to find ghosts decking the pages of these plays that belong to the world of post-war(s) America. Both Rabe and Shepard write in, what is essentially, a period of disillusionment for America. Rabe, Tekinay (2004) points out, taking Vietnam War as a “departure point”, foregrounds

> the elements in the national life and consciousness that were shaped by and that gave shape to the period during and after the war: rootlessness, drug culture, inevitability of violence, obsession with mechanical sex, superficiality of the middle-class value system, insincerity (not only of people but also of institutions of state and religion) and racism. (p. 37)

Shepard writes from a similar vantage point and responding the same sense of disillusionment. According to Nathans (2017), his work

> reflect the popularity of drug culture and the disaffected voice of young Americans disgusted by the Vietnam War, Watergate, and widespread

> political corruption. Additionally, by the mid-1970s, a slowing international economy, a worldwide oil crisis, and rising inflation produced an economic depression that hit working- and middle-class Americans hard. It undermined the postwar economic boom of the 1950s, and destabilized notions of the "American Dream." (p. 211)

Streufert's observation regarding Shepard's employment of the spectre as a "tool[] of serious political and social critique" (as cited in Luckhurst & Morin, 2014, p. 14) in his *The Late Henry Moss*, rings true for Shepard's *Buried Child* and Rabe's *Sticks and Bones* as well. In both of these plays, the encounter with the ghost prompts reappraisal of the self-identity, and as an extension, the national identity. August Wilson, as an African-American playwright, is writing from a viewpoint that fundamentally differs from both Rabe and Shepard. In *The Piano Lesson,* he supplies an alternative narrative that is oftentimes put under erasure in the dominant historical discourse. The significance of embracing the losses, struggles and resistances of the past, no matter how painful, is the point Wilson stresses both through his attempt to chronicle each decade of twentieth century African-American experience, and through his use of the spectre in the play. Facing and embracing the spectre and therefore, the past is crucial for (re)building and maintaining an identity as an African American.

One last point to consider with regards to the plays in this chapter is that all three plays, while employing the trapping of theatrical realism, challenge the form and its inadequacy in reflecting the complexities and irrationalities of existence. As reflected before, the twentieth century vision is one that can no longer naively retain, without at least a modicum of scepticism, the idea of single objective reality built on a rational vision of existence. As such, the realism with the assumptions underlying the traditional realism, such as strict logical causal relations between events, the linear understanding of time as well as the objective understanding of reality constitutes a problematic theatrical style for the twentieth century vision. However, as will be seen in the plays of this chapter, the style can be flexible enough to be reconfigured to exhibit contemporary visions. Both Rabe and Shepard employ and challenge the realistic form and create works that are products of what Demastes terms as ‘new realism’; whereas, Wilson challenges the form by incorporating elements from African, or rather African-American, spirituality to implement a form of ‘magical realism’. In all three works, however, it is the employment of the figure of the spectre that most prominently destabilizes the realistic form and allows the writers to create new permutations to account for their subjective visions. Exactly how they do so will constitute a main part of this chapter.

4.2 You can never go home again: David Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones*

> *... Death, like a familiar, hears*
> *and look, has made a man of dust*
> *of a man of flesh. This sorcery*
> *I do. Being damned, I am amused*
> *to see the centre of love diffused*
> *and the wave of love travel into vacancy.*
> *How easy it is to make a ghost.*
> Keith Douglass

David Rabe’s 1969 play *Sticks and Bones* constitutes the initial foray into the contemporary haunted plays that make up the focus of the last chapter. Chronologically the last part of Rabe’s loose trilogy of Vietnam Plays, *Sticks and Bones* is essentially a homecoming play where the blinded veteran David finds out just how true the old saying “You can never go home again” can be. The physically blind veteran is no longer the same golden American youth that left his home to go to the war. More importantly, however, as David finds out, the morally blind society he comes back to has never been the ideal home he always had imagined it to be in the first place. Upon his return, David not only brings back with him the ghost of the Vietnamese girl he left behind, but he also drags the war itself right into the living room of the All-American family when his much-too-changed vision of the world collides with the one-dimensional one of his family. Modelled intentionally after the archetypal American family of the popular 1950-60s television sit-com "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet”, the members of David’s suburban family are products of a consumer culture, while the beliefs they cling to are no more than the hackneyed values of stereotypical middle-class America. Inevitably, from the moment David is delivered blind and traumatized to their doorstep by the sergeant as if he were nothing more than a parcel, he becomes an agent of destabilization, threatening to topple the homeostasis of the family that is revealed to be intensely fragile throughout the course of the play.

Initially, the family tries to gloss over the attacks their returning son lays on them and their values. Before long, however, their frantic attempts to assimilate him back into the fold and retain the artificial normalcy they cling to take on a violent edge that culminates in the family-assisted suicide of David. Although the homecoming veteran appears to have lost the power play he had initiated upon his return, the family does not emerge unscathed in the wake of this battle within the American home either. Employing David in conjunction with the ghostly figure of Zung, the Vietnamese lover, as destabilizing agents threatening the artificial equilibrium of the American family, Rabe lays bare the hypocrisy, prejudice, racism, violence and the wilful ignorance of life’s ugly realities that underlies the idyllic self-image of the American family. As Bernstein (1980) observes, Rabe uses David's newly acquired disability and the ripple his homecoming creates:

> as a springboard for examining American values; the standards and assumptions by which we live, our motivation to go to war, what happens to those who go to war, the American ethos, and what hope we can have for the future. (p. 22)

By exposing the archetypal American family as fraudulent, superficial and shallow and triggering the revaluation of the values that lie at the heart of it, Rabe criticizes the American society at large since this family serve as the epitome of the American nation. Thus, the play moves beyond simply a “war-play” as Vietnam is only a symptom of the disease lying at the core of the nation. Something is rotten, Rabe conveys, in the United States of America. Much like Hamlet’s Denmark, this All-American home, the hearth of the nation, is a haunted space and incidentally its ghost is a small Asian girl named Zung. Presumably the image of the lover David has left behind in Vietnam, the spectre of Zung haunts both David and the family in different ways. By making use of the liminal and evasive nature of the figure of the ghost, Rabe’s employment of Zung goes beyond being a simple criticism about the complicity of the middle-class America in the destruction of the war. It is the purpose of the first section of the chapter four to delineate the ways in which the figure of the ghost enriches and complicates the interpretation of Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones.*

As previously remarked, *Sticks and Bones* goes beyond being simply a ‘war play’. To the degree it is a war-play, however, David’s haunting by the spectre of Zung is almost expected since the figure of a war veteran carries with it a form of hauntedness in its various appearances in literature. One famous example, of course, is Woolf’s shell-shocked Septimus Smith from *Mrs. Dalloway,* whose likely hallucinatory encounters with the ghostly presence of his soldier-friend Evans prove a major obstruction to any possible reintegration back into the life Smith left behind. In an analogous way, when David returns home, he unwittingly brings with the ghostly figure of his Vietnamese lover, Zung, when his unexamined prejudices stop him from bringing back her in the flesh. Kosok's observation that "on stage the ghost of more modern times is not so much the revenge figure of previous eras but often a cipher for signifying trauma, violence and otherwise hidden human rights abuses" rings true for David in *Sticks and Bones* (as cited in Luckhurst & Morin, 2014, p. 2). Zung constitutes for David a personal spectre demarking his guilt in two different ways. In the first place, her spectre stands for the wrongdoings and atrocities committed against the Vietnamese that David is hell-bent on making his family acknowledge. David's experience in Vietnam, all the atrocities he witnessed and partook in has shaped his vision, and he strives to force this hard-gained insight onto his family, especially in the family gathering around the home-movie, as his vivid descriptions paints over the flickering green blank footage. Although Ozzie is quick to accuse David of trying to "make up for the thousands [he] butchered" (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 153), David shows that he himself is not ready to face up his crimes committed during the war as he claims innocence: "Because I talk of certain things . . . , don't think I did them. Murderers don't even know that murder happens" (p. 128).

For him, his trauma, arising from his loss of pretensions of innocence and from atrocities he committed, remains ultimately unconfrontable and unutterable, aptly conveyed in the silent figure of the spectre. The other way Zung haunts David is through her absence-in-presence. David is also guilty of leaving Zung behind and his inability of acknowledging this desertion and the unexamined prejudices lying under it further ensconces this guilt. David may have gained a new vision, but it is not until he comes back and faces his family that he is able to perceive his own underlying values that makes him see Zung in paradoxical terms: "She is garbage and filth and I must get her back if I wish to live. Sickness, I must cherish her" (p. 138). Falling in love with Zung was perhaps the biggest trauma David had encountered, as he had to re-evaluate all the values that had previously constituted him. He admits Vietnamese were all "hunks of meat that had no mind to know of me until [he] cared for her" (p. 152), yet faced with the daunting prospect of returning with Zung by his side to his all-American family, David surrenders to the "old voices inside [him]" that tell him to "cast her down" (p. 138). This cowardly betrayal of Zung is precisely the guilt David must confront before he is able to perceive Zung's ghostly presence. Until he draws out violent and racist outburst from Ozzie at the end of Act One and identifies those "old voices" as the values passed onto him like a genetic illness by his family, he is only able to sense a presence within the house that he hopes is Zung and is unable to see Zung. Only when he is ready to acknowledge his desertion of her and make the admission "I discarded you. Forgive me" (p. 138), he is able to see her. Until then, Zung's presence as a ghost is evocative of revenge-ghost that came to haunt the wrongdoer. Yet with this shift, Zung's presence-in-absence becomes a source of comfort to David who is mired in loneliness as an outsider in his own house.

Zung also occupies the position of the ghost in avenger-plays, revealing the family as the source of wrongdoing against whom revenge must be taken, marking David as the one to don the mantle of the revenger, or in this case, his "ragged combat fatigues" (p. 168). The family may be adamant in shirking any responsibility about their part in Vietnam War and steadfast in not admitting any guilt, but her presence in their house is not as easy to ignore as flicking off the channel when news of Vietnam come up. They may try their best in keeping the war out of the domestic hearth, but war has a way of creeping in. Once again, the presence of a spectre work as a sign of guilt and rottenness and mark the haunted place as the center of miasma. Something is rotten in the American home, the metaphorical core of American society. The question of what exactly is the crime, however, does not have a simple answer since just as Zung is more than just a personal spectre haunting David, *Sticks and Bones* is more than just a war play.

Rabe argues that “war” is relevant to his plays only as far as it is a "permanent part" of "the eternal human pageant" and not his focus (Rabe, 1972/1993, p. xxv). *Sticks and Bones*, however is more specifically concerned examining the American society, its values and revaluating the undercurrents making up the national identity. Vietnam War is only the latest symptom of the disease that is surrounding the American society. Rabe’s naming his characters after the iconic Nelson family from the sit-com *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* makes obvious his focus on American identity. Although he comments “there was a time when the names Andy, Ginger, Daniel, and Bucky seemed a more aesthetically appropriate choice” (p. xxiii), it is undeniable that Rabe makes great use of the connotations that the Nelson family accords the play. Representing the ideal family that has ostensibly achieved the American Dream, the Nelsons were cultural icons for the period between 1950s and 1960s. Made up of a caring father, a nurturing mother and their two sons, they represent what the American society, or at least the ideal family as constructed by the mass media, should aspire to. In this ideal of life, no real problems could arise, at least not more than the ones that could be solved within the allotted thirty minutes of runtime. In contrast to *Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, “a sentimental celebration of American values” which “excluded any evidence of anxiety and pain” (Bigsby, 1985, p. 326), Rabe’s recycling of these nostalgic icons in *Sticks and Bones,* Stein (1991) argues, revolves around the question:

> How will Ozzie Nelson, who solves all problems in the TV Nelson family by using reason, compassion, humility, and humanity, solve the problem of his eldest son David returning home from -the Vietnam War, blind, involved with a Vietnamese girlfriend of questionable repute? (p. 22)

Rabe, however, goes beyond simply asking how the ideal family would deal with the prospect of war and its aftermath. In the first place, as it will be true for the other plays in this chapter, his choice of target for spectral haunting is not the individual, but the entire family, the microcosm for the whole society. It is primarily through this encounter with the ghost, as well as ally David, who is both the haunted and the haunter, that the cracks in the foundation, that is, the fragility and the underlying sickness of the ideal are laid out open.

The most obvious sickness that the ideal family seems to be suffering from is the entrenched racism that envelops their daily lives and thought patterns. Rabe (1972/1993) calls it ‘tribalism’ and notes that the play is about “as much about obsession as it is about tribalism— a more inclusive term than 'racism'— just as I consider the root of racism to be sex, or more exactly miscegenation” (p. xxiii). For the Nelson family, racism, an extreme expression of the process of otherization, works as an indispensable tool in building and maintaining their identities, specifically as the ideal American family. This extensive racism is most blatant in their attitudes towards Zung and David’s championing of her. Within this context, the ghost once again proves an apt tool to explore the notions of alterity as the spectral Zung stands for not only the Vietnamese other, but the racial and perhaps the national other in general. That Zung can enter the ideal American home only as a spectre shows both the process of erasure of the other from the ideal and paradoxically endows it with a menacing power to destabilize the self-presence of that same ideal. An instance of the process of erasure can be seen in the first appearance of the spectre of Zung. She appears right in the middle of Harriet’s attempts at anesthetizing David’s anxiety attack with Easy Sleep:

> *HARRIET (she stands over* DAVID): It'll give you the sleep you need, Dave; the sleep you remember. You're our child and you're home. Our good . . . beautiful boy.
> *(And the door to the outside bursts open. There is a small girl in the doorway, an* ASIAN GIRL. *She wears the Vietnamese Ao Dai, black slacks and white tunic slit up the sides.)*
> Oh, my goodness. (As *she goes racing over to slam the door shut, leaving the girl outside.)* What an awful . . . wind.
> *(Blackout. Music.)* (p. 106)

Harriet's slight pause here suggests that "wind" is a last minute substitution to what she really deems "awful", the presence of the "Asian Girl" at her door. It also hints that rather than an inability of seeing the spectre because they lack the vision David seems to have acquired, the family suffers from unwillingness to see and acknowledge this presence. Harriet's abrupt comment to David before he even mentions a Vietnamese lover also proves that she is intentionally ignoring Zung's presence, rather than being unable to see her: "I'll bet you're glad you didn't bring her back. Their skins are yellow, aren't they?" (p. 107)

Rabe's note about the approach the actors should take supports this reading of deliberate blindness:

> The actors must try to look at what they are ignoring. They must not physically ignore things--turn their backs, avert their eyes, be busy with something else. The point is not that they do not physically see or hear, but that they psychologically ignore. Though they look right at things, though they listen closely, they do not see or hear. The harder they concentrate on an event, the clearer their psychological state and the point and nature of the play will be, when in their next moments and speeches they verbally and emotionally ignore or miss what they have clearly looked at. (as cited in Bigsby, 1985, p. 326)

In his analysis of interaction between European-Americans and African-Americans, Bernasconi (2000) observes that the "*invisibility of racial minorities arises* from a *refusal on the part* of the majority to see them or, more precisely, to listen to them" (p. 184). This observation could easily extend to attitudes of White America towards all other ethnic groups; it is certainly true in the case of attitudes towards

Vietnamese, encapsulated by Rabe's portrayal of Nelson family. If there is seeing, Bernasconi points out, it is "a case of seeing without seeing" since "Whites have trouble seeing past the stereotype as if it formed a layer of invisibility" (p. 176). Throughout the play, Nelson family is seen to be suffering from this form blindness juxtaposed with the physical blindness of David who is determined to remove the scales from the eyes of his family. Within the dynamic that the family is operating in however, this attempt of David's has dangerous implications. For the sense of self for the members of the Nelson family is dependent on a clear-cut binary between self and the other. Their absolute claim to the ideal 'self' is dependent on the denigration and dehumanization of 'the other'. When the roots of self-identity is built upon such brittle ground -that is difference from the other, instead of a presence of a core-self-, the layer of invisibility stereotypes form becomes a strategical tool in the attempts to maintain that fragile 'self'. Accordingly, when David to tell his family about the girl he left behind in poetic terms, a girl "with hands and hair like wings." (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 114), they are adamant in inscribing any possible relation their son might have had with a Vietnamese girl in their own ideological frame and unwilling to recognize anything more than meaningless encounters at hot sheet motels. When they realize that it was not a "nurse" or a "Red Cross" girl that David had a love affair with but a Vietnamese girl, Ozzie and Harriet both resort to their respectful coping mechanisms. Harriet tries to rationalize the affair, arguing that Zung must have been a last resort to satisfy a need born from being "lonely and young and away from home for the very first time" especially since there were "no white girls anywhere around" (p. 115). Ozzie, on the other hand, employs a perverse form of euphemism, substituting series of debased slang describing carnal act for the act of love that David describes poetically:

> OZZIE: I mean, all right, what you mean is you whored around a lot. Sure. You whored around. That's what you're saying. You banged some whores. … What I mean is, okay, sure, you shacked up with. I mean, hit on. Hit on, Dave. Dicked. Look at me. I mean, you pronged it, right? Right? Sure, attaboy. … You screwed it. A yellow whore. Some yellow ass. You put in your prick and humped your ass. You screwed some yellow fucking whore! (p. 114)

Ozzie's increasingly violent and equally frantic attempts at finding the right word for the 'repulsive' act portrays the limits of his interpretative frame. Within the hierarchical binary he is operating in, the other is seen in dehumanized terms for the 'self' to lay claim to higher label of human. Accordingly, any relation David has had with Zung could be no more than satisfaction of animalistic lust, a form of domination of the inhuman Asian female by the superior white male. Within the same binary logic, the Asian other is also read in terms of impurity and disease as opposed to pure, healthy, rugged American self:

> OZZIE: Dirty, filthy diseases. They got 'em. Those girls. Infection. From the blood of their parents it goes right into in the fluids of their bodies. Malaria, T.B. An actual rot alive in them . . . gonorrhea, syphilis. There are some who have the plague. (p. 118)

Ozzie's allocation of the congenital transmission of diseases to the racial other suggests that race itself is seen as some form of disease, whereas the physical racial characteristics are taken to be markers and symptoms it. "The human face was not meant to be that way. A nose is a thinness . . . and the lips that are not thin are ugly" Harriet tells David, and both Ozzie and Harriet emphasize the yellowness of the skin of the Asian other, which for them denotes the hue of sickness. The most distinguishing racial marker for the Asian other, however, are the eyes. Ozzie cannot stand the thought David's transgression could have caused this racial characteristic to be transferred to their grandchildren, thus adulterating their pureness: "LITTLE BITTY CHINKY KIDS YOU WANTED TO HAVE! LITTLE BITTY CHINKY YELLOW KIDS! DIDN'T YOU! FOR OUR GRANDCHILDREN!" Naturally, the idea of disease brings with it the fear of contagion. Both Ozzie and Harriet are horrified with the idea that David had close relations with an Asian girl. While Ozzie cannot contain his disgust that David "touched them" (p. 118), Harriet tries to be contented with the fact that "[David] didn't bring her back-—didn't marry her—we have those two things to thank God for" (p. 161). However, Harriet's suspicion concerning what David is hiding behind his glasses suggest that she fears that David might have 'caught' something from Zung:

> HARRIET: … But there are moments when I see him . . . hiding ... in that bed behind those awful glasses . . . and I see the chalkiness that's come into his skin, the—
> OZZIE: Those glasses are simply to ease his discomfort.
> HARRIET: I hate them. (p. 109)

What lies behind those glasses, the emptiness of blind eyes or 'chinkiness' caught from the Vietnamese lover? While David keeps refusing to take his glasses of until the very end when he is defeated at the hands of his family, throughout the play he remains aligned with Zung due to his disability since in both their cases their eyes act as the physical marker of their otherness.

