Subversive Ghosts

Epistemic Injustice, Invisibility, and Silencing in American Women's Fiction

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1. Introduction

> *"'We are about to organize a club,' went on the spirit of Jacob Marley, 'of Ghosts Who Became Famous. Now, you will readily see that such a club should be kept very select and none admitted to membership except those who are unquestionably famous."* (Wells 284)

> "*The buzzing was her voice. She could not communicate properly any longer but could still scream of unspeakable horrors inflicted on her, of ruin and pain. Even when coherent memory and thought had been scraped away, this searing rage remained.*" (Moreno-Garcia 289)

In Carolyn Wells' satirical ghost story "The Ghosts Who Became Famous—A Christmas Fantasy," first published in the 1900 Christmas edition of *The Century Magazine*, the male narrator discovers on the night before Christmas Eve that Marley's ghost from Charles Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" (1843) and the ghost of Hamlet's father from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603) have selected his house to host a meeting of spirits to form an exclusive club of ghosts who became famous. Not in the least shocked by this revelation, the narrator agrees with his spectral guests to clear out the main room before midnight on Christmas Eve. Marley's ghost and the ghost of Hamlet's father happily agree, and on Christmas Eve the house is crowded with spectral figures who all claim the right to become part of the club. Amongst them are: The Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come from Dickens's "A Christmas Carol" (1843), various ghosts from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1606), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1602), *Julius Caesar* (1599), and *Richard III* (1593), the Headless Horseman, from Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820), Peter Quint and Miss Jessel from Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw" (1898), and a few others.

The central conflict of the evening consists of an argument over who is famous enough to be part of the club. While the Headless Horseman, who appears to be the most prominent and strong-willed member of the group next to the two initiators, argues for the acceptance of Rudyard Kipling's Tomlinson as well as Henry James' Peter Quint and Miss Jessel into the club, the ghost of Hamlet's father opposes it (Wells 285). This conflict leads to a night-long debate over the central question "What is fame" (286). According to Peter Quint, "fame does not necessarily imply popularity. Because it [*The Turn of the Screw*] was not one of the six best-selling books is no reason why [… it] should not be considered famous." Quint proceeds to argue that his "author would scorn to be popular, but all the world calls him famous. Therefore I am famous" (286). This issue of fame versus popularity is still unsolved by the time the narrator's family gets up on Christmas morning and the narrator forces the ghosts to leave

by winding up a rooster toy because, according to the ghost of Queen Anne, "[g]hosts never depart until cockcrow" (286). The story's central question thus remains unresolved, and, in the end, the readers must answer it for themselves.

Wells' story illustrates four very important facts when thinking about and discussing the role of literary ghosts: First, the assembly highlights both the popularity and the importance of the ghost as a literary trope. Indeed, a significant amount of the most famous literary characters in Western literature encounter ghosts on their journey: from Shakespeare's tragic heroes Hamlet or Richard III to Dickens's Scrooge, from Irving's Ichabond Crane to James's governess. Secondly, ghosts are a transatlantic phenomenon and an integral part of both the British and American literary traditions as evidenced by the dispute between the ghost of Hamlet's father and the Headless Horseman who stand representative for two of the most famous writers from the British and American literary tradition respectively: William Shakespeare and Washington Irving. Thirdly, the central conflict of fame versus popularity suggests that ghosts transcend the artificial boundaries of high and low culture, and are, in fact, an integral part of both.

Finally, and most importantly, all the alleged famous ghosts who are under discussion for becoming club members are ghosts created by male authors. There is not one ghost present who was born by the imagination of a woman. However, contrary to what this exclusive club of ghosts would have us believe, there are countless examples of ghosts in women's literature. Indeed, according to Jessica Amanda Salmonson, up to seventy percent of supernatural tales in North American Victorian magazines and periodicals were written by women ("Preface" x). However, despite this popularity of women's ghost stories at the time women's ghosts are excluded from even applying for membership in Wells' story. This exclusion of women's ghosts mirrors the long-time exclusion of women's literature from the literary canon.

The exclusion and marginalization of women is a central aspect in women's ghost stories—both past and present. In addition to dramatizing the exclusion of women's literature from the literary canon, I argue that women's ghost stories in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century also criticized the exclusion of women from knowledge production and their marginalization in patriarchal discourses more generally. In other words, I argue that the trope of the ghost in women's literature is a subversive literary tool to criticize hegemonic power structures. Moreover, I will show that this subversive potential of the ghost trope is picked up again by women of color in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century to criticize the exclusion and marginalization of people of color in (post-)colonial and patriarchal societies.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020), for example, illustrates how contemporary female writers of color continue the literary tradition of the nineteenth century ghost story by reclaiming the subversive potential of the ghost trope. By rewriting Charlotte Perkins Gilman's famous story "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892), which I will read as a ghost story in Chapter 2 of this study, *Mexican Gothic* shows that contemporary women of color who write ghost novels are often heavily influenced by their nineteenth century forebears. They enter a dialogue with short stories from over a century earlier to negotiate similar issues of marginalization and silencing that already existed—albeit in different manifestations—in the nineteenth century.

Mexican Gothic is set in 1950's Mexico and tells the story of Noemí Taboada, who travels to her cousin Catalina's house in rural Mexico after her father received an alarming letter from her. In it she claims that the house she is living in is haunted by ghosts. Noemí discovers that the entire house is infested with a fungus that allows its inhabitants to extend their mortal life by entering a symbiotic relationship with them. This mycorrhiza network, called "*the gloom*" (Moreno-Garcia 211) keeps the ghosts or memories of its former deceased inhabitants—primarily the women—present, if not quite alive, and allows them to haunt the house and place of their violent deaths. In the end, it turns out that the gloom has its origin in the corpse of the family's patriarch's first wife, Agnes, whose dead body Noemí finds in the house's basement. Agnes' body functions as the human core of the house's mycorrhiza network, which means that the fungus that infests the entire house originates from and feeds of her dead body. It is Agnes' voice that is described in the quote at the beginning of this introduction that "could still scream of unspeakable horrors inflicted on her" (289) even though her communication skills have been maimed by the violence inflicted on her body and voice by her previous husband, the family's patriarch. In the novel, Agnes herself becomes the haunted house: "What had once been Agnes had become the gloom, and inside the gloom there lived ghosts" (284).

Agnes' example dramatizes how ghosts negotiate violence against women and specifically the silencing of women's voices in patriarchal discourse—a similarity contemporary ghost novels share with their nineteenth century precursors, as I will show throughout this study. Indeed, it is important to note that the narrator observes specifically Agnes' inability to communicate: "She could not communicate properly any longer but could still scream." In addition, "coherent memory and thought had been scraped away" (Moreno-Garcia 289). The violence towards Agnes is thus specifically aimed at her ability to make herself heard by silencing both her thoughts and her voice until nothing but a raging scream is

left. Importantly, when I write about 'voice' and 'voicelessness' in this study, I do not refer to what the Cambridge Dictionary defines as "the sounds that are made when people speak or sing" ("Voice," def. B1), but rather to the second definition provided by the Cambridge Dictionary: "an expression of opinion, or the right to express your opinion" (def. C2). This means that the loss of voice implies a loss of communication skills rather than a loss of sound; even though Agnes can still scream, she cannot utter words anymore and thus cannot communicate properly.

As implied by these two opening examples, this study will put ghost stories from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century into dialogue with contemporary novels by women of color. Opening this dialogue allows for a detailed examination of the subversive potential of the ghost trope and its increasing relevance for women writers to criticize hegemonic power structures in a US American context. This does not mean that I wish to conflate the struggles experienced by white women in the nineteenth century with the struggles experienced by people of color in contemporary US society. Rather, I am interested in the subversive potential of the literary trope of the ghost and how it allows women writers across historical and ethnic boundaries to claim their voices and criticize hegemonic power structures of knowledge production.

This study is the first to open this dialogue of women's ghost stories across different historical and ethnic boundaries. Previous scholarship on American women's ghost stories has either focused on stories from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century such as Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's *Scare Tactics*: *Supernatural Fiction by American Women* (2008) or Dara Downey's *American Women's Ghost Stories in the Gilded Age* (2014), or on contemporary ethnic novels such as Kathleen Brogan's *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature* (1998) or Gina Wisker's *Contemporary Women's Ghost Stories: Spectres, Revenants, Ghostly Returns* (2022).[1] However, so far, no one has put these two manifestations of the ghost story into direct dialogue with one another to examine the (dis)continuities of the genre. While Wisker emphasizes postcolonial women's fiction from both British and US American contexts, I will narrow down the scope specifically to US American women writers in the second part of this study, looking at African American, Indigenous, Lantinx, and Asian American writers who use the figure of the ghost to criticize the marginalization and silencing

[1] On female ghosts in American literature, see Norman, *Dead Women*. On female ghosts in American and British popular culture more broadly, also see Roberts. While I focus on the gender of the writers, Norman and Roberts focus on the gender of the ghost instead.

of their people in white hegemonic discourse. Putting these ghost novels into dialogue with nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories, then, allows for an exploration of epistemological questions that continue to be important issues in women's ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth century until today.

What allows me to put these texts from different historical and cultural backgrounds into dialogue with each other, are the concepts of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker 1) and "epistemic violence" (Spivak 280). Writing in a feminist philosophical context, Miranda Fricker defines epistemic injustice as "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1). In other words, epistemic injustice occurs when someone is harmed in how they convey or create knowledge (1). In a postcolonial discourse, the term "epistemic violence" is often used in reference to Gayatri Charavorty Spivak, who defines the process of othering the colonial subject in Western discourse as "epistemic violence" (280) because it leaves the subaltern subject both voice- and speechless. As I will show later in this introduction, epistemic injustice and epistemic violence are deeply intertwined. Using these concepts as a theoretical framework, I argue that one of the main functions of the ghost trope in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories by white women as well as in contemporary ghost novels by women of color is to criticize epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in (white) patriarchal power structures. I will show that the subversive potential of the ghost trope is used by women writers from different historical and ethnic backgrounds to criticize the silencing and invisibility of marginalized people.

One of the central concerns of women's ghost stories and novels is therefore the relation between power and knowledge. Ghosts in women's writings are used to ask who can produce knowledge, and who is silenced and excluded from knowledge producing discourses. Like Michel Foucault, I consider knowledge and power to be inextricably intertwined in the sense that "power produces knowledge." As Foucault theorizes: "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations" (*Discipline* 27). Consequently, what is considered as 'truth' in a society is also dependent on power structures. Foucault writes, "[t]ruth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power." He further elaborates that "[e]ach society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth" by which he means "the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; […] the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true" (*Power* 131).

I argue that ghosts in women's ghost stories are used to disrupt exactly those power structures that determine what counts as 'true' in patriarchal society and thus constitute a form of counter-discourse, meaning "a discourse against power" (Foucault, *Language* 209). I consider the ghost story/novel as a literary "space in which the formerly voiceless might begin to articulate their desires—to counter the domination of prevailing authoritative discourses" (Moussa and Scapp 88). In other words, the subversive potential of the ghost trope in American women's fiction lies in its ability to provide a voice to those members of society whose perspectives and voices are otherwise silenced and remain invisible within (white) patriarchal power structures. As a subversive counter-discourse, women's ghost stories criticize that in patriarchal nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century US society it is only men who can determine 'truth' while women's experiences and statements are disregarded and often even considered to be false. Similarly, contemporary ghost novels by writers of color highlight the power imbalance between white and non-white forms of knowledge and criticize the editing of US history by silencing the stories of people of color.

Putting early manifestations of the ghost story into dialogue with contemporary ghost novels also allows for a re-evaluation of the key concerns in women's ghost stories during the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Rather than contending that women's ghost stories in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century are exclusively concerned with everyday issues, as previous scholarship has suggested, I will highlight their participation in epistemological discourses about knowledge production. Building on an argument by G.R. Thompson, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, for example, argues that

> for the men, the ghost foregrounds 'the apparitional nature of existence' (Thompson, 'Apparition' 92) and raises questions about what human beings know and what in fact can be known at all. In contrast, for women, the ghost often foregrounds what we may call the terror of the known — that is, the demands made of and restrictions placed upon women by fathers, husbands, children, and cultural expectations. ("American Ghost" 408)

Indeed, in his article in which he exclusively focuses on male writers, Thompson argues that "the 'ghost' story in America is […] focused on the illusion of the ghostly appearance as an icon for the apparitional nature of all existence." He posits that "[t]he American 'ghost' story embodies ontological, epistemological, and axiological concerns central to the Romantic dilemma of subject and object" (92). Men's ghost stories are thus seen in the context of the ontological, epistemological and axiological questions prominent in Romanticism and Transcendentalism, while women's ghost stories are seen "*In contrast*" (Weinstock, "American Ghost" 408; my emphasis), meaning as an opposite, to these issues.

Although I agree with the argument that women negotiate issues of the female experience in their ghost stories—most often issues of "[m]arriage, motherhood, sexuality, mental and physical health, spinsterhood, widowhood" (Lundie, "Introduction" 2)[2] or domestic violence—I oppose the conclusion that this means that they stand in contrast to men's ghost stories. I also disagree with the assumption that men's ghost stories are more concerned with broader philosophical issues as their female counterparts. On the contrary, as I show throughout this thesis, women's ghost stories very much use the ghost story and the "terror of the known," as Weinstock puts it ("American Ghost" 408), to negotiate epistemological questions of knowledge and power. After all, knowledge and power are part of everyday life as much as marriage, motherhood, or sexuality. Women's ghost stories thus present a "conscious challenge not only to the epistemology of men's ghost stories, their assertion of a knowable reality, but to the dominant notions of reality in patriarchal culture" as Catherine Lundie observes correctly. ("One" 271). This becomes already evident in the two examples quoted at the beginning of this introduction. While Wells' story philosophizes over the question of what fame and popularity really are, Moreno-Garcia's novel dramatizes the ways in which women are completely silenced and thus excluded from any knowledge producing discourses. Furthermore, I argue that women's ghost stories—both past and contemporary—repeatedly question the legitimacy of existing power structures which credit one gender with the ability to produce knowledge while the other gender is dependent on the confirmation of their lived reality.

Throughout this study, then, I am interested in what Jane Tomkins has coined as the "cultural work" (xi) of these narratives and their political implications in the contexts of feminism, post- and decolonialism, and critical race theory. More precisely, I am interested in the ways in which these narratives negotiate issues of gender and sexuality, the interwoven legacies of colonialism, slavery, and Indigenous dispossession as well as intersections of race and gender. Therefore, I will situate the stories and novels in their respective historical and cultural contexts to examine how they subvert patriarchal and (post-)colonial power structures. In undertaking this political reading of the ghost story, I follow Fredric Jameson's assumption that all narratives are in their core political and function as "socially symbolic acts" (20). According to Jameson, all interpretation of any literary text necessarily must arrive at the political implications of this text (17). In the case of the ghost story, this political implication

[2] Also see Weinstock, "American Ghost" 418.

is often a feminist one. Indeed, according to Lundie, "hundreds of stories testify to the fact that there is a link between feminism and American women's supernatural fiction" ("One" 271).[3]

To lay the foundation for my analysis of this dialogue of women's ghost stories across different historical and ethnic boundaries, I will first introduce the ghost story and the ghost novel. I will then briefly talk about the three most prominent—albeit certainly not the only—genres and narrative modes than can be found in the ghost story/novel: the Gothic, the fantastic, and magic realism. Next, I will turn to the central concepts of this study: epistemic injustice, epistemic violence, ignorance, silencing and invisibility that are dramatized by the literary trope of the ghost in all these various manifestations of the ghost story/novel. Finally, I will present an outline of this study.

1.1. From the Ghost Story to the Ghost Novel

In the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, the ghost story appeared primarily in the form of the short story. In fact, the development of the short story and the ghost story can be seen to be intimately connected—especially when considering the fact that one of the first genuine short stories was a ghost story: Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820).[4] Between the 1830s and the 1890s, the American literary marketplace witnessed rapid transformations such as technological advancements in both printing and paper production (Smith and Price 3). Most magazines of the 1830s had only a small readership, consisted of solely "a few pages of solid columns of print, with few or no ads" and brought barely any profit (Ohmann 24). However, according to Alfred Bendixen, "[i]mportant new markets for American short stories appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century, most notably the advent in 1857 of the *Atlantic Monthly*, which included three stories in each of its early issues, attracted significant talent, and paid well." What is more, "*Harper's Magazine*, which had been established in 1850, abandoned its initial practice of publishing mostly reprints of British material and began soliciting American writers" thereby providing increasingly more publishing opportunities for American short story writers. Finally, "other magazines soon provided a meaningful market for short fiction, including *The*

[3] On the links between ghost stories and feminism, also see Wallace, "Ghost."
[4] On the development of the American short story and Washington Irving's instrumental role in it, see Bendixen, "Emergence" 4-7.

Galaxy (1866–78), *Lippincott's Magazine* (1868–1915), and *Scribner's Monthly* (1870–81) and its successor, *The Century Magazine* (1881–1930)" (Bendixen, "The Emergence" 13).

Consequently, by 1900, American magazines "resembled their counterparts of the late twentieth century" (Ohmann 25). Richard Ohmann credits this significant transformation of the American magazines to several strategies, mainly the drop of prices and the featuring of advertisements (25-27). In addition, "cheaper postal routes, rising literacy rates, and wide distribution by railroad altered the course of publication and deeply affected writers and readers alike. Periodicals became easier to produce and sustain as consumable commodities for a market of incalculable potential" (Smith and Price 3). Moreover, the growing economy led to a more leisurely engaged population which in turn increased the need and wish for entertainment (5). Ohmann situates the development of the print marked in America with the overall development towards a mass culture. According to him, American culture changed significantly over the course of the nineteenth century: Before the nineteenth century, "[c]ulture was immediate, oral, participatory." In the early nineteenth century, however, "people entered into experiences that had some of the characteristics of mass culture. For the first time, thousands of people who did not know each other came together as audiences" (18). Print culture, magazines, newspapers, etc. were a significant part of this development.

In this changing marketplace the periodical became a tool for women "for social and political advocacy, for the critique of gender roles and social expectations, and for refashioning the periodical as a more inclusive genre that both articulates and obscures such distinctions as class, race, and gender" (Cane and Alves 1). Indeed, "American women writers from various social backgrounds, ethnicities, and races understood that the best way to make themselves and their ideas known was through the periodical press" (15). Women were, for example, able to publish stories in the many newly appearing periodicals such as the high-class *Harper's* or *Scribner's Magazine* or the *Atlantic Monthly* or the more popular versions such as *Frank Leslie's Popular Magazine*, or *Godey's Magazine*. While many women aspired to contribute stories to high-class magazines, the popular counterparts often offered better pay, and many women writers were dependent on earning money with their writing (Cane and Alves 10). Many of the famous women writers at the time like Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Mary Wilkins Freeman or Edith Wharton published ghost stories in periodicals. In addition, numerous less known women writers profited from the growing publishing industry and wrote for either the aforementioned periodicals or others of their kind. One popular genre in these periodicals, was the ghost story.

Although varying in both narrative structure as well as content, most "ghost stories by turn-of-the-century American women reveal themselves to center on the institutions and ideological issues that shaped their author's lives. Marriage, motherhood, sexuality, mental and physical health, spinsterhood, widowhood" (Lundie, "Introduction" 2). Similarly, Weinstock claims that rules of public discourse prohibited women to publicly talk about or criticize "such 'unladylike' topics as bad marriages, the cultural injunction to have children, and the demands of maternity" ("American Ghost" 418). Women writers then turned to the ghost story to address these issues because "the ghost story […] began to open a new field of literary representation that contested and offered alternatives to the prevailing ideological values of Victorian patriarchy" (Brewster and Thurston 4). The "ghostliness" in the ghost story, then, Rosemary Jackson explains, "serves both as a parable of their [women's] social alienation—unrecognized, refused access to a full life, many women occupy a position similar to that of the living dead—and a protest against these restrictive forms of life and reality" ("Introduction" xxi).

After the 1920s and 1930s, some scholars suggest, the ghost story declined (Briggs, *Night* 23, Weinstock, "American Ghost" 422), by which they mean that it lost its popularity and relevance as a literary genre. This is, however, misleading. In fact, Gina Wisker speaks to the prevailing importance of the ghost story genre by arguing that "the plague-ridden, apocalyptic, threatened days of the twenty-first century can best be tackled, expressed, through ghost stories" (1). Rather, it is the short story that declined. Indeed, "[w]hereas the big magazines […] once played a leading role in popularizing and valorizing (and, in a matter of fact, commercializing) the genre [of the short story], nowadays the short story seems hardly competitive in economic terms" (Basseler 36). Consequently, the ghost story can be found more and more often in the literary genre of the novel. Importantly, this does not mean that there were no ghost novels published during the nineteenth century—the most prominent example of one would be Harriet Prescott Spofford's *Sir Rohan's Ghost* (1860). Neither does it mean that there are no more ghost stories in the form of the short story published today. I have included a story from Carmen Maria Machado' short story collection "Her Body and Other Parties" (2017) in this study (see Introduction to Part II). My primary focus on short stories from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century and novels from the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first century is thus based on popularity of the literary genre. This selective focus allows me to focus on the most prominent ghost stories at the time—either in form of the short story or in the form of the novel.

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, it is primarily women of color who turn towards the ghost story genre. Jan Stieverman, for example, observes "a strong and

quite unironic interest in the supernatural […] shared by many contemporary U.S. writers from ethnic minority groups" (168). Importantly, Stieverman notes, "in these ethnic fictions, the supernatural is neither primarily intended to frighten readers, nor to serve as a narrative means to probe the dark side of the human soul" (170) which is equally true for nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories written by women. In those stories, the supernatural is also scarcely used to frighten, and much more often used to criticize the invisibility of the female experience in the silencing of their voices in patriarchal society.

Similarly, Wisker notes that the ghost trope is used "in many colonial, postcolonial and African American fictions" to expose "[c]onstructions of difference, Otherising and brutal silencing" as well as "dehumanizing beliefs and behaviours" (20). In addition, according to Kathleen Brogan, "[g]hosts in contemporary American ethnic literature function […] to re-create ethnic identity through an imaginative recuperation of the past and to press this new version of the past into the service of the present" (4). Brogan distinguishes between "the more familiar ghost story" which she defines as a "genre of short fiction that blossomed during the nineteenth century, leaving us with thrilling fireside tales of haunted houses, graveyard revenants, and Christmases past" and stories of "cultural haunting." According to her, a story of cultural haunting can be distinguished from earlier versions of the ghost story by the "communal nature of its ghosts" instead of the focus on the individual psyche in nineteenth century ghost stories (5).

However, while Brogan's distinction is certainly valid in many ways, it disregards important similarities and continuities shared by the two manifestations of ghost stories. Indeed, Wisker argues that ghosts in contemporary women's ghost stories fulfill the same roles as the three ghosts in Dickens' famous "A Christmas Carol:" "ghosts are there to remind and clarify, not to be ignored and walled up again, shut down, banished, and they warn about both the present and the potentially empty future" (17). Consequently, I will not adopt Brogan's conception of cultural haunting but rather refer to contemporary manifestations of the ghost trope in literature as *ghost novel*. This conception allows me to acknowledge the different literary genres of short story versus novel while still highlighting the continuity of ghost narratives by referring to both as ghost *story* and ghost *novel*.

For this study, then, I define a ghost narrative as a narrative that permeates different literary genres such as the short story or the novel. On a plot level, all ghost narratives feature a ghost, meaning a person who has died in the narrative past, but still appears either as a disembodied voice or as a spectral figure to some of the characters in the story. Alternatively, the ghost narrative can feature some other haunting object that is visible to some characters but

not others. Importantly, I will not include narratives in which a living woman is mistaken for a ghost—another popular narrative template in stories at the time, in which, however, the supernatural is explained by a rational solution in the end. This explaining or rationalizing of the supernatural occurrence is an important aspect which excludes those types of stories from the stories I am interested in. Indeed, the very fact that the supernatural is not rationalized, but rather exists outside of or as an alternative to rational patriarchal discourse, is a significant characteristic of the ghost narratives I examine in this project because it challenges readers to consider explanations outside of the traditional, purely rational knowledge system. Finally, I consider both the ghost story as well as the ghost novel to participate in various literary genres and narrative modes that are particularly prone to disrupting existing power structures, the most important of which are the Gothic, the fantastic, and magical realism.

1.2. Genre and Mode: Between the Gothic, Magical Realism, and the Fantastic

Literary ghosts defy and transgress clear genre boundaries and narrative modes. As Julian Wolfreys notes: "ghosts cannot be either contained or explained by one particular genre or medium, such as gothic narratives. They exceed any single narrative modality, genre or textual manifestation. It is this which makes them ghostly and which announces the power of haunting" (1). Despite this fluidity of the ghost trope and its tendency to escape clear definition and categorization, its prime time can be traced back to Gothic literature and particularly the ghost story. Ghost stories are most often understood to be "a special category of the Gothic" (Briggs, "The Ghost Story" 177). They "are partly characterized by the fact that their supernatural events remain unexplained." Or in other words, unlike in other Gothic narratives, in ghost stories the "supernatural is not explained away" (177). Like other Gothic narratives, "[ghost stories] defamiliarize the ostensibly everyday to upset and cast new light on whatever has been repressed, ignored, marginalized, misrepresented and silenced" (Wisker 2). According to Weinstock, the cultural work of the ghosts is thereby to "reestablish a form of historical continuity by linking past to present precisely when such a linkage seems threatened" (*Scare Tactics* 7). Women's ghost stories in particular, Wisker proposes, "are unstoppable reminders, a franchised, legitimated voice to expose wrongs, particularly those which are fundamentally gendered and grow from inequalities of power" (2).

Women's ghost stories specifically can then also be considered as part of what Ellen Moers has coined the "Female Gothic."[5] Female Gothic, according to Moers, refers to "the work that women writers have done in th[is] literary mode" of the Gothic (91).[6] According to Lynette Carpenter and Wendy K. Kolmar, women's ghost stories inherited themes like victimization, dispossession and violence against women as well as "the necessity of understanding female history, and the bonds between women, living and dead, which help to ensure women's survival" from the Female Gothic (10). In addition, American women's ghost stories must also be situated in the American Gothic. And as such, they should be considered at the heart of the American literary tradition rather than at the margins of it. Indeed, as already noted by Leslie Fiedler, the Gothic mode is central to the American literary fiction: "of all the fiction of the West, [American fiction] is most deeply influenced by the gothic, is almost essentially a gothic one" (124-25). The American Gothic offers a literary space to negotiate a vast variety of themes, including the frontier, Puritan ancestry, "fear of European subversion and anxieties about popular democracy […]; the relative absence of developed 'society'" as well as racial issues—specifically slavery and the interaction with Indigenous peoples (A. L. Smith 4).[7]

Ultimately, however, "[t]he central topic thematized by the Gothic is inevitably *power*: who is allowed to do what based upon their subject position within a particular society at a specific moment in time" (Weinstock, "Introduction: American Gothic" 2). More specifically, "the Gothic is always about inequities in distributions of power and contests for control" (3). In the context of the ghost story, this negotiation of power is inextricably intertwined with issues of knowledge and truth. This central concern with power is also a key similarity between the Gothic mode and that of magical realism. They both offer the potential to criticize hegemonic power structures—particularly the distribution of power and knowledge. Similar to the Gothic, magical realism provides a narrative space to question hegemonic structures of knowledge production because it "offers […] a way to discuss alternative approaches to reality to that of Western philosophy" (Bowers 1).

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[5] Diana Wallace or Melissa Edmundson also situates women's ghost stories in a female Gothic context (Wallace, "Uncanny Stories" 57-68; Edmundson 70).
[6] On the female Gothic also see Wallace and Smith.
[7] On American Gothic, also see Crow, *History*; or *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic,* edited by Weinstock.

While Gothic motifs and influences are still dominant in many of the novels discussed in the second part of this study, the narrative mode of magical realism becomes increasingly important when examining ghost novels by women of color. Even though the term is highly contested because of its complicated history and because it includes a variety of different manifestations (Bowers 20), it nevertheless offers a helpful theoretical frame. According to Bowers, the 'magic' part of 'magical realism' "refers to an extraordinary occurrence and particularly to anything spiritual or unaccountable by rational science" (20). In addition, magical realism draws on the literary tradition of realism in that it presents "imagined or magical elements as if they were real" (22). In other words, magical realism is "a mode of narration that *naturalizes the supernatural*; that is to say, a mode in which real and fantastic, natural and supernatural, are coherently represented in a state of rigorous equivalence – neither has a greater claim to truth or referentiality" (Warnes 2). This trait is shared by both the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories as well as contemporary ghost novels by American women: the occurrence of the ghost is always presented as real in the narrative itself and by the women in these narratives. In nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories, for example, it is only the male characters who refuse this naturalization of the supernatural and who insist on upholding Western rationality.

In addition, both the ghost story or the Gothic more generally as well as magical realism are often discussed in close connection to fantasy literature[8] and what Tzvetan Todorov has termed the fantastic. However, although Rosemary Jackson considers ghost stories to be a "special category of the fantastic" (*Fantasy* 69), the fantastic proves less useful for the analysis of the narratives in this study than the Gothic or magical realism. I will thus disregard the generic framework of the fantastic for the purpose of my analyses. Instead, I consider ghost stories as a generic mixture of Gothic and magical realism. Indeed, both nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories as well as contemporary ghost novels make frequent use of Gothic tropes. In addition, they both share the acceptance of the supernatural as natural within the story-world, which is an essential component of magical realist fiction.

Nevertheless, it is useful to take a short glimpse at the genre of the fantastic in order to emphasize some important thematic similarities. According to Todorov, the fantastic can be defined as follows:

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[8] *The Cambridge Companion to Fantasy Literature*, for example, includes a chapter "Gothic and Horror Fiction" (21-35) as well as on "Magical Realism" (167-178).

> In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, […] there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. (25)

"The fantastic," he continues, "occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous" (25). The essential component of the fantastic is thus a moment of "hesitation" (25), or as Stieverman calls it "a hermeneutical conflict" (201), in which the reader, just as the character, is conflicted about whether to accept the supernatural occurrence as such or whether to search for a more realist explanation. Importantly, the fantastic can either exist in only parts of a work, or it exists throughout it if "the ambiguity persists" at the end of the text (Todorov 43). In Gothic narratives, for example, Todorv explains, "the effect of the fantastic is certainly produced, but during only a portion of our reading" (42).

In ghost stories, specifically, the fantastic and this moment of hesitation is usually connected to the ghostly figure and the question whether it really is a ghost or whether there is another, more rational explanation for its occurrence. However, in women's ghost stories and novels this hesitation is usually very brief—if it occurs at all—because the ghost is very quickly accepted as real in these stories. Therefore, women's ghost stories and novels usually resolve themselves into what Todorov terms the genre of the marvelous because they accept the existence of the supernatural. Similarly, Jackson contends that "the very term 'ghost' suggests a sliding towards the supernatural and the marvellous, away from more material and ambiguous 'unrealities' of the fantastic." Nevertheless, she asserts that "the effect of ghost tales is similarly disturbing" because "[t]hey disrupt the crucial defining line which separates 'real' life from the 'unreality' of death, subverting those discrete units by which unitary meaning or 'reality' is constituted" (*Fantasy* 69). Consequently, the fantastic and the ghost story equally raise epistemological questions about what is real and what is not.

In contrast to the ghost story and other Gothic narratives, magical realism is often more clearly differentiated from the fantastic. In her comparative analysis of the fantastic and magical realism, Amaryll Beatrice Chanady explains, "[i]n contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader, and this is the fundamental difference between the two." In other words, while the same occurrence is presented as "problematical" in a fantastic narrative, it is "presented in a matter-of-fact manner by the magical realist" (24). Consequently, the fantastic upholds the binary opposition between 'real' and 'unreal' or

'natural' and 'supernatural,' while magical realism offers a way to accept the 'supernatural' as 'natural.' Because of this upheld binary, the fantastic is less useful for my analysis than the Gothic and magical realism.

One of the most common theoretical approaches to Gothic narratives in general and the ghost story in particular is a psychoanalytical reading based on the works of Sigmund Freud. According to Julia Briggs, "[g]host stories represent the return of the repressed in its most literal and paradigmatic form" ("The Ghost Story" 178). In addition, Sigmund Freud's concept of "Das Unheimliche" (297), the uncanny, something that is supposed to be familiar becomes strange and a source of threat, is often used to examine ghost stories. The uncanny refers to "a sense of weirdness, created when something that seemed safe and familiar suddenly becomes strange, or something that should have remained hidden is revealed" (Crow, *History* 7). In the ghost story, ghosts create this sense of weirdness because they are neither fully dead or alive and thus resist the laws of rationality. What is more, the uncanny is the second neighboring genre to Todorov's conceptualization of the fantastic (Todorov 41). In other words, when resisting a marvelous reading of the ghost by searching for a realist interpretation of the supernatural occurrence—most often the supposed madness of the protagonist—the story is resolved in the genre of the uncanny. However, none of the ghost stories and novels in this study clearly resolve into the uncanny in the end. On the contrary, most of them confirm the existence of the ghost or supernatural occurrence, and the few that do not leave it ambiguous. Consequently, I prefer to disregard the concept of the 'uncanny' in my reading of the ghost stories in this study.

The second theoretical framework commonly applied to literary ghosts is that of hauntology. Hauntology was first coined by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx* (1993). Colin Davis points out that specifically in literary studies "Derrida's rehabilitation of ghosts as a respectable subject of enquiry has proved to be extraordinarily fertile" because "[h]auntology supplants its near-homonym ontology, replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive" (53). Indeed, literary theory has witnessed a so-called "spectral turn" (Weinstock, "Introduction: Spectral Turn" 4). Weinstock suggests that one reason for this spectral turn is the fact that ghosts share significant similarities "with poststructural thought in general" because they "disrupt[…] both oppositional thinking and the linearity of historical chronology" (5). According to Jacques Derrida, "[i]t is a proper characteristic of the specter, if there is any, that no one can be sure if by returning it testifies to a living past or to a living future" (143). In other words, ghosts are connected to both past and future, thereby disrupting linear historical thinking. In addition,

Derrida highlights visibility and invisibility as central aspects of the ghost: "The specter, as its name indicates, is the *frequency* of a certain visibility. But the visibility of the invisible" (144). This "visibility of the invisible" is a core theme in women's ghost stories and ghost novels. As I will show, women writers from different historical and ethnic backgrounds use the literary figure of the ghost to make visible that which remains invisible in patriarchal society: the female experience and violence against women and people of color.

1.3. Haunting Both Parts: Epistemic Injustice and Epistemic Violence

The main thematic similarity that nineteenth-century ghost stories share with contemporary ghost novels is their common interest in issues of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence. While I conceive of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence as the overarching issues, I consider silencing, ignorance, and invisibility to constitute forms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence—all of which are criticized in past and contemporary ghost narratives. In the following, I will delineate the difference between epistemic violence and epistemic injustice in their conceptual foundations and explain how I use them for my analysis. However, it is worth noting from the outset that epistemic injustice and epistemic violence are inextricably intertwined and difficult to differentiate because they have originated in different theoretical disciplines and thus often describe similar issues from different theoretical positions. Throughout the second part of this study, I predominantly use Spivak's term of epistemic violence because the novels discussed there must be situated in postcolonial discourses. They all negotiate (post)colonial power structures and the subsequent speechlessness of the colonial subject. In contrast, I will use Fricker's term of epistemic injustice primarily in the first part of this study because the stories discussed there are predominantly concerned with issues of feminism. In addition, I will use Fricker's term of epistemic injustice in both parts whenever there are specific forms of epistemic injustice represented in a text such as testimonial injustice or hermeneutical injustice. Finally, I consider silencing either as a form of epistemic injustice or as a form of epistemic violence based on the harm depicted, as suggested by Emerick.

Epistemic injustice, as coined by Miranda Fricker in a feminist philosophical context, refers to a kind of "wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower" (1). Fricker distinguishes between two distinct kinds of epistemic injustice: "testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice" (1). Testimonial injustice occurs when a speaker receives less

credibility than they deserve because the hearer is influenced by identity prejudices they hold against the speaker (28). A hearer, for example, might pay little attention to a woman's testimony because they are convinced, she is overreacting due to sexist prejudices they have about women being hysterical and too emotional to reliably interpret a given situation. In ghost stories, testimonial injustice is often negotiated in connection to the sighting of a ghost. Importantly, the ghosts in the stories discussed in this project, are always real in the story world. However, rather than believing the woman's testimony that she sees a ghost, their experience is brushed off as hysterical or imagined.

Hermeneutical injustice, on the other hand, occurs when someone is lacking the epistemic and interpretative resources to adequately interpret their social experience (Fricker 1). This can refer to something as simple as a lack of language and concepts to understand and express what is happening. Fricker gives the example of sexual harassment and the inability to make sense of and express women's experience of sexual harassment at a time before the concept was available in public discourse (6). In the ghost stories in the first part of this study, this hermeneutical injustice is often connected to issues such as domestic abuse. Since the concept of domestic abuse did not exist as such in the nineteenth century,[9] the women in these stories often lack the specific language and concept to communicate their experience properly. This is not to say that they cannot describe what is happening to them and how they feel about it—afraid of their husband, for example. However, since there was no similar public discourse about domestic abuse as we know it today, the hearers usually fail to fully understand them, and as a result their experiences are not taken seriously.

According to José Medina, the harms caused by hermeneutical injustice "should not be minimized or underestimated, for the interpretative capacities of expressing oneself and being understood are basic human capacities. Meaning-making and meaning-sharing are crucial aspects of a dignified human life" (41). Based on this observation he further develops Fricker's concept of hermeneutical injustice and proposes the concept of "*hermeneutical death*" to account for "forms of hermeneutical injustices that are so damaging that they […] radically constrain one's hermeneutical capacities and agency." Examples of hermeneutical death, according to Medina, are "the loss (or radical curtailment) of one's voice, of one's interpretative capacities, or of one's status as a participant in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices." In instances of hermeneutical death, "Hermeneutical harms can run so deep as to

[9] On the development of the domestic abuse discourse, see Ferraro or Goodmark.

annihilate one's self" (41). In contrast, in "non-fatal hermeneutical injustices […] one's status and agency as a communicator and interpreter is preserved even if seriously constrained" (42). One example for an instance of hermeneutical death, according to Medina "can be found in slave traders' practice of separating African slaves who spoke the same language to maximize communicative isolation and in US slaveholders' practice of punishing slaves caught speaking African languages" (47). A very similar form of hermeneutical death can be found in Nora Okja Kellers novel *Comfort Woman*, which I analyze in the second part of this study.

Medina's conceptualization of hermeneutical death is closely related to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has coined as "epistemic violence." In fact, I would go as far as to argue that "hermeneutical death" is a form of epistemic violence rather than epistemic injustice—particularly in a post-colonial context. According to Spivak, "epistemic violence" refers to the process of othering the colonial subject (280-81) and rendering them speech- and voiceless in the process. Spivak concludes that because of this epistemic violence against the colonial subject and particularly against subaltern women, "[t]he subaltern as female cannot be heard or read," and that, ultimately, "[t]he subaltern cannot speak" (308). Epistemic violence, as conceptualized by Spivak, is inextricably intertwined with colonialism. Indeed, while Fricker writes from a feminist philosophical background, Spivak must be situated in a postcolonial context. The important difference between epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, then, is their theoretical origin and the subsequent difference in analytical perspectives. While Spivak focuses on epistemic violence as an unavoidable result of colonial power structures more generally, Fricker is much more focused on interpersonal interactions—which is not to say that epistemic injustice as thought up by Fricker is not also a systemic issue or based on systemic forms of discrimination.

What the two concepts of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence have in common is the idea of voicelessness, the inability to express the own experience and subjectivity in the oppressive discourse of (white) patriarchy, and, even more importantly, the active silencing of one's voice and experience in the hegemonic discourse of (white) patriarchy. Indeed, the most common form of epistemic injustice or epistemic violence negotiated in all stories and novels in this study, is that of silencing. According to Barrett Emerick, "[s]ilencing[…] can be one form of testimonial injustice, in that the person who is silenced is prevented from communicating on the grounds that they are not credible sources of knowledge" (39). Importantly, over time silencing and epistemic injustice can significantly impact someone in their capacity as a knower. And since being a knower is a central aspect of personhood, Emerick argues, epistemic injustice can become epistemic violence when it has the effect of violating a

person's integrity (41).[10] Similarly to Medina, who argues that hermeneutical death occurs in extreme instances of hermeneutical injustice, Emerick argues silencing constitutes epistemic violence instead of epistemic injustice in very extreme cases. According to this line of argument, epistemic injustice and epistemic violence are only differentiated by the degree of harm inflicted on the victim. In cases of silencing, I will adopt Emerick's distinction throughout my analysis.

In addition, it is important to point out that not only people can be silenced but the past can be silenced as well, as prominently argued by Michel-Ralph Trouillot in his study *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*. According to Trouillot, "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences" (27). He explains that there are four moments "in the process of historical production" in which silences enter this process: "the moment of fact creation (the making of sources); the moment of fact assembly (the making of archives); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of narratives); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of history in the final instance)" (26). It is due to a "differential exercise of power" that some narratives are told while others remain silent (25). I consider this act of silencing the past as a form of epistemic violence because it is usually the colonial subject, whose perspective on history is silenced while historiography is written out of the perspective of the more powerful colonial power. This connection to colonialism and the subsequent rendering of the colonial subject as voiceless, turns this silencing of the past in a form of epistemic violence. It is precisely this silencing of the past that is criticized in many novels in the second part of this study. The ghosts in these novels return to resist the silencing of their past, the silencing of their stories and actively demand to be included into historical narratives.

Moreover, I consider ignorance a vital part of both epistemic injustice and epistemic violence. Indeed, (post)colonial ghost novels from the mid-twentieth and the early twenty-first century also increasingly negotiate what Charles Mills has coined as "white ignorance," which is closely tied to white supremacy, and also constitutes a form of epistemic violence. Mills defines white ignorance as a "privileged, group-based ignorance" that "implies the possibility of a contrasting 'knowledge,' a contrast that would be lost if all claims to truth were equally spurious, or just a matter of competing discourses" (15). In other words, "white ignorance involves a failure to recognize and appreciate what nonwhite people know, and a failure to attend to facts that support the credibility of nonwhite people" (Sherman and Goguen 7). As

[10] On epistemic violence, silencing, and testimony also see Dotson.

Linda Martín Alcoff points out, this form of ignorance is structural ("Epistemologies" 47-49). Moreover, Mills suggests that in addition to white ignorance, there are also other group-based forms of ignorance. For example, "[m]ale ignorance could be analyzed similarly and clearly has a far more ancient history and arguably a more deep-rooted ancestry in human interrelations, insofar as it goes back thousands of years" (22). Consequently, while the novels in the second part of this study emphasize racism and white ignorance, the stories in the first part of this study negotiate issues of misogyny and male ignorance.

Finally, the literary trope of the ghost is not only used to negotiate issues of silencing and ignorance but invisibility. Whereas silencing can be seen an active process, invisibility is more passive. In other words, I consider silencing as an act that is done by someone to someone, whereas invisibility is a certain state of being or feeling someone experiences. Defined very broadly, I will use invisibility to refer to a person (ghost), action or emotion that is unseen, i.e. not acknowledged in dominant society. Usually, this applies to the women or people of color in the stories and novels I selected, who are marginalized in society to an extent at which they become almost invisible to the people around them. It is not only their voices and stories that are being silenced but their entire experience is disregarded and not seen. The invisibility in these narratives is thus a form of social invisibility as well as a form of literal invisibility.[11]

Importantly, invisibility is a widely used trope in literature that does not only apply to the trope of the ghost. As pointed out by Guttzeit, "the metaphor of invisibility extends across contemporary social issues and literary forms" (4). Françoise Král further explains that the "trope of invisibility has emerged as a critical concept in the humanities" only recently and was, at first, "associated with the issue of racial invisibility" ("Thresholds" 11). However, it has since become increasingly relevant, and "has also been applied to all forms of social exclusion, be they racial social or political" (12). What links invisibility to the issues of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, then, is what Král calls its "epistemic potential" (12). According to Král, "The real challenge of invisibility is […] not necessarily to focus on metaphors of invisibility but to grapple with the complex and disturbing fact that certain groups become *de facto* invisible for want of sites that would welcome their testimonies" (14). This "de facto" invisibility of certain groups of people is exactly what is negotiated and ultimately criticized by ghost narratives. In other words, these ghost stories and novels are as much about the social

[11] On invisibility in literature and contemporary culture see, for example, Guttzeit, Král, *Social Invisibility*, and Steiner and Veel.

invisibility of the people encountering the ghosts[12] as they are about the invisibility of the literary ghosts themselves.