David's employment of the home-movies taken at Vietnam as a tool of attack towards his family is built upon his desire to give voice to the other. Although the screen remains "blank except for a greenish glare, and an intense flickering" (p. 125), David's words force horrifying imagery of brutal atrocities done to a Vietnamese couple upon his audience instead of "one of those lovely little ponds" as Harriet expects (p. 121). As opposed to Ozzie's fantasy of wartime heroism or camaraderie, or Harriet's expectation of scenic imagery without any mention of war, David's description of a Vietnamese couple strung up on a barbed wire "all bone and pain, uncontoured and ugly but for the peculiar melon swelling in her middle which is her pregnancy" (p. 126) is an attempt to offer an alternative to mainstream history:

> DAVID In fact, as it turned out they would have all been better off left to hang as they had been strung on the wire—he with the back of his head blown off and she—the rifle jammed exactly and deeply up into her and a bullet fired directly into the child living there. For they ended each buried in a separate place; the husband by chance alone was returned to their village, while the wife was dumped into an alien nearby plot of dirt, while the child, too small a piece of meat, was burned. *(He strums the guitar.)* Thrown into fire as the shattered legs and arms cut off of men are burned. There is an oven. It is not a ceremony. It's the disposal of garbage . . .! (p. 126)

Yet what is equally chilling is Harriet's incredible denial to 'see' and accept responsibility for what David is telling them:

> HARRIET: It's so awful the things those yellow people do to one another. Yellow people hanging yellow people. Isn't that right? Ozzie, I told you—animals—Christ burn them. David, don't let it hurt you. All the things you saw. People aren't themselves in war. I mean like that sticking that gun into that poor woman and then shooting that poor little baby, that's not human. That's inhuman. It's inhuman, barbaric and uncivilized and inhuman. It's inhuman. It's inhuman and barbaric and uncivilized. (p. 127)

Harriet refuses even to entertain the possibility that this barbaric act could have been committed by an American soldier and conveniently shifts all the responsibility on the inhuman "yellow people". David's astute perception that "Murderers don't even know that murder happens" rings disturbingly true. That the screen remains blank throughout David's narrative implicates the audience as a partaker of willing blindness, aligning them with gaze of the family. It is important to note the spectral body of Zung is present for this screening and she is apparently able to see the images David is depicting on the blank screen as the stage direction notes: "*(And* ZUNG, *silently, drifting, picks up a soda and drinks, watching the movie"* (p. 126). The questions of to what extent the audience is guilty of the same crimes the family his guilty of, to what extent they participate in the willing blindness towards anything that disturb the sugar-coated reality and to what extent they are murderers that "don't even know that murder happens" are raised and remain in the background throughout the play. That the spectre of Zung remains a silent spectator to David's 'giving voice to the other' instead of attempting to reclaim authority over her self-representation seems to imply that for Rabe authentic understanding and representation of other is impossible, the closest attempt to do so is filtered through David, thus never truly authentic. It is also a test for David to face up to his discarding of Zung. Confronted with his father's bigoted outrage against the thought of 'chinky' grandchildren, he is able to identify clearly that the ghostly old voices that told him to "cast her down" as belonging to his parents and see them as prejudiced clichés as they are. This 'enlightenment' allows him finally to perceive the spectre of Zung, proving that her presence goes beyond the physical as David's physical blindness is no longer an obstacle to him seeing her.

That racial prejudice is not limited to the family becomes obvious with Father Donald's arrival to Nelson house to bless and cure David as per Harriet's concern that David has "sinned against the Sixth Commandment with whores" (p. 141). Supposed to be a head figure of an inclusive religion, after all "All children are God's children" as Harriet jarringly reminds us (p. 138), Father Donald's bigoted views about "that yellow whore" that David had "carried on with" and his utter inaptitude in dealing with David's trauma reveal the shallowness of his faith and his lack of understanding. Taken as a representative of Catholic Church in particular and religion in general Father Donald reveals the hollowness of religion and its impotence as spiritual guide for the society. His bag of tools to diagnose and contain the 'disease' consists of biblical racial prejudices and pop psychology magazines, which Cooper (1986) reads as "an attempt to revivify decrepit spiritual forms through a facile modernity" (p. 618). Relying on what has been "demonstrated beyond any possible doubt" by those magazines Father Donald diagnoses David as "maladjusted, embittered, non-goal-oriented misfits" and in despair because he has engaged in relationship with a “whore”. For him, “the sexual acceptance of another person, …, is intimate and extreme; this kind of acceptance of an alien race is in fact the rejection of one’s own race—it is in fact the rejection of one’s own self—it is sickness…”, which he purports treat through superficial blessing that is violently thwarted by David (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 147). This form of ‘sickness’ that entails loss of self is exactly what Harriet is afraid of: “They don’t change and we are gone. It is our triumph, our whiteness. We disappear. …They take us back and down if our children are theirs—it is not a mingling of blood, it is theft” (p. 164). Harriet’s words show that her ‘tribalism’ is fuelled by her fear of atavistic ‘regression’, what in her eyes is a degeneration from superiority of whiteness to an animalistic primitive race. The danger of coming into contact with the other lies in the risk of losing the self in the process. While Harriet understands this loss of self as genetic theft through miscegenation, David perceives this loss as something immediate and metaphysical: “It seemed that I should go to her if I was to ever live, and I felt that if I ever truly touched her secret stranger’s tongue and mind, I would somehow die” (p. 165). For him, scary as it was, this loss was a source of enlightenment, granting him a new form of vision in lieu of his physical vision. David does not realize just how much of a powerful catalyst his intimate contact with the other proves to be until he returns home and sees his home through de-familiarized eyes. Now able to see beyond the veneer of normalcy, he is able to understand that the reasonable voices which “seemed a source of wisdom” (p. 138) asking him to cast Zung down were only bigoted, false illusions and the self-superiority his family clings to is nothing but an outrageous sham. David’s mission becomes to force such awareness on his family who remains in denial.

It is this awareness that the family is afraid of and the more they see how this change in this bitter, disgruntled man work out the more determined they get to avoid a similar transformation. Their modus operandi in resisting this awareness is persistent and desperate evasion and ignoring of Zung's presence in the house and David's attacks against their values. Hence, even though Zung only speaks a single line toward the end of the play, her speech is crucial because Ozzie can no longer ignore her presence. More importantly, she no longer fits in the script Ozzie and Harriet provided for her, 'animals' after all are not capable of speech. So although Zung's *"Chào ông! Hôm nay ông manh không"* means no more than 'Hello! Are you fine today?' it proves a danger for Ozzie that must be promptly defused:

> OZZIE: Oh, what is it that you want? I'm tired, I mean it. Forgive me. I'm sick of the sight of you, squatting all the time. In filth, like animals, talking gibberish, your breath sick with rot. . . And yet you look at me with those sad appealing eyes as if there is some real thing that can come between us when you're not even here. You are deceit. (His hands, rising to her throat. The fingers close.) I'm not David. I'm not silly and soft little David. The sight of you sickens me. YOU HEAR ME, DAVID? Believe me. I am speaking my honest true feelings. I spit on you, the both of you, I piss on your eyes and pain. Flesh is lies. You are garbage and filth. You are darkness. I cast you down. Deceit. Animal. Dirty . . . animal. . . . Animal. (*And he is over her. They are sprawled on the ground. Silence as no one moves. THE GIRL lies like a rag beneath him.*) (p. 171)

Ozzie rejects her attempt at interaction by relegating her speech to "gibberish" and rescripts her as inhuman and animalistic for he is not ready for the implications of facing the other will be for his notion of the self. Replicating the play of dominations acting out at Vietnam Ozzie permanently silences her by strangulation, effectively cutting down any further possibility of communication. Having put Zung's body out of sight by "*either dragging her behind the couch, or putting her in a green garbage bag brought to him by HARRIET*" (p. 172), Ozzie is able to cling to his illusionary selfhood and avoid the transformation that David underwent. With Zung gone, David power over his family disappears and soon David is exorcized as well through family-assisted suicide.

However, before these twin exorcisms finally subdue the threat Zung and David pose to family's self-identity, the play reveals just how fragile and artificial their senses of self truly are. For Rabe (1973), rather than living authentic lives, the family is only concerned maintaining an ideal image:

> In any society there is an image of how the perfectly happy family should appear. It is this image that the people in this play wish to preserve above all else. Mom and Dad are not concerned that terrible events have occurred in the world, but rather that David has come home to behave in a manner that makes him no longer lovable. Thus he is keeping them from being the happy family they know they must be. He attacks those aspects of their self-image in which reside all their sense of value and sanity. But, curiously, one of the requisites of their self image is that everything is fine, and, consequently, for a long time they must not even admit that David is attacking... (p. 225)

As long as they maintain the outward image of a happy family, they are not concerned about the fact that they are living surface lives and that their selves are actually prescribed roles that only 'seem' genuine. It is at this point that Rabe's choice of iconic Nelson family as his model becomes particularly pertinent. Spigel (1992) notes how the family sitcoms of 1950s, of which *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* constitutes a primary example, "worked to 'naturalize' family life, to make it appear as if this living arrangement were in fact the only one possible" (p. 178). The family depicted in these shows consisted of a wise "breadwinner father, homemaker mother, and growing children placed within the domestic space of the suburban home" (Haralovich, 1989, p. 61). As McDonald (1986) observes "[i]f any American family has the claim to the status of an icon - a simulacrum and model for all other American families - it would be the family of the Nelsons" (p. 230). However, what makes the Nelsons specifically intriguing is that they presented "the image of a real family representing itself as a fictive family" (p. 230). The names of the characters of the show were in fact the names of the actors portraying them and they were a family in “real life”, in fact, Ozzie Nelson himself produced the show. Selling the *image* of “unobstructed, unmediated view of the Nelson family" (Spigel, 1992, p. 159), The Nelsons blurred the lines between illusion and reality. This unique status of Nelson makes them the perfect choice for Rabe to comment upon the artificiality of the ideal American family and their senses of self. The blinded veteran’s homecoming with ghost of Zung following behind him is an affront to the ‘ideal image’ that the family is determined to maintain and their first instinct is to ignore and gloss over this disturbance to their daily routine. Soon enough, however, the members of the ‘happy’ family to falter in maintaining the seemingly authentic roles allocated to each of them.

Embodying the carefree youth with a musical talent and an easy-going personality, David’s younger brother Rick functions as a preserver of normalcy with his repetitive entrances and departures. Presumably, he is living the ideal life of a teenager: he goes on dates, watches movies, constantly takes pictures with his Polaroid camera, strums his guitar and attempts to satisfy his endless appetite by munching on fudge, cookies and milk. Yet, David astutely observes that he is only surface without any substance and nothing more: “You’re so selfish, Rick. Your hair is black; it glistens. You smile. You sing. People think you are the songs you sing. They never see you” (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 123). Rick has no tolerance for “stupid stuff” David talks about and only wants to talk “about cake and cookies and cars and coffee” (p. 171). Such level of true superficiality Rick represents demands certain level of brutality and crudeness. His equation of a sexual encounter with having “the greatest piece a tail ... a beautiful piece a ass” at the back of a car reveals his crassness. (p. 162). Ultimately, he is the one who violently breaks David’s menacing hold over his parents by first smashing his guitar upon David and finally suggesting that he cuts his wrists:

> RICK (moving to DAVID, who sits alone in a chair): Hey, Dave, listen, will you, I mean I know it's not my place to speak out and give advice and everything because I'm the youngest, but I just gotta say my honest true feelings and I'd kill myself if I were you, Dave. You're in too much misery. I'd cut my wrists. Honestly speaking, brother to brother, you should have done it long ago. (p. 173)

For Rick, David's mistake lies in thinking "people are valuable or something and given a chance like you were to mess with 'em, to take a young girl like that and turn her into a whore, you shouldn't when of course you should or at least might ... on a whim." (p. 174). Killing people by throwing bags of cement on them, he finds, is hysterical and going to war is nothing more than an opportunity for going "easy and play" (p. 175). This eventual display of Rick's moral callousness and brutality is especially harrowing because both Rick's domination over David at the end of the play and the implication that Rick is the father showing home-slides to his family in the opening scene indicates that it is the values associated with Rick that survives and passed on to next generation.

Assuming the mantle of the model wife and mother, Harriet's role is to be the nurturing and loving presence in the house and to attend selflessly to the needs of her husband and children. She performs this role by constantly offering to food or medicine to her family and summoning a priest if she feels spiritual guidance is needed. Yet Zung's sudden presence at the house she is trying to ignore and David's unwillingness to go along with the domestic rituals of the household soon reveals that her role goes no beyond than just superficial pretence and has no substance. Her frantic attempts at being nurturing by constantly feeding her family, as Cooper (1986) observes, are only a "substitute for the love that is really unfelt" (p. 617). Moreover, while as befits her role of nurturing mother she seems to be the only one who is worried about David’s uneasiness at returning home, her solution of getting him doped with “Easy Sleep” reveals that rather than David’s wellbeing she is more concerned about how David’s outbursts are disturbing the sugar-coated reality of their everyday existence. The superficiality of her motherly concern is matched the hollowness of her religious belief. While she is quick to condemn Ozzie for his “cruel words” about Zung claiming “All children are God’s children” (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 138), her own remarks about the Vietnamese belies this apparent religious acceptance towards ‘the other’. As befits a quintessential consumer, her expectation from religion is rapid and easy gratification, thinking a prompt blessing by Father Donald is enough to put all things to right. While Harriet is usually quite adept at evading reality by focusing on the trivial, there are moments that shows she is more than aware of underlying problems. Nevertheless, the astuteness of her observation that Ozzie is responsible for David’s situation by “all those years … teaching him sports and fighting” is diminished by the fact that she claims no responsibility of her own. Her quickness to blame Ozzie also reveals an underlying animosity towards her husband, which is made more evident in the scene where she offers Ozzie an aspirin and follows it with the spiteful observation that “[a]spirin makes your stomach bleed. … Nobody knows why. It’s part of how it works. It just does it; makes you bleed. … inside yourself you bleed” (p. 130). The drugs the selfless mother, like herself, provides carry the Derridean ambiguity of *pharmakon*: they are poison wrapped as remedy. Nowhere the hollowness beneath the caring exterior of the nurturing mother is more glaring than the ritual ‘murder’ at the end of the play. Harriet’s interjection to the act of David’s suicide is not to stop him from committing it, but rather to prevent it from getting messy as she races to bring the “*silver pans and towels with roosters on them”* so that the “*pans will catch the* *blood"* (p. 174). For Harriet, with David's exorcism, "it'll all be over" and there will be "no more funny talk" to disturb the façade of perfect family (p. 175).