1.4. A Roadmap to This Study

In the first part of this study, I will focus on ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. As mentioned earlier, there is an abundance of supernatural short stories written by women writers from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Some of them have been anthologized in collections such as Alfred Bendixen's *Haunted Women: The Best Supernatural Tales by American Women Writers* (1985), Jessica Amanda Salmonson's *What Did Miss Darrington See? An Anthology of Feminist Supernatural Fiction* (1989), or Catherine A. Lundie's *Restless Spirits: Ghost Stories by American Women 1872-1926* (1996). Others, however, have remained hidden in the periodicals in which they were first published. In preparation for this study, I have done extensive research in periodicals such as *Atlantic Monthly, Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly, Harper's New Monthly Magazine, The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine, Scribner's Magazine, The New England Magazine, Godey's Lady's Book*, as well as various ghost story collections by female authors at the time. The selection of stories in this study is based on this research—but I am certain that I have overlook many other publications that are worth discovering.

Given the different historical contexts I draw on, I open the first part of this study with a brief introduction, in which I discuss Madelene Yale Wynne's story "The Voice" to introduce the central themes of invisibility and silencing of the female experience. Following this discussion, I will introduce the most important aspects of the historical and cultural contexts for the stories in the first part such as the changing discourse on gender or spiritualism. Importantly, I understand women's ghost stories as a deeply political genre. The stories in the first part of this study, for example, enter a dialogue with the fight for women's rights in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. Ghost stories like Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room" or Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" negotiate the changing gender ideals at the time from the ideal of

[12] On a discussion of the metaphor of "living ghosts" in contemporary culture see Peeren.

True Womanhood which persisted until the late nineteenth century to the New Woman that solidified itself in the 1890s, and that became the new ideal of femininity at the turn of the century. Indeed, most of the stories in this part exhibit a strong feminist agenda by denouncing violence against women and the exclusion of women from knowledge producing discourses.

In the third chapter, I will focus on knowledge construction as well as epistemic injustice in the forms of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. In the first section of Chapter 3, I will examine how Elizabeth Stuart Pehlps's "The Day of My Death" (1968) and Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room" (1895) negotiate testimonial injustice against women. Both stories negotiate how knowledge is constructed in patriarchal discourse and criticize the fact that it is only the male experience that is awarded sufficient credibility to construct knowledge and truth, while the female experience is disregarded as imagination. Next, I will turn to Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" (1872) and Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916). I argue that both stories negotiate hermeneutical injustice against women in the context of domestic violence. Finally, I will conclude the first chapter with a discussion of Edith Wharton's "The Fullness of Life" (1893), which dramatizes the reach of patriarchal ideology beyond death.

The subjugation of women to patriarchal ideology will also be the focus of Chapter 4, in which I will examine how ghost stories negotiate epistemic injustice in the form of the silencing of women's voices by medicalizing their minds and bodies. Particularly, I am interested in the ways the ghost trope is used by women writers to dramatize the silencing of women's voices and the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal discourse and the medicalization of women as "hysterical" in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century US society. Indeed, it is noticeable that many male characters in these ghost stories initially try to explain the haunting by questioning the health and sanity of their wives. The ghost thus becomes a vehicle to negotiate aspects of female life that not only remain mostly invisible and unspeakable in the dominant discourse but that are actively reframed as 'sickness' by the medical patriarchal institutions at the time.

In the first subchapter of Chapter 4, I will examine M.E.M. Davis's "The Room on the Roof" (1900) and Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" (1914). In both stories, the sighting of the ghost is paralleled by the deteriorating health of the female main characters. I argue that both stories dramatize that the female experience remains invisible in patriarchal discourse and that there is no room for women's existence outside of patriarchal ideology, which is why both protagonists eventually die. In the second subchapter, I focus on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892) and Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The

Gospel" (1913). Interestingly, while Gilman's story presents a harsh critique of the rest cure, Bacon's story celebrates the treatment for its achievements in women's health. However, when read in the context of the ghost story genre, both stories ultimately dramatize the complete subjugation of women to patriarchal ideology. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood. Or: The Hidden Self* (1902-1903). I argue that Hopkins's novel uses the subversive potential of the ghost trope to criticize epistemic violence and racist injustice against African Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. It thus negotiates similar issue of power and knowledge as the other stories in this first part, but with a focus on race instead of gender.

Race becomes increasingly important in the second part of this study, in which I will redirect my focus to ghost novels written by women of color. First, I will again give a brief introduction to important themes and contexts and introduce some of my main arguments by discussing Carmen Maria Machado's short story "Real Women Have Bodies" (2017). In this second part of my study, I argue that female writers of color from the second half of the twentieth century onwards use the by then well-established subversive potential of the ghost trope to criticize epistemic violence against people of color as well as white ignorance in hegemonic discourse. Similar to nineteenth century ghost stories, then, contemporary ethnic ghost novels dramatize the silencing and the invisibility of marginalized voices and experiences in hegemonic US society. One aspect that becomes increasingly important in these ghost novels is the aspect of historicity and the issues of silencing the past theorized by Trouillot. In fact, ghosts are increasingly used to criticize white ignorance regarding hegemonic historiography as well as the editing of history by silencing the voices and stories of marginalized groups.

This becomes obvious when reading contemporary ghost novels in the context of the Black Lives Matter movement. As agents of resistance that denounce misogynist and racist structures of epistemic violence and injustice by excavating the stories of those who were violently silenced and erased from history, ghost novels are in dialogue with various forms of activism of the early twenty-first century that have a similar aim and function. The widely celebrated *The 1619 Project* (ongoing since 2019) from *The New York Times Magazine* led by Nikole Hannah-Jones, for example, performs a similar cultural work as many contemporary ghost novels: to question hegemonic historiography and particularly the American origin story and to fill the silences created in the production of history. As Hannah-Jones writes in the preface to the book publication (2021) of the project: "while history *is* what happened, it is also, just as important, how we *think* about what happened and what we unearth and choose to remember about what happened" (xxvi). Overall, the project argues that America does not start

with the Declaration of Independence in 1776 but rather with the arrival of the first slave ship in 1619 thereby putting the history of slavery at the center of American history. The book publication of the project "combines history with journalism, criticism, and imaginative literature to show how history molds, influences, and haunts us in the *present*" (Hannah-Jones xxix). The mentioning of haunting in Hannah-Jones's preface is significant because it establishes a direct link to ghost novels in which haunting histories become corporeal in the figure of the ghost.

The haunting history of colonialism will be a focus in Chapter 6. In the first sub-section, I discuss Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) and Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse* (2022). I argue that both novels negotiate violence against women and epistemic violence in the form of silencing women's voices in patriarchal and post-colonial power structures. In the second sub-section, I turn to Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer* (1988) and Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* (2021). Walters's novel negotiates epistemic violence and hermeneutical injustice experienced by Indigenous peoples and white ignorance of white historians and museum staff. Similarly, Erdrich's novel draws on the captivity narrative to criticize epistemic violence in the form of white ignorance. Finally, I will conclude the chapter with a discussion of LaTanya's McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* (2021), which uses the trope of the ghost to negotiate similar themes of violence against women, white ignorance, and structural racism as the other novels.

In the seventh and final chapter of this study, I examine the phenomenon of the ghost narrator. What the novels in this chapter all have in common is that they feature at least one character, who is dead in the narrative presence of the story and who returns as a ghost narrator to tell his or her own story. In contrast to earlier versions of the ghost story or ghost novel, then, the ghosts in the novels discussed in this chapter possess significantly more agency. In Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) or Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997), which I discuss in the first section of this chapter, violated women speak up as ghost narrators to tell their stories and thus resist the epistemic violence of patriarchal and colonial power structures, that attempted to silence them. Similarly, in Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), which are the focus of the second section, two women start to hum and sing the blues from beyond death to subvert the dominant narrative and counteract epistemic violence. While L in *Love* increasingly subverts patriarchal discourse by speaking the truth about the novel's patriarch, Willa Mae in *Getting Mother's Body* sings from beneath the grave to claim her spot in the communicative memory of her community and provide a historical dimension to present day events. Finally, I conclude this chapter with a

brief discussion of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), which negotiates similar themes of epistemic violence, silencing and reclaiming of stories and voices as the other novels.

What the increasing popularity of the ghost trope in women's literature across historical and ethnic boundaries shows is that the literary trope of the ghost is an increasingly important literary tool to negotiate issues of power and knowledge, and that it carries great political weight. Throughout this study, I show that ghost stories and ghost novels constitute a literary counter-discourse that criticize and subvert the hegemonic discourse of their respective times. Despite all their differences in structure and discussed issues, white women's ghost stories from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century are in many ways aligned with ghost novels by women of color from the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century. They are all using the literary trope of the ghost to criticize the silencing of marginalized voices and the invisibility of marginalized experiences in hegemonic society. While nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories negotiate primarily issues of gender, race and racism become increasingly important in contemporary ethnic ghost novels.

In the conclusion of this study, I will trace the similarities and differences of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories and contemporary ghost novels. I will close this study with a brief look at Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina's young adult novel *The Things She's Seen* (2018), which transports the subversive potential of the ghost trope to the young adult genre and negotiates epistemic violence and the silencing of Aboriginal teenage girls in Australia. The novel thus suggests that the ghost trope is, indeed, uniquely suitable to negotiate the silencing of all marginalized groups—regardless of whether that marginalization is because of their gender, race or age. What is more, the novel illustrates the connections between the ghost novel and the Bildungsroman by merging the two genres, thereby suggesting that the literary trope of the ghost not only has a political function, but may also have an educational one. In fact, when taking a look at Marc Redfield's examination of the Bildungsroman as a "specter" (vii), a "[p]hantom" (38), and as "[g]hostly" (63), one cannot help but notice an uncanny alignment between the ghost novel and the Bildungsroman.

Part I

Writing Female Knowledge: Women's Ghost Stories, Invisibility, and Epistemic Injustice

2. Introduction

In Madelene Yale Wynne's short story "The Voice" (1895), the young male protagonist through whose perspective the story is told sees a girl sitting in front of an abandoned house while he is plowing the field. As he tries to approach her, she disappears. The next day, the same thing happens again only this time the young man follows her inside. He searches the entire house but cannot find the young woman anywhere. Suddenly, he hears her voice right beside him. When he asks why he can hear but not see her, she tells him that she cannot be seen and heard at the same time. The young man regrets that he would have to leave "if [she] won't let [him] see [her]" and when the voice pleads "Oh, don't go!" (115), he further inquires

> 'Can't I *ever* see you again?'
> 'Oh, yes!' Said the voice, and it seemed to vibrate all around him, a dancing voice full of joy and hope.
> He smiled with it, and then there was laughter all around him, moving here and there gaily.
> 'I want to see you. now.'
> 'Then I can't talk with you any more.'
> 'Never mind, let me see you.' (115-16)

The scene dramatizes the silencing of women's voices in patriarchal society—particularly within the domestic sphere which is typically associated with femininity at the time. The casual expression "never mind" (116), with which he brushes away her fear of being silenced, proves that the male protagonist does not consider the relinquishing of her voice and subsequently her ability to communicate a great loss. As soon as he makes that decision for her, the girl's "dancing voice full of joy and hope" and her happy laughter (115) turn into "[a] sigh, a soft moaning sound" (116). Even though the young woman is obviously saddened by the loss of her voice, she cannot defend herself against his patriarchal control.

The fact that she only starts to speak once she has convinced the young man to enter the house to look for her, represents the social division of the spheres: The outside of the house, where the young man first encounters the woman on his walk home from work, represents the public sphere, while the inside of the house represents the domestic sphere. Consequently, the young woman can only speak to the man once he has entered her realm, the house. Initially, the

voice of the girl is happy inside the house, she is described to have "a dancing voice full of joy and hope" and she laughs as she moves around him, welcoming him to her realm. However, the decision to see rather than hear her inside the house, means that women's oppression and silencing within patriarchal discourse also reached into the domestic sphere. The young man can see her now, she becomes an object of his gaze but the prize for being seen is silence. Without a voice she is unable to relate her feelings, her experience, let alone her opinions to either him or the world in general. His quick decision and the dismissiveness in his exclamation "Never mind" (Wynne, "Voice" 116) suggest that this is not wished for anyway. As long as he is able to look into her "sweetest eyes" (116), he is content—which appears to be all that really matters.

His expectations, directed towards her beauty rather than her voice, represent the cultural expectations women had to face at the time—and often still do until today. As Ellen Moers observes in her examination of the Female Gothic mode, "the looks of a girl are examined with ruthless scrutiny by all around her, especially by women" from very early on in her life (108). Moers notes that the compulsion to visualize "the fear of self, to hold anxiety up to the Gothic mirror of the imagination, may well be more common in the writings of women than of men" (107). This obsession with the visual and the simultaneous horror of being reduced to one's looks is the central issue in "The Voice." More than that, the woman in the story is completely dependent on the young man to return her voice to her eventually. In this short dialogue, the male protagonist makes the active decision to silence the female voice in favor of seeing the woman it belongs to—or rather her "shape" (Wynne 117).

Because he holds a position of power in patriarchal social structures, she has to submit to his wishes in order to not be repudiated by him and society. The conflict is then summarized in the words "Illusive voice! vanishing shape to deal with!" (Wynne, "Voice" 117) and even though the young man feels "a wild delicious hope that he, he might at last unite voice and shape" (117) it is clear that he is unable to do so because of the decision he made. He exerted his power over the young girl, having her follow his demand rather than letting her choose for herself. Instead, he hopes that he would be the one that "might at last unite voice and shape" (117). With this hope, the story ends with the rather dramatic statement: "So from the plough-boy is the poet born" (117). The final reference to literature here is a harsh critique of Wynne's fellow male writers—both contemporary and past. It refers to the objectification of women through the male gaze; it suggests that in male writing women are merely an object—in the eyes of the plough-boy as much as of the poet—rather than an individual subject.

What is more, combined with the hope to unite voice and shape it suggests that poets do indeed speak for the female subjects of their work rather than give them their own voice. The story thus criticizes literature by men as reducing women to an object—albeit a highly interesting one as Virginia Woolf's narrator of *A Room of One's Own* will discover two decades later. They serve as a fascinating subject, but by being turned into this subject, they are robbed of their own voices—quite the opposite to uniting voice and shape. They might be visible in the poet's lines, but their voices are silenced just the same. Not only are their voices negated, they are actively suppressed by the male author, reduced to "the most discussed animal in the universe" (Woolf 21).

Wynne's "The Voice" represents the marginalization of women in nineteenth century US society and their constant struggle to be seen *and* heard. Ultimately, the story suggests that being both visible and audible for a woman at the time is impossible. The story can thus be read as a subversion of patriarchal power distribution. In showing that it is never possible for women to be both seen and heard at the same time, the story constitutes a strong critique of the limitation of women to their roles within the domestic spheres. The voice itself represents female freedom. While being a voice, the woman is happy and free to move as she wants. The physical shape, on the other hand, represents female confinement within the domestic sphere. The dominant discourse of the mid-nineteenth century defined married women as inherently domestic, and completely dependent on their husbands. In addition, the female protagonist loses her agency once the young man demands to see rather than hear her. The story thus introduces two central themes of nineteenth and early-twentieth-centuries ghost stories: First, the silencing of the female voice—by the literal silencing of the woman's voice—and, secondly, the invisibility of the female experience—by her literal invisibility.

Through this focus the story also introduces the central issues of gender relations, social expectations, and ideology.[13] Within the narrative, the young woman's initial happiness once she succeeded in inviting the young man into the house as well as her quick surrender to his demand to see rather than hear her show her "*interpellation*" (Althusser 118) as subject of patriarchal ideology, in which she subsumes a subordinate role and is expected to listen to the head of the household, the man. According to Louis Althusser, interpellation refers to the function of ideology to "'transform[…]' the individuals into subjects" (118). What is more,

[13] I consider ideology to be both a fixed set of ideas and believes as well as what Althusser considers as "material practice," meaning every-day patterns of behavior, customs, and rituals (Storey 4-5). According to this definition, both women and men must act in a way that is pre-defined and accepted by the ideological framework of their time.

there is no way for individuals to escape interpellation because "ideology is eternal" (119). Althusser argues that "ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: *individuals are always-already subjects*" (119). Picking up on this argument, Judith Butler further explains "[i]f the subject can only assure his/her existence in terms of the law, and the law requires subjection for subjectivation, then, perversely, one may (always already) yield to the law in order to continue to assure one's own existence" (112). Butler concludes that "[t]he yielding to the law might then be read as the compelled consequence of a narcissistic attachment of one's continuing existence" (112-113).

Exactly this process can be observed in "The Voice." To continue to exist in a discourse which casts her as inherently domestic and dependent, the young woman in the story, yields to the young man's wishes and is thus interpellated as a subject of the domestic sphere. In other words, relinquishing her voice by complying to the young man's wishes interpellates her as a subject of patriarchal society and thus ensures her own existence. Her appearance as a physical shape represents this act of interpellation by making her subjection physically graspable. Simultaneously, her invisibility or shapelessness while speaking suggests that she moves outside of the pre-defined gender roles and outside of subjectivation. However, since subjectivation requires subjection, according to Butler (112), she can only become a subject of society by subjecting herself to patriarchal control. As long as she does not relinquish her voice, she is invisible to everyone around her and thus not a full part of society. Consequently, the story suggests that for women to be able to exist within the patriarchal society of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, they had to subject themselves to an ideology of dependency and accept to be silenced within the hegemonic power structure of their time or else accept a life in complete invisibility.

As becomes evident in the story, a woman's role in mid- and late nineteenth century US culture was clearly defined. Critics often describe the gender role distribution at the time in terms of the two separate spheres model—women being confined to the domestic sphere, while men are engaged in the public sphere. However, as Warren points out, this "gendered spheres model is limited not only because it applies primarily to upper- and middle-class white women but also, and even more importantly, because it does not allow for intersections of race, class, and sexuality, which […] were important considerations in determining gender identities" (2). Especially white middle- and upper-class women conformed to the ideal of what Barbara Welter has coined as the ideal of "true womanhood" (1966), which consists of "four cardinal

virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (Welter 152). Nevertheless, it was also white working-class and middle-class Black families that aspired to and adopted this model of domesticity as the ideal for women's roles (Warren 55-56). For example, "an important measure of success for a black man, as for a white man, was the extent to which he could afford to keep his women in the home" (56).

All dominant areas of society—politics, law, religion, medicine—defined women as inherently dependent. Legally, for example, married women were considered to be a part of the legal identity of their husbands (Warren 45).[14] The most outraging aspect of a woman's complete dependence and legal subordination to her husband, however, lay "in the legal acceptance of domestic abuse. [In fact, t]he common law assumed that physical abuse by the husband would occur and placed the burden of deflecting it on the wife" (47). It thus comes as no surprise that domestic violence is one of the prominent issues discussed in women's ghost stories of the time that will be further explored in Chapter 3. Writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe or Edith Wharton used the ghost story genre to criticize domestic violence and its invisibility and denial in patriarchal discourse. As noted by Weinstock, "[their] stories […] foreground and implicitly contest […] larger social structures and ideologies that foster and permit violence against women" (*Scare Tactics* 55). Therefore, "they are representative examples of an unacknowledged American Female Gothic tradition" (55).

What is more, the issue of domestic violence in women's ghost stories of the time is inextricably intertwined with issues of epistemic injustice—particularly hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 1). Hermeneutical injustice as defined by Miranda Fricker, occurs when someone does not have access to important interpretative resources to make sense of and communicate their social experience (1). One such example would be a woman's experience of sexual harassment before the term was introduced into public discourse (6). Not having the concrete concepts to name what is happening to someone seriously harms their ability to understand and communicate their own lived experience. Since the term domestic violence did not exist in the nineteenth century and was only introduced into public discourse in the 1970s (Ferraro 78, cf. Goodmark 2), women suffering from such abuse earlier were not able to concretely name the source of their suffering and meaningfully communicate about the wrong they were experiencing—even though they might be able to describe what hurts or frightens them. Especially in the context of violence and harassment, missing terminology also often implies

[14] This so called "doctrine of marital coverture" originated in the English common law (Warren 45).

missing legal frameworks to prosecute the wrong.[15] The ghost story is therefore used by women writers to negotiate issues that were only partly or not at all communicable in public discourse.

In addition, women's ghost stories negotiate the medicalization of the female mind and body in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries society, which I focus on in Chapter 4. Indeed, religious and medical discourses at the time emphasized women's submission to their husbands in various different ways (Warren 58-62). Mental activity for women and any other activity than that in the domestic sphere was assumed to lead to illness. It would "prevent conception, and jeopardize the continuation of the species," and, worst of all, it would "threaten[…] the health of [the] children" (61). The most famous example that negotiates this medicalization of women is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" in which the female protagonist is subjected to the notorious rest cure against her will. The rest cure was a widespread medical treatment for women which forbid them any kind of mental or physical exercise to heal their anxiety and nervous conditions. Unsurprisingly, the heroine's mental state in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" deteriorates under these conditions.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the ideal of the New Woman emerged and slowly but consistently challenged old gender ideals promoted by the ideology of True Womanhood. Indeed, as Martha H. Patterson posits, "[t]he rise of the American New Woman represents one of the most significant cultural shifts of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (1). "The New Woman was or wanted to be free in important areas of her life: work, social activities, self-development, self presentation, affection, relationship" (Ohmann 268). This also included more sexual autonomy for women (Patterson 16). Those who challenged the "middle class doctrines of separate spheres, the vocation of domesticity, and the angel in the house [that] had hardened through the middle decades of the century" promoted women's suffrage as "their most forward cause, but they also called for liberalization of divorce laws, changes in the oppressive property relations of marriage, access to education, and other reforms" (Ohmann 267). Indeed, "by the 1890s, more radical feminists like Charlotte Perkins Gilman had articulated a deeper critique of gender roles, women's domestic subordination, and even the bourgeois family and the ideal of motherhood." These newly emerging ideas were thus closely connected with the newly emerging ideal of the New Woman (267). Importantly, however, the idea of what or who the New Woman was, differed according to region, class background, race, and ethnicity as well as political

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[15] The Violence against Women Act, which "articulated the state's priorities in addressing domestic violence" was only passed in 1994 (Goodmark 2).

orientation, which underscores the complexity of the concept (Patterson 1-2). What is more, the concept of the New Woman was closely connected to the periodical press, from which it emerged and gained its name (2).

It thus comes as no surprise that women used the highly popular genre of the ghost story to negotiate their place in patriarchal US society and draw attention to issues that were suppressed or simply denied by public discourse. Even before the ideal of the New Woman emerged, literature was a socially acceptable way for women to take part in a public discourse. A writing career was compatible with the ideals of true womanhood. Susan Coultrap-McQuin, for example, argues that "[a]s writers, women earned money but not outside the home. Their work made them more like the uncounted numbers of married women in the nineteenth century who were wage earners in their homes, selling surplus products, taking in boarders, or making garments" (24). Consequently, writing was not subversive to the ideals of true womanhood but could rather be seen as a sort of domestic labor. Similarly, Ohmann explains that "[w]omen in the arts did not sin against womanliness, unless by voluntary indecorum or principled feminism. […] The arts and letters were a safe arena for women's achievement" (270). The main reason why literature offered itself as a potential career for women lies in its generic conventions. While "[s]entimentalism and emotional expression," which were predominantly considered to be stereotypical female attributes, "were inappropriate in the business world," they were, indeed, "acceptable in literature, the church, and the home—all three areas seen primarily as the province of women" (Coultrap-McQuin 7). Therefore, "although women were barred from many professions, conventional understandings of authorship did not prohibit a 'lady' from writing" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 136).

In in this cultural context of increasingly contested gender norms in the second half of the nineteenth century, the ghost story emerged as a parallel development with Spiritualism (Weinstock, "American Ghost" 410). According to Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, "[g]host stories, like Spiritualism, play out the fantasy that the dead are not really dead. Although the encounter with the ghost can be uncomfortable, if not terrifying, the terror of death itself is diminished because separation from loved ones is shown to be only temporary" (411). In addition, spiritualism was deeply intertwined with the women's suffrage movement and, as pointed out by Ann Braude, "ardent Spiritualists appeared not only in the woman's rights movement but throughout the most radical reform movements of the nineteenth century" such as "the abolition of slavery, […] the reform of marriage, […] children's rights, and […] religious freedom, and they actively supported socialism, labor reform, vegetarianism, dress reform, health reform, temperance, and antisabbatariansim" (3). Not surprisingly, it was specifically "[t]hrough

spiritualism, mesmerism, and supernaturalism, [that] the Victorian woman probed the nature and the extent of her spirituality and discovered expression, freedom, and power" (Dickerson 47).

What is surprising, however, is the fact that there are only very few direct references to spiritualism in nineteenth century ghost stories—even though both share an active interest in the dead, the afterlife, and women's rights. While Howard Kerr muses that it might be "[b]ecause of the polemical furor over the movement[… that] few writers responded to it in a neutral enough way to use it for mystification and terror" (66), Weinstock considers the

> ostensibly anomalous presence of supernatural themes in local color realism, and the presentation of occult experience in such fiction as an extension of reality rather than an interruption of it, […] as the reflection of Spiritualist understandings of a continuum of being connecting natural to supernatural. (*Scare Tactics* 37)

Similarly, Jennifer Bann argues that "[t]he lack of explicit references to spiritualism in the ghost story[…] does not indicate a lack of influence." She explains that "[s]piritualism's contribution to supernatural literature was not limited to the séance and all of its trappings; it helped to subtly transform the figure of the ghost, from the less-than-human apparitions of earlier narratives into the more-than-human characters of the later nineteenth century" (665). This transformation of the literary trope of the ghost becomes particularly obvious in women's ghost stories and in the fact that in most of these stories the ghost is no longer used as a source of fear but rather as a vehicle of suppressed knowledge, whose primary aim is not to terrorize the living but to reclaim its own voice and make its story heard and seen.

Indeed, knowledge is one of the central topics negotiated by women's ghost stories. While issues such as marriage, gender relations, motherhood, or female sexuality in women's ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century is well documented, the negotiation of epistemological questions concerning patriarchal systems of knowledge production and the systemic exclusion of women from these systems has received far less if any scholarly attention so far. Over the course of the next two chapters, I will thus examine how women writers at the time use the ghost to dramatize issues of "epistemic injustice" (Fricker 1) against women. These issues include primarily the silencing of the female voice in patriarchal discourse—as became evident in Wynne's "The Voice"—as well as testimonial and hermeneutical injustice.

While hermeneutical injustice in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories is usually associated with issues of domestic violence—as already mentioned above—, testimonial injustice in women's ghost stories is usually connected to sharing knowledge about

the existence of the ghost. It is important to note here that the ghost in the context of women's ghost stories is always real and not imagined because the supernatural occurrence is not explained away in the end but most often confirmed or otherwise left ambiguous.[16] In those cases in which the existence of the ghost remains ambiguous, however, the context of the ghost story genre at the time suggests that the ghost is, indeed, very much real. What is significant, then, is the fact that it is usually not the female experience that is able to produce and share knowledge about the existence of the ghost, but only the male experience. To be more precise, whenever a woman first sees a ghost and tries to tell a man—usually her husband—about it, the husband reacts by telling her she has either imagined or dreamed the whole thing.

Given the dominant ideological viewpoint that women had a very frail nervous system which was "prone to overstimulation and resulting exhaustion" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 334), the male reaction the female characters in these stories are faced with are based on what Fricker defines as "*identity prejudices,*" meaning prejudices that are based on someone's social identity, for example their gender (27). In other words, what leads the men in these stories to assume their wives have dreamed the supernatural encounter can be traced back to patriarchal ideology about the female body and nervous system prevalent in nineteenth century America. In Hildegard Hawthorne's "Perdita" (1897), published in *Harper's Magazine*, for example, the female narrator's claim of having encountered a little girl on her veranda is met with her husband's disbelief who condescendingly explains: "My dear, babies don't appear and disappear like East-Indian magicians. You have been napping, and are trying to conceal the shameful fact." At first, the narrator insists that she is very much able to "know a baby when [she] see[s] one" (557), but after repeated mockery by her husband she eventually concedes that "I suppose I *was* dreaming" (558). This exchange clearly dramatizes the fact that it is the man who decides what is real and what is imagined or dreamed, while the female experience is silenced and made to believe that she only dreamt the encounter.

In the third chapter, I focus on epistemic injustice and this this silencing of women's voices particularly in connection to testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. Examining Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death" (1868), Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room" (1895), Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost of the Cap'n Brown House" (1872), Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), as well as Wharton's "The Fullness of Life" (1893), I will show

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[16] There are also a number of stories written at the time that include alleged ghosts that ultimately turn out to have completely natural explanations. I do not consider these stories ghost stories; I will focus my research exclusively on those stories in which the supernatural is confirmed in the end or at least remains ambiguous.

how the ghost trope is used to dramatize the silencing of the female voice and the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal society and, more specifically, the epistemic injustice—both testimonial and hermeneutical—women experienced at the time. In all these stories, male characters deem women's perception of reality as untrustworthy or even untrue and it is always the male experience that has the power to produce knowledge while the female experience remains marginalized and utterly powerless. In addition, Edith Wharton's "The Fullness of Life" dramatizes that the patriarchal power structures defining women's lives on earth are so strong and restrictive that they even reach beyond death.

In the fourth chapter, I focus on the invisibility that results from silencing women's voices and medicalizing their minds and bodies. Taking the theme of silencing women's voices to an extreme, some women are banned to live in total invisibility and become ghosts themselves—both literally and figuratively—through the emotional neglect and abuse of the men closest to them. Focusing on M.E.M. Davis's "The Room on the Roof" (1900), Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" (1914), Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892), and Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel" (1913), I argue that the literary figure of the ghost represents the invisibility of the female experience. Anxieties about marriage or motherhood, physical or psychological abuse, the loss of agency and self-determination, or the medicalization of the female subject are all issues projected onto the ghosts in these stories.

The female protagonists in these stories face the choice between interpellation as subjects of patriarchal control—and hence the loss of their agency and visibility—or death. M.E.M. Davis's and Olivia Howard Dunbar's stories dramatize the inevitability of women's interpellation by patriarchal ideology. Both protagonists dare to imagine a life outside of the ideological roles society sees fit for them, but they fail and ultimately die. The two stories by Josephine Daskam Bacon and Charlotte Perkins Gilman show how the infamous rest cure, popular at the turn of the century, was used as an ideological tool to oppress women. The ghost is thus often used by women writers to dramatize an unfair distribution of power when it comes to creating and sharing knowledge. It is precisely this subversiveness of the ghost trope, which undermines (white) patriarchal knowledge, that is also used in Pauline E. Hopkins's serial novel *Of One Blood. Or, The Hidden Self* (1902-03). Therefore, I conclude this chapter by examining how Hopkins uses references to nineteenth century occultism, the ghost story genre, and particularly the literary trope of the ghost to criticize nineteenth century knowledge about race. I argue that Hopkins utilizes the subversiveness of the ghost and the ghost story genre more generally to criticize racism and epistemic violence against African Americans.

3. Knowing What is 'Real'

One of the primary functions of the ghost trope in women's ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century is to dramatize "epistemic injustice"—both "testimonial" and "hermeneutical" (Fricker 1)—that women experience in patriarchal US society. The ghost is used as a vehicle to criticize how women's perception of reality is often disregarded by the male authority figures and how only the male experience is credited with the ability to produce knowledge about the world. Tellingly, in many ghost stories of the time the first sighting of the ghost is made by a female character. However, when she communicates this experience to her husband or another male character, she is accused of having dreamed or imagined it. In Mrs. E.T. Corbett's "The Pin Ghost" (1876), published in *Harper's Magazine*, for example, the female narrator begins her story by stating that even though her husband accused her of having dreamt all of it, the reader might still believe her experience. Similarly, in Hildegard Hawthorne's "Perdita" (1897), the husband initially does not believe in the ghost his wife saw—even though he later must admit the ghostly little girl does indeed exist.

I claim that exactly this moment of unbelief and ridicule is significant in these stories because it symbolizes the silencing and invisibility of women's experiences within patriarchal society on several levels. First, it dramatizes the testimonial injustice that the female character experiences because her words are not believed—usually because the man whom she talks to has prejudices about hysterical women and automatically assumes she either must have imagined or dreamed any encounter with supernatural beings. Secondly, based on this decreased credibility put into women's words, the ghost is often used to negotiate issues of hermeneutical injustice as well. Hermeneutical injustice can be seen in the fact that the female characters in these stories often lack specific concepts and interpretative resources to both completely understand and to successfully communicate the severity of their experience because large parts of the female experience in the nineteenth century were silenced and marginalized in the dominant discourse—and consequently remained as invisible as the ghosts that come to represent them.

In women's ghost stories, the literary trope of the ghost is often used to criticize domestic abuse or domestic violence against women—a concept that was not available to women in the nineteenth century. According to Kathleen Ferraro, the discourse of "domestic violence" emerged in the 1970s and, consequently, was not available as a specific label or legal concept in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. What is more, as noted by Leigh

Goodmark, "[h]istorically, domestic violence was treated as a private affair, an extension of the husband's right to control the behavior of his wife, to be handled within the confines of the home" (1).[17] Only with the battered women movement in the 1970s did domestic violence become increasingly criminalized (Ferraro 85; Goodmark 1). Moreover, Goodmark points out that even today "[t]he legal definition of domestic violence has largely been focused on physical assaults and threats to commit physical assaults." Psychological abuse, on the other hand, is significantly less prosecuted: "For the purposes of criminal prosecution or the issuance of a civil protective order, one hit, however minor, often carries greater weight than a daily barrage of emotional, economic, and other non-physical abuse" (30).

I argue that one of the issues negotiated in the ghost stories I discuss in this chapter is this invisibility of domestic violence and the hermeneutical injustice experienced by women at the time who lacked the language and legal definitions to describe and interpret their experience of abuse. This negotiation happens primarily by dramatizing exactly this part of the female experience that was not acknowledged as a public problem and instead silenced by the hegemonic discourse. In addition, these stories draw attention to, non-physical forms of domestic violence such as female isolation and incarceration, psychological terror at the hands of the husbands, or violence that is not immediately directed against another person—aspects of domestic abuse that are still often not acknowledged even today. These stories thus work towards a conceptualization of domestic violence that speaks from and to the experience of women in patriarchal power systems and one that is still relevant in today's discourse as well. A conceptualization that stands in stark contrast to the legal and social definitions at the time. In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Giant Wisteria" (1891), for example, a young woman's ghost returns to haunt a summer estate after she was presumably killed by her father because she bore a child out of wedlock and refused to marry her cousin to cover it up. In Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), a young woman is isolated in a Gothic mansion by her much older husband, who murders all her pet dogs and puts them on her pillow for her to find. And in M.E.M. Davis's "The Room on the Roof" (1900), a woman's ghost haunts the room on the roof after she was imprisoned there by her former husband and died in isolation.

The threat to the female characters in the ghost stories I analyze is usually not posed by the ghost, but by the men in these stories who either do not take the experiences of their wives seriously enough to further inquire into the events; who often actively negate their experience

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[17] This does not mean that domestic violence was legal in nineteenth century US society, as pointed out by Ferraro, but rather that it was rarely ever prosecuted or punished (80).

by telling them that they must have dreamed the whole thing (even though they later oftentimes have to admit to the reality of the ghost when encountering it themselves); or who commit acts of physical or psychological violence against the women in their lives. Indeed, the ghosts themselves are primarily harmless and non-threatening—at least towards the women in the stories. Instead, the ghosts pose a serious threat to the discourse and patriarchal order more generally. Only in exceptions—like, for example, "Kerfol"—do the ghosts emerge as actual physical threats to characters within the story world. However, it is noteworthy that the physically dangerous ghosts in "Kerfol" are dogs, rather than human beings. In fact, what stands out is that ghosts who appear in the form of women usually remain completely powerless—in death as they were in life. In addition, in most stories, the ghosts' primary aim is not to scare or terrorize the living characters, but rather to make their own stories heard and seen, and to encourage living characters to uncover the violence inflicted upon them while they were still alive. In other words, the ghosts primary aim is to resist the silencing of the female voice and the invisibility of the female experience—particularly in connection to domestic abuse—in patriarchal discourse by becoming a spectral reminder of violence inflicted on women's bodies and voices.

In the first part of the chapter, I show how ghost stories dramatize epistemic injustice, particularly testimonial injustice, and the exclusion of women from systems of knowledge production. Both Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death" (1868) and Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room" (1895) dramatize how women's experiences are considered inadequate to produce knowledge. Indeed, in both stories, it is the husband who has the power to produce knowledge and whose experience shapes reality, while the women's experiences in both stories are disregarded as mere imagination and pushed to the margins. Both stories show that women's experiences and perception of reality always require male confirmation to be considered 'real.'

In the second subchapter, I turn towards the dramatization of domestic violence and its silencing and invisibility in the dominant patriarchal discourse. Again, these issues of invisibility and silencing are closely intertwined with the negotiation of epistemic injustice in the form of both hermeneutical and testimonial injustice. By examining Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" (1872) and Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), I show how the patriarchal discourse of the time disregarded issues of domestic violence against women and how the ghost is used by women writers to dramatize the struggle of domestic abuse victims to make sense of and communicate their own experience of violence. Interestingly, both stories use a male narrator as a mediator to talk about the female experience of domestic

violence, thereby further marginalizing the female experience and ultimately dismissing it entirely in patriarchal discourse.

In the conclusion to this chapter, I show how Edith Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" (1893) negotiates the reach of the patriarchal ideology that lies at the basis of this epistemic injustice lives even beyond death. The story criticizes how patriarchal ideology was so strong that women were interpellated to it even in the afterlife. Similarly, in Georgia Wood Pangborn's "The Substitute" (1914), protagonist Anna Marston is visited by an old friend, who tells her about her children. After the death of her husband, she gave her children to a Mrs. Van Duyne, whom she pays to take care of them. In the end, it turns out that Anna has been talking to her friend's ghost, who pleads her to take care of her children now that she is dead. The story shows that the demands and responsibilities of motherhood followed women beyond death since the friend only returns as a ghost to ensure the safety of her children.

3.1. Knowledge Production and Testimonial Injustice in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death" and Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room"

Typically, a woman's sighting of a ghost in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories is not enough to verify its existence. In contrast, men's sighting of the ghost is sufficient to do so. Consequently, it is the male experience that produces knowledge while the female experience is cast as imagination or a dream. Although both wife and husband often encounter the same ghost, it is only the husband who can confirm the ghost's existence. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death" first published in *Harper's New Magazine Monthly* in October 1868, illustrates this issue in satirical terms. Fred, the male narrator of the story, does not believe his wife Alison's reports that their house is haunted. Only when he himself repeatedly experiences supernatural occurrences does he start to believe in the ghost. Importantly, it is every new form of supernatural occurrence that again needs to be confirmed by Fred's own experience—Alison's experience is never enough to establish that the house is haunted.

According to Howard Kerr, the story is "sympathetically based on the experiences of her [Phelps's] grandfather, Eliakim Phelps, during the Stratford rappings of 1850" (109), which means that the story must be read in the context of spiritualism. Interestingly, Phelps's story is one of the few ghost stories that actively draw on spiritualism as a source. Indeed, Kerr notes

that "of the serious ghost-story, […] there were fewer examples involving spiritual manifestations and mediums than one might expect" (65). Similarly, Bann observes that "spiritualism is strangely omitted from the ghost stories with which it shared decades of popularity" and she also mentions Elisabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death" as one of the few examples of stories that actively engage with spiritualism (664). In contrast to Kerr, however, who describes Phelps's treatment of the spiritualist elements as "sympathetic[…]" (109), Bann posits that the story "attacks its [spiritualism's] numerous absurdities" (664).

Spiritualism started in the United States with the Fox sisters and the Rochester rappings of 1848.[18] The Stratford rappings, which Kerr identifies as having heavily influenced Phelps's "The Day of My Death," occurred only two years later in 1850 and consisted of "alphabetical communications combined with spectacular poltergeist mischief in the house of Reverend Eliakim Phelps of Stratford, Connecticut" (6).[19] "Replacing her grandfather with a whimsical lay narrator named [Fred] Hotchkiss," Kerr explains,

> [Phelps] included the same dummies, spoons, falling key, and demand for pie later recalled by her father, along with an errant sheet and other laundry that refused to stay locked away. Hotchkiss told of his experiences with a good deal of humor […]. But although belittling the spiritualistic cult, he accepted the phenomena as authentic and inexplicable. Not surprisingly, so did the author. (179)

However, while Kerr is ultimately correct in his observation that Fred Hotchkiss eventually accepts the spiritualist occurrences in his house as authentic and inexplicable, it is significant that it takes him a large part of the narrative to do so. What is even more significant is that he needs to confirm every new supernatural occurrence in his house with his own experience rather than trusting his wife's experience of haunting. In "The Day of My Death," Fred, his wife, Alison, and their two children move into a new house which soon reveals itself to be haunted. Even though Fred starts out as a disbeliever in ghosts, the cumulating strange occurrences in the house eventually convince him of the existence of a ghost and he starts communicating with it via the tools of spiritualism. By the end of the narrative, he is deeply engaged in the Spiritualist community, traveling to several mediums in different towns to confirm the premonition one of them had of his upcoming death. Since all mediums agree on him being "summoned into a spiritual state of existence" by the second of May, he accepts this as his death

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[18] See, for example, Kerr (3), Bennett, Bridget (5).

[19] Kerr bases his summary of the spiritualist movement in the 1850's and of the Stratford rappings on a variety of newspaper articles form the time as well as Frank Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism: A History and a Criticism* (1902).

sentence (Phelps 639). However, he ends the story by stating "that up to the date of this article 'I still live'" (632).

In the story, Fred functions as a vehicle to ironically deconstruct and criticize male dominated epistemology, in which the male experience functions as the only reliable source to produce knowledge—about life in general but also about the female experience in particular. Importantly, "The Day of My Death" differs in its use of humor from the first comic literary reactions to spiritualism a decade earlier during the 1850's, which mostly ridiculed the movement because of "its more obviously laughable features—silly and fraudulent mediums, uncritical enthusiasts, bizarre séances phenomena, inane messages from famous spirits" (Kerr 22). In contrast, the humor in "The Day of My Death"— though making use of comical elements like bizarre haunting experiences—does not stem from a satire or ridicule of the spiritualist movement itself, but rather from Fred's resistance to it—despite the obvious evidence in its favor.

Indeed, Fred embodies male ignorance and a form of self-assumed superiority 'to know better.' In the beginning of his narrative, Fred is convinced that "[s]piritualism [is] a system of refined jugglery. […] There would always be nervous women and hypochondriac men enough for its dupes. [He thanks] Heaven that [he is] neither" (Phelps 622). Important here is his prejudicial description of "nervous women" as being easily "duped" by spiritualist ventures. He thus connects spiritualism to specific identity prejudices of the time which assumed that "the female's nervous system and emotions prevailed over her conscious and rational faculties" (Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg 334). By stating that he is neither a nervous woman nor a hypochondriac man, he claims stereotypically male coded rationality as his domain. Consequently, when his wife Alison wakes him one night because she heard somebody knocking on their door, he immediately goes back to sleep after checking and not seeing anyone there. His rational explanation of her perception—which differs from his since he did not hear anything or see anything strange—is that it was just one of "her dreams" (Phelps 622). Since she still insists on having heard "somebody […] rap[…] in that room all night long" he brushes her concerns away but suggesting it had been rats, mice, or "wind! Broken plaster! crickets! imagination! dreams! fancies! Blind headache! nonsense!" (622).