In an interview with Kolin (1989), Rabe remarks that the "real core of the play is Ozzie" (p. 155) and it is his journey that is witnessed. The role bestowed unto Ozzie within the ideal family is that of gentle but authoritative patriarch. The masculine ideal he is operating under demands that he be the caring provider for his family, act as source of security and stability and impart fatherly wisdom to solve any trouble his family may run into. While Ozzie, outwardly, seems to enjoy the prestige this role bestows upon him, David's return with ghostly Zung in tow begins to challenge the validity and authenticity of Ozzie's status as a patriarch. By focusing his attacks prominently on Ozzie, David aims to both expose the underlying hostility beneath the exterior of caring father and get Ozzie to recognize that he is living a lie. David initiates his attacks to break Ozzie by targeting Hank Grenweller, the mythical shadow towering the Nelsons much like a founding father and even, Ozzie reveals, the engineer of the marriage between Harriet and Ozzie in the first place. As Cooper remarks (1986), Ozzie finds in this mythical figure "the ideal of American manhood: athletic, healthy and strong. Ozzie has idolized Hank and turned him in imagination into the perfect comrade" (p. 619). To deconstruct the myth of Grenweller, David informs his parents that Grenweller's lost hand was a result of congenital illness and not an accident as his parents thought. By relocating the *sickness* from 'the other' to the mythical American Self embodied in Grenweller, David not only presents a crushing challenge to his family's binary value system, but he also divulges the symbolic sickness underlying American society. Although Ozzie initially dismisses the idea, he soon becomes preoccupied with it and gradually his hold on his identity weakens:

> OZZIE: Harriet, do you know when David was talking about that trouble in Hank's hand being congenital, what did you think? You think it's possible? I don't myself. I mean, we knew Hank well. I think it's just something David got mixed up about and nobody corrected him. What do you think? (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 121)

Once David topples the core myth, Ozzie begins to question his identity as a father and husband and the violent hatred he bears to his family emerges to surface:

> OZZIE: They think they know me and they know nothing. They don't know how I feel. How I'd like to beat Ricky with my fists till his face is ugly! How I'd like to banish David to the streets. How I'd like to cut her tongue from her mouth! They know nothing . . . ! I was myself. *(And turning to the audience now, it's clear that the audience are his friends, his buddies.)* I lived in a time beyond anything they can ever know—a time beyond and separate, and I was nobody's goddamn father and nobody's goddamn husband! I was myself! (p. 119)

As Ozzie begins to struggle with his own position, David resumes his attacks to get him to see that he has been trapped into a marriage and interpellated into a role, mistakenly thinking that he has been pursuing his own desires. The more David intensifies his attacks to get Ozzie to see his 'entrapment' into a commercial-perfect life, the more desperate Ozzie gets in his attempt to hold onto the deceptive sense of stability and authority his role as ideal father affords him. In his struggle to find answers that he discovers are "silver and elusive . . . like fish" (p. 137), Ozzie performs six soliloquies. As McDonald (1986) notes, these are about "being a runner, playing a guitar, finding himself through Harriet, discovering 'no sign or trace' of himself, being of no use to the family, and contemplating his 'commercial on the value of Ozzie'" (p. 220). It is the last of these soliloquies, the 'commercial on the value of Ozzie' that proves a breaking-point in Ozzie's quest to find answers and that marks his ultimate failure of finding an authentic ground to build his identity upon. To hold onto his identity that he felt was slipping through his fingers, and to reclaim the 'understanding' that has left him, Ozzie gathers three empty chairs with bulk of papers upon which is written the list of everything he owns with corresponding material value. Addressing the empty chairs as members of family, he tells them to combat the “feeling of being nothing” that has been oppressing him lately, he has made an inventory of everything he owns so that the family members can distribute them “at the slightest provocation” (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 167). That he can only define himself in terms of material value of his possessions is a devastating testament to his entrapment in a commercial society with its prioritization of commercial values as well as to the poverty of his imaginative and moral acuity. This entrapment readily extends to the other family members and in implication, the whole society. The play is filled with signs pointing to the artificial reality of the advertising world that the Nelsons are living in. The constant flickering of the light coming from the TV set highlights the sitcom origin of the characters. More overtly, both Harriet and Ozzie when they are unable to cope with the crisis David is causing, revert to commercials, extolling the virtues of products like corn-husk cigarettes and Meyer Spot Remover. The plasticity of the commercial reality they are living in is also reflected in the relationship between the members of the family. While they are, on the surface, the perfect mother, the perfect father and the perfect youth, there is no real emotional connection and no real love between them. The performance of caring and concern they are participating in, in fact masks hostility for each other. Ozzie would like to, “beat Ricky with [his] fists till his face is ugly… banish David to the streets” and “cut [Harriet’s] tongue from her mouth” (p. 119), while Harriet relishes in giving Ozzie aspirin that “makes you bleed” (p. 130). Moreover, all members readily lead and assist David to suicide cheerily to get rid of the disturbance to their ‘ad-perfect’ lives.

What makes Ozzie’s speech to empty chairs is made particularly significant due to Zung’s silent presence as a spectator. Ozzie stoutly ignores her until the end of his speech but when “*hit with a sudden light that makes [him] go rigid as if some current from her has entered into him and he is turning slowly to look up at her*”, he finds himself compelled to address to her and ask her to “[l]et David alone” (p. 167). For Rabe, what is being ignored with Zung is “that intuitive, feeling, resonant part of that house, the vet, all of them, of life itself, or that potential” so “they can be “permanently false” (Zinman, 1991, p. 9). Moreover, Zung’s silent gaze upon Ozzie during his speech to empty chairs instigates a perspective shift and makes salient Ozzie’s role as the performer for both the audience and more importantly, Ozzie himself. Although her silent presence throughout the play similarly works to make obvious the performativity of the characters, she can be more easily ignored because the presence of the other ‘performers’ can keep the illusion that the act is real. When the illusion must continue as one-man act, however, the ignored reality and the awareness of artificiality that Zung brings in cannot be so easily suppressed. However, to keep the ‘ideal’ that Nelsons are performing from crumbling Zung and their much too changed son need to be exorcised, for only in total isolation can such fragile ideal survive.

When considered from a meta-theatrical perspective, Zung introduces another level of reality as well, as her presence questions the representational adequacy of realism. For Rabe, *Sticks and Bones* “lives in a middle ground between what is thought of in theater terms as ‘realism’ and ‘fantasy’ and Zung is the most significant element in that allows Rabe attack the logical and linear vision of the world that underlies what he deems realism. Realism, he argues,

> is an underpinning construct, which declares the validity of a strict cause and effect being always at work in human events, a proportionate relationship between events and the forces that create them and which they create. . . . It's a very Newtonian view, the clockwork, mechanistic view, and it's very comforting to us, but in our souls we know it's not true. (Zinman, 1991, p. 14)

In such “Newtonian clock of a play”, he points out, “a kind of Darwinian assemblage of detail which would then determine the details that might follow, the substitution of the devices of logic for the powerful sweeps of pattern and energy that is our lives” (Rabe as cited in Demastes, 1988, p. 51). Demastes argues what Rabe is describing as realism is actually naturalism and that Rabe himself uses “realistic mode of presentation” (p. 50) to portray what is not “the ordered and consequential naturalist world” and attack “the naturalist philosophy” (p. 36) and accordingly can be termed a new realist. Tekinay (2004) explains that grown “out of a late twentieth century perspective on existence”, new realism “is infused with the spirit of the absurd, the avantgarde, the experimentation of the 1960s and the sense of isolation and fragmentation that defines our post-modern age” (p. 36). Rabe through his reshaping of the realist form show its inadequacy in dealing with the contemporary vision of a disordered world emerges as a practitioner among new realists, who “manipulate the realistic form into fresh permutations that can accurately present contemporary visions” (p. 36).

Sticks and Bones is shaped by and against the spectre of the ‘realism’, as both the tradition of American family drama that Rabe is redefining and the sit-com genre that he riffs on do have long standing association with realism. In the play, the family seems determined to operate in this clockwork universe where there are daily ‘domestic rituals’ that everyone has to participate and where problems can mechanically be solved either by eating, taking medicine or getting the blessing of the pastor. When the problem of David is not so easily solved, Ozzie tries to find the root cause of the malady and wants to check David’s fingerprints to check if he is an impostor. Yet, as was seen, Rabe establishes just how artificial and limited this understanding of reality is, for it can brook no chaotic interruptions and cannot account for powerful sweeps of pattern and energy that is our lives. It also operates on the principle that there is only one shared reality and refuses to accept that reality is subjective. While the family pretends they are all operating upon one shared reality, it is only through erasing out the disturbances and the adamant unwillingness to acknowledge doubts, fears and individual perceptions that the superficial shared reality is able to survive. Standing in direct juxtaposition to this reality, the 'fantastical' spectre of Zung embodies the chaos and the energy underlying our lives, which the rationalistic view of life cannot accommodate and ultimately ejects. To the extent that the audience is disturbed by the presence of Zung breaching the naturalistic laws within the drama and ignores her to focus on the interaction between they become complicit in the same crime of erasure and evading the family is committing. Moreover, any attempt to rationalize Zung as simply as David's hallucination, implies that the audience is working from the same impulse as that of the family: adhering to safety of the ordered superficial reality. After all, as Demastes (1986) points out, "[l]ogic, too, manipulates and distorts the world to fit into the formulas, and the result is a two dimensional creation void" (p. 108).

When Zung's presence and David's unwillingness to join his family in their evasion begins to jeopardize the stability of this ordered reality, the family must exorcise them. For Rabe, the ending of the play, is "very much an assault" and

> if the play's done correctly, the audience will be compelled from the beginning of the play through the end to identify with Ozzie.... He's the one on the journey.... So I think if you were identifying with Ozzie and you reached a point where you too were saying "Shut up" to David and then they did that to him, had him cut his wrist, you would be an accomplice in a ritual and you would have to see something about yourself. (Kolin, 1989, p. 156)

Both the strangulation of Zung and the assisted-suicide of David by the family act as catalyst for audience become aware of their identification with the family and recognize their own willingness to hold fast to superficial reality. Although, Ozzie refuses to change and “opts for the way he has been” (p. 156), jarred by the cheery murder taking place on stage, it becomes the audience’s turn to embark upon a journey of their own.

The ending also brings the play to full circle. As Rabe (1973) points out “[a]t the start, the family is happy and orderly, and then David comes home and he is unhappy. As the play progresses, he becomes happier and they become unhappier. Then, at the end, they are happy” (p. 226). The tableau at the end of the play that Rick takes the picture of is the photograph interpreted as ‘somebody sick’ during the slide-show at the beginning of the play. The cyclicity of the play and the seemingly ‘neat’ closure of the play (for the family) is deliberately claustrophobic and prompts re-evaluation of the initial perception. In Rabe’s terms, [i]t's a very confrontational play that basically says that society, or the status quo, is sick and that when it's re-established, it's sicker” (p. 156). Both the sickness and the ideal has been re-evaluated and reallocated at the end of the play. Through this claustrophobically circular design of the play, Rabe is also implying that the expectation of progress underlying the linear and rational vision of the world is ultimately false; on the contrary, such vision only allows for stagnancy.

In line with his vision of the world as unordered and irrational, Rabe abstains from providing a solution and only presents the problem. Moreover, although, Kauffman sees the play as laden with trite string of ironies such as “the blind' man is the one who can really see, the 'healthy' people are, really sick, the priest is really un-Christian, the Vietnamese girl, -maligned as a whore, is really pure, and so on" (as cited in Davies, 1991, p. 134), Rabe, in fact, avoids delineating such clear-cut oppositions. The blind man with moral vision, Rabe points out, is not the saviour:

> David's demands are unlivable. The truth of the matter is that what David's asking for is impossible. He's gone too far. He's asking for a form of insanity.

> This character David comes in and tries to shatter it [status quo] and almost does, but in the end, he makes a fatal mistake and underestimates something and is then himself drawn into the society. (Kolin, 1989, p. 156)

Further, though David seems to see Zung as a form of salvation, Rabe hints that David’s vision of “total understanding in you of me and me of you" is skewered, for instead of understanding Zung in her complexity, he hopes to change her: “I’ll buy you clothing. I’ve lived with them all my life. I’ll make them not hate you. I’ll buy you books. They will see you. The seasons will amaze you. Texas is enormous. Ohio is sometimes green.” (Rabe, 1969/1993, p. 138). Although David might be disillusioned enough to perceive the flaws of his family, he himself cannot help but exoticize Zung and their relationship.

Rabe is writing from a vantage point that is counter to an understanding of the world where things are “proportionate, … diagnosable” (Zinman, 1991, p. 14) and hence fixable. The world he is describing is filled with chaos, uncertainty; it is unknown and unpredictable and as Demastes (1988) remarks, “if it is governed at all, the word ‘govern’ must be used ironically, and only then would Rabe be able to say it is governed by randomness” (p. 40). As such, the implication of his use of the spectre differs from what was observed in the plays of earlier periods. Although, just as in the earlier plays, the manifestation of the ghost functions as a marker for rottenness and injustice in *Sticks and Bones*, Zung’s presence is a not a guarantee that justice will prevail, for the play ends pessimistically with the forced exorcism of Zung along with the avenger figure of David and the perpetuation of the evasion. Similar to the way Zung’s presence only points to injustice and does not provide a resolution, Rabe is content with only revealing the problems underlying contemporary society and raising questions; he offers no answers. There can be no one single solution, for there is no one single reality but a multitude of individual perceptions. Consequently, when the play ends, the duty of asking questions and seeking answers falls unto the shoulders of the audience. Each must embark upon a journey of their own and provide their own answers. Only then can change be possible.

4.3 Digging up the bones in Sam Shepard's *Buried Child*

TILDEN: It is a mystery to me
– Sam Shepard, Buried Child

That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,
Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
–T.S. Eliot, "The Wasteland"

The second of the contemporary plays that this chapter deals with belongs to Sam Shepard, another playwright like Rabe that belongs in the group William Demastes terms 'new realists'. *Buried Child* premiered in 1978 and brought Shepard critical and popular acclaim by winning Pulitzer Price for the best play as well as an Obie award for playwriting the following year. It is the second part of 'family trilogy' which includes *Curse of the Starved Class* (1977), *True West* (1980) as well. The trilogy marks a shift in Shepard's early experimental works towards a more traditional realistic framework, or what appears to be one at initial glance. It called be called realism, Shepard explains, but "not the kind of realism where husbands and wives squabble and that kind of stuff" (as cited in Roudané, 2002, p. 5). In essence, however, the resemblance to traditional realistic drama is only superficial, for Shepard's vision, Demastes (1987) explains, remains ultimately postmodern: "[Shepard] has chosen realism as an ironic means to illustrate the disintegration of causal threads espoused by the old realism (or naturalism), which simultaneously illustrates the disintegration of the family foundation" (pp. 230-231). *Buried Child* was revised by Shepard in 1995 because, he explains in his interview in *American Theatre*, he “didn't want anything in the play to be gratuitously mysterious. And [he] felt that certain questions that were ignited in the play should find - not resolution, they shouldn't be resolved - but they should be at least followed through” (Coen, 1996, p. 28). It is the original 1978 text that will be explored here, for the changes Shepard made in the revised edition, mainly clarifying the incest and the infanticide, only detracted from the sense of ambiguity and unclearness that is central to the play’s meaning, and the vision underlying new realism.

Buried Child like Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones* operates essentially as a homecoming story, only instead not the veteran returning back home, it is the prodigal (grand)son, after an interval of six years, returning to a farm in Illinois for a visit to his grandparents before he continues on to Mexico to visit his father. In, what is essentially, an attempt to delve into his roots to re-evaluate and reconstitute his identity, Vince, along with his girlfriend Shelly, returns to Midwest to find his childhood home ‘much too changed’. Not only no one in the house recognizes or remembers Vince, but the disintegrating family Vince encounters is nothing like the quintessential American family of his nostalgia indulged remembrances. Whether a specific event caused the ‘fall’ from grace or whether the ideal family he remembers never existed in the first place remains one of the significant questions that drives the play. In either case, however, the dysfunctional family of the *Buried Child* appear to be in a constant state of hauntedness which contributes to the gothic atmosphere of the play. A cursory glance upon online reviews of production[4] of *Buried Child* reveals that many viewers feel that the play is dominated by a spectral presence, some even going so far to term the play as a form of 'ghost story'. Although no actual apparition of a ghost is present on the stage, this sense of hauntedness the play exudes makes the play viable for a ghostly reading. Indeed, the overt lack of presence for the ghost is reminiscent of what, in the second chapter with regards to ghost of Agamemnon in *The Libation Bearers*, was termed as the 'unmanifest ghost'. This form of ghost, as may be recalled, claustrophobically closes in on characters, affecting them incessantly with its presence-in-absence, marking the land with miasma. Aside from the myths like that of the Corn Spirit/King (Nash, 1983), the myth of wounded Fisher King and the questing hero (Porter, 1993) and the Christian pattern of fall and redemption (Bottoms, 1998), Shepard also incorporates the unmanifest haunting present in Greek plays like *The Libation Bearers* to implode the realistic/naturalistic format of the play. Similar to Rabe, Shepard uses the haunting of an archetypal American home to delve into the dark underside of the American society and dig up the buried bones underlying the American identity.

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[4] In reviews to contemporary productions of the play, whether be it professional or amateur ones, *Buried Child* is seen in terms of a ghost story. Brantley (1996) remarks that the play is “haunted by

The play begins with a stage description of a living room of a farmhouse in Illinois. Formally, the play itself is 'haunted' by the conventions of realistic drama and in each moment plays against the expectations raised by that form. In the case of the initial stage description, instead of the homeliness and cordiality expected by the living room setting, the audience is presented with a picture of decay and decrepitude. Further, the set is designed to create an unrealistic disembodied area consigned to stasis and oblivion:

> In *Buried Child* it is the abrupt staircase that seems to vanish into nothingness, and the further curious nothingness of a useless corridor [the

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the specter of a dead infant" while Chen (2016) remarks that "there is … a feeling of a ghost, and a tone of shifting unease, that hangs over every scene."

> porch] at the rear of the stage. . . . Anyone entering or leaving must pass through a void. (Kerr, as cited in DeRose, 1993, p. 142)

From the state of the objects to the body of the only visible character at the stage, everything in this insulated void is on the verge of disintegration. The wooden staircase is “old” with “frayed carpet laid down on the steps”. The dark green sofa that is old patriarch is resting upon is crumbling “with the stuffing coming out in spots”. The TV, central to any middle-class American home is on, however it emits neither image nor sound, only “a flickering blue light comes from the screen”. The upright that brightens the room along with this sterile blue light exudes “a faded yellow shade”. The small night table near the sofa is filled with “several small bottles of pills” necessitated by the ongoing cough of the thin and sickly looking patriarch slowly decomposing on the dissolving couch. The said patriarch covered in “an old brown blanket” is an old man in “in his late seventies” and with his “well-worn T-shirt, suspenders, khaki work pants and brown slippers” he almost appears to be part of the decaying fixture of the room (Shepard, 1979, p. 11). His furtive sips from the bottle of whisky hidden under the sofa cushion exacerbates his ongoing cough, once again marking the state of decline in the household. All in all, his state is reminiscent of Nagg in Beckett’s *Endgame*.