The alignment of wind with imagination as both equally probable causes for the perceived disturbance suggests that any natural explanation will include female misperception. The suggestion that Alison cannot distinguish between having heard crickets and rappings on the door discredits her experience to sole imagination. Read against his earlier comment about "nervous women," Fred's disbelief in Alison's experience of having heard strange sounds can

be interpreted as testimonial injustice stemming from his own prejudice about women being nervous, hysterical, and prone to fall prey to spiritualist "dupes." In addition, the intensification of alternative explanations for her hearing—from "wind" to "nonsense"—successfully silences all further complaints. While the explanations "wind! Broken plaster! crickets" still acknowledged the existence of a noise, the following explanations of "imaginations! dreams! fancies! Blind headache! nonsense!" do not. It is thus not only Alison's interpretation of reality that is called into question but her entire experience that is reduced to mere "imagination" and "nonsense" by her husband. Consequently, Alison is initially silenced by Fred and continuously denied any partaking in the production of knowledge about their house being haunted.

On the contrary, it is only through the male experience of Fred that the existence of a disturbance in the house is finally acknowledged. After several days, Alison again reports to have "spent another wakeful night with those 'rats' behind the headboard" (Phelps 623). To clear up the circumstances, Fred stays up the following night, and confesses "[a]t half past eleven […] that [he] heard a singular sound" (623). Thus, the nightly search begins. Fred and Alison search the entire room, following the mysterious sounds that Fred now too encounters: "an invisible trip-hammer appear[s] to hit the floor beside [him] at every step; [he] attempt[s] to step aside from it, over it, away from it; but it follow[s him] pounding into [his] room." Sarcastically, Alison suggests: "Wind? […] Plaster cracking? Fancies? Dreams? Blind headaches?", reminding him of his previous statements and proving to him that she is very well able to distinguish between wind and mysterious rappings without having to imagine the latter (624). In fact, her sarcasm suggests that the male and female experience of certain events are not that different; the main difference only lies in the fact that one is considered to be knowledge producing while the other is silenced and made invisible by the patriarchal power by being cast as mere imagination. By sarcastically reclaiming his disbelief for herself Alison also reclaims her power and knowledge over her own experience and, at least partially, resists his attempts to silence her.

Nevertheless, any new encounter with the ghost must again be confirmed and verified by Fred himself. Alison's own experience is never enough to confirm the haunting in the house. When clothes disappear from a locked closet, Fred verifies this by putting new clothes in the drawer, "lock[ing] the drawer, put[ting] the key in [his] pocket; lock[ing] the door of the closet, put[ting] the key in [his] pocket; lock[ing] the door of the room in which the closet [is], and put[ting] that key in [his] pocket" (Phelps 625). With these measures he ensures to be completely in control of the situation instead of the women in the house. The clothes are now

under his patriarchal protection. Only after the clothes still disappear from his protection, does he admit to the supernatural occurrence.

What is more, only after Fred admits to the existence of the disturbance can the supernatural fully gain a foothold in the house. After discarding multiple different theories and conclusions about the nature of the occurrences, Fred "[f]inally, [… holds his] peace, cease[s] to talk of 'rats,' ke[eps his] mind in a state of passive vacancy, and narrowly and quietly watche[s] the progress of affairs" (Phelps 625). This moment of admittance marks Fred's entry into the world of spiritualism since he finally gives up any "reasonable" explanation attempts (625). Indeed, it is his more or less explicit acknowledgement of the "mysterious influence, inexplicable by common or scientific causes" (625) that finally legitimizes its existence and, in a way, makes it more real. Notably, this admittance does not even need to be uttered out loud—since he admits he does not say it "to other people" (625) but the admission to himself is sufficient to confirm the reality of haunting. Furthermore, the escalation of events after Fred's admittance to the spirit suggests that his male knowledge about it infuses it with more power or even conjures it into existence in the first place. Indeed, he admits that "[f]rom the date of that escapade with the under-clothes confusion reigned in [their] corner of Nemo's avenue. That night neither [his] wife nor [him]self closed an eye, the house so resounded and re-echoed with the blows of unseen hammers, fists, logs and knuckles" (625).

Soon thereafter, the house's spirits challenge Fred's hegemonic masculinity of him being the patriarch that reigns—if need be—by force to keep his house in order. During a dinner party, at which the haunting escalates into moving cutlery, dinner plates, and food items, Fred addresses the spirits for the first time, "wrenched for the moment into a profound belief that they must be spirits indeed." Hitting his fist on the table, he screams: "Whatever you are, and wherever you are,[…] go out of this room and let us alone" (Phelps 626). After his initial confession that he is happy to be neither a "nervous woman" nor a "hypochondriac man" who believes in spiritualism, he is here "wrenched for a moment into the profound belief that it must be spirits indeed", which dramatizes the slow crumbling of his initial self-assumed superiority. However, it is only through softness and politeness that Fred can stop the disturbance, not through forceful and strong commands. The only response Fred gets to his outburst "[is] a furious mazourka of all the dishes on the table" (626). Upon the suggestion of one of the dinner guests, Fred tries to appeal to the spirits "more softly, addressing the caster, and intimating in [his] blandest manner that [he] and [his] guests would feel under obligations if [they] could have the room to [them]selves till after [they] had dined" (626). Even though his tone when narrating this new method of appeal is sarcastic and humorous—he "*intimat*[*es*] in [his]

blandest manner that [he] and [his] guests would *feel under obligations* if" they could dine undisturbed (626; my emphasis)—, the effect this softness and politeness have is undeniable since their dinner party can, indeed, continue undisturbed for the rest of the night.

While the main plot of the story repeatedly confirms the knowledge producing power of male discourse, its irony and sarcasm increasingly deconstructs it. Eventually, the ironic ending deconstructs this power entirely. After Fred admits to living in a haunted house, he—with the help of Alison's cousin, Gertrude Fellows, a medium—starts to communicate with the ghosts around him, thereby confirming the legitimacy of their existence. He starts to consult mediums and receives the message that he "will be summoned into a spiritual state of existence" by the second of May. The first time, Fred hears this message by a medium is in Boston:

> 'How do you know it?' [he asks her]
> '*I* don't know it. I am told.'
> 'Who tells you?'
> 'Jerusha Babcock and George Washington.'
> Jerusha Babcock was the name of my maternal grandmother. What could the woman know of my maternal grandmother? It did not occur to me, I believe, to wonder what occasion George Washington could find to concern himself about my dying or my living. There stood the uncanny Jerusha as pledge that my informant knew what she was talking about (Phelps 630).

This rather humorous scene again suggests that male support is needed to verify a claim made by a woman. Even though it is Jerusha who primarily functions to verify the medium's claim, George Washington's presence nevertheless is needed to provide further legitimacy. As Fred himself reports retrospectively, he does not even question the fact that George Washington might interfere with his life or death in the current moment—or that his ghost was there. He does, however, question how the medium would be able to make contact to his maternal grandmother, Jerusha. Thus, while Jerusha functions to prove that the medium does indeed have a connection to the afterlife, George Washington functions as the male authority figure further validating the prophecy.

Afterwards, Fred travels to several towns and sees several different mediums who all confirm this prophecy: "On the second of May, at one o'clock in the afternoon, you will pass out of the body." To determine what exactly will cause this passing he starts "consulting books of medicine to discover what evidence [he] could by any possibility give of unsuspected disease. [... He] devote[s] two days to medicine-genealogical studies, and [is] rewarded for [his] pains by discovering […] one great-aunt who died of heart disease at the advanced age of two months" (Phelps 630-31). On the one hand, this illustrates the need to find a natural or scientific explanation for his death, which is associated with male reason: If he is going to die it must be because he is sick with some genetic defect or disease. On the other hand, in devoting himself

over the course of several days to the excessive study of his family's medical history while being locked in a room somewhere in Philadelphia, he turns into the very person he negated to be in the very beginning: one of the "hypochondriac men" believing in spiritualism (622).

At first glance, spiritualism itself seems to become the disease that infects him. However, upon closer examination it turns out that it is his own ignorance and his arrogant assumption of being able to produce and legitimize knowledge that leads to the ironic ending of him being wrong and still alive. Notice that the medium's prophecy never mentioned the word 'death,' but that this was only his own interpretation: "I suppose in good English that means I'm going to die" (Phelps 630). It is only in a letter by Gertrude Fellows that the word 'death' appears. After Fred has already confirmed his upcoming death through several different mediums and accepted it as inevitable, Fellows writes in a letter that it seems clear to her "that some calamity is to befall [him] in the spring[…]. It seems to [her] to be of the nature of death." And she does not think he can avoid it (631). However, even though Gertrude Fellows assumes that the calamity she prophesied is "of the nature of death" (631), she nevertheless leaves room for doubt by using speculative language like "It seems to me" rather than determinate language such as 'it will be' or 'it is.'

Ultimately, then, it is again he himself who functions as the final source of knowledge—in this case knowledge about his own time of death. Ironically, it is this knowledge that, in the end, turns out to be wrong. In fact, the medium's prophecy, can be interpreted quite differently: Fred does enter a spiritual state, and he does pass out of his body, but not in the sense that he dies. On the contrary, he is very much alive, but for the first time able to transcend his own ignorance and arrogance about the lived experience of his wife. As became evident in the dinner party haunting scene, the spirits of the house challenge Fred to transcend his masculinity of being the patriarch who dismisses and silences his wife and who prioritizes control and force over love and care. The "spiritual state of existence" he enters is thus a version of masculinity that acknowledges and actually sees his wife and family in a much more positive light—rather than as incompetent and haunted. His new spiritual state lies in him becoming the father and husband he is supposed to be by now possessing the ability to appreciate domesticity and family instead of disregarding them.

The story therefore promotes a very idealized image of domesticity by first of all criticizing the non-appreciation and dismissiveness a woman's experience of domestic labor is met with within patriarchal discourse. The first impression Fred relates to the reader is the image of his wife, Alison, "sitting on a bandbox. She had generally been sitting on a bandbox for three weeks, or on a bushel basked, […] or the baby's bath-tub. On one occasion it was the

baby himself. She mistook him for the rag-bag" (Phelps 621). While observing this stillness of his wife, Fred wonders "[w]hat it is that women find to do with themselves in this world […] They are always 'attending to things.' Whatever that may mean" (621). The obviously very ignorant interpretation Fred has of his wife's day is thus clearly a negative one: she sits all day for three weeks, not fulfilling her motherly duties properly because she cannot even distinguish her own baby from a rag-bag, leaving her husband to wonder what it is that she does all day. The answer to this is, of course, that she is cleaning the house while he is at work, making it inhabitable for the young family. In his ignorance, however, Fred only sees her in stillness and is unappreciative of the domestic labor she conducts every day.

His male ignorance thus symbolizes the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal society. One night when he returns from work, he finds her "in a heap in the corner, two dusters and a wash-cloth in one blue-veined hand, and a broom in the other; an old corn-colored silk handkerchief knotted over her hair […]; and her little brown calico apron-string literally tied to the baby, who was shrieking at the end of his tether" (Phelps 621). She is "too tired even to crawl" (621). Fred's earlier assessment and wonder stand in clear contrast to this image. His focus on her 'sitting' or not properly attending to the baby at certain moments illustrates his lacking appreciation for domestic labor. While the society at the time idealized domesticity for women, the domestic labor is clearly not appreciated by Fred in this instance. On the contrary, Alison's tedious work remains entirely invisible. Fred's dismissiveness towards his wife clearly shows how oblivious he is to his wife's experiences and perceptions and the constraints and demands the domestic sphere places upon her. This ignorance comes from him being away at work all day. Consequently, when he arrives at home, he finds his wife exhausted from her own day. The story suggests that since he does not see her domestic labor, he remains ignorant of it and thus also cannot appreciate it.

The story therefore simultaneously reinforces patriarchal gender ideals as well as criticizes the invisibility of women's contribution in patriarchal society. Domestic labor exists as a parallel to the ghost and haunting in the story. As long as Fred cannot see it, he does not consider it as real and dismisses it. When he eventually stays home from work, however, because he believes he will die that day, he finally sees his wife in action during her own day of domestic labor—he visually confirms her working, so to speak—and, indeed, changes his entire perception of her and their family life. The story thus ultimately promotes an idealized version of domesticity by creating the final image of a domestic sphere in which the woman's domestic labor is as appreciated as the man's labor at work in the public sphere. Since Fred

awaits his death in early May, he stays home from work that day because he is not "feeling exactly like work to-day" (Phelps 632). Instead, he asks Alison to spend the day with him:

> I remember precisely how pretty she was that morning. She wore a bright dress—blue, I think—and a white crocus in her hair; she had a dainty white apron tied on, 'to cook in,' she said, and her pink nails were powdered with flour. Her eyes laughed and twinkled at me. I remember thinking how young she looked, and how unready for suffering. I remember—I remember a variety of simple little things that happened that morning—that she brought the baby in after a while, and that Tip [their older son] came all muddy from the garden, dragging his tiny hoe over the carpet; that the window was open, and that while we all sat there together a little brown bird brought some twine and built a nest on an apple bough just in sight. (632)

The image of family and domestic life conveyed in this paragraph shortly before Fred assumes he will die, is highly idealized. The loving husband appreciates his wife's beauty in her domestic role. He notices the "dainty white apron" which is a symbol of her domestic work in the kitchen, as is the flour which powders "her pink nails." She wears a flower in her hair and a dress, both symbols of hegemonic femininity. In addition to noticing his wife's beauty, Fred also notices other small things which bring him closer to his family as, for example, the open window through which he can observe a little bird building a nest to start and raise its own little family—mirroring the family inside the house. The picture of the core family painted in this image is almost a pastoral one, lifting the image of a happy, "laugh[ing] and twinkl[ing]" couple raising two sons in a house with a garden (632).

This image significantly differs from the image of the family at the beginning of the story, when Alison was "too tired even to crawl" with "an old corn-colored silk handkerchief knotted over her hair", the baby "dangling in mid-air" from the apron-strings, and the parlor of the house still a "carpetless, pictureless, curtainless, blank, bare, soapy room" (Phelps 621). Fred's emersion in spiritualism has transformed him into a man who is now appreciative of the domestic sphere around him and his family inhabiting it. Thus, the "spiritual state of existence" prophesied to him by the mediums is the new embrace of his role within the domestic space (630). He left behind his ignorance for his wife's work as both a mother and the woman of the house, transcended his dismissiveness towards her and her cousin's beliefs and experiences within the haunted house, and is almost reborn into the idealized version of his family.

Ultimately, then, Fred is a perfect example of the knowledge producing power of male discourse and the subversion of it in women's ghost stories. Throughout the narrative he has to confirm the female experience and empower the haunted house around himself, but, in the end, he fails to give the prophecy the meaning he made out in his own mind. Instead, the story uses his immersion in spiritualism and the satirically described hauntings in the house to create its very own discourse on domesticity. It first criticizes the male ignorance and lack of appreciation

of women's domestic labor—thereby illustrating the constraints placed upon women by this ideology—and then presents its own idealized version of domesticity. Therefore, the story still conforms to the ideology of the two separate spheres, but it calls for an appreciation of female work and an acknowledgment of the female experience within that sphere.

Another story heavily concerned with this issue of female experience in patriarchal discourse is Madelene Yale Wynne's "The Little Room" (1895), titular story of the short story collection *The Little Room and Other Stories*. In his brief introduction to "The Little Room," Alfred Bendixen calls it "[o]ne of the most effective 'puzzle stories' ever written" and a "forgotten masterpiece" (Introduction to 119). The story's seemingly unsolvable puzzle he praises in this way lies in the existence of the haunting 'little room' itself. Indeed, the ghostly presence in the story is not—as is the case with the other stories in this project—a dead human or animal, but rather an elusive space. Yet, even though "The Little Room" does not feature a full-fledged ghost as most of the other stories do, the haunting nature of the little room/china closet that sometimes appears and sometimes disappears, nevertheless fulfills the same function as the human or feral ghosts in other stories: Just as the ghost in other stories, the spectrality of the little room is used to dramatize the silencing of female voices and the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal society.

The reader first learns about the haunting little room through a story Margaret Grant tells her husband Roger as they are on their way to visit her two aunts. Margaret's mother grew up in their house and was raised by them. At the age of ten, however, she was sent to live with relatives in Brooklyn and stayed with them until she got married. When she took her husband back to her New England aunts, she wanted to show him the little room in the house she remembered most fondly. However, they only found a china closet in the space where Margaret's mother remembered the little room to be. After the aunts insisted that the house was as it always has been, they all decided that Margaret's mother had only imagined the little room. Years later, when Margaret herself is only eight years old and her father has died, she and her mother returned to the aunts' house once again and found a little room in the space where her mother now remembered a china closet. The aunts' reaction to this revelation was, again, the simple statement that the "little room has always been there, […] ever since the house was built." Upon the remark that the last time Margaret's mother and her husband had found a china closet, aunt Hannah replied "No, there has never been any china-closet there; it has always been just as it is now" (Wynne 20). When Margaret and Roger arrive at their aunts' place, they again only find a china closet.

This switch between little room and china closet happens several times throughout the story. Thus, the story's puzzle lies in the mystery of the space's appearance as either a little room or a china closet. According to Weinstock, this puzzle points towards the underlying ideological construction of space itself as inherently gendered (*Scare Tactics* 61). The little room represents a "feminine space of refuge and intimacy in the heart of the domestic space of the farmhouse" (62). The china closet forms a stark contrast to the liberating female space of the little room and "clearly symbolizes the forms of domestic labor, such as cooking and cleaning, that were expected from married women during the nineteenth century and suggests as well that women within marriage were numbered among the husband's possessions" (64). Therefore, as soon as a Margaret's and her mother's husbands are present "the little room, this idealized space of fantasy and self-realization, ceases to exist and becomes itself fantasy, a haunting memory of liberty surrendered" (64). Weinstock uses queer theory to point out that the story's "queer haunting presence of the little room […] highlights the gendered construction and inhabitation of space itself" (65). In other words, the disappearance of the little room whenever a male family member is present, dramatizes the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal discourse—particularly the need for "self-realization," or the possibility for leisure time. The puzzle's solution therefore seems to be rather easy: the room appears as a room if there is only a woman present and changes into a china closet, a symbol of patriarchy, as soon as a man appears.

However, this seems too simple an explanation since it disregards several instances in which the story deviates from this presumed rule. There are, for example, the two aunts, Hannah and Maria, who always seem to remember the house exactly as visitors find it—either with china closet or little room—and seem to have no recollection of it ever being otherwise. Here, Weinstock offers several different explanations such as genuine ignorance of the changing space, or a sort of "discomfort or distress related to their own liminal position as elderly spinsters within a culture that emphasizes marriage and maternity as the key to female fulfillment—that manifests itself in an unwillingness to admit to the instability of their domestic space" (*Scare Tactics* 67). In addition, the second part of the story revolves around the two women Rita and Nan, one being Margaret's friend and the other her cousin, who travel to the house in order to determine whether there is a little room or a china closet there. Even though both women travel there alone without a man accompanying them, only Nan sees the little room, whereas Rita finds a china closet. Weinstock's explanation for this inconsistency is "that patriarchal ideology is so pervasive that some women cannot even dream of 'a room of their own' outside of or apart from gendered social conventions" (64). In this case, Rita would be

interpellated by patriarchal ideology to such a high degree that she cannot open a room for her own self-actualization and enjoyment but immediately accepts her role as domestic worker and thus opens the door to a china closet.

However, Weinstock disregards the importance of female speech and narrative mediacy in the story when trying to solve the puzzle of the little room. When examining the narrative more closely, one cannot help but notice that the little room only ever exists in direct speech. The reader never once encounters the little room directly—or more precisely mediated through the covert narrator—but only ever hears about it in Margaret's and later Nan's accounts. In the instances in which the narrator mediates the encounter with the haunted space, it always turns out to be a china closet. The entire first part of the story, for example, takes place in direct speech. Margaret and Roger Grant are sitting in a train traveling to Vermont to visit her aunts Hannah and Maria. During this rather uneventful scene, Margaret tells Roger the story of her mother and the little room/china closet. When they arrive at her aunts' house, Margaret "and her husband [go] to find the little room, or closet, or whatever [is going] to be there." What they find, is "a *china-closet*" (Wynne 26).

As they approach the door, the reader is cast into the same role as Roger, wondering whether this mysterious room Margaret has been talking about really exists. Because there is no comment of an omniscient narrative voice, the reader's curiosity for the truth is never resolved. Instead, the reader, as Roger, can decide whether or not to believe Margaret's mysterious story of the little room or disregard it and trust the narrator who only described a china closet. Roger's reaction is one of disbelief and again shows the disregard of the female experience by patriarchal order. He is "antagonized" and "hurt" and, after a pause, "sa[ys], kindly enough, but in a voice that cut her deeply: 'I am glad this ridiculous thing is ended; don't let us speak of it again'" (Wynne 27). By demanding to not speak about the subject of the little room again, he effectively silences Margaret and casts her previous experience of the room as unreliable. Indeed, an instant later, Margaret realizes "*he [doesn't] believe her*" (28). This emphasis on his disbelief, marked by the use of italics, further highlights the central issue at stake: the dominance of male over female experience and the testimonial injustice experienced by women who receive little credibility from their male counterparts in instances in which the man cannot confirm her experience with his own eyes. Since Roger himself cannot see the room, it can never have been there at all.

The second time there is an argument over the existence of the little room, this time between Rita and Margaret's cousin, Nan, a similar narrative structure appears. On short notice, Rita cannot attend their trip to Vermont, and Nan has to go alone. In a telegram, she reports her

finding in the Vermont house: "'Safely arrived; went to Keys farm; it is a little room'" (Wynne 33). Again, the reader only learns about the existence of the little room through a woman's words. And again, the narrator neither confirms nor negates the existence of the little room but simply transmits the message Nan sent to her friend. However, when the narrator subsequently describes Rita's journey to the Keys farm, Rita "[finds] the china-closet" (34). This narrative structure is significant because it immediately puts the reader in opposition to the women in the story. The readers themselves must make the decision whether or not to believe Margaret and Nan and thus accept "The Little Room" as a ghost story featuring a haunting space, or to disregard their stories just as Margaret's and her mother's husbands did. If the reader decides to believe Margaret and Nan, female discourse has the power to create truth—the truth about the little room as an actual space—but if the reader does indeed decide to disregard their experience as every other character in the story, then female discourse is again rendered powerless.