His stealth in drinking as well as his need to hide his cough upon hearing “the sound of his wife’s voice coming from the top of the staircase” initially may suggest a desire not to worry his wife, however their following ‘squabble’ shows that there is no love lost between this husband and wife (Shepard, 1979, p. 11). As Halie’s disembodied voice comes from top of the staircase to urge Dodge to take a pill for his cough and engage him into some form of bickering, Dodge tries his best to ignore Halie and only grudgingly responds to her to prevent her from coming down. He is revealed to be a cynical and bitter man, filled with resentment towards his family, specifically his wife and son Bradley, whose life’s aim seems to be menacing his father and shaving Dodge’s head without his consent. Bradley, he argues, “was born in a goddamn hog wallow! . . . and that’s where he belongs” (p. 23). He is not loving or kind towards eldest son Tilden either even though he feels compelled to defend Tilden against Halie’s incriminations. Dodge is unable to understand why Tilden would return back home in his adulthood and can’t bring himself to worry about him, not when he “got into trouble” in New Mexico and certainly not when he returned home in a “profoundly burned out” (p. 16) state.

Halie is not the picture of the loving wife and the kind mother of ideal family either. Her initial concern for her husband in urging him to take pills is soon belied in an inconstant move when she blames Dodge’s ill-tempered responses on his pills: “Have you been taking those pills? Those pills always make you talk crazy” (p. 22). A bit later she becomes openly disdainful towards Dodge, admonishes him saying, “sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off til all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood” (p. 24). Halie is quite inconsistent towards her eldest son Tilden as well. One moment she makes him responsible for taking care of Dodge saying he is the oldest. The next, she is protective towards him, telling Dodge: “You've gotta watch out for him. It's our responsibility. He can't look after himself anymore, so we have to do it. Nobody else will do it. We can't just send him away somewhere” (p. 20). Then she gets angry and accuses Tilden of lying and stealing the corn he brought out of nowhere, making him cry in the process.

The dialogue between Halie and Dodge also reveals that Halie, with her dress completely in black along with her “black handbag, hat with a veil, and . . . black gloves" (p. 20) is in constant mourning for a time past when things were "wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! The sun was just gleaming. . . . Everything was dancing with life! There were all kinds of people from everywhere. Everyone was dressed to the nines". Certainly "not like today" (p. 14), where things are, in Dodge's concise description, "catasthropic" (p. 12). Halie conveniently singles out a specific event for this fall, the death of her son Ansel. The question rises, could Ansel be the buried child of the title? It is likely Hallie is displacing one death for the other, unable to voice the real traumatic death of a son, barest mention of whom brings all hearers to standstill. In the impossibility of mourning the child whose narrative must remain untold, Halie transforms her melancholia unto a hyperbolic mourning and reminiscence of another dead son. Ansel, who has died unfortunately during his wedding night to a 'Catholic girl' at the hands of the Catholic mafia and not at service for his country like Halie envisioned for him, is embellished into a Colossus in Halie's memories. When Ansel died, she argues, it was the same as if all of her children died, for:

> He was the smartest. He could've earned lots of money…. Lots and lots of money. He would've took care of us, too. He would've seen to it that we were repaid. He was like that. He was a hero. Don't forget that. A genuine hero. Brave. Strong. And very intelligent. Ansel could've been a great man. One of the greatest. I only regret that he didn't die in action. It's not fitting for a man like that to die in a motel room. A soldier. He could've won a medal. He could've been decorated for valor. (p. 20)

She has built up this lost son in her mind to such a heroic degree that she wants to commission Father Dewis, the local priest rather reminiscent of Rabe's hypocritical Father Donald, to put up a statue for him, "a tall statue with a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other" (p. 21) to commemorate the heroic and robust All American youth. She is so adamant in getting some form of commemoration that she even eagerly goes on a (c)overt date with Father Dewis, although Dodge is evidently aware of what his wife is doing behind his back: “[Halie] won't be back for days. She says she'll be back but she won't be. *(he starts laughing)* There's life in the old girl yet” (p. 33). As Ansel’s prowess in basketball that Halie claims Father Dewis has witnessed is later belied by Bradley’s comment that “[h]e never played basketball” (p. 59), the veracity of Ansel’s embellished other talents are put in doubt as well and further points to Halie’s excessive need to overcompensate for the barrenness of the present.

Nothing seems to retain its virility in this household, the remaining sons Bradley and Tilden are both ‘wounded’ in their own ways. The violence prone Bradley, who takes a sadistic pleasure in furtively shearing his father’s scalp with electric clippers to leave him bald and bloody is consigned to wearing a wooden leg because went and chopped “his leg off with a chain saw” (p. 20). The wooden leg that replaced the loss of the limb becomes from him a source of phallic power, take it away, Dodge later tells Shelly, he is reduced to a whimpering fool: “Bradley? … He's a push-over. 'Specially now. All ya’ gotta' do is take his leg and throw it out the back door. Helpless. Totally helpless” (p. 52).

As for Tilden, now that he has returned home after he “went out West and got himself into trouble” (p. 55), there seems to be “[s]omething about him is profoundly burned out and displaced” (p. 16). Once an All American Fullback, “[wearing] lettermen's sweaters…. medals hanging all around his neck”, he has become childlike in mental capacity and displays idiosyncratic behaviour. Yet, reminiscent of the Romantic idea of noble savage, he seems to have a deeper understanding of humans ‘truths’ and closer connection to nature. He is the only one perceiving the necessity to unearthing buried narratives and the human need for having a voice. “You gotta talk or you'll die”, he declares, “I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but I just lost my voice" (p. 25). Suggestive of his closer connection to nature and the spectral presence, Tilden's initial entrance, with "*heavy construction boots, covered with mud, dark green work pants, a plaid shirt and a faded brown windbreake . . ., wet from the rain"* (p. 18) has him bearing an armful of corn that he will shortly proceed to husk. The act is met with suspicion and incredulity as Dodge interrogates him as to the origin of the corn that Tilden claims to have picked from "right out back" (p. 17). Dodge accuses him of stealing the corns from the neighbours, for, he asserts, "There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That's the last time I planted corn out there!" (p. 17). Hallie, as well, corroborates this narrative of barrenness, saying "We haven't had corn here for over thirty years" and berates Tilden for stealing the corn and messing up the house (p. 22). It appears that whatever event that has happened over thirty years ago has turned the family and the land around it into a desolate wasteland where nothing grows and all remains in constant state of stasis.

The first hint of 'the event' comes later in the act, when as he is bickering with Halie about Bradley, Dodge blurts out: "He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's buried in the back yard!" (p. 24). That the Dodge's slip here is a violation of the family pact is obvious as both Tilden, Harriet and Dodge freeze as soon as the words are out. The hinted secret buried in the backyard has led the family into a ghostly existence, in between the past and the present, cut off from the future. Ironically, their desperation to keep it buried is what keeps the otherwise fragmented and isolated family together. However, the spectral presence of the buried child refuses to remain dormant and in an ironic reversal asserts itself through supernatural emergence of crop. The corn, the carrot and later the bones of the child encroaches upon the family, brought in by Tilden, and threatens to upset the fragile balance that the family tries to retain by acts of erasure. Tilden himself is unable account for the crop he brings inside almost unwittingly. “It's a mystery to me”, he remarks,

> I was out in back there. And the rain was coming down. And I didn't feel like coming back inside. I didn't feel the cold so much. I didn't mind the wet. So I was just walking. I was muddy but I didn't mind the mud so much. And I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact I was standing in it. So, I was standing in it. (p. 23)

The mysterious and almost biblical appearance of the corn suggests spectral presence of the buried child and hints at the vengeance and the retribution trope that, as was seen, was associated with the figure of the ghost. The end of the act has Tilden, almost unwittingly burying his sleeping father in husks of corn. Aside from an allusion to the myth of the corn spirit/king, this act suggests that Dodge is the source of the miasma, the committer of the action that caused the family’s ‘fall’. The act ends with Bradley coming in from the rain to violently cut the hair of his sleeping father who is lying covered under husks of corn, leaving him bald and bloody. Notwithstanding the violence-prone nature of Bradley himself, Dodge seems to accrue punishment after punishment.

The second act begins with the prodigal (grand)son Vince arriving at the farm with his girlfriend Shelly after a six years of interval. Their arrival urges the audience to reorient their gaze with regards to the family as Shelly’s position as an outsider makes her the mediator for the audience. As Crum (1988) observes before Shelly’s arrival, “the audience must “write” the play in isolation. After her appearance, however, she serves as a mediator in the search for meaning and allows the audience an outlet for its frustrations as that meaning is continually denied” (p. 76). Shelly’s initial response to the appearance of the farm reflects the expectations the audience familiar with the myth of the American dream would have from a farm in Midwest:

> This is the house? . . . I don't believe it. . . . It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something. . . . Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little

> dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot. (Shepard, 1979, pp. 29-30)

To Shelly's good natured mockery saying, Vince responds, "What's a' matter with that? It's American…. It's my heritage. What dya' expect?" (p. 30). The heritage Vince expects that he has is the icon of perfect American family with warmth, kindness and success that circulated the public imagination and appeared in various guises such as TV shows like *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* or in paintings of Norman Rockwell which "excludes the sordid and the ugly" (Rockwell as cited in Ceglio, 2002, p. 301). What both Vince and Shelly is about to discover is precisely 'the sordid and the ugly' that is erased out of that icon. Upon entering the house and coming across the cynical, booze-obsessed and belligerent Dodge in lieu of a wise and benevolent grandpa, the amusement of Shelly is replaced with shock and dread: "This is terrible, Vince! I don't want to stay here. In this house. I thought it was going to be turkey dinners and apple pie and all that kinda stuff. . . . I'm fuckin' terrified!" (Shepard, 1979, p. 36) More than the aggressive behaviour of the old curmudgeon they encounter however, what terrifies Shelly is the fact that neither his grandfather, nor father is able to recognize or remember Vince. As Shelly and Vince try to get them to recognize Vince, more intimations of the secret spills out:

> SHELLY: (pointing to VINCE,) This is supposed to be your son! Is he your son? Do you recognize him? I'm just along for the ride here. I thought everybody knew each other!
> TILDEN *stares at* VINCE. DODGE *wraps himself up in the blanket and sits on sofa staring at the floor.*
> TILDEN: I had a son once but we buried him.
> DODGE *quickly looks at* TILDEN. SHELLY *looks to* VINCE.
> DODGE: You shut up about that! You don't know anything about that! … That happened before you were born! Long before! (pp. 37-38)

It seems in their joined effort to smother and evade the trauma of 'the event', the family has buried 'the past' (that is all the things of the past that might remind them of the event like Tilden having a son), along with the body of buried child. However, the cutting off of the past to avoid facing it is pathological and invites a more entrenched ‘haunting’ than remembering the trauma would cause. Cutting of the past disturbs the chronological trajectory of the family for it imprisons them in a barren present by making it impossible to ‘forward’ so long as the event remains unfaced.

For his own part, the more they refuse to recognize him, the more desperate Vince gets in his attempts to get them to do so. He goes even as far as demonstrating childish tricks he used to do in the past, like bending his thumb backwards or playing drums with his teeth. Vince has high stakes in their recognition of him for this visit in an act of search for his roots to recover a sense of identity. When they fail to recognize him despite the tricks, Vince begins to question himself and tries to assess whether he committed a crime that justifies him being forgotten: “I don't get it. I really don't get it. Maybe it's me. Maybe I forgot something. Have I committed an unpardonable offence? ... How in the hell could they not recognize me! I'm their son!” (pp. 41-42). It seems only a crime, or something sinful, would justify memories of something to be abjected, erased, or rather in this case, buried.

Indubitably, the heritage Vince is delving into is, as he points out, American. For, as in Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones*, Shepard’s archetypal family is a microcosm of American society. Wyman (2016) draws attention to fact that Shepard uses “iconic referents signal American identity and belonging for this unnamed family”, ranging from “Thanksgiving, to Norman Rockwell, to Pee Wee Reese” to emphasize the play’s “powerful critique of U.S. culture” (p. 40). Accordingly, what the dark secret buried in the backyard of this family is buried in the ground that constitutes American history and American identity as well. Something(s) is rotten in United States of America and Shepard suggests, the more it is evaded, the more powerful its haunting gets.

Vince, however, is not ready to face ‘the sordid and the ugly’ that needs to be erased for the ideal image to be maintained. Consequently, the first sign that all may not be well, drives him to escape. The antagonistic behaviour of his grandfather, the mental incapacity of his father and their inability or rather unwillingness to recognize him hints at the darkness that his heritage contains and is enough scare him off. Saying he will go and get the booze Dodge had asked him to, Vince leaves Shelly behind with no real intention to return.

As Shelly defends Vince against Dodge’s accusations and assures him that Vince will return with the promised bottle, she can’t help but probe into what seems to remain ‘unsaid’ in this house. She first attempts to ascertain whether they really don’t recognize Vince or just refusing to do so and gets Tilden to admit “I thought I saw a face inside his face” (Shepard, 1979, p. 45). As she kindly plays along with Tilden’s eccentricities, such as peeling the carrots he brings in and allowing him take and pet her rabbit fur coat, she is able to draw from him “certain things … [n]obody’s supposed to hear” (p. 45). Unaccustomed to a kindness shown to him within this environment of emotional sterility and disregarding Dodge’s attempts to shut him up, Tilden soon bursts out the dark story of infanticide with hints of incest that haunts the family, making Shelly regret that she ever probed for it

> TILDEN: We had a baby, (*motioning to* DODGE) He did. Dodge did. Could pick it up with one hand. Put it in the other. Little baby. Dodge killed it. . . . Never told Halie. Never told anybody. Just drowned it. … Nobody could find it. . . . Finally everybody just gave up. Just stopped looking. Everybody had a different answer. Kidnap. Murder. Accident. Some kind of accident. . . . . He said he had his reasons. Said it went a long way back. But he wouldn't tell anybody. . . . He's the only one who knows where it's buried. The only one. Like a secret buried treasure. Won't tell any of us. Won't tell me or mother or even Bradley. Especially Bradley. Bradley tried to force it out of him but he wouldn't tell. Wouldn't even tell why he did it. One night he just did it. (pp. 47-48)

The story is enough to shock Shelly into a trembling silence, and make Dodge to go into a coughing fit on the ground. The act ends not with this revealment but with the menacing figure of Bradley enters again and dominates Shelly by forcing his fingers in her mouth, an act of forced pseudo-fellatio to underscore the need to keep 'silent'.

In contrast to the first two acts, the third act begins in the morning, "[b]right sun" and "[no] sound of rain" that served as a background until now. It appears that 'the secret' being revealed has caused the rain, or perhaps the reminder of the constant spectral presence, to cease and bright sun to appear. Shelly, seemingly recovered from last night's events, tries to take back control within the house, cooking bouillon that for Dodge who refuses to eat it and tries to get into the heart of thing and find out from the lips of the accused the answer to the question "What's happened to this family anyway?" (p. 53). She interrogates Dodge about the past, asking him about the happy pictures of the family hung up on the 'unseen' upstairs, ones of the woman with red hair holding a baby in her arms, "looking down at the baby like it was somebody else's" (p. 54). Dodge, however is adamant in his refusal of the past despite Tilden's exposure last night. He refuses to equate himself to the "Somebody who looks just like you" in the pictures Shelly saw, saying "That isn't me! That never was me! This is me. Right here. This is it. The whole shootin' match, sittin' right in front of you" (p. 54). For Dodge, as long as he himself refuses to reveal it, past can remain unimportant and under erasure: "What's to remember? . . . How far back can you go? A long line of corpses! There's not a living soul behind me. Not a one. Who's holding me in their memory? Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?" (p. 55). Dodge's words reveal that it is only memory that keeps the dead 'alive' in some form, as long as he refuses to remember, the child he killed is nothing more than just bones. Ironically, Dodge seems to consider himself as a 'dead man', as well as “an invisible man” (p. 16), for he believes he is not ‘remembered’, even though he is ‘technically’ alive and in no need of remembrance. The line between the dead and the living if further blurred by Dodge’s comment, suggesting there are more ways than on to being a ghost.

Shelly persists despite Dodge’s evasions but before she is able to draw out from Dodge whether or not Tilden was “telling *the truth* about the baby last night?” (p. 55), Halie returns with Father Dewis in tow, slightly intoxicated and appearing to have set aside her black mourning attire for sunny, yellow dress accompanied by armful of yellow roses. Halie is distraught to find that now the house appears to be in disarray, -—Dodge sitting on the ground while Bradley is reclining on the house with his wooden leg been left out in the open— and the status quo changed, implicitly seeing Shelly as usurping her place in the household. Her tactic to gain back control is to ignore Shelly while covertly insulting her. Unlike the rest of the family that Halie manages to dominate, however, Shelly does not back down and asserts her ‘presence’: “I don't like being ignored. I don't like being treated like I'm not here” (p. 61). When Halie and Father Dewis try to put her down by pointing out it is not her house, Shelly, now ‘in the know’ of the secret, turns the tables on the family: “You're the strangers here”, exclaims, “not me” (p. 62). Further, she knows that they’ve “got a secret. You've all got a secret. It's so secret in fact, you're all convinced it never happened” (p. 63). For her they are the strangers not only because they are nothing like what she imagined from Vince had imparted her but by erasing/burying the past, they have become strangers to themselves. By living their lives while avoiding the dark secret, they are denying any form of true ‘presence’ and dooming themselves to a limbo existence.

Seeing that Shelly is unwilling to be cowed even facing Halie and having the “feeling that it doesn't make a bit a' difference” Dodge gives to Shelly, who “wants to get to the bottom of it”, the ‘full’ story, despite Halie and Bradley’s belligerent attempts to stop him from breaking ‘the pact’ (p. 64). He explains how they were living the life of achieved American dream: “All the boys were grown. The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over. . . . Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out”. Then, the real ‘fall’ happened when Halie got pregnant again even though they “hadn't been sleepin' in the same bed for about six years” (p. 64). To punish this infidelity, Dodge had Halie give birth to the child without any medical help and in pain, which almost resulted in killing her. But, the baby proved more resilient than Dodge imagined and it committed the worst crime of existing:

> DODGE: . . . It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. It wanted to be a part of us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. Tilden knew. . . Tilden was the one who knew. Better than any of us. He'd walk for miles with that kid in his arms. Halie let him take it. . . . We couldn't let a thing like that continue. We couldn't allow that to grow up right in the middle of our lives. It made everything we'd accomplished look like it was nothin'. Everything was cancelled out by this one mistake. This one weakness. (p. 65)

Dodge’s emphasis on Tilden in his narrative exposes further depravity lying buried in the past of this family for it reveals the buried infant to be the product of incest. It is not his wife’s infidelity with his son that most disturbs the old patriarch however, rather the real crime, for Dodge, is the existence of this incestuous infant ruining the image of the perfect All-American family and disclosing the falsity of American dream. Dodge’s swift solution to the problem is matter-of-fact: “I killed it. I drowned it. Just like the runt of a litter. Just drowned it” (p. 65). What Dodge doesn’t say, however, is that after his solution their lives had never been the same. You can always bury the bones, but the memories are harder to get rid of. The past always has a way of coming back to haunt, and the more it is supressed the more powerful its spectral influence grows. In *Buried Child*, rather than appearing as a bodily presence, the spectre remains diffused and operates mostly in a psychological terrain, thus exploring the nature of the harrowing reverberation of unfaced trauma and guilt. Shepard complicates this definition of the ghost by bringing back the vengeance aspect of the ghost in the body of Vince, whose return coincides with the end of Dodge's big reveal.

The Vince who returns is not the same person who left to escape from facing what may get revealed about his heritage. Befitting the violent nature of the family he drunkenly enters "*crashing through the screen porch door up left, tearing it off its hinges"* (p. 66), singing the Marines' Hymn and throwing empty beer bottles, all the while threatening to "come in there and usurp [their] territory" (p. 67). "Don't underestimate me for a minute!" he exclaims "I'm the Midnight Strangled I devour whole families in a single gulp!" (p. 67). Surprisingly, the 'new' Vince is recognized not only by Halie, but also by Dodge. With the return the old patriarch, having now divulged the buried narrative, promptly wills his house and all "paraphernalia therein" (p. 69) to his recently recognized grandson and dies "*unnoticed by the audience"* (p. 72). Vince, aware that he has inherited not just a house but a heritage refuses Shelly's promptings to leave the house and describes what has transpired between his departure and return:

> VINCE I was gonna run last night. I was gonna run and keep right on running. I drove all night. Clear to the Iowa border. The old man's two bucks sitting right on the seat beside me. It never stopped raining the whole time. Never stopped once. I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. *Like a mummy's face.* I saw him *dead and alive* at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield, I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time.

> And every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his Grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. Still *recognized the bones* [emphasis added] underneath. The eyes. The breath. The mouth. I followed my family clear into Iowa. Every last one. Straight into the Corn Belt and further. Straight back as far as they'd take me. Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved. (pp. 70-71)

Vince's eerie experience carries the connotations of two different forms of spectral possession. On the one hand, his narrative is that of reconstituting his identity through recognition of ancestral burden. The echoes of this type of haunting were seen previously in both *The Persians* and *Hamlet*. Whereas in *The Persians*, the ghost of Darius indicated the burden of legacy of a magnificent past in contrast to the failure of the present, in *Hamlet* the ancestral legacy proved to be more ambiguous. The ghost of the old Hamlet carried with it both the overtones of an Edenic past in contrast to the theoretical depravity of Claudius' reign and the intimations of sins of the father threatening to corrupt the avenger son, Hamlet. In *Buried Child*, however, the spectral burden of ancestry is given purely in its negative aspects. DeRose (1992) comments on the similarity between this type of haunting and Ibsen's use of the term 'ghosts' and points out that Vince is "is the spiritual and biological inheritor of what Ibsen called "ghosts": the decaying doctrines and diseased genetic traits, unavoidably handed down from parent to child, that predetermine one's life" (p. 108). For Vince, this seems to be embracing the streak of violence and drunkenness in his heritage and assume his 'rightful' place in the house as the new patriarch. No use running.

On the other hand, Vince is operating, to a certain extent, within the economy spectral vengeance; however, his exact role is rather ambiguous. He blurs the line between the avenger, the sinner and even the revenge ghost. He fits the role of the avenger for it is his visit after six years that precipitates the disclosure of the secret and his claim to his heritage that finally brings on ‘the murderer’s’ death. Certainly, the “mummy face” that appears in the windshield can be read as the true orchestrator of the act of revenge, possessing Vince and making him return to lay claim to the house. He carries the overtones of ‘the sinner’ as well, for he inherits all the vices of his grandfather when he replaces him, be it the violence or the drunkenness. Finally, rather than being possessed by the spectre, he himself may be the ghost himself, come to reveal the story of his own conception and punish the wrongdoer. Thus the mummy face he sees in the windshield is his own, the bones he recognizes underneath a nice echo of the actual bones that Tilden unearths at the end of the play. As a revenant, he *begins by coming back*; neither dead nor alive he remains in between. Nash (1983) do a similar reading in his study and finds Vince to be “the reincarnation of the buried child, now returned to claim his patrimony, a return signalled by the sudden and startling growth of corn in the fields” as well as “the lost brother Ansel and, in fact, the spirit of all the children born to Dodge's ancestry” (p. 488). Nash’s reading, while convincing, touches upon only one set of “multifarious identities” (p. 488). The combination of the avatars of the avenger, the ghost and the sinner within the person of Vince, however, is something that appears to be a deliberate skewering of conventional revenge ghost narrative by Shepard to make it less explanatory in the rational sense and imbue it with ambiguous potency of myth.

Vince returns and takes over the house at the exact moment that the buried secret of the family is revealed through the mouth of the murderer; this unburial is echoed in a more literal one taking place in the backyard. As Dodge finally dies and Vince places roses on his chest before taking Dodge’s place on the couch, Tilden enters:

> *dripping with mud from the knees down. His arms and hands are covered with mud. In his hands he carries the corpse of a small child at chest level,*

> *staring down at it. The corpse mainly consists of bones wrapped in muddy, rotten cloth. He moves slowly downstage toward the staircase, ignoring VINCE on the sofa, VINCE keeps staring at the ceiling as though TILDEN wasn't there.* (Shepard, 1979, p. 72)

With the bones of the infant, and the buried narrative disinterred, the haunting of the house appears to have ended, the spectre exorcised. As Tilden carries the bones of the dead child up to his mother, Halie's voice coming from upstairs gives notice of edenic bounty visible from her room with "over-all view from the upstairs" (p. 22):

> HALIE: I've never seen such corn. Have you taken a look at it lately? Tall as a man already. This early in the year. Carrots too. Potatoes. Peas. It's like a paradise out there, Dodge. You oughta' take a look. A miracle. I've never seen it like this. Maybe the rain did something. Maybe it was the rain. . . . Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself. You can't force a thing to grow. You can't interfere with it. It's all hidden. It's all unseen. You just gotta wait til it pops up out of the ground. Tiny little shoot. Tiny little white shoot. All hairy and fragile. Strong though. Strong enough to break the earth even. It's a miracle, Dodge. I've never seen a crop like this in my whole life. Maybe it's the sun. Maybe that's it. Maybe it's the sun. (p. 72)

The wasteland of thirty years has been blessed by miraculous appearance of crops. The past is no longer put under erasure, and the future can finally be hopeful. The old, corrupt, barren patriarch is replaced by the new, potent generation to bring possible rebirth and renewal to the land in, what Nash (1983) points out, a modern re-enactment of "the ritual of the killing of the Corn Spirit" (p. 488).

From a larger perspective and taking the microcosm for the entire nation, the unfolding of the play suggests the necessity of recognizing and facing up the misdeeds that lie in the American heritage. Exactly which offense pollutes the American history is not indicated in the play. The buried sin of the archetypal family is a primal one, combination of incest and infanticide. The perfection implied by the ideal has never existed in the first place, the sin was inbred and the corruption was not due to outside forces. Consequently, there is no definite allegorical correspondence with a specific 'event' that defiles American history but rather something within the root of American character is wrong. Accordingly, any guilty deed in the nation's past haunting its present "be it racism, or religious and ethnic prejudice, or, as appears most likely given the time frame of the play and Ansell's involvement in the military, the Vietnam War" is just another manifestation of the darkness hidden in the American character. This darkness must be unearthed in its various manifestations and acknowledged, the ghosts exorcized, so that the nation can heal and move forward towards what is hopefully a better future. Only then the Edenic bounty heralded by Halie's disembodied voice is possible.

Or is it? A more careful glance reveals the resolution of the play to be more ambiguous and problematic rather than neat and optimistic. To begin with, while at initial glance Vince's visit to farm does bring about the unburial of the secret, Vince not only misses both Tilden's and Dodge's narration of the event but also ignores the corpse Tilden carries upstairs. Therefore, the facing and the acceptance of his heritage only appears to include violence and drunkenness and not the dark secret, the revealment of which, as was suggested, brings the end to the haunting. Secondly, the possibility of change and renewal is belied by the fact that while Vince replaces the impotent and decaying Dodge, he does not appear to be much different from the old patriarch. He is as boisterous, drunk and violent as his grandfather and his stated aim of "carry[ing] on the line" (Shepard, 1979, p. 70) seems unlikely since he does not even care that Shelly, the only viable female he could 'be fruitful and multiply' with, leaves the house at the end, leaving him as 'sterile' as Dodge had been. Rather than a linear movement towards a 'better' future, the ending seems to suggest an entrapping circularity, a continuation of sterility and violence.

The mythical patterns associated with fertility rituals that Shepard incorporated into the play, which can 'explain away' the play's strangeness according to some critics, runs into certain problems as well. Simmard (1982), for example, points out that the play "functioning as a postmodern dramatization of *The Wasteland".* Eliot's poem is, naturally, based the Fisher King legend in which a young quester who travels to a land cursed with sterility under the sick or wounded (symbolically castrated) Fisher King and by asking him the right question, he heals both the king and the land suffering under him, bringing renewal and rebirth. If, however, Vince is the questor returning to his childhood home rendered sterile under the sick and decaying Dodge, then why is the disability dispersed onto Tilden with his mental incapability and Bradley with his amputated leg as well? Further, it is not Vince who takes the role of the questioner but Shelly, who initially questions Tilden, and not the dying king. The first instinct of the questor knight, on the other hand, is to escape the sterility of the house.

The western myth of the Corn King or Corn Spirit that Nash (1983) contended was being re-enacted in the play is not a better fit either. Described in Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, the myth of the corn-spirit is essentially a fertility ritual where an effigy of the corn-spirit, the Old Corn King, no longer as vital as he had been when he was first chosen, is sacrificed and replaced with a new effigy of the corn-spirit to ensure the fertility of the land. It is, in Demastes' (1988) concise description, "a mythic pattern of death, fertility, and resurrection" (p. 107). The covering of Dodge under corn by Tilden is one of the strongest allusions to the myth in the play. If Vince is the new Corn King replacing Dodge, the old and sick leader whose death will re-fertilize the land however, Porter (1993) asks, then why does the corn appear before Vince arrives at the farm (p. 115)? While Halie is only able to perceive the corn after all that is buried is finally brought to ground and the new order begins, the crop had already been present, albeit in its menacing aspect, brought in by Tilden and threatening the deliberate isolation of the household. Shepard's incorporation of the spectral menace plays on the connotation of the corn and make it ambiguous. While in fertility rituals the corn is a sign of fertility and regeneration, in *Buried Child* because it sprouts from the ground that the murdered infant is buried in and mysteriously penetrates into the deliberate seclusion of the house as a call of the narrative to be unburied, the corn accrues the connation of menacing spectratility as well.

The rebirth and regeneration of the land implied by both the Fisher King and Corn King myths are belied in the cyclical ending of the play as well. Vince, as had been pointed out, is not the vital, fertile young generation that will bring about a hopeful and fertile reign. More likely, he ends up entrapped in a cycle of violence, corruption and sterility, the ancestral heritage his forefathers bestowed upon him. The myths are alluded and then destabilized. Or rather, as Porter (1993) points out, Shepard in his postmodern sensibility "invokes myth ironically, using it to debunk itself" (p. 115).

The play also abounds with various other ambiguities all centring upon the mystery of the buried infant. The true parentage of the child remains indefinite for we are given contradictory clues. While, as Porter (1993) suggests, "the implication that the child was the result of an incestuous relationship between Halie and Tilden" is a pronounced "position taken by most critics" (p. 112), statements made by Dodge and Tilden at different places also name Dodge as the father:

> Yet this doesn't square with Dodge's earlier insistence that his flesh and blood is buried in the back yard, or Tilden's statement in Act Two that he had a son once "but we buried him," to which Dodge replies, "That happened before you were born! Long before!" (92). (pp. 112-13)

Tilden's confession to Shelly also starts with the confusion the pronouns regarding the baby's parentage: "We had a baby, *(motioning to DODGE)* He did. Dodge did"

(Shepard, 1979, p. 47). While this pronoun correction might arise from Tilden’s desire to hide the incest while revealing the infanticide, the use of “we” is also a sign of double fatherhood due to the ambiguity of the true father’s identity.

The answer to the question of who killed the child is not without problems as well. Although both Tilden’s and Dodge’s confession narratives name Dodge as the perpetrator, Dodge’s complaint about the violent events that happens anytime he lies down introduces a contradictory narrative: “You go lie down and see what happens to you! See how you like it! They'll steal your bottle! They'll cut your hair! They'll murder your children! That’s what’ll happen” (p. 38). After Dodge confesses the ‘truth’, Halie asserts that he is telling lies and “Ansel would've stopped him from telling these lies!” (p. 65) while Bradley insists that he’s “the only one in the family who remembers. The only one” (p. 64) and there is nothing to remember. While it is likely that both Bradley and Hallie is clinging to the pact of denial that has kept them isolated but together in spite of the blatant lack of love and respect for each other, the multiple and contradictory accounts of the past suggest the impossibility of speaking about one true ‘objective’ past in the post-modern world.

The identity of the buried child suffers from ambiguity as well. Who is the buried child of the title? Is it just the product of an incestuous relationship between Tilden and Halie whose remains are exhumed by his father to be brought to his mother? Or could Vince really be “the reincarnation of the buried child” as Nash (1983) suggests, “returned to claim his patrimony” (p. 488) or maybe not the reincarnation but the spectre of the dead child himself? The signs are certainly there. Vince has been conveniently erased from the memories of the family parallel to the deliberate erasure of the secret and the burial of the event to the deep recesses of the ‘memorial’ ground. There is never a mention of Vince’s mother, and at one point

Vince is so agitated at his Tilden and Dodge’s insistent refusal to recognize him, he exclaims: “How could they not recognize me! How in the hell could they not recognize me! I'm their son!” (Shepard, 1979, p. 42). His referral to both Tilden and Dodge as his father is suggestive of the buried infant’s case of ambiguous parentage. The “mummy’s face” (p. 70) and the bones underneath it he sees in the windshield during his epiphany is another is another sign of the shared identity with the buried child. For Nash (1983), even a further displacement for the identity of the buried child is possible, the other dead child who lives in Halie’s hyperbolic memories: “Vince is also the lost brother Ansel and, in fact, the spirit of all the children born to Dodge's ancestry” (p. 488). Of course, if such an equation is made, there remains the problem of having concurrently both Vince and the exhumed remnants of the buried child on the stage at the end of the play. As such, the ‘real’ identity of the buried child remains constantly displaced and deferred with no non-contradictory identification possible.