In his analysis of the story, Weinstock concludes that men and women experience the world differently "due to the ideological weight of gender. The ultimate unsettling assertion of Wynne's haunting story is that men and women occupy different—and mutually exclusive—realities. The queer space of the little room reveals the ways in which ideologies of gender construct different worlds for men and women" (*Scare Tactics* 69). If we now take into account the narrative situation and add it to this conclusion, the story implies that women's reality is in every way suppressed by dominant ideology. Margaret's, her mother's, and Nan's reality of the little room cannot exist outside of their own discourse—a discourse that manifests itself as the counter-discourse to the dominant patriarchal discourse that is represented by the husbands in the story as well as the narrator. Indeed, the narrator's description of the little room is very much limited to reporting it via direct speech or writing by the female characters in the story. The narrator themself cannot step out of the patriarchal discourse which does not allow a space of female self-fulfillment and female pleasure for women and can consequently never directly describe the little room. Therefore, the little room can only exist within the very private experience of women and as a counter-discourse to patriarchy. In patriarchal discourse, it disappears out of existence.

"The Little Room," then, dramatizes the silencing of women's voices and the invisibility of the female experience and female needs and desires in patriarchal society. The male discourse, represented by Margaret's father, Roger, and—at least to some extent—the narrator, dominates female speech completely. By never actually describing the little room outside of female speech, the narrator implies that it is not 'really' there but only exists in the women's

imagination. In other words, the little room and the needs and desires for leisure and self-actualization it represents can only exist in the memory of Margaret's mother, herself, and Nan, but it remains entirely invisibility to the narrator and ultimately also the reader. The female experience thus becomes negated and suppressed by male power. Only a man's visual confirmation of the existence of the little room would be able to confirm it as existent and enable it to become part of the narrative outside of female speech.

This theme of male power having to confirm the female experience as valid and 'true' is a theme present in many other ghost stories as well. In "The Little Room" it is the existence of a feminine space and the right to female enjoyment and self-fulfillment outside of domestic duties which is eliminated from dominant discourse. In other stories, it is the issue of domestic violence which is disregarded by the dominant discourse and thus judged as non-existent.

3.2. Hermeneutical Injustice and Domestic Violence in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" and Edith Wharton's "Kerfol"

Many of the most famous American ghost stories are structured as a story within a story. One of the most prominent examples is Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," in which the tale about the Headless Horseman is framed by a short explanation of the situation in which the narrator first heard the story, as well as a short note at the beginning of the text informing the reader that the text was found amongst the papers of the fictional historian Diedrich Knickerbocker. Another example would be Henry James's "The Turn of the Screw," in which the governess's story is preceded by an opening prologue in which the visitors of a boarding house are assembled around the fire and listen to Douglas, one of the characters, who reads the governess's manuscript to the group. In both these cases, the frame narrative serves to justify the ghost story. Just as Diedrich Knickerbocker and his status as a historian legitimizes the tale of Sleepy Hollow, Douglas functions as a character witness to the governess and thus verifies her story—even though she later proves to be rather unreliable in her storytelling.

Unsurprisingly, this structure can also often be found in women's ghost stories at the time. The most interesting cases of these frame narratives—particularly regarding epistemic injustice and silencing of women's voices—can be found in stories in which the story within the story is told by a male character. In Harriet Beecher Stowe's short story collection *Sam*

Lawson's Oldtown Fireside Stories, first published in 1872, for example, one of the characters, Sam Lawson, functions as the town's storyteller and tells the several different ghost stories in the collection to the homodiegetic narrator. In Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), the male narrator of the frame narrative transcribes an old trial record and retells the story of Anne de Cornault. In both stories, the ghost first exists within the narrative of one of the characters. However, while the frame narrative serves as a legitimization and verification of the following ghost story in stories by American men, the frame narrative in ghost stories by American women often serves a quite different function: As I will show by analyzing the stories by Harriet Beecher Stowe and Edith Wharton, the male narrator in the frame narrative disqualifies, dismisses, and disregards the female experience of the ghost—or rather that which the ghost represents.

It is not only the female experience of haunting that is dismissed and silenced by these male narrators, but also the female experience of domestic violence. In fact, both Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" and Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" heavily imply the existence of domestic violence against women without mentioning the term itself—which comes as no surprise considering that the concept was not available in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century. In both stories, the ghost becomes a vehicle to negotiate hermeneutical injustice regarding domestic violence—particularly in the form of female isolation and incarceration and psychological terror at the hands of the husband. In addition, both stories criticize the accompanying testimonial injustice women who try to talk about domestic violence experience in nineteenth century patriarchal society by showing how they are not believed, or their suffering is disregarded or ridiculed. Indeed, just like the existence of the ghost is disregarded by the men in the story, so is the idea of domestic violence. Women's voices are thus completely silenced, and their experience cast as invisible—just as the ghost itself.

In Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's "The Day of My Death," Fred does not believe his wife that she has heard a ghost and must confirm it several times himself before he acknowledges that something supernatural might be going on in their house. This pattern can also be observed in Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" from the short story collection *Sam Lawson's Fireside Stories* (1872). Although the stories in the collection are not connected in their content, they do all follow the same narrative structure: the frame narrative is set in front of the fireplace in a house, on the bank of a river, or elsewhere where there is need for entertainment, and Sam Lawson is asked to tell one of his stories. One of these is a story of Cap'n Brown, who moves to Oldtown with the wish to settle down and who is accused by two

town's women to either have his house haunted by a woman he murdered, or otherwise to have imprisoned a living woman in that same house.

Storytelling and narration take place on several levels in "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House." The first level is the telling of the ghost story within the frame narrative. While fishing in the Charles River, the homodiegetic narrator—a young boy—asks Sam Lawson whether or not ghosts really exist:

> Sam, tell us certain true, is there any such things as ghosts?''Be there ghosts ?' said Sam, immediately translating into his vernacular grammar: 'wal, now, that are's jest the question, ye see.' 'Well, grandma thinks there are, and Aunt Lois thinks it's all nonsense […]''Wal, you see, boys, in them things it's jest as well to mind your granny. There's a consid'able sight o' gumption in grandmas. You look at the folks that's allus tellin' you what they don't believe, — they don't believe this, and they don't believe that, — and what sort o' folks is they ? Why-, like yer Aunt Lois, sort o' stringy and dry. There ain't no 'sorption got out o' not believin' nothin'. (Stowe 139-40)

This set up to the story introduces "the primary occupation of the story" which is "the ontological status of the ghost" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 37). In addition, it also introduces the conflict between various producers or holders of different knowledges: Aunt Lois, the boy's grandmother, and Sam. In fact, the boy narrator is conflicted between the two opposing opinions of his grandmother, who believes in ghosts, and his aunt, who does not. In asking Sam Lawson for his fatherly opinion, then, he makes him the last instance of truth and at the same time disregards the teaching of both adult women in his life—or rather seeks male confirmation on either one of their knowledges. Thus, Sam functions as a validator of experience and truth—he represents the knowledge producing power of male discourse just as Fred did in "The Day of My Death." If his male authority decides to believe in ghosts, then it is acceptable to do so. And indeed, Sam Lawson validates the grandmother's knowledge by telling the boys to believe in her teaching. At the same time, he belittles Aunt Lois by calling her "stringy and dry" and accusing her of having no believes at all (Stowe 140). Aunt Lois is immediately repudiated by Lawson for not conforming to what he believes is right. Sam Lawson then proceeds to tell a tale which illustrates this central conflict of believing and not believing.

As the story goes, Cap'n Brown settled down in Oldtown with a fortune he had made at sea. He was not married but he had a servant woman (the historical contexts in the mid-nineteenth century suggests a slave woman) from Guinea, named Quassia, who did all of his housework. One day, Quassia asks Cinthy, a woman from the town, to come spend a week at the house to tailor some clothes for the Captain. Cinthy later relates her experiences of feeling like "there was somebody or somethin' round the house", following her or "she felt somebody go by her up the stairs" (Stowe 145-56). Quassia denies that there is anybody else living in the

house besides them, but a little time later Cinthy sees a "white figure" in the parlor and eventually "standing' right in the moonlight by her bed, was a woman jest as white as a sheet" (148-49). Cinthy concludes it must have been a ghost since the woman was gone a moment later and both her bedroom doors were still locked from the inside. Later, Cinthy's account of a ghost living up at the Cap'n Brown house is contradicted by an encounter of Aunt Sally Dickerson, who claims she saw a woman leave the Cap'n Brown house in the middle of the night, suggesting that the Captain has kept a woman imprisoned in the house.

Firstly, it is noteworthy that the woman in the Cap'n Brown house or respectively her ghost only exists within the narratives of both Cinthy and Sally Dickerson. The reader never encounters her themselves—like in Wynne's story "The Little Room." In addition, the whole tale only exists in Sam Lawson's re-telling of it. The female voices are therefore overwritten by his male interpretation. The story never once directly relates the female experiences to the reader, but it is always mediated by both a male narrator and a male addressee—the boy who the story is told to, the homodiegetic narrator of the frame narrative. Secondly, it is also noteworthy that Cinthy and Sally Dickerson are both accused of having dreamt their version of events which ultimately deems both of their experiences equally unreliable (Stowe 158-59). Therefore, both women are, again, accused of not being able to distinguish between reality and dream. As Sam Lawson states, "which on 'em was awake, or which on'em was asleep, is what ain't settled in Oldtown yet" (159). The reality of the female experience thereby becomes an aspect of communal life and more importantly communal epistemological practices since it is the community that is eventually tasked to decide which woman's tale is more trustworthy, meaning 'real.' In other words, it is the community that decides whether or not the female experience is 'true' or not and not the respective woman herself. Reality and knowledge about what is 'real' and what is not are thus only constructed communally, not individually.

These two opposing stories of what happened at the Cap'n Brown house lead back to the question posed by the boy narrator at the very beginning of the story: are ghosts real or not? As Weinstock aptly observes, "[o]f the two possible conclusions—real woman or ghost—the more realistic interpretation also turns out to be the more frightening of the two" (*Scare Tactics* 41). However, the fact that part of the community chooses to believe in the ghost and the other part chooses to believe it was a real woman who was brought away in the middle of the night, has some serious implications. When being told the story, Aunt Lois says: "'Ghosts, […] don't tell me! Perhaps it would be best ef 'twas a ghost,' says she. She didn't think there ought to be no sich doin's in nobody's house; and your grandma she shet her up, and told her she didn't oughter talk so." When the narrator interrupts Sam to ask what this means, Sam explains:

> 'Why you see,' said Sam mysteriously, 'there allers is folks in every town that's jest like the Sadducees in old times: they won't believe in angel nor sperit, no way you can fix it; and ef things is seen and done in a house, why, they say it's 'cause there's somebody there; there's some sort o' deviltry or trick about it. (Stowe 151-52)

The wording Sam Lawson uses suggests that he does indeed side with those town's people who believe in the ghosts—rather than in the "deviltry," that Aunt Lois suggests when she says it might be better if it was a ghost. Sam implicitly discredits everybody who does not believe in "angel nor sperit" (151) just as he discredited and belittled Aunt Lois in the beginning of the narrative, when he called her "stringy and dry" (140). What Aunt Lois suggested with her comment "Perhaps it would be best ef 'twas a ghost" is of course the implication that if it was a real woman in the house, she would be imprisoned and thus at least emotionally if not physically abused by the Cap'n. The community, however, by choosing to rather believe in the ghost, rejects all responsibility in helping the mistreated woman. This shows that even though Aunt Lois can imply that something wrong is happening, there is no room in the public discourse to adequately discuss, or criticize, let alone prosecute domestic violence.

Sam Lawson's dismissal of Aunt Lois also symbolizes his dismissal of her interpretation of domestic violence. Consequently, as the patriarchal authority figure in the story, his dismissal also means a denial of domestic violence in nineteenth century society more generally. Indeed, the fact that Sam as the male authority figure telling the story implicitly sides with the townspeople who believe in the ghost instead of in the imprisoned woman implies that if the choice is between ghosts and domestic violence, the belief in the supernatural is the more plausible or, at least, the more comfortable one. The existence of domestic violence is thus completely suppressed and negated. This denial and willful ignorance particularly by the male community members becomes even more evident when the town's minister goes to call on the Cap'n. He reports "he didn't see nothin'" which Lawson immediately comments with "Folks never does see nothin' when they ain't lookin where 'tis, Fact is, Parson Lothrop wa'n't fond o' interferin'; he was a master hand to slick things over" (153). The fact "[t]hat the women of the town felt themselves to be beholden to an ineffectual parson to investigate the situation suggests the ways in which social customs function to obscure private vices, as well as the ways in which gender expectations delimit autonomy for women" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 39-40). What is more, by choosing to believe the minister who reported to have seen nothing out of the ordinary in the house, the townspeople carry on their gossip, but do not further inquire on their own.

Even though the community is split in its opinion on whom to believe, it is nevertheless noteworthy that neither of the two experiences seems to lead to a further investigation. This further illustrates the silencing of female voices and invisibility of female experiences in the public sphere. According to Sam Lawson's storytelling, the Captain, although not a church member, is regarded

> as honest and regular a man as any goin', as fur as any on us could see. To be sure, nobody know's where he come from, but that wa'n't no reason agin' him […] But then, ye see, folks will talk, […] and they did some on 'em talk considerable strong about the cap'n; but some how or other, there didn't nobody come to the p'int o'facin' on him down, and sayin' square out, 'Cap'n Brown, have you got a woman in your house, or hasn't you? or is it a ghost, or what is it?' Folks somehow never does come to that. Ye see, there was the cap'n so respectable, a settin' up every Sunday there in his pew, with his ruffles round his hands and his red broadcloth cloak and his cocked hat. (Stowe 155-56)

The Cap'n's reputation is indisputable by either of the two women's experiences (155). Even though he is new in town, and no one knows much about him, the town's community does not confront him and instead turns a blind eye and remains willfully ignorant—as evidenced by the minister's refusal to see anything out of the ordinary. The Cap'n's status and respectability—and, not at least, him being a man—protect him from any charges. The talk that happens behind his back does not reach him and his reputation. Thus, his reputation is stronger than the testimony of two of the town's women. Indeed, the town is so obsessed with the question which of the two women's experiences was only a dream that no one deems it worthy to further inquire into either one of them, which ultimately leads to a disregard and silencing of both experiences. Neither one of them sparks a response. Violence against women, as it is either way carried out by the Captain—either he has killed a woman, whose ghost now haunts his house, or imprisoned one—, is cut out from the public discourse. By shifting the focus from domestic violence to the question whether it was Cinthy or Aunt Sally who might have dreamt their experience, the issue of domestic violence is silenced completely. Since male discourse has the power to produce knowledge, not including an issue such as domestic violence in this discourse consequently means that it does not exist for the public.

Thus, the female experience is suppressed on all narrative levels. In disregarding the experience of the living or deceased woman in the Cap'n Brown house and instead focusing on the question of whether or not the other two women might have dreamt what they saw, all three women's experiences are disregarded by the community. What is more, all of them only exist in the male discourse of Sam Lawson's fireside story. Violence against women becomes a spooky tale that is told at the fireside. Neither Sam Lawson nor the boy narrator are very eager to correct the wrong. By making the existence or non-existence of a ghost in the house their

primary concern, they completely disregard the violence against women at the basis of this question. The very real experience of abuse of the woman in the house—whether alive or not—becomes only a shadow of the primary concern of the reliability of the two narratives.

A similar pattern can be observed in Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" (1916), first published in *Scribner's Magazine*. Like Wharton's earlier story "The Lady's Maid's Bell," which was published roughly one decade earlier, "Kerfol" is deeply concerned with the female experience of "sexual violence, isolation, and psychological abuse" (Ohler 40). In his interpretation and comparison of these two stories, Paul Ohler argues that by "present[ing] different social contexts, the early-twentieth-century United States in 'The Lady's Maid's Bell' and early seventeenth-century France in 'Kerfol,' [the two stories] fictionally analyze a trans-historic culture of sexual violence toward women" (41). "Kerfol"—though being the later of the two stories—is much more modeled after the early European Gothic narratives. It is set in an old, sublime mansion in Brittany, family seat of the aristocrat Yves de Cornault. In addition, the story utilizes the classical characters of the Gothic heroine, Anne de Cornault, who is held capture and abused by the Gothic villain, her husband Yves de Cornault. The story thus aligns itself with the classical European Gothic tradition to "frame protagonists as subject of male power to create women's history out of Gothic mystery" (44).

Told through the eyes of the supposedly—although never explicitly stated—male narrator who in narrative present of the frame narrative is told by his host in Brittany to buy the old mansion Kerfol, both the reader and the narrator discover a gruesome tale of domestic violence and murder of the house's previous inhabitants that happened around 1600. After spontaneously visiting Kerfol one day, the narrator reports to his hosts Lanrivain to have encountered several dogs barking at the house. According to Madame de Lanrivain, "those dogs are the ghosts of Kerfol," which appear once a year (Wharton 332). Based on this mysterious incident Lanrivaine presents his guest with an old judicial record of the trial of the previous lady of Kerfol, Anne de Cornault. The content of the report is then presented to the reader in the words of the male narrator who translates and "disentangle[s]" the report into "a simpler form" (333). Anne, he reports, lived childless at Kerfol with her husband, Yves de Cornault, being away on business trips most of the time until one day her husband is found dead at the bottom of the stairs—torn apart by what appeared to be dog bite marks. Anne was tried for his murder because no dogs could be found at Kerfol.

Over the course of the narrative, it becomes apparent that Anne owned several dogs during her time at Kerfol, all of whom turned up dead on her bed after her husband discovered that she had given the collar of her first dog to a neighborly friend Hervé de Lanrivain as a piece

of remembrance. Supposedly out of jealousy, her husband killed every dog she brought home after this incident and presented it as a reminder of his power over her on her pillows. The night Yves de Cornault died, Hervé de Lanrivain returned from a trip and sent a message to Anne to inform her he would be awaiting her outside that night. When Anne walked down the stairs from her room to warn Hervé of her husband's temper she heard a "terrible scream and a fall" (Wharton 339). When the judge inquired further, she reported to have heard the "dogs kept on snarling and panting. Once or twice he cried out. I think he moaned once. Then he was quiet." Answering the question of which dogs, she thought, did this, she replied, "My dead dogs," after which she "was taken out of court, not to reappear there again." She "died many years later, a harmless madwoman" (334).

In transcribing the trial records, the autodiegetic narrator of the frame narrative becomes the overt, intra- and heterodiegetic narrator of Anne de Cornault's story. His voice dominates every single aspect of Anne's experience. Importantly, the very act of transcribing trial records suggests an interpretation of the same. Ultimately, it is his decision which part of her story is told and which part is left out. Through this narrative technique, Ohler argues, the story at its core depicts "historical restrictions on women's self-representation" (48). Therefore, "'Kerfol' in essence can be considered as a sort of literary diptych in which two stories of Kerfol are 'careful'-ly juxtaposed in order to raise questions about the limits of representation—that is, about what can and cannot be seen and spoken" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 50). In other words, Anne cannot represent her story herself but must rely both on trial records kept by the patriarchal judicial system in which she was tried for murder, and the male hobby-historian uncovering her story and interpreting it during the transcription process decades later.

In addition, the issue of domestic abuse that haunts the entire tale, can neither be fully explained by Anne herself nor adequately interpreted by the male narrator who, according to Weinstock, "ultimately refuses to acknowledge the underlying story of gender oppression and ghostly retribution that structures the tale" (47). This inability to openly speak about and discuss domestic violence is thus indicative of the hermeneutical injustice faced by women at the time who cannot adequately communicate their experience of abuse. In addition, this unspeakability also points towards a willful male ignorance about domestic abuse that manifests itself in the failure of the male narrator to acknowledge Anne's experience of abuse and instead paints her as a "harmless madwoman."

In fact, testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice intersect in Anne de Cornault's story in several significant ways. First of all, her repeated testimony that it was neither her nor her friend who killed her husband but instead her dead dogs, is repeatedly dismissed by the

judges because they firmly believe she has killed her husband to run away with her lover. They do not accept any other explanation certainly not one involving ghost dogs. The reader, however, knows that the ghost dogs are real because the narrator has already encountered them in the frame narrative and thus confirmed their existence. Secondly, Anne's repeated testimony that she did not have an affair with Hervé de Lanrivain but rather an innocent friendship is also repeatedly dismissed because it does not fit the judges' prejudice of an adulterous, murderous woman. At the beginning of the trial, she admits to wanting to talk to Hervé de Lanrivain the night her husband died. The narrator paraphrases her having "said that her married life had been extremely lonely: 'desolate' was the word she used" (Wharton 336). In emphasizing 'desolate' as her exact choice of words, the narrator shows his contempt and disbelief in her experience actually being that horrific. When, in addition, she reports that some days he would not speak to her at all and that "he kept her like a prisoner at Kerfol" (336), these statements also do not seem to impress him or the judges. Even her confession of having feared for her life because her husband had strangled her dog sparks no response in her favor (336). Instead, the judges—as well as the narrator—have already made up their minds about her being a temptress and adulteress and, consequently, the accusation of adultery serves as the primary reason to indict her in the first place.

In addition, hermeneutical injustice becomes apparent during Anne's examination by the judges when she states:

> '[…] I was afraid for my life.'
> 'Of whom were you afraid?'
> 'Of my husband.'
> 'Why were you afraid of your husband?'
> 'Because he had strangled my little dog.'
> Another smile must have passed around the courtroom: in days when any nobleman had a right to hang his peasants – and most of them exercised it – pinching a pet animal's wind-pipe was nothing to make a fuss about. (Wharton 336)

This interrogation proves the domestic abuse that Anne suffered from and the fear her husband's violent behavior against her only companions caused in her. Yet, neither society nor law recognized such an offense, and consequently, as Ohler points out, "Anne's suffering at the hands of her husband is delegitimized by the juridical proceedings depicted in the centuries-old legal text the male narrator reports" (43). This delegitimization of the female experience points towards both male ignorance as well as hermeneutical injustice regarding domestic violence against women. More specifically, hermeneutical injustice lies in the lack of language and concepts to express Anne's experience as abusive because, as the last paragraph suggests,

according to the law the killing of a pet animal was nothing out of the ordinary; it certainly was not called abusive—which of course does not mean that it was not.

In fact, the male narrator recounts after relating Anne's story of her dead dogs that "It was an odd tale, certainly; but what did it prove? That Yves de Cornault disliked dogs, and that his wife, to gratify her own fancy, persistently ignored his dislike" (Wharton 338). Note, that the second sentence is phrased as a statement rather than a question. The patriarchal knowledge produced after hearing the story, is thus not that Anne suffered from the domestic violence at the hands of her husband but rather that she was the one at fault for ignoring his wishes. This reasoning as well as her interrogation and, indeed, the entire trial point towards a willful male ignorance of the judges who cannot—and also do not show any real effort to—understand why finding her pet dogs strangled on her pillow would have caused any fear for her life in her.

Both narrator as well as judges thus exhibit what Pohlhaus calls "*willful hermeneutical ignorance*" (716). According to Pohlhaus, "*willful hermeneutical ignorance* describes instances where marginally situated knowers actively resist epistemic domination through interaction with other resistant knowers, while dominantly situated knowers nonetheless continue to misunderstand and misinterpret the world" (716). In other words,

> The oppressed are often perfectly well able to express and conceptualize their experiences. But the privileged will often ignore or disparage new concepts and understandings developed by the oppressed. If the privileged are confused by what they hear, and decide not to try to understand novel concepts, or not to think through them well enough to reach more than a surface level comprehension, then the privileged commit a form of epistemic injustice that Pohlhaus terms 'willful hermeneutical ignorance.' (Sherman and Goguen 8)

"Willful hermeneutical ignorance" is thus a combination "of hermeneutical injustice and privileged ignorance" (7). This is exactly what can be observed in the case of Anne de Cornault in Kerfol. Anne is perfectly able to express her fear of her husband and what exactly leads her to fear for her life. However, the privileged men such as the judges or the narrator do not show any real effort to understand her and thereby maintain their male ignorance and subject Anne to further epistemic injustice.

The ghost dogs that allegedly killed her husband become a symbol for domestic violence and just as the existence of the ghosts is dismissed, so is the reality of domestic abuse. Instead, the male judges choose to remain ignorant about the female experience of isolation and psychological terror, and Anne de Cornault is finally silenced for good by being "handed over to the keeping of her husband's family, who shut her up in the keep of Kerfol, where she is said to have died many years later, a harmless madwoman" (Wharton 340). Through the judges' maintained ignorance, then, and the discreditation of Anne as a "harmless madwoman", who

once again is incarcerated in Kerfol, the patriarchy is able to maintain its power and cast female knowledge about domestic violence as illegitimate.

Ultimately, no representative of the patriarchal power structure—neither her own lawyer, nor the judges, neither the especially founded ecclesiastical committee, nor the narrator—believe Anne's story of violence and haunting. In fact, her lawyer "was thoroughly ashamed of [this line of defense]" and the narrator reports that he "would have sacrificed her without a scruple to save his professional reputation" (Wharton 338). Furthermore, the bias shown by the representatives of the patriarchal power structures at work "systematically invalidates all evidence that might work in her [Anne's] favor" (Dyman 84). As in Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House," then, a woman's narrative of her experience, her perception of the reality of their marriage, and her reported fear for her life again lead to endless discussion by the male leaders of the community but does not spark any other response than to finally let the whole incident fade into forgetfulness.

Consequently, as pointed out by Weinstock, the most important aspect of social critique in "Kerfol" " is the complete failure of the narrator at the end of the story to reflect on the story of Anne de Cornault, which indicates that insensitivity to the plight of women is as much a problem in the narrative present as it was in the 1600s" (*Scare Tactics* 52-53). Indeed, at the end of the story, the narrator exhibits "an unwillingness […] to engage with the historical fact of women's oppression" (53). Although in the frame narrative, he still asks himself the question "Is it possible that anyone could *not* see—" (Wharton 330), ultimately "he is the one who *refuses* to see, to acknowledge what on an intuitive level he knows—that Anne's story is not so much about ghostly dogs or romantic liaisons as it is about the very real forms of sanctioned cruelty" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 53). The narrator's *failure* to reflect and *refusal* to see thus dramatize male ignorance regarding domestic abuse. In his male ignorance, the narrator dismisses the female experience of violence to maintain his world view in which domestic violence does not exist, but rather in which a husband has the right to power and privacy in all matters concerning his marriage—including violent retribution for his wife's alleged infidelity. Through this, then, hermeneutical injustice regarding domestic abuse remains existent and patriarchal power structures are maintained.

This male ignorance that also leads to the narrator's unreliability—the text's structural manifestation of his failure to acknowledge Anne's experience of abuse. In addition, this unreliability further emphasizes the invisibility of the female experience in patriarchal discourse. Even though he states in the beginning that "nowhere have I added anything of my own" (Wharton 333), the narrator clearly "interprets Anne's story from his own perspective"

(Fedorko 67) and thus turns into a very biased and ultimately also unreliable narrator. As I argued above, the very act of transcribing a historical record is already an act of interpretation—especially when he admits to having "disentangled" the report into "a simpler form" (Wharton 333). In addition, the narrator comments repeatedly on the events preceding the trial and during the trial itself. Halfway through the narrative, for example, he writes "I will try to keep as nearly as possible to Anne's own statements, though toward the end, *poor thing*…" (Wharton 335; my emphasis). This condescending 'poor thing' emphasizes his own as well as the judges and jury's self-assumed superiority over Anne and her story. In addition, the comment implies that her account of what happened is—at least in his eyes—much too confused to be believable. The narrator therefore clearly sides with the judges and jury and—through his commentary—discredits Anne's explanation of her husband's death through her dead dogs. Moreover, he comments that Anne "was not a clever woman, I imagine" (339) proving further that he does in fact add his own 'imagination'—meaning interpretation—to the trial records, despite his promise to not add anything of his own.

The comment also again illustrates his alleged intellectual superiority to Anne and her story. In his interpretation, she failed to drug her husband which would have allowed her to escape with her lover Hervé de Lanrivain. "[A]s the first result of her cogitation *she appears to have made the mistake* of being, that evening, too kind to her husband. She could not ply him with wine" (339; my emphasis). Because of this Yves the Cornault is later able to catch her in her alleged escape and falls prey to her revenge. Her explanation of the dead dogs murdering her husband, is disregarded from the start by both the court and the narrator himself—even though the narrator knows that the ghost dogs exist since he has seen them himself.

The unreliable male narrator, then, represents the patriarchal power structure in which male reason dominates over female intuition and supposed 'superstition'—despite strong evidence that would suggest that the female knowledge about the existence of ghost dogs is, indeed, the more validated knowledge. The narrator "dismisses Anne's story of her husband's death by refusing to take seriously the suprarational knowledge he has gained while visiting the ruined Kerfol" (Fedorko 66). During his trip to the old mansion, he saw the dogs himself, "[y]et he ignores all this supporting evidence when he reads the proceedings of Anne's trial, taking stock in the judicial over the intuitional" (67). Therefore, through "his arrogant judgment of Anne, the narrator joins the cast of Gothic characters who deny intuitive understanding and take refuge solely in reason" (66). He thus maintains hegemonic male epistemological practices that solely accept so-called "reasonable" explanations and completely disregards Anne's—and ultimately his own because he has, after all, seen the ghost dogs himself—experience as

legitimately knowledge-producing and instead casts them as supernatural superstition. Consequently, he remains willfully ignorant of Anne's experience of domestic violence by not acknowledging alternative epistemological practices which would confirm the existence of the ghost dogs. Acknowledging the existence of the ghost dogs would also mean he would have to disregard the more "reasonable" explanation of Anne being a murderess, which is the conclusion that is drawn by all representatives of the patriarchal power structure.

As was the case in Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House," the female experience of domestic violence—evidenced by the fact that Anne was very much isolated in her husband's mansion for most of the time and in the psychological terror of him killing her pet dogs and placing them on her pillow—is repeatedly ignored by the patriarchal power structure. By continuously discrediting Anne's account of the domestic abuse and instead emphasizing that the first years of Anne's and Yves' marriage "passed happily for the couple" (Wharton, "Kerfol" 334) the narrator both enables and legitimizes the exclusion of the domestic violence as a serious aspect in the later trial. By not making the domestic violence a legitimate aspect in Anne's trial, the patriarchal power structure once again negates its very existence.

In fact, it is already in his description of the marriage that the narrator systematically disregards Anne's experience of being constrained and abused and instead sides with the patriarchal power represented by her husband. In relying on statements by others about the marriage of the Cornaults, the narrator discovers that "[n]o one was found to say that Yves de Cornault had been unkind to his wife, and it was plain to all that he was content with his bargain" (Wharton 334). In making Yves de Cornault his first person of reference, the narrator establishes a hierarchy of perception. If the husband was content and no one plainly stated that he abused his wife, this must be the truth. With this for Yves' perspective beneficial summary of their marriage, the narrator lies important groundwork for the reception of the following trial records in which Anne stands alone with her accusations of psychological abuse. In fact, his description of Anne mentions that "the only grievance her champions could call up in her behalf was that Kerfol was a lonely place, and that when her husband was away on business […] she was not allowed so much as to walk in the park unaccompanied" (334). Being constrained to the house and not allowed outside unaccompanied when her husband is away, is the first sign of emotional abuse the story offers. However, the narrator seems unimpressed. Moreover, he brushes away the discovery of a servant woman finding her lady in tears over the fact that "she was a woman accursed to have no child, and nothing in life to call her own" with the conviction that this was a "natural enough feeling in a wife attached to her husband" (334).

Since Anne did not have any children of her own, the dogs function as a symbolical child-replacement, which further emphasizes that their murder can be seen as an act of psychological abuse of Anne. Anne receives her first dog from Yves de Cornault after he has been on a long trip to Bordeaux. She "petted and talked to it as if it had been a child—as indeed it was the nearest thing to a child she was to know" (Wharton 334). The murder of the dog by her husband is thus even more horrific. He takes away the object of her motherly love and care. In addition to constraining her to his house, he now constrains her to the sole role of submissive wife, violently subjecting her to the patriarchal ideology he represents. She has nothing left that is only hers but is now truly his property to do with as he pleases. Fedorko argues that the dogs' "passive silence," which the narrator encounters in the frame narrative when visiting Kerfol, represents "emotional neglect and abuse;" therefore "the ghostly dogs clearly speak for the passive Anne, whose husband does not talk to her for days. In strangling the pet dogs her husband is strangling her, chocking off her source of love and liveliness" (67). What is more, the "passive silence," Fedorko notices, and the strangling through which the dogs are murdered, represent the direct and indirect silencing of Anne's voice through her husband and other patriarchal instances as well as the testimonial and hermeneutical injustice she experiences.

Edith Wharton's "Kerfol" as well as Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Capt'n Brown House" are both powerful tales about domestic violence. They illustrate how violence against women is disregarded by the public and how the female voice and experience are silenced on two levels: an individual and a communal one. The first experience of violation the stories' heroines have to endure happens with the act of domestic abuse; the second experience of violation is their dismissal and silencing in the public sphere. In addition, neither of these women is allowed to speak for themselves, but all their experiences are related through the mediation of male dominated discourse—represented by the male narrators—which leaves no room for the public voicing of domestic violence. The male narrators in combination with other representatives of the patriarchal power structure, such as the judges or lawyer in "Kerfol," furthermore represent male ignorance about domestic abuse. By ignoring the testimony of women and refusing to even attempt to understand their experience, the patriarchal power is maintained, and domestic violence remains marginalized and largely invisible in the dominant discourse.

Consequently, both the ghostly woman in the house and the ghost dogs in Kerfol represent the ghosts of domestic violence women endure without being able to make their suffering heard. They dramatize the hermeneutical injustice connected to this violence, since the patriarchal discourse denied its very existence and denied women the access to interpretative

resources to first of all make sense of and second of all communicate their experience successfully. In both cases, the community is notified of the violence the Capt'n and Yves de Cornault commit against their respective wives, but in both cases the domestic violence is disregarded or even denied—and the patriarchy chooses to remain ignorant. Instead, the debate is concerned about the question whether or not the stories of these women can be considered reliable or are rather the tales of "harmless madwom[e]n" (Wharton 101). If the community considers them unreliable, their accusations of domestic violence can also be deemed unreliable. Since according to nineteenth century law, a woman was regarded her husband's property, the community supports his right to do as he pleases. Thus, in both cases, the women are left alone in their fate.

The two stories lay open these structures of systematic oppression of women's voices and experiences. In illustrating how women's voices were silenced by the dominant discourse, these female authors reclaim a feminine voice in a male dominated discourse. They tell stories around domestic abuse, both emotional and physical, and thus give faces and voices—even if they are only imaginary ones—to the numerous real-life women that are represented by these characters. The inventive, and often subversive, use of literature allowed them to discuss these "'unladylike' topics", to reuse Weinstock's words ("American Ghost" 418), that were otherwise unsayable in public discourse.

3.3. Conclusion: Interpellated Ghosts and Ideology's Reach Into the Afterlife in Edith Wharton's "The Fulness of Life"

What the stories I have discussed so far all have in common is that they use the figure of the ghost not only to shine a spotlight on epistemic injustice in the forms of testimonial and hermeneutical injustice experienced by women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, but also to negotiate the place of women in patriarchal society more generally. Indeed, testimonial and hermeneutical injustice in these stories is always a result and symptom of patriarchal power structures that renders women's experiences and knowledges invisible in the dominant society and thus silences their voices. Edith Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" (1893) dramatizes that this patriarchal ideology reaches even beyond the threshold of death. In a way, this reach of patriarchal ideology beyond death is visible in Wharton's "Kerfol" in which Anne de Cornault is still judged and essentially silenced by the male narrator centuries later.

Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" is told from the perspective of a dying woman. After succumbing to her sickness, she reaches the threshold between life and death, where she encounters the Spirit of Life. The Spirit gives her the choice between spending her afterlife with her soul mate or waiting for her husband to die as well and join her in eternity. The woman chooses to wait for her husband. Wharton's story is a dramatization of the oppression of women in an ideological framework which left them little to no choice in the institution of marriage. After realizing that she will have to wait for her husband, the protagonist accuses the Spirit of Life: "Do you still keep up here that old fiction about choosing? I should have thought that *you* knew better than that. How can I help myself? He [her husband] will expect to find me here, when he comes" (Wharton 704). The story shows the far reach of the patriarchal ideology, affecting women even after death. The protagonist cannot choose to go with her soul mate because that decision would mean she would have to act against all the convictions and societal expectations that guided her life. Even in death, she cannot escape interpellation and thus her only choice is to, indeed, wait for her husband.

In addition, the short story negotiates the invisibility of the female experience in the institution of marriage. During her conversation with the Spirit of Life, the protagonist muses that she often

> thought that a woman's nature is like a great house full of rooms: there is the hall, through which everyone passes in going in and out; the drawing-room, where one receives formal visits; the sitting room, where the members of the family come and go as they list; but beyond that far beyond, are other rooms, the handles of whose doors perhaps are never turned; no one knows the way to them, no one knows whither they lead; and in the innermost room, the holy of holies, the soul sits alone and waits for a footstep that never comes. (Wharton 700)

Her husband, however, never "got beyond the family sitting-room" (700). This metaphor of the female nature as a house and the contentedness of the husband to stay in the "perfectly beautiful" (700) sitting room instead of trying to reach beyond that, shows how the protagonist was for the most part invisible to her husband. He only ever glimpsed the parts of her which were visible to the public anyhow, but never showed any effort to try to get to know her beyond that. Not seeing the rooms beyond those public areas literalizes the invisibility of her experiences, perspectives and anxieties locked away in them.

Consequently, the protagonist admits to the Spirit of Life that she has never known "the fulness of life"—least of all in her marriage, which she describes as "a very incomplete affair" (Wharton 700). She realizes that she and her husband "never understood each other in the least" (701)—something that is only obvious to her, while her husband spent his life in comfortable

ignorance. In fact, "he always thought that he understood" her perfectly (704). However, while he enjoyed reading "railway novels and the sporting advertisements in the papers," she enjoys the works of Dante and Shakespeare, art, and architecture (701). Her explanations show that her marriage was neither based on shared love and affection, nor on common interests. On the contrary, while she learns that her husband has "imagined that he had found his soul's mate on earth in [her]," her involvement in the marriage was solely built on a sense of duty. According to her, "no one else would know how to look after him, he is so helpless. His inkstand would never be filled, and he would always be out of stamps and visiting cards. He would never remember to have his umbrella recovered, or to ask the price of anything before he bought it." It was even her who had to choose the books he read, for only she knew which ones he liked (704). This sense of duty, the fulfillment of her role as his wife, taking care of him, making his life easier, remains stronger—even in death—than the wish to find self-fulfillment in the form of her soulmate. And thus, "[t]he tantalizing possibility of a shared home in paradise for all eternity with her soulmate crumbles in the face of what she appreciates to be an inescapable obligation" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 115).

Furthermore, the story discusses the hypocritical standards of gender expectations at the time. The story dramatizes that "women are expected to sacrifice their personal fulfillment for the sake of the happiness of others, while men are free to pursue personal satisfaction even when it may affect negatively those around them" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 117). This becomes obvious in the protagonist's interaction with her alleged soulmate. Before she makes the decision to stay and wait for her husband, the Spirit of Life introduces her to her soulmate because "every soul which seeks in vain on earth for a kindred soul to whom it can lay bare its inmost being shall find that soul here and be united to it for eternity" (Wharton 702). Immediately, she finds a connection to the other soul talking to him about Dante, Botticelli and Mantegna, Leonardo, Titian and Crivelli (702-03). They revel in the thought that "at last [they] shall have time to read them all. […] Shall it be 'Faust' or the 'Vita Nuova,' the 'Tempest' or 'Les Caprices de Marianne,' or the thirty-first canto of the 'Paradise,' or 'Epipsychidion' or 'Lycidas'?" (703). However, while the man who is said to be her soulmate revels in the newfound happiness without questioning it, the protagonist soon realizes that she is expected to be true to her husband. Upon her question "[i]s there no one on earth whom you sometimes remember?", he simply answers "[n]ot since I have seen you," and according to the narrator, "being a man, he had indeed forgotten" (703). This short exchange ironically comments on the double standards for men and women. While he is free to make his own choices, not bound by expectations others might have of him, she is very much bound by social convention and gender

expectations. The ideology of femininity at the time demands unconditional fidelity and submissiveness from her, but not from him.

Moreover, their short exchange criticizes women's exclusion from high art and literature. Obviously, the protagonist is much more well versed in the literary and art history of Western civilization than her husband. Her interests range from Goethe's *Faust*, over Dante's *Inferno*, to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Nevertheless, in life she is kept from pursuing this interest to full extent because she has no one to share it with. As she tells the Spirit of Life, it was during a trip to Florence that she felt true happiness. Sitting "one evening in the Church of Or San Michele […] close to the tabernacle of Orcagna" she says that she

> felt [her]self borne onward along a mighty current, whose source seemed to be in the very beginning of things and whose tremendous waters gathered as they went all the mingled streams of human passion and endeavor. Life in all its varied manifestations of beauty and strangeness seemed weaving a rhythmical dance around me as I moved, and wherever the spirit of man had passed I knew that my foot had once been familiar. (Wharton 701)

However, while she has this experience of awe, her husband is "sitting beside [her]. In an attitude of patient dejection, gazing into the bottom of his hat," and when he finally rises, he wonders that "[t]here doesn't seem to be much to see here, and […] the table d'hôte dinner is at half-past six o'clock" (702). Their experiences of the same space, the same art and history, are completely contrary to each other. While she recognizes the space as a symbol for mankind's great achievements and its timeless beauty, he only sees an old building, thinking of the dinner he is about to miss back at the hotel. He embodies ignorance while she embodies openness and knowledge.

"The Fulness of Life" follows a similar narrative strategy as did Carolyn Well's story "The Ghosts Who Became Famous," which I discussed in the opening of this study. It proves that women writers at the end of the nineteenth century were well aware of the literary and cultural tradition they had to simultaneously compete and comply with in order to be recognized. Wharton's protagonist, for example, realizes that "certain flowers suggest certain painters—the perfume of the carnation, Leonardo; that of the rose, Titian; the tuberose, Crivelli" and she wishes to discuss canonized literature from Dante's *Inferno* to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Goethe's *Faust* (Wharton 703). This knowledge and passion about art and literature show that women at the time were well-versed in Western society's literary and cultural history and that they claimed the right to be included in their discussion as well as production. In referring to this wide selection of renowned artists, Wharton situates herself within the same discourse and claims a space in the rows of Shakespeare, Dante and their successors. This participation in the discourse of high art, however, can also be seen as another

form of interpellation. Indeed, Wharton's story seems to need the legitimization that comes with the knowledge and ability to discuss so called 'high' art and literature to claim a place in the same literary tradition, which had excluded and oppressed female voices for centuries. The story thus still situates women's writing within the patriarchal power system. It cannot exist outside of the male dominated literary discourse.

Accordingly, the story's protagonist is also unsuccessful in freeing herself from the patriarchal system. The ideological restrictions of her time which lead her to wait for her husband, also lead her to not pursue her passion for literature and art. Despite the strong urge to follow this passion and the promise of spending an eternity with someone who understands her and shares this passion, the protagonist realizes that she cannot build a home with her soul mate in the afterlife because "home would not be like home to [her] unless [… he] slammed the door and wore creaking boots" (Wharton 703). When the Spirit of Life reminds her that her husband "will not understand [her] here any better than he did on earth" and "[h]is boots will creak just as much as ever" and "he will slam the door [… a]nd continue to read railway novels," the protagonist happily accepts all of it. "'No matter,' she sa[ys]; 'I shall be the only sufferer, for he always thought that he understood me'" (704). She thus decides to wait for her husband and by the end of the story she is "still seated alone on the threshold, […] listen[ing] for the creaking of his boots" (704).

Dying and becoming a ghost herself enable her to reflect on these ideological restrictions and talk about them to the Spirit of Life. However, death does not enable her to escape from these ideological bonds. Even in death she is interpellated to the dominant ideology by deciding to wait. Similarly, Lundie argues that "Wharton's wife stays with her marriage, in both the here and hereafter, because she is unable to break with society's training and expectations" ("One" 247). Consequently, her "fullness of life must be sacrificed eternally to her wifely duties" (247). Even though the Spirit of Life offers her an escape, the ideal of femininity she has lived up to all her live is so strong that she willingly decides to wait for her husband. Her reasons for this are, as she stated, her definition of 'home' and her sense of duty and responsibility she feels for her husband. It is thus the ideological definitions of what it means to be married and what a 'home' should look like that are still defining her life in the afterlife. Wharton's story criticizes this ideology, which kept women from finding the 'fullness of life' because they were too restricted by societal expectations and gender roles. As did the stories in first part of this chapter, "The Fulness of Life" criticizes that marriage often meant the complete self-sacrifice of women, a self-sacrifice that reached even beyond death. This theme of ideology's reach beyond death

is commonly employed by ghost stories of the time and is further explored in the following chapter.