At first glance *Buried Child* appears to operate within the trajectory of murder mystery narrative. Shelly’s attempts to the find the answer to the question “What's happened to this family anyway?” (Shepard, 1979, p. 53) parallels the audience’s attempts to make meaning of the puzzle and uncover ‘the truth’ that can explain it all away, a notion mocked by Dodge at large:

> DODGE: She thinks she's going to uncover the truth of the matter. Like a detective or something. . . . She thinks she's gonna suddenly bring everything out into the open after all these years. . . . She wants to get to the bottom of it. (pp. 63-64)

Find the clues, match them correctly, name the murderer and exorcise the ghost. Simple formula. However, the concept of single ‘objective truth’ to ‘explain all away’ is not only frustrated by the various contradictions and ambiguities embedded into the play but mocked by, as Porter (1993) points out, overdetermined nature of the play:

> When one considers the overabundance of clues which Shepard scatters in our path, for instance, clues which lead nowhere, it is difficult not to conclude deliberation on his part. Vince has been gone for six years, the same number of years since Dodge and Halie had shared a bed when she became pregnant; they moved to this site in 1908 and have lived there for fifty-seven years; Dodge hasn't planted corn since 1935; no corn has grown for thirty years; Tilden has been gone for twenty. None of these highly specific facts . . . is critical. The text, if anything, seems overdetermined. Shepard invites us to play detective, then frustrates our efforts to make sense of this superfluity of information. All our familiar modernist assumptions about cause and effect and the continuity of past and present are shattered. (p. 115)

Similarly, Shepard adopts the ghost narrative alongside the mythical allusions but incorporates the overarching ambiguity into spectral formula as well. The spectral presence in the play still carries with certain connotations that has been associated with the ghost in the previous chapters. The connotations accompanying the revenge ghost such as the necessity of revealing the wrongdoing that induces the haunting and curses the land, the overtones of vengeance being taken against the perpetrator(s), perhaps more relevantly the connotations linked with the psychological haunting such as the necessity of giving voice to the untold narrative, the return of the repressed guilt, the effect on the present of the past deeds, the haunting as melancholia arising from the ‘impossibility of mourning’ are certainly present in *Buried Child*. However, the ghost narrative is also subverted in multiple ways as well. As mentioned before, the traditional roles of the ghost, the avenger, as well the successor of the guilty party is projected onto Vince at various points of the play. As there are signs of identification made between Vince and the buried child, Vince partakes in the role of the ghost. As the avenger, he unwittingly brings vengeance onto the family when his visit triggers a set of events that reveals the secret and brings the end of the wrongdoer, Dodge. Ironically, however, Vince remains the only one who has not heard about the ‘event’ that generated the haunting. He remains, at best, an unwitting avenger. As one who replaces Dodge on the couch in what appears to be repetition of the cycle of violence and corruption he participates in the role of, if not the wrongdoer, then the successor of him. Further, the outcome of the exposing and facing the transgression, thus exorcising the ghost, remains ambiguous at best. Unlike in the plays discussed in the previous chapters of this theses, the presence of the ghost does not necessitate that justice will prevail no matter what happens. The murder does out in the play, however, whether the miraculous crop Halie perceives really hails a hopeful future or whether Vince’s reign will perpetuate the brutality and degradation that appears to be endemic to the family is left unclear.

Neither the murder mystery formula nor the ghost narrative, then, manages the resolve the ambiguity that govern *Buried Child*. In his interview with Lippman (1984), Shepard comments about his failure to ‘resolve things’:

> I think it's a cheap trick to resolve things. It's a complete lie to make resolutions. I've always felt that particularly in the theatre, when everything's tied up at the end with a neat little ribbon and you're delivered this package. You walk out of the theatre feeling that everything's resolved and you know what the play's about. (p. 10)

This failure of resolution, undeniably reflects Shepard’s desire to destabilize the notion of one objective truth that can ‘explain away” all the chaos that lies under all existence.

Porter (1993) considers Shepard’s allowance for inconsistencies in *Buried Child* as part of the play’s meaning and finds it to be a reflection of Shepard’s “radical postmodern Weltanschauung” (p. 114). In such worldview “all simplistic notions of cause and effect are held suspect” (p. 109) and the past can no longer provide an account for what is happening in the present, nor can future be predicted.

Consequently, *Buried Child* takes place in a “world bereft of absolutes, where even logic and reason break down and nothing can be known for sure” (p. 117). Demastes’s (1988) grouping of Shepard under new realists suggest a similar interpretation regarding Shepard’s representation of reality. As discussed before with regards to Rabe’s play, new realism is working against the (mis)understanding of realism as determined and bound by linear and rationalistic vision of the experience in order to create new permutations to account for contemporary vision of the world. In a later work, Demastes (1996) finds this newer approach to realism, (a “hybrid of naturalism and absurdism” (p. 259), both with regards to Rabe and Shepard, to be more in line with the insights of “chaos science” in which “mere randomness” is denied as much as “the strict causal determinism” in favour of what may be termed as “unpredictable determinism” (p. 265). Rather than an absolute chaos governing our lives there are ‘patterns’, but ultimately these ‘patterns’ are bound to remain “unpredictable and disorderly” (p. 260). In *Buried Child*, Shepard employs this vision to destabilize the notion of one single truth and to allow for multiple perspectives and multiple individual notions of the past to coexist and compete with each other. Consequently, while the necessity of facing the past to exorcise the ghosts is a given, the trajectory remains problematic due to multiplicity of individual perspectives of the past and the unpredictability of the future. Furthermore, Shepard allows for intimations of ‘pattern’ to emerge in the form of mythical allusions and murder mystery formulas only to frustrate their explanatory capability in order to allow for what Demastes describes as “a decentered vision of the notion of order as control” that “sees the necessity of welcoming a dynamic tension between disorder and order” (p. 267). His employment of the ghost narrative works in a similar manner. While his use of the ‘pattern’ of spectre is itself an affront to rationalistic vision deemed to be underlying ‘realism’, he goes a step further and destabilizes the spectral ‘pattern’ itself to keep it from becoming an all-explanatory solution to the puzzles of the play. As such, his spectral vision is all the more authentic for it returns to the spectre its absolute destabilizing power arising from its liminal nature.

4.4 Battle of the spectres in August Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson*

August Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson* presents a more different and ultimately more spiritual form of spectral challenge to realistic dramatic tradition. As he is primarily writing from the position of an African American, rather than “a man or a playwright” (Wilson, 2000) the disruption of realism by supernatural elements in his largely realist plays arises almost unbidden from his desire to fully portray the African American experience in the twentieth century on the stage. The aim of reflecting African American sensibility realistically involves accepting supernatural for, as Wilson remarks in an interview with Shannon (as cited in Londré, 2007), “the idea of ghosts and the idea of supernatural phenomena in black American life is a very real phenomenon” (p 119). Wilson’s realism, as such, is pervaded by "elements of mysticism, ritual, spiritualism and storytelling" (Bissiri, 1996, p. 100) and as he yokes the spiritual and the real together, he manages to “come up with a third thing, which is neither realism nor allegory” (Wilson as cited in Lahr, 2007, p. 32).

Realism, as theatrical style, is usually criticised for its association with the dominant culture. Many critics have pointed out that, in essence, realism serves and replicates the dominant ideology, which, for all intents and purposes, has been white middle class in the twentieth century. Approaching the style from a feminist perspective, for example, Dolan remarks that realism “reifies the dominant culture's inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes” (as cited in Demastes, 1996, p. 55). The inscription of power relations within the style holds true between races as well, so relating African American vision in realistic mode, or mostly realistic in the case of Wilson’s oeuvre, has its own challenges due to the need to both work within and against the existing connotations. The rationalistic and linear logic that is thought to undergird realism is also a part and parcel of the Western racist perspective that is used to delineate hierarchical ordering between the races, demarcated in terms of binary oppositions. For Morales (1994), the Western historical perspective “systematically has represented Africa, Africans, and peoples of the diaspora as the uncivilized, history-less, human Other to a rational and objectively ‘civilized’ humanity” (p. 113). This systemic representation is a dangerous cultural manipulation to justify the ‘domination’ of this irrational Other. However, as has been pointed with regards to Shepard and Rabe’s manipulations of realism, the realistic style can be a suitable and radical tool to work against the deterministic and rational logic, perhaps even more so than the avant-garde modes due to those same connotations the style carries. For Morales, Wilson’s incorporation of “African mystical beliefs” into the over-all realistic framework to create his ‘permutation’ of realism constitutes a form of resistance for it provides “an alternative historical perspective” that is “antithetical to the secular views of history in the West, especially positivist conceptions of history that presume historical objectivity and a scientific method” (p. 112). For Wilson, the supernatural elements are not gratuitous but an intrinsic part of African American life and as such a part of the cultural vision he is presenting on the stage. In an interview he comments upon the supernatural in one of his early plays, *Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*, but his remarks hold true for the mystical element in his works in general:

> The mysticism is a very large part of their [the characters'] world. My idea is that somewhere, sometime in the course of the play, the audience will discover these are African people. They're Black Americans, they speak English, but their world view is African. The mystical elements, the Binder, the ghosts are a very real part, particularly in the early 20th century, of the Black American experience. There was an attempt to capture the "African-ness" of the characters. (Wilson as cited in Powers, 1984, p. 52)

Aside from the manipulation of the realistic form to incorporate the mystical African spiritualism, Wilson, in his ambitious Twentieth-Century cycle, presents a broader challenge to the 'official' dominant Western historical perspective by giving voice to the experience of the 'silenced' other who is either misrepresented by the 'dominant culture' or is completely absent in representation. Wilson's seminal project of writing a cycle of ten plays, one for each decade, to chronicle the African American experience in the twentieth century is an important attempt in supplying an alternative history that challenges the 'official' one from white perspective. Rather than "writing history in the traditional sense", Plum (1993) remarks, Wilson's focus on the African American experience as history, "'rights' American history, altering our perception of reality to give status to what American history has denied the status of 'real'" (p. 562). His method of chronicling is not focused on 'critical' events that determined the trajectory of the racial history in United States of America. Rather, he is engaged in a re-imagining of the daily experience of African Americans within the context of historical changes. "I am not particularly interested in history as such", Wilson points out, instead his plays deal with "people who live their lives in a certain social condition that could not have existed other than in those particular decades" (as cited in Bigsby, 2007, p. 207).

Written in 1987, *The Piano Lesson*, is part of this cycle and takes place in 1937 to depict a battle of siblings over the question of what to do with the family legacy; literally in the case of the material existence of the piano, and metaphorically with respect to a painful history that the piano encapsulates. Historically, the 1930s is a decade that “conjures images of the Great Depression: breadlines, Hoovervilles, the Dust Bowl, WPA projects”, Londré (2007) points out, and for her:

> [t]hat Wilson sets his play in the latter part of the decade and hoists none of those cultural flags is surely deliberate. The economic depression of the 1930s hit hardest those who had bought into the prosperity of the 1920s, but African Americans – not having experienced much, if any, of that prosperity – moved into the 1930s under already familiar financial constraints. (p. 113)

Admittedly, the play is not historically concerned with the Great Depression. However, the traces of another broader event significant in African American history, the Great Migration, is visible in the play. The Great Migration was a relocation of more than six million African Americans from the post-Reconstruction rural south to northern industrial cities that occurred between 1910 and 1970, the peak of which was the initial decade of the twentieth century. Krasner (2007) points out that “[t]his movement of people during the twentieth-century diaspora . . . occurred primarily during two periods: 1910 to 1930, and post-World War II circa 1945 to 1970” and Pittsburgh, where almost all of Wilson’s cycle plays including *The Piano Lesson* take place, “was one of several major northern cities which absorbed large numbers of African Americans” (p. 161). Depicting 1937, *The Piano Lesson*, takes places between these two periods of movement, almost three decades removed from the peak of the first period. The move between the years 1910 and 1930 was triggered by several reasons, Karenga explains, ranging from:

> dissatisfaction with and determination to escape the oppressive and exploitative race relations in the South. . . depressed economic situation in the South which included crop failures, the ravage of the boll weevil and natural disasters like the 1915 floods in Alabama and Mississippi which had disastrous results on the agricultural economies . . . growth of industry in the North, especially with increased semi-skilled and unskilled labor demands due to World War 1. . . the world war had cut off immigration from Europe and with it its pool of unskilled laborers and domestic servants. (Karenga as cited in Staton, 2000, p. 97)

The life in north, however, did not really turn out to be the Eden that was promised. The life in North for African Americans was filled with other troubles as the racial prejudice and indiscrimination did not magically disappear, the increase in immigration led to the rise of ghettoization with dismal living conditions and with the advent of the Great Depression opportunities for work get increasingly sparser for African Americans.

Wilson finds the Great Migration to be a story of loss and dislocation for the African American community. He sees the move in terms of leaving behind two hundred and fifty years of history and culture for African Americans entrenched in the South. For African Americans, Wilson pointed out, the soil of black experience, culture and history is United States and not Africa. “I have no fascination with Africa itself. I’ve never been to Africa and have no desire to go”, he told Lyons in the 1999 interview,

> Africa is right here in the southern part of the United States, which is our ancestral homeland. I don’t need to make that leap across the ocean. When the first African died on the continent of North America, that was the beginning of my history. (p. 8)

As such the move from the south to north was bound to create a sense of loss for the African American community and was problematic in terms of maintaining and reconstituting an identity as an African American:

> We were land-based agrarian people from Africa. We were uprooted from Africa, and we spent over 200 years developing our culture as black Americans. And then we left the South. We uprooted ourselves and attempted to transplant this culture to the pavements of the industrialized North. And it was a transplant that did not take. I think if we had stayed in the South, we would have been a stronger people. And because the connection between the South of the 20's, 30's and 40's has been broken, it's very difficult to understand who we are. In all my plays . . . I always point toward making that connection, toward reconnecting with the past. You have to know who you are, and understand your history in America over more than 300 years, in order to know what your relation is to your society. (Wilson as cited in Rothstein, 1990)

Wilson's project of depicting black experience in his Twentieth-Century cycle is one such attempt to make that connection with the past in order to understand the self in the present, and make way for a better future for the African American community. "The importance of history to me is simply to find out who you are and where you have been", Wilson disclosed to Powers (1984):

> It becomes doubly important if someone else has been writing your history. I think blacks in America need to reexamine their time spent here to see the choices that were made as a people. I'm not certain the right choices have always been made. That's part of my interest in history-to say "Let's look at this again and see where we've come from and how we've gotten where we are now." I think if you know that, it helps determine how to proceed in the future. (p. 52)

The lost sense of identity due to broken connection to a painful legacy of the past, as well as the need reclaim that past to regain a sense of identity both, individual and communal is precisely what is at the heart of *The Piano Lesson.* It is unsurprising, then, that Wilson chooses to employ the figure of the ghost to emphasize the importance of facing the spectral presence of the past in order to re-negotiate self-identity, for, as Brogan (1995), in her study about Ethnic American literature, points out:

> As both presence and absence, the ghost stands as an emblem of historical loss as well as a vehicle of historical recovery. . . . Ghosts are not the exclusive province of any single ethnic group; they figure prominently wherever people must reconceive a fragmented, partially obliterated history, looking to a newly imagined past to redefine themselves for the future (p. 164)

As was observed in the discussion of previous plays, the encounter with a ghost always carries the danger of destabilizing the notion of the self, but also a promise of rebuilding that self. Only when ghosts are faced and successfully exorcised can the self-identity be re-constituted.

Wilson introduces *The Piano Lesson* with setting instructions that suggest the Charles home in Pittsburgh is pervaded with a sense of dislocation and stasis. Berniece, a thirty-five old woman and her eleven-year-old daughter is living with her uncle Doaker in his uncle's house in the Hill District. It is later on implied that Berniece has moved there from south three years ago after her husband died. "The house", Wilson describes, "is sparsely furnished, and although there is evidence of a woman's touch, there is a lack of warmth and vigor" (Wilson, 1990, p. 1). There seems to be a blatant lack of settling within the house, as if the occupants do not truly belong there. What does stand out from the mundane background is a piano, the contention over which, drives the play:

> Dominating the parlor is an old upright piano. On the legs of the piano, carved in the manner of African sculpture, are mask-like figures resembling totems. The carvings are rendered with a grace and power of invention that lifts them out of the realm of craftsmanship and into the realm of art. (p. 1)

Wilson's almost poetic stage instructions promises that a momentous event is about to take place:

> *The dawn is beginning to announce itself, but there is something in the air that belongs to the night. A stillness that is a portent, a gathering, a coming together of something akin to a storm. There is a loud knock at the door.* (p. 1)

The knock signals the arrival of Boy Willie, Berniece's thirty-year-old brother and his partner Lymon travelling from south to sell watermelons. Eager to have a family reunion Boy Willie hollers at Berniece to come down but Berniece's harsh response to her brother show that she nurtures some form of enmity towards her brother. Boy Willie, with his disarming "boyishness" and "infectious grin" pays no attention to his sister's lack of enthusiastic welcoming however, and goes on to announce the celebratory news: "The Ghosts of the Yellow Dog got Sutter" (p. 4). This is the first of many references to existence of ghosts in the play and automatically suggest the two most pertinent connotative aspects of the ghost, justice and revenge:

> BOY WILLIE … The Ghosts of the Yellow Dog got Sutter. … Ask Lymon, they found him the next morning. Say he drowned in his well . . . About three weeks ago. Me and Lymon was over in Stoner County when we heard about it. We laughed. We thought it was funny. A great big old three-hundred-and-forty-pound man gonna fall down his well. . . . Everybody say the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog pushed him. (pp. 4-5)

Just who these ghosts are and who is this Sutter is left unexplained until a later acts of storytelling by various characters supply the missing pieces to the narrative. However, at this initial juncture, the audience is introduced to the idea of vengeful spirits who are powerful on their own rights to actually manage to push an old three-hundred-and-forty-pound man down to a well. This possibility is promptly rejected by Berniece, who regards the whole idea as “nonsense” (p. 5). “Somebody down there” at the South, she claims, must be “pushing them people in their wells” (p. 5).

As Berniece exists upstairs to check on her daughter, Lymon and Boy Willie turn their attention to the dominating presence of the piano on the stage. It is soon revealed that Boy Willie has other plans then just selling the watermelons he and Lymon hauled up from the South. He is a man with a plan and has set his sights on acquiring the land of the dead Sutter, whose brother has promised a two-week grace period so Boy Willie can gather enough money to buy the land from him. Unlike his partner Lymon, who plans to stay on North as he is on the run from Sheriff down at South, Boy Willie intends to return to South and start up his own farm on the land he plans to buy. He already has one third of the money, he aims to get one third from selling the watermelons and the last third he intends to get from selling the piano, which is half his as he claims. Doaker is quick to counter Boy Willie that Berniece, whose has claim to the other half of the piano, would never allow Boy Willie to sell it. According to him, even Avery, the elevator operator/would-be-preacher who determinedly pursues Berniece to get her to agree to marry him, was unable to convince her to sell it to help start up his church. Boy Willie would not be easily put off from his plan to buy the land and insists that he will sell the piano. Before what makes the piano so significant that Berniece would never allow it to be sold is revealed however, the discussion is cut off by Berniece's hollering that comes from upstairs. It appears that Boy Willie brings more than just a narrative of vengeful ghosts in his trail, for Berniece claims that she has seen the ghost of the previously mentioned Sutter:

> BERNIECE: Sutter . . . Sutter's standing at the top of the steps. . . . I come out my room to come back down here and Sutter was standing there in the hall. . . . He look like Sutter. He look like he always look. . . . He was standing there . . . had his hand on top of his head. Look like he might have thought if he took his hand down his head might have fallen off. Just had on that blue suit . . . I told him to go away and he just stood there looking at me . . . calling Boy Willie's name. (pp. 14-15)

It appears that Berniece is more willing to accept the idea of ghosts calling for revenge when the 'haunted' is the African-American, while the 'haunter' is the dead white man. Sutter's calling of Boy Willie's name, for Berniece, can only be read in terms of Boy Willie being the culprit, which she is prompt to suggest. It is a suggestion undoubtedly buttressed by her hostility towards her brother who she judges is likely to commit a crime and cause trouble, be it stealing a truck, killing Sutter or causing the death of her late husband, Crawley. This time, however, it is Boy Willie who is unwilling to believe Berniece and he claims that Berniece must be hallucinating. He is adamant that it is the Ghost of the Yellow Dog who killed Sutter and is unable to entertain the possibility that a white man's ghost would be resourceful and powerful enough to haunt them: "Sutter couldn't find his way from Big Sandy to Little Sandy. How he gonna find his way all the way up here to Pittsburgh? Sutter ain't never even heard of Pittsburgh" (p. 14). For him, if Sutter's appearance is real, then it is undoubtedly connected with the presence of the piano and not himself. The history behind the piano and the carving on it seem to be the missing piece of the puzzle that would explain many questions of the play, including the identity and the significance of the contending spectral presences.

It is Doaker who ends up playing "the role of African American griots", that is, "oral historians, narrating family chronicles and penning their own expertise into considerable account" (Muhammed & Hasan, 2017, p. 183) and supplies the missing narrative in the next scene. In order to explain why he is so sure that Berniece would never allow the piano to be sold he recounts an oral history of Charles family, that is encapsulated, indelibly connected to the piano to an audience of Lymon, Boy Willie, and his brother Wining Boy, the wandering piano man who drops in Doaker's house every once in a few years when he runs out of money. "To understand about that piano", he contends "you got to go back to slavery time" (Wilson, 1990, p. 42). As Doaker tells the story, it is revealed that the current Charles family is only a few short generations removed from slavery: "See, our family was owned by a fellow named Robert Sutter. That was Sutter's grandfather. Alright", whereas "the piano was owned by a fellow named Joel Nolander". (p. 42). Robert Sutter, he recounts, wanted to buy the piano from Nolander as an anniversary gift to his wife, Ophelia. Only, lacking money he offered Nolander an exchange of 'commodities', Nolander's piano for Sutter's "one and a half niggers" (p. 42):

> That's the way he told him. Say he could have one full grown and one half grown. Mr. Nolander agreed only he say he had to pick them. He didn't want Sutter to give him just any old nigger. He say he wanted to have the pick of the litter. So Sutter lined up his niggers and Mr. Nolander looked them over and out of the whole bunch he picked my grandmother . . . her name was Berniece . . . same like Berniece . . . and he picked my daddy when he wasn't nothing but a little boy nine years old. They made the trade off and Miss Ophelia was so happy with that piano that it got to be just about all she would do was play on that piano. (pp. 42-43)

This blood purchase marks the piano as a sign of lack of control over self and familial destiny. Literally bought with the exchange of the members of the Charles family, the piano becomes deeply imbedded to their family history, inscribing loss and severed family ties in it. The ‘loss’ strangely seems to have been felt by Miss Ophelia as well, for, Doaker recounts, although she was initially happy to play the piano she soon missed Berniece and Boy Willie back and wanted to reverse the exchange. When Nolander refused to comply, Miss Ophelia took to bed and began wasting away. To ease his wife’s suffering, Sutter devises an ingenious way of giving Miss Ophelia ‘her niggers’ back:

> DOAKER: Now, our granddaddy’s name was Boy Willie. That’s who Boy Willie’s named after . . . only they called him Willie Boy. Now, he was a worker of wood. He could make you anything you wanted out of wood. He’d make you a desk. A table. A lamp. Anything you wanted. Them white fellows around there used to come up to Mr. Sutter and get him to make all kinds of things for them. Then they’d pay Mr. Sutter a nice price. See, everything my granddaddy made Mr. Sutter owned cause he owned him. That’s why when Mr. Nolander offered to buy him to keep the family together Mr. Sutter wouldn’t sell him. Told Mr. Nolander he didn’t have enough money to buy him. . . . Sutter called him up to the house and told him to carve my grandmother and my daddy’s picture on the piano for Miss Ophelia. And he took and carved this . . . See that right there? That’s my grandmother, Berniece. She looked just like that. And he put a picture of my daddy when he wasn’t nothing but a little boy the way he remembered him. He made them upout of his memory. (pp. 43-44)

The narrative shows the concept of “ownership” is turned into a spectral psychic wound, for Charles family in particular and African Americans in general. Not only it serves as a reminder of the black body as a chattel, but it also coded in black African American psyche as a constant ‘lack’, the inability to own anything, even the products of your own labor. Papa Willie Boy’s skilled craftsmanship is twisted in the hands of Sutter into a curse that keeps the family separated. Whereas his inability to own the “valuable” products of his labor becomes a curse on its own that is replicated in different shapes for the later generation. Boy Willie’s father, Boy

Charles, suffers from the ‘curse’ as after he spends his whole life as a sharecropper, he is left with nothing as well. This is a curse Boy Willie seeks to escape from by finally ‘owning’ his own farm.

As Doaker continues, it is revealed that Papa Willie Boy has one more heritage to bequeath to the following generations and it is the spirit of resistance. Papa Willie Boy takes Sutter’s order and subverts it:

> Only thing . . . he didn’t stop there. He carved all this. He got a picture of his mama . . . Mama Esther . . . and his daddy, Boy Charles. Then he put on the side here all kinds of things. See that? That’s when him and Mama Berniece got married. They called it jumping the broom. That’s how you got married in them days. Then he got here when my daddy was born . . . and here he got Mama Esther’s funeral . . . and down here he got Mr. Nolander taking Mama Berniece and my daddy away down to his place in Georgia. He got all kinds of things what happened with our family. (p. 44)

By carving all the history of his family there, Papa Willie Boy subversively claims the piano as belonging to the Charles family. Morales (1994) finds that the carvings on the piano make it a repository of history for the family and argues that it “parallels similar devices used to preserve the oral history of several African civilizations, such as the memory boards (lukasa) of the Luba and the brass plaques of Benin” (p. 107). While such devices were generally markers of royal line, they were essentially used to trace lineage history and serve as memory repository for oral historians. Morales argues that the carvings on the piano in *The Piano Lesson*, “though no longer serving a sacral kingship and a royal order, function similarly to this Benin tradition by pictorially preserving important events of the family's history as well as the images of the ancestors themselves” (p. 107). Morales’ insight shows that Papa Willie Boy’s dissident act turns the piano into a marker for the Charles family. While Sutter is incited to this covert act of resistance, he is unable to do anything as Miss Ophelia is now overjoyed to have both “her piano and her niggers too” (Wilson, 1990, p. 42). The intricate figures carved on it not only increases the monetary value of the piano but also turns the piano paradoxically into a sign of both powerlessness and the possibility of resistance.

The cycle of resistance and loss that is bound in the black body of the piano is replicated in the next generation. Doaker goes on to explain that his brother, Boy Charles, who is also Berniece and Boy Willie's father, was obsessed with the piano and decided to take it back where it 'belongs':

> Boy Charles used to talk about that piano all the time. He never could get it off his mind. Two or three months go by and he be talking about it again. He be talking about taking it out of Sutter's house. Say it was the story of our whole family and as long as Sutter had it . . . he had us. Say we was still in slavery. Me and Wining Boy tried to talk him out of it but it wouldn't do any good. Soon as he quiet down about it he'd start up again. We seen where he wasn't gonna get it off his mind . . . so, on the Fourth of July, 1911 . . . when Sutter was at the picnic what the county give every year . . . me and Wining Boy went on down there with him and took that piano out of Sutter's house. (p. 45)

For Boy Charles, the black body of the piano stands for all of the Charles family in particular and African Americans in general. Boy Charles is determined claim the identity of the owner, and not the owned. The date of the 'recovery' of the piano, Fourth of July, is significant for it marks the event as an act of self-determination. By taking the piano back, the metonymic replacement for lost family members, Boy Charles intends to take back his own history and symbolically free the family from any control over their own destiny. Although he succeeds in getting the piano back and subsequently leave behind an heirloom for his children, the act causes his life and inscribes further loss in the history of the piano. While Doaker and Wining Boy manages to smuggle the piano with Mama Ola's people, Boy Charles makes the mistake of remaining behind. Doaker explains while no one know exactly what happened, somebody set the house of Boy Charles on fire, only Boy Charles has already escaped from house to take the 3:57 Yellow Dog:

> He didn't know they was gonna come down and stop the train. Stopped the train and found Boy Charles in the boxcar with four of them hobos. Must have got mad when they couldn't find the piano cause they set the boxcar afire and killed everybody. Now, nobody know who done that. Some people say it was Sutter cause it was his piano. Some people say it was Sheriff Carter. Some people say it was Robert Smith and Ed Saunders. But don't nobody know for sure. It was about two months after that that Ed Saunders fell down his well. Just upped and fell down his well for no reason. People say it was the ghost of them men who burned up in the boxcar that pushed him in his well. They started calling them the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog. (p. 45).

The narrative finally reveals the origins of the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog and reveals how they become an agent of justice for the oppressed African Americans whose histories are filled with injustices that remain unseen and unacknowledged by the white man's law. The constant allusions to Parchman Farm where nearly all of the male characters of the play spend a couple of years on bogus charges and forced to work as well as the references to instances of manipulations of the law for black man's detriment reveals that justice is not accorded to African Americans through law. Wining Boy says as much, "The colored man can't fix nothing with the law" (p. 38). The Ghosts of the Yellow Dog, whose lives were cut short in a cruel act of injustice gain power through their death to punish the wrongdoers, working in a sense as "the hand of God" as Avery recounts Father Thompson referring to them. Unlike revenge ghosts that seek the aid of an avenger, however, these ghosts are powerful enough to take the matter into their own hands and acts as the judge and the executioner for the "nine or ten" white man residing in Sunflower County, Mississippi, upon finding them guilty of injustice and violence committed against not only against themselves but to black men at large.

Elam (2000), argues that the faith in Ghosts of the Yellow Dog an African reflects "a retention in African American social and cultural processes" (p. 377) and elucidates his point by referring to Kwame Appiah's argument about the belief in "an ontology of invisible beings", or as Appiah terms it “explanatory theories” that is common to “the traditional African religions, as well as contemporary Africans”. These beliefs “function in a manner similar to western scientific theory or western religious doctrine to explain, predict, and control both the known and the unknown forces operative in the practitioner's world” (p. 377). As such, Elam points out that “belief in the Ghosts of Yellow Dog offers an explanatory theory for the inconceivable coincidence of nine or even twelve men falling down their wells” (p. 377). The African retention surrounding the belief in the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog mark these ghosts as ‘African American’, providing strength for the black community.

In fact, aside from punishing the wrongdoers, Ghosts of the Yellow Dog grants to those who call to them for spiritual power as well. Wining Boy recounts such an encounter with Ghosts of the Yellow Dog at “where the Southern cross the Yellow Dog” (Wilson, 1990, p. 86), an apt place for such an encounter due to the inherent liminality associated with the crossroads. In discussing Morales’s reference to the Yoruban idea of ‘orita meta’, “a crossroad between the world of the living and that of the dead”, Elam (2000) cites Drewal’s *Yoruba Ritual,* shedding light upon this association of liminality for African culture: "The crossroads is a prime spot to place sacrifices so that they will be taken to the otherworld, a practice that has been retained by both Cuban and American practitioners of Yoruba religion” (p. 375). Morales (1994), argues that the piano itself functions as an ‘orita meta’ and explain that for “the Yoruba, ancestral shrines are key links between the two worlds, where descendants may contact their ancestors for protection, support, and guidance” (p. 108). Both the piano, and juncture where the Southern cross the Yellow Dog function as liminal spaces where such contacts with ancestral spirits are possible. Wining

Boy's recounts his encounter with the ghosts at a crossroad in "July of nineteen thirty", "a time where nothing was going right in [his] life":

> I said everything can't go wrong all the time . . . let me go down there and call on the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog, see if they can help me. I went down there and right there where them two railroads cross each other . . . I stood right there on that spot and called out their names. They talk back to you, too. . . . But to me it just filled me upon a strange sort of way to be standing there on that spot. I didn't want to leave. It felt like the longer I stood there the bigger I got. I seen the train coming and it seem like I was bigger than the train. I started not to move. But something told me to go ahead and get on out the way. The train passed and I started to go back up there and stand some more. But something told me not to do it. I walked away from there feeling like a king. Went on and had a stroke of luck that run on for three years. (Wilson, 1990, p. 35)

Functioning as ancestral spirit for the whole of black community, Ghosts come to aid of those who call them, by 'talking back' to the 'callers', guiding them and engulfing them in a sense of belonging. They reconnect the lost, the wanderer back into community by instilling in them a sense of self-worth. Only by feeling bigger was Wining Boy is able to turn his luck around, albeit it only las a few years.

In *The Piano Lesson*, the spectres are racialized and divided along the colour line. Ghosts, as spirits of dead black men, are part of African American community. They gain power through their deaths they didn't have in life and provide strength for the African American community. Sutter's ghost on the other hand, is the ghost of the other for the same community, and his spectral existence is a disembodiment of the continual white oppression that goes on the day. Interestingly enough, unlike Ghosts, Sutter seems to have lost the power he had while he was living as he seems to be bound within the vicinity of piano and haunt the Charles family by appearing when a move is made on the piano. Boy Willie comments upon the connection when he tells Berniece: "That's the way to get rid of Sutter's ghost. Get rid of that piano" (p. 15). He is seen at different times by Berniece and Maretha within the play and Doaker tells Wining Boy he has actually 'seen' Sutter's ghost before Maretha did, or rather, saw his ghostly recital on the piano. Considering the piano is essentially the embodiment of the family history for the Charles, Sutter's extensive attachment to the piano suggests that Sutter functions as "the disembodied embodiment of the slaveholder's historical perspective (and perhaps even the dominant culture's control of history)" (Morales, 1994, p. 111). However, as Elam (2000) points out, As Elam (2000) points out,

> the piano is a complex and multilayered symbol; its meanings are both personal and political. This piano must be read as a metonym, if not for race itself, then for the racialized plight of African Americans within the context of their history of struggle and survival in the United States (pp. 367-68)

Sutter is indubitably connected to the traumatic events that took place in that history, be it the personal losses for the Charles family in particular, or atrocities associated with the slavery that continues to haunt the African Americans generations removed from it. Unlike with Ghosts, entities whom African American can call upon, Sutter's ghost is a form of haunting as trauma, "one cannot control its coming and going because it begins by coming back" (Derrida, 1993/2006, p. 11). As was seen from the comments of Wilson regarding the importance of reclaiming history for African Americans, there is a strong connection between history and the present day identity. Accordingly, Sutter's desire to control the history of the Charles family is an attempt to control their present day reality as well as the possibilities of the future. The question of how to be free from Sutter's ghost is ultimately linked with the question what to do with the piano, that is, what to do with the past.

At first glance, in the contention between the two siblings it appears Boy Willie's attitudes towards the piano is one of practicality, whereas Berniece's is one of sentimentality. Boy Willie argues that as Berniece is not making any practical use of the piano, as in giving out lessons on it to get some money, she forfeits any rights to stand in the way of Boy Willie's plan to plant a future for himself. By selling the piano, he can finally buy into that piece of ‘American Dream’, a route that has been systematically closed for the African American man. Buy becoming an owner of the land, ‘hard work’ and fortitude, characteristics that serve as prerequisites for the participants in the dream, can finally pay off when he would be at last free from systematic impediments such as slavery and sharecropping that get in between his hard work and products of his labor. He does not seem to be overly concerned with the fact that to achieve his dream, he would have to sell what essentially constitutes an embodiment of his family history, a piece of his identity. For Berniece, on the other hand, selling the piano is a sacrilegious act, almost amounts to the selling of your soul. “Money can’t buy what that piano cost” she tells Boy Willie, “You can’t sell your soul for money. It won’t go with the buyer. It’ll shrivel and shrink to know that you ain’t taken on to it. But it won’t go with the buyer” (Wilson, 1990, p. 50).