4. Between Ghosts and Madness

In the previous chapter I have argued that women's ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century criticize epistemic injustice against women in the forms of excluding women from knowledge producing discourses, silencing their experience and hermeneutical and testimonial injustice in nineteenth century patriarchal society. In my reading of Wynne's "The Little Room," for example, I have shown that this exclusion went as far as a complete suppression of the female experience within patriarchal society. The female reality, as the short story suggests, could only exist within a female counter-discourse because the dominant patriarchal discourse did not provide a language to talk about it and thus it became incomprehensible to the larger public. The ghost stories in this study dramatize that, within public discourse, the female experience is not only not acknowledged as reliable and knowledge-producing, but it becomes invisible as a result of this silencing.

One discourse in which this invisibility of the female experience and the suppression of female knowledge about the own life and body becomes particularly evident is the medical discourse. Victorian medical belief held that to preserve one's health, one "must achieve a harmonious relationship with their environment and a balance among bodily organs. Anything that upset this balance causing undue strain, might decrease a person's resistance and impair nutrition" (Bassuk 144). In addition, Victorian doctors were convinced "that each organism possessed a finite amount of vital energy" (145). Since women's most important task was to bear children, they were not supposed to distract themselves and waste important energy on other tasks or activities. Such distracting activities were, for example, any form of education, intellectual work, or any other work than domestic work (145).

Thus, the medical discourse of the nineteenth century, was "used to enforce cultural structures against woman's active participation in economic activities outside the home—except in the role of exploited worker" (Warren 62). Indeed, according to Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg, the ideal of the Victorian woman—characterized by her "nurturance, intuitive morality, domesticity, passivity, and affection"—was firmly rooted in scientific, meaning medical and biological, explanations. "These medical and scientific arguments formed an ideological system rigid in its support of tradition, yet infinitely flexible in the particular mechanisms which could be made to explain and legitimate woman's role" (334). These scientific arguments also emerged to counteract the slowly increasing challenge of the

traditional gender roles caused by the rapid economic and social changes in both Western Europe and the United States during the nineteenth century (333).

Over the course of this chapter, I argue that the trope of the ghost is used to highlight the ways in which the medical discourse is used to silence the female experience. This silencing constitutes a form of epistemic injustice because it robs the women in these stories of any agency to produce knowledge about their own bodies and experiences. More precisely, the ghosts dramatize how the medical discourse is used to suppress the female experience and female knowledge about women's own lives, feelings, and bodies. The ghosts in these stories draw attention to the ways in which female agency is taken away by the protagonists' husbands and/or doctors by medicalizing them. As a result of this active silencing, women in these stories often become invisible as well. Female characters are portrayed as fading away into a barely alive, invisible state and become ghost-like, excluded from every form of social life around them. A common characteristic many of these stories share is that agency is taken from the women in them. Without her own agency, the female main character 'fades away' into a ghostly state of being, mirroring the actual ghost in the story, and oftentimes dies eventually.

Whereas the actual reason for this fading away of the female protagonist in these stories is female imprisonment, emotional neglect, and, at times, even abuse by the husband, the patriarchal discourse in these stories usually assumes it to stem from some mysterious illness that ails the female protagonists. In M.E.M Davis's "The Room on the Roof: A True Ghost Story" (1900), for example, Katharine Sinclair is befallen by such a mysterious illness which brings about her slow death after she has married Alick Sinclair and moved to his father's estate. In Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" (1914), Beatrice Vesper, guest at Burleigh House where the female narrator lives, fades away because she falls in love with the ghost of the long chamber's previous occupant's lover, who seduces her. In Helen R. Hull's "Clay-Shuttered Doors" (1926) the narrator's best friend Thalia almost dies in a car accident but her husband pleading her not to leave him allegedly keeps her from dying. However, once she is back at their home, she starts to fade away into a ghostly state of being and dies eventually.

Consequently, invisibility and silencing in these stories are often connected to the theme of mental health or rather alleged mental sickness. Social isolation, subjection to the rest cure, and depression and anxiety are only the most common issues discussed in these ghost stories by women. In Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel" (1913), for example, the female protagonist is—just as the woman in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892)—brought to the country and subjected to the rest cure. She has lively discussions with a woman wearing a grey dress, whom she meets at the house, and only learns later from her

psychiatrist that the woman is not, as she has assumed, another patient but someone who died there previously. In addition, some of these stories are characterized by an ambiguity in their portrayal of the supernatural leaving open the question whether the female protagonist is only imagining what she sees or whether she is, indeed, going mad. In Mary Heaton Vorse's "The Second Wife" (1912), for example, the protagonist Beata sees the ghost of her deceased friend after she married her former husband. Throughout the story it remains ambiguous whether her deceased friend is actually haunting her or whether the ghost is only a mental manifestation of her own guilt and jealousy.

It is worth mentioning that there are several ghost stories written from the perspective of a ghost narrator or focalizer viewing the realm of the living from the outside, illustrating that women in society are marginalized—whether they are already dead or still alive. Sometimes these ghosts stay behind because they must learn something before they can move on. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's novella "The Gates Between" (1887), for example, is told from the perspective of Dr. Thorne, a male doctor who dies and must realize the mistakes he made in repeatedly silencing his wife during his lifetime and not being a good father or husband before he can move on. Similarly, in Oliva Howard Dunbar's "The Shell of Sense" (1908) the female ghost narrator watches her former husband Allan and her sister Theresa discover their mutual love and must overcome her jealousy and give her blessing to the two lovers before she can move on. At other times, they linger to address the living once more. In Phelps's short story "Since I Died" (1873), for example, the female narrator tells the moment of her own death and passing into the afterlife. She directly addresses a female addressee sitting on her death bed and eventually must leave her behind to enter the afterlife.

It becomes obvious that the concepts of epistemic injustice in the form of silencing, invisibility, and ideology are deeply intertwined in these stories. In fact, it is patriarchal ideology which silences women's voices and ultimately casts their perspectives, and their experiences as invisible in these stories. Consequently, making themselves visible or heard within this ideological framework requires the female protagonists to step out of ideology. However, as the ghost stories in this chapter show, stepping out of ideology only leaves women with the choice of death as there is no room for them outside of the roles and expectations patriarchal society defined for them. In the first subchapter, I will show how M.E.M Davis's "The Room on the Roof: A True Ghost Story" (1900) and Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" (1914) dramatize how interpellation turns women into ghost-like beings, silences their voices and ultimately casts their experiences as completely invisible to their families and friends. Both protagonists enter a space where they encounter an alternative to the ideology

they are living in and even though they try to return to their previous state of interpellation, they both fail and die in the end.

In the second subchapter, I will focus on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892) and Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel" (1902) and examine the subversive potential of the ghost trope to criticize the infamous rest cure as an ideological tool of oppression that is used to silence the women and again leaves them invisible as a result. While in "The Yellow Wall-Paper," the rest cure itself is represented to rob women of all their agency and their voices and cast them as completely invisible, "The Gospel" celebrates the treatment for its achievements. However, eventually both stories confirm that the only choice the protagonists in these stories have is, again, the choice between interpellation and death.

Finally, in the conclusion I will show how Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood; Or the Hidden Self* (1902-1903) utilizes the medical discourse to criticize epistemic violence and how any other kind of knowledge beside a white, patriarchal knowledge is discredited. *Of One Blood*, uses the frame of the ghost story and references to the occult and mesmerism to criticize the epistemic violence of the dominant ideology about race at the beginning of the twentieth century. The medical discourse is thus representative of colonial, white patriarchal discourse more generally and used as a reference to illustrate a similar suppression of alternative forms of knowledge as is the case in other ghost stories that are primarily concerned with gender. Instead of criticizing the silencing and invisibility of female knowledge and experiences, however, *Of One Blood*, dramatizes the epistemic violence of racism, which is also deeply ingrained in the dominant discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

4.1. Becoming Ghost-Like: Invisibility and Illness in M.E.M. Davis's "The Room on the Roof" and Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber"

In M. E. M. Davis's "The Room on the Roof: A True Ghost Story" (1900), first published in *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly*, the ghost that Alick and his wife Katharine Sinclair encounter in their room on the roof of a boarding house directly mirrors Katherine's own anxieties and her experience in her marriage to Alick; anxieties that are invisible to her husband. Katherine suffers from a mysterious illness, whose symptoms are that she does not eat enough, lost all her color, and is easily startled. The illness started shortly after she married Alick Sinclair and moved to the Catalpas, his father's estate. Once they relocate to live in a boarding house, in the

room on the roof, Katharine's health immediately starts to improve. However, the room is haunted by a woman who died in that same room, and Alick Sinclair is so scared for his wife's health that he wants to leave again. Before they can make an active decision, however, the boarding house burns to the ground, forcing them to move back in with Alick's father. Once they are back at the Catalpas, Katharine's illness returns and, not even a month later, she dies.

The story is characterized by Alick's inner conflict between Katharine's needs and his own fears of losing her. Upon Katharine's wish to move out of the estate in the hope of improving her health Alick approaches Mrs. Lawson, the owner of a boarding house in town, to board him and his wife. However, even while taking Katharine's wishes into consideration, he only does so reluctantly. He admits to regret having to leave his father, and he stops "with an air of indecision" before he even enters the boarding house to ask Mrs. Lawson for a room. His reluctance and regret are furthermore accompanied by "a shade of embarrassment" (M.E.M. Davis, 546) when he approaches Mrs. Lawson, proving that from the beginning onward he feels uncomfortable in putting Katharine's needs above his own. Once they have settled in the room on the roof of the boarding house, Katharine's health immediately improves. At the same time as Alick recognizes "a look of content on her white brow" and thus an improvement in her condition, he also starts to see "something moving between Katharine and himself[.] Something faint and shadowy," which turns out to be a "gray-clad figure of a woman with head drooped to her breast and arms hanging at her side." Alick watches as the woman "pace[s] slowly back and forth, from the window opening upon the roof to the washstand set against the opposite wall, pausing slightly at each turn, and passing through the lamp-stand as if it were not there" (549). The moment in which Alick notices the ghost is significant because it is exactly the moment in which his wife is regaining her own personhood. In addition, it is important to note that he first sees the ghost standing between himself and Katharine.

This positioning of the ghost woman implies that she represents something that is standing between the couple or something that is distorting Alick's view of his wife, namely Katharine's alleged illness. Before they move into the boarding house, Katharine is described as having developed a "mystierious malady […] shortly after her marriage, and which continued to baffle her physician, [and] had robbed her cheeks of their color and bloom." The strangeness of the illness leads to the feeling of "[s]omething almost akin to awe[, which] filled those around this exquisite young creature at sight of her strange and inexplicable sufferings" (Davis 548). At the same time, the illness is also described as "add[ing] an indescribable charm to her delicate face and fragile figure" (548). Alick Sinclair as the main focalizer of the story clearly idealizes Katharine's illness. In his eyes, the illness turns her into an almost angelic

being, “delicate” and “fragile,” whose fainting fits cause her to fall into his arms leaving her “wan face, still resting on his shoulder, smil[ing] up into his” (548). Alick cherishes her helplessness and dependency by positively describing her as “delicate” and “fragile” and he robs her of her personhood by referring to her as an “exquisite young creature” (548) rather than a woman. It then comes as no surprise that he sees the change in her once they arrive at the boarding house as a threat to his own power and control over her.

As Katharine’s health improves, her previous maladies manifest themselves in the haunting figure, which, interestingly enough, only scares Alick and not the allegedly easily startled Katharine. In the boarding house, Alick observes “a touch of color in her [Katharine’s] lips; her golden hair seemed to have regained somewhat of its lost lustre” (Davis 549). Immediately after this observation, he first spots the grey glad figure. Just as Katharine’s cheeks had been drained “of their color and bloom” (548) once the sickness befell her, the grey figure in the room is described as “pale” with “compressed lips.” The description of “grey-clad figure” (549) already refers to a draining of colors. In addition, Katharine’s own “slender arms” are mirrored by the ghost’s “tall and slender” figure (549). The similarity in the description of both women symbolizes a clear alignment of Katharine’s experience and that of the ghost woman. Alick, however, does not recognize these similarities, but instead degrades the ghost woman by repeatedly referring to her as “the thing” rather than a woman (550).

Alick’s fears of losing his wife are thus projected onto the ghost. In fact, it is rather Katharine’s improvement than the ghost that scares him—even though he cannot admit it to himself. Katharine’s improving health means she regains her agency and is less dependent on Alick for his protection and constant care. On their second evening away from the Catalpas, Katharine sends Alick to have dinner at his father’s estate, while she remains in the boarding house. When he returns, Alick finds her sitting on the piano and singing to the other visitors of the boarding house. He is “overcome with emotion” (Davis 552) and instead of joining his wife, he heads directly to their room, indicating that he cannot be near her when it is not for the need of protecting her.

Seeing her in the semi-public space of the boarding house, which obviously improves her health and general condition much more than the isolation in the domestic space of his father’s estate, deeply upsets him. The change of setting also implies a distortion of gender roles and gender expectations. In the traditional expectation of marriage, Katharine would have become the happy mistress of the Catalpas, successfully integrating herself in the patriarchal structures of the father and son relationship. The failure of this traditional image deeply upsets Alick—not only because Katharine does not fulfill her traditional role, but also, and more

importantly, because he is prevented from fulfilling his own traditional role as husband and protector. Seeing her happy in the semi-public sphere of the boarding house while the domestic sphere of the Catalpas had obviously made her sick, distorts Alick's role as much as it does Katharine's. In the traditional marriage setup, he is supposed to be the one enjoying the public sphere and then returning to his wife waiting for him at home. Instead, Katharine is playing piano in the dinner hall, while Alick returns to their room on the roof, where he encounters "the gray-clad figure" (Davis 552) again.

The ghost woman thus represents Alick's anxieties about his wife's newfound freedom, which stands in opposition to his own continued need to protect her from something—even if it is an almost invisible ghost figure, pacing through their room at night. His main concern is less the haunting itself but the question what Katharine might do, once she sees the woman. He fears "The shock will kill her! She will die! She will drop dead before my eyes!" (Davis 549). In fact, when Katharine falls asleep the first night, he watches "her in an agony of amazement and incredulity. Could it really be that she was sleeping? Was she not rather dead?" (550). However, Alick's increasing worries about his wife are, in fact, only happening inside his own mind because as it turns out in the end, Katharine has been able to see the ghost all along but was not bothered by it.

In addition, the ghost of the woman in the room of the roof is clearly linked to Katharine's experience of confinement in the Catalpas and consequently represents the imprisonment, silencing, and invisibility of women by and in patriarchal power structures and traditional gender expectations more generally. Indeed, Katharine's illness only befell her once she arrived at Alick's father's estate and as soon as they "pass[…] under the arched gateway the mysterious gloom [falls] back upon her" (Davis 554). The illness is thus connected to her confinement in Alick's world and in her marriage to him. She enters his life as his bride and is brought to his family estate. Nowhere in the story is it mentioned that she has her own family, friends or other women in her life to support her. She is completely dependent on Alick and his father and in this male dominated world she quickly fades away. In fact, Alick "could have sworn that he saw its [the mysterious gloom] descent in visible form. Her hair on the instant became dull and lifeless; her cheeks fell hollow; the red on her lips changed to a gray pallor." (554). Katharine becomes as ghostlike as the grey figure in the room on the roof once she returns to the Catalpas.

Her anxieties about being confined in a male space and in a marriage, which suppresses her voice without having her own support system, are mirrored by the woman's ghost. According to Mrs. Lawson,

> old Squire Lawson, [her] husband's grandfather, had that room built as a sort of jail for his young wife, who went out of her mind, poor thing, and no wonder, for the Squire was a terrible old man! He took her baby from her and shut her up in that room and kept her there by herself until she pined away and died. My husband clomb up on that roof once when he was a boy and saw her through the window walking up and down. She had a veil on her head. That was before she died. After she died she came back and kept on walking just the same. All the Lawsons used to see her. (Davis 553)

Being imprisoned by her violent husband, the young woman whose ghost continues to haunt the space of her death, dies in silence and invisibility. The woman's life as a living person shows no difference to her existence as a ghost. As Mrs. Lawson said, she "kept on walking just the same" (553). Whether dead or alive, she was imprisoned, silenced and invisible to the outside world. As I already showed in the previous chapter, domestic abuse and violence against women was often excluded from public discourse. "The Room on the Roof" repeats this pattern. The domestic abuse happens behind closed doors and can only enter the public discourse through the supernatural—the ghost. In fact, the horror of the woman's life and death only becomes visible and speakable in the aftermath of her death. Haunting the room ensures that her story is told to those who can see her.

A similar fate happens to Katharine, who is isolated—if not violently imprisoned—in the Sinclair estate and dies because her individuality is completely consumed by her status as wife. The way of oppression has obviously changed from the violence the ghost woman experienced to the silent isolation Katharine is subjected to. Yet, both women are ultimately oppressed by the patriarchal power structures around them. Katharine's anxieties of loneliness, and dependence are invisible to both her husband and the larger public. What is more, like the woman's ghost, Katharine is unable to relate the horror of her experience to the people around her. While the imprisoned woman was kept from escaping or even communicating her situation to others through the violence of her husband, Katharine is kept from escape through ideological constraints. By agreeing to return to the Catalpas, Katharine is interpellated by the ideology of domesticity and submissiveness. She accepts her role as wife and lady of the estate. Even though Alick can see her fading away by observing her hair becoming "dull and lifeless; her cheeks [falling] hollow; the red on her lips [changing] to a gray pallor" (Davis 554), his earlier idealization of her helplessness suggests that he does not really see her anxieties and fears that are causing this physical change in her. His inability to ever mention the grey woman in their room also proves his inability to communicate with his wife. In the end, she is the one mentioning his fear "*of the Woman who walks here at night*" (553). However, before they can talk about the ghost and their own fears and anxieties, the boarding house burns down, and they return to the Catalpas.

The ghostly grey woman thus also functions as a dramatization of epistemic injustice, particularly hermeneutical injustice. She represents that which cannot be put into words in nineteenth-century discourse: domestic abuse and the entrapment of marriage. Just as Anne was isolated by her husband in Wharton's "Kerfol," so is Katherine isolated by Alick when he takes her back to his father's estate. Even though Alick does not kill her pet animals but cares deeply about his wife, he still is unable to understand her feeling of entrapment and isolation. Eventually, even if he is not causing it directly, then at least he is not doing anything to prevent her untimely death. In addition, Katherine herself also seems to be unable to fully understand why she does not get better, and she also is unable to communicate about her experience to anyone—just like the ghostly woman.

The complete sacrifice of the self, which women had to make when getting married, is represented by Katharine's final return to the Catalpas after the boarding house burns down. Indeed, the fire in the boarding house symbolizes the limits of the ghost story genre and once more dramatizes the persistence of patriarchal ideology to reach every aspect of live. Within this ideology, there is no room for female self-fulfillment and even the subversive genre of the ghost story cannot fully rid itself from that ideology and must, in the end, restore the patriarchal order. Just like Anne in "Kerfol" is, in the end, once more incarcerated in Kerfol by her husband's family, or the mysterious woman in "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" is denied any outside help from the community, Katherine must eventually return to her role as wife and mistress of Catalpas. She must leave the feminine coded space of the boarding house, in which she had found a space of self-fulfillment and in which she was both visible and audible at the same time. The story's ending thus once more confirms what Wynne's story "The Voice" has made abundantly clear: women cannot be seen and heard at the same time in patriarchal society. By leaving the boarding house, Katherine is forced to relinquish the voice that she had reclaimed by entertaining the other guests in the dinner hall.

Consequently, the boarding house in "The Room on the Roof" shares many similarities with the little room in "The Little Room." It is a space of female self-fulfillment in which Katherine regains her personhood and agency as her health improves. However, just like Wynne's little room always turns back into the china closet, Katherine is prevented from permanently staying in a space outside of patriarchal order. In an act of almost divine intervention, the patriarchal order is restored as the boarding house burns down and "[i]n an incredibly short time the old wooden building was laid in ashes" (Davis 554). In a way, then, the boarding house disappears almost as magically as the little room disappears in Wynne's story. Eventually, the patriarchal order is fully restored when "Sinclair and his wife returned to

the Catalpas" (554). The utopian setting of the boarding house is thus destroyed to uphold tradition. The discourse of the turn of the twentieth century demanded a clear gender role distribution in marriage which is eventually reestablished once the boarding house burns down. In getting married, Katharine submitted to the protection of her husband and to this she must return. Her final death symbolizes that marriage for women meant the death of individuality and the confinement within the role as someone's wife.

The intersection of space, memory, gender, and illness in "The Room on the Roof," creates a tradition of female oppression and self-sacrifice—both physically and ideologically. The space of the Catalpas as well as the space of the room on the roof illustrate female imprisonment. In the Catalpas, Katharine finds herself in an ideological prison, built by the expectations that society, her husband, and she herself have of her as a woman and wife. In returning to the Catalpas, she submits to this ideology of what it means to be a wife and mistress of the family estate. This interpellation eventually causes her death. In addition, the room on the roof represents a historical, forceful oppression. Through the communicative memory Mrs. Lawson shares with Alick when telling the story of the woman who was imprisoned and died there, a tradition of female imprisonment is established. The only change that can be observed in this tradition is the method with which it is enforced. The history of the room and the woman who has lived and died there, thus mirror the experiences Katharine herself faces and are in turn directly linked to her illness which is a symptom of her confinement.

A very similar pattern of the intersections of space, memory, gender, and illness can be observed in Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" (1914), first published in *Harper's Magazine*. As the story goes, Beatrice Vesper is visiting her long-time friend Molly, the story's first-person narrator, and her husband David at their newly inherited mansion, Burleigh House. Both are already in the company of another friend, Anthony Lloyd. Over the course of the summer, Beatrice is proofreading her husband's newest book before its publication. Every day, new pages arrive for her to go through. The homodiegetic narrator, hostess Molly, observes very concerned how her friend starts to look more ill every day. One night, she insists that Beatrice spends the evening with her, David, and Anthony. Anthony tells the story of the house's first lady