When a closer attention is paid to the rhetoric and actions of the both characters, however, it appears that the initial division reflected as the “dialectic between economic progress (represented by the character Boy Willie) and historic preservation (represented by his sister Berniece)” (Alexandre, 2009, p. 75) is not so clear-cut after all. Rather than selling his heritage, Boy Willie sees the selling of the piano, the only thing that his father was able to bestow upon his children, as a way to build upon that heritage, claiming if he had the opportunity, Boy Charles would have done the same: “Now, I’m supposed to build on what they left me. You can’t do nothing with that piano sitting up here in the house. That’s just like if I let them watermelons sit out there and rot” (Wilson, 1990, p. 51). He argues that as long as some use is not being made out of the piano, it remains barren, unlike the land he intends to buy:

> As long as I got the land and the seed then I’m alright. I can always get me a little something else. Cause that land give back to you. I can make me another

> cropand cash that in. I still got the land and the seed. But that piano don’t put out nothing else. (p. 51)

Respecting the past, for Boy Willie, is a valuable endeavour, as long as sentimentalism does not get in the way of the building one’s identity and future. Getting stuck up in the past for only the sake of the past is bound to get into the way of future. What Berniece does, Boy Willie, explains is not revering the past but securing it under a blanket and keeping it hidden. In keeping the history of the piano hidden from her daughter Maretha, teaching her “that she living at the bottom of life” (p. 92), Boy Willie claims that Berniece is the one betraying that heritage. Instead of hiding the history of the piano from Maretha, who is the only one actually playing that piano, Berniece should celebrate its retrieval as it is an act of resistance:

> You ain’t even told her about that piano. Like that’s something to be ashamed of. Like she supposed to go off and hide somewhere about that piano. You ought to mark down on the calendar the day that Papa Boy Charles brought that piano into the house. You ought to mark that day down and draw a circle around it . . . and every year when it come upthrow a party. Have a celebration. If you did that she wouldn’t have no problem in life. . . . You got her going out here thinking she wrong in the world. Like there ain’t no part of it belong to her. (pp. 90-91)

Hiding the events that prove the resilience and will to survive of the Charles family from Maretha, who represents the future, is to steal her identity from her. Looked from that perspective, Berniece does seem to want to escape the past, rather than celebrate it. Berniece is convinced that the acts of resistance inscribed in the history of the piano is only the male side of the story. She accuses Boy Willie of not seeing the loss and mourning all the acts of violence causing the females of the family: “You always talking about your daddy but you ain't never stopped to look at what his foolishness cost your mama” (p. 52). Rather than seeing acts of resistance, Berniece sees unending cycle of violence: “All this thieving and killing and thieving and killing. And what it ever lead to? More killing and more thieving. I ain’t never seen it come to nothing" (p. 52). While the males commit heroic acts and go out in the blaze of the fire, the females are left behind to mourn them:

> Look at this piano. Look at it. Mama Ola polished this piano with her tears for seventeen years. For seventeen years she rubbed on it till her hands bled. Then she rubbed the blood in . . . mixed it upwith the rest of the blood on it. Every day that God breathed life into her body she rubbed and cleaned and polished and prayed over it. "Play something for me, Berniece. Play something for me, Berniece." Every day. "I cleaned it upfor you, play something for me, Berniece." . . . Seventeen years' worth of cold nights and an empty bed. For what? For a piano? For a piece of wood? (p. 52)

Berniece further identifies with the figure of the mourner for she has lost her husband Crawley three years prior over "a piece of wood" as well. Crawley was shot while he was helping carry the wood Boy Willie and Lymon had 'liberated' while hauling wood for Jim Miller. Stuck in the mourning since her childhood, Berniece is unable to truly accept the past as her heritage and in fact actively escapes it. Rather than a source of power for her, the piano is a burden she does not want to bestow upon her daughter. Her explanation to Avery regarding the reason she won't play the piano or tell Maretha its history reveals that in escaping the past, she is cutting loose familial and communal bonds as well:

> When my mama died I shut the top on that piano and I ain't never opened it since. I was only playing it for her. When my daddy died seem like all her life went into that piano. She used to have me playing on it . . . had Miss Eula come in and teach me . . . say when I played it she could hear my daddy talking to her. I used to think them pictures came alive and walked through the house. Sometime late at night I could hear my mama talking to them. I said that wasn't gonna happen to me. I don't play that piano cause I don't want to wake them spirits. They never be walking around in this house. . . . I got Maretha playing on it. She don't know nothing about it. Let her go on and be a schoolteacher or something. She don't have to carry all of that with her. She got a chance I didn't have. I ain't gonna burden her with that piano. (p. 70)

Morales (1994) explains that while "Berniece believes in the mystical power of the piano, recognizing it as the site of connection to her ancestral spirits . . . she denies those spirits access to her life" (p. 108). Berniece's deliberate escape from the ancestral spirits, which can be a source of power, is what allows her to see her place "right at the bottom" (Wilson, 1990, p. 92). Wilson, in an interview with Lyons (1999), reveals his interpretation of the play and comments upon the danger of such escape:

> That play [*The Piano Lesson*] sets up the question of whether you can develop a sense of self-worth by denying the past. Everyone sees the play differently than I do. Because Boy Willie wants to sell the piano, they think he is trying to deny the past. But Berniece cannot even touch the piano—she's the one who is denying everything, she's the one trying to run away from the past. He is saying, "I don't need a piece of wood to tell me who I am, to remind me of my past. If the wood can give me a future, if selling the piano will enable me to buy the land where we were slaves, then I've come full circle. (pp. 15-16)

So long as Berniece keeps denying the past, she and in extension her daughter will be unable to build a sense of self-worth and thus unable to move on towards a better future. Just as so long as the ghost is not faced and exorcised, the Charles family will remain 'slaves' to the past, unable to the escape white control embodied in the figure of Sutter's ghost.

It is in the last scene of the play Wilson provides a form of an answer to the question of how to exorcise the ghost. As Sutter's ghost begin to appear more frequently with the increasing rift between Boy Willie and Berniece, it becomes impossible to ignore its presence any longer. As such, Berniece asks Avery, the aspiring preacher, to come to house in order to bless the house and exorcise the ghost. While Avery is attempting a Christian exorcism, Boy Willie, unwavering in his capacity in self-determination literally tries to take the manner in his own hands. Taking "*a pot of water from the stove*" and "*fling[ing] it around the room*" (p. 105) in an signifyin(g) on the Avery's use of holy water, Boy Willie decides to directly engage with Sutter's ghost, running upstairs to wrestle with him. At this moment of physical confrontation, Avery admits failure of his Christian exorcism and calls onto

Berniece: “Berniece, I can't do it” (p. 106). The moment Berniece realizes that Boy Willie’s life is in danger and all the others are unable to do anything Berniece realizes what to do:

> *(There are more sounds heard from upstairs.* DOAKER *and* WINING BOY *stare at one another in stunned disbelief. It is in this moment, from somewhere old, that* BERNIECE *realizes what she must do. She crosses to the piano. She begins to play. The song is found piece by piece. It is an old urge to song that is both a commandment and a plea. With each repetition it gains in strength. It is intended as an exorcism and a dressing for battle. A rustle of wind blowing across two continents.)* (p. 106)

Wilson’s stage descriptions for this moment relays that Berniece acts on an instinct and reclaims her connection to the ancestral spirits. Her willingness to play the piano signifies that she is no longer escaping the past. The two continents brought together in her calling song are obviously Africa and America, two parts making up the history of African Americans. The reference to African oral traditions is deliberate. As Elam (2000) notes, in the original 1988 text of the play, “Berniece crosses to the piano and plays a Christian hymn as Boy Willie runs up the stairs to confront Sutter's ghost” whereas “Wilson, in the 1990 Broadway version, replaces Berniece's intonation of a Christian hymn with a spontaneous, "atavistic," ritualistic chant” (p. 376). Her song is made up of invocations for members of her family:

> I want you to help me
> . . .
> Mama Berniece
> I want you to help me
> Mama Esther
> I want you to help me
> Papa Boy Charles
> I want you to help me
> Mama Ola
> I want you to help me (Wilson, 1990, p. 107)

Wilson writes in the stage directions that the answer is granted as “*the sound of a train approaching is heard. The noise upstairs subsides”* (p. 107). The sound of the train indubitably links these ancestral spirits with the Ghosts of the Yellow Dog, who talks back to those who call them. As Berniece ends her litany by thanking the spirits, Sutter's ghost is defeated and exorcised. The ghost of the other is defeated by the ancestral ghosts of the community. Elam (2000) explains the significance of the method of the exorcism as such: "Significantly, in exorcising Sutter's ghost, the "Euro"-Christian litany, the written text of and faith in the Bible fails, while oral "African" tradition, the spontaneous and oral calling forth of the ancestral spirits, succeeds" (p. 378). By accepting her a conductor for the ancestral spirits, Berniece reclaims her place in the African American community and is able to accept her heritage truly instead of running from the pain of facing it. By embracing the past not only a source of trauma but a source of strength, Berniece is finally able to 'build upon' it. Seeing that she is finally 'making use' of the piano, or rather the past, Willie Boy concedes to leave the piano with Berniece with one caveat: "Hey Berniece . . . if you and Maretha don't keep playing on that piano . . . ain't no telling . . . me and Sutter both liable to be back" (Wilson, 1990, p. 108). Parallel to the other plays in this chapter, Wilson does not allow for a clear-cut resolution. The re-emergence of the ghost remains a possibility, which mandates the necessity of continual embracing of the past and building upon it and thus transforming the future. It is the same mandate that Wilson lays on the present African American community. In an interview with Bill Moyers (1988), Wilson emphasizes the necessity of embracing the past in order to build a better future:

> I find it criminal in fact that we, after hundreds of years in bondage, do not celebrate our Emancipation Proclamation; that we do not have a thing like the Passover where we sit down and we remind ourselves that we are African people, that we were slaves. Because we try to run away, we try to hide that part of our past. We don't have that. If we did something like that, it would say, "this is who we are." We would recognize the fact that we are Africans, we would recognize the fact that we were slaves, and we would recognize that since we have a common past, that we have a common future also. (Moyers, 1988)

Rather than focusing on the trauma and running from it, the past should be reclaimed and celebrated. Only then, can one can build a sense of self-worth, recognize themselves as part of a community, and work together towards a better future. This is the lesson that Charles family learns and ultimately what Wilson tries to relay through the reimagining of history that makes up his Twentieth-Century cycle.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The “specter is always a *revenant”,* Derrida announces, “one cannot control its comings and goings because it begins by coming back” (Derrida, 1993/2006, p. 11). As the quintessential figure of return, from the inception of the theatre to this day, the ghost keeps on returning to haunt the theatrical space. This gesture of returning imbedded in the ghost carries within it the power to threaten the illusionary expectancy of simple linear progression of time that flows from past to present to future, with each division of time flawlessly separated and unencumbered by the demands of the other. By refusing to remain ‘dead and gone’ and returning to haunt, the ghost belies the professed sufficiency and the independency of the present from the strains of the past. This chronological disruption constitutes only one side of the ghost’s propensity to destabilize and rupture the apparent unadulterated stability and integrity of any order that demarcates borders in accordance with the logic of binary oppositions and excludes the unwanted in the process of its establishment. The ghost, an essential figure of liminality, is capable of blurring the line between these binary oppositions and bringing to light what had been excluded, supressed, erased, forgotten and unacknowledged in making up of that order.

History of nations is laden with social shifts and events that give rise to instances of establishing (and re-establishing) order. The suppressed, the unresolved, the forgotten and the untold strains that trouble social and national consciousness oftentimes come to fore on stage. The figure of the ghost provides a valid tool to engage with these tensions, bringing them to surface, so as to offer a possibility of, if not their resolution, then at least the acknowledgement of their presence. In the three main chapters that focus on different nations at different periods of time, the manifestation of the ghost in the plays is read in terms of responding to what remained unsolved in the face of a certain social shift or trouble. The appearance of the ghost in the plays of Ancient Greece explored in the second chapter is seen to be, at least in part, occasioned by such social strains. Whereas, *The Persians* grapples with the unacknowledged loss and anxiety regarding the Greco-Persian Wars, *The Oresteia* engages with the remnant concerns regarding the transition from matrilineal to patrilineal succession as well the replacement of primal understanding of justice with the civic justice. Explored in the third chapter, Shakespeare's ghosts constitute responses to the two major changes that had huge social and political impact on the 16th and 17th century England, leaving undeniable imprint on the national consciousness: The Protestant Revolution of England in the case of *Hamlet* and replacement of Tudor dynasty with the Stuart dynasty. For the contemporary American theatrical space that the chapter four deals with, it is the disillusionment with the ostensible ideal embedded in the American dream in a period that comes after two world wars, Cold War, economic struggles and most recently Vietnam War that facilitates the manifestation of the ghost. While Rabe and Shepard, in *Sticks and Bones* and *Buried Child* respectively, use the ghost as an instrument of social and political critique, decrying offences and hidden violence rooted in American history, August Wilson's ghosts are a testament to the indelible impact of slavery with its accompanying narrative of sufferings untold and injustices underwent on the African-American psyche.

The working of these unresolved strains within the plays is played out in terms of certain tropes and associations that the spectre evokes through its appearance, which include the demand for justice for a wrongdoing, the ‘outing’ of the hidden truth and the call to face and actively remember a painful past. In many of the plays, the ghost’s presence either demands justice for an offence, or is an injunction to remember, or both as in the case of the ghost of Hamlet’s father; whereas the haunting marks the place as a site of a transgression that needs to be redressed or hints the presence of an untold narrative that needs to be unearthed.

As the ghost reappears on Western stage throughout the ages, these tropes and associations interlinked the with the figure of the ghost is replicated, reworked and transformed anew, for each appearance of the spectre carries the traces of its earlier manifestations. Approaching the works of contemporary stage - where the presence of the ghost can no longer be explained by a recourse to a widespread belief in the supernatural, with an arsenal of these earlier associations (be it their continuations or differences) - allows for enriched interpretations of these works. The haunting of the castle’s battlements in *Hamlet*, heralding that ‘something is rotten in the state of Denmark’, is replicated; for example, the haunting of the quintessential American home in *Sticks and Bones* and *Buried Child* indicts American society for its own rottenness. The triangle of revenge schematically given in *Hamlet*, consisting of the avenger-ghost-wrongdoer, is reshaped and complicated in Rabe’s *Sticks and Bones* as well in Shepard’s *Buried Child*, where the boundaries between the roles are deliberately blurred in alignment with the ‘undecidability’ that is characteristic of postmodern vision. The significance of voluntary remembering of the past and burden of ancestral legacy the ghost of Darius stands for in *The Persians* is reworked in Wilson’s *The Piano Lesson*, where the Charles family evokes the help of ancestral spirits through reclamation of the painful past and exorcise the ghost of the white slaveholder’s descendant.

The conception of the ghost, as well as the connotations it carries, also undergoes some changes through the figure that reappears at different historical contexts separated by long intervals. Undoubtedly, the epistemological, ontological and theological background of Ancient Greece, Elizabethan/Jacobean England and contemporary (post-1960s) America could hardly be the same. The widespread belief in the supernatural that characterized earlier imaginations no longer holds true for the contemporary vision, which, equally disillusioned with the logical Newtonian worldview and its underlying ideology, finds the ghost a valid instrument to destabilize the formal realism based on such vision and disclose its inadequacy in reflecting the complexities and irrationalities of existence.

One example of such change concerns the ghost's characterization. Unlike in the plays of earlier periods where the spectre appears as a distinct, objective figure with motivations of its own, in contemporary plays explored here, the ghost is characterized in a psychological strain, that is, as an externalization of the inner realities and mental disturbances. Kosok sees in this conception of the ghost "a cipher for signifying trauma, violence and otherwise hidden human rights abuses" rather than "the revenge figure of previous eras" (as cited in Luckhurst & Morin, 2014, p. 2). This shift is reflected in the way the presence of the ghost is diffused through contemporary plays studied in this thesis, rather than specific appearances triggering the characters to action. Consequently, in contemporary plays explored, the focus is on the haunted rather than the haunter, and the ghost's presence is felt through the effects it has on the haunted. Shakespeare's conception of the ghost - especially the silent ghost of Banquo who appears, at least partly, to be the reflection of Macbeth's guilty conscience-, occupies a mid-space between the ancient and the contemporary, or rather, between the certainty of objective reality and the awareness of the inescapability of subjective experience.

Another difference concerns the association between the figure of the spectre and the notions of justice and truth. In contemporary plays explored in this thesis, particularly in *Sticks and Bones* and *Buried Child*, the presence of the ghost no longer guarantees the eventual triumph of justice as it did in the plays belonging to earlier periods, where ghosts operated in an overarching supernatural/divine frame that promises eventual establishment of justice and order. Nor does it necessarily function as a vehicle to attain hidden truth, as say, the ghost of Darius, who was able impart the true reason why the Persians lost the Battle of Salamis and prophesied a future Persian defeat at the Battle of Plataea. While the notions of justice and truth are still evoked through the spectral presence, they remain ultimately problematized and made uncertain, in alignment with the contemporary worldview, in which the concepts of single objective truth and absolute justice are no longer tenable.

Another difference concerns the connection between the ghost and the closure accorded to the plays. The eventual pseudo-closure that the ghost's presence, working within an overarching supernatural/divine frame, accorded and led to in the plays of Ancient Greece, while slightly considerably in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, is almost completely precluded in the contemporary plays explored in Chapter Four. In Rabe's *Sticks and Bones*, the family's adamant refusal to acknowledge the presence of the ghost in their house and reassess their own senses of self, finally leads up to her exorcism through 'strangulation' at their hands just before the completion of this refusal with family assisted-suicide of David, the only one who is able to 'see' the ghost and recognize her demand. The two 'exorcisms' effectively restore the status quo that enable the family to remain 'permanently false', bringing not an ostensible closure, but oppressive entrapment underlying that status quo. The revelation of 'truth' and the exhumation of the 'buried' at the end of Shepard's *Buried Child* - instead of heralding new beginnings and better future, thereby bringing a seeming closure - gives rise to a claustrophobic circularity, a continuation of sterility and violence. In August Wilson's *The Piano Lesson,* on the other hand, while the successful exorcism of the ghost and promise of a better future suggests a form of closure, the seeming closure is problematized by the final warning that further hauntings are possible and each would require a new exorcism.

Finally, as can be gathered, the ghost's aptness for engaging with the unresolved tensions guarantees its presence on stage for further times to come. As its comings and goings cannot be controlled, we can only wait for its return to see what more alterations it will undergo, what demands it will make, and hope we are ready to face them. For it will return, and, as Hamlet points out, *the readiness is all*.

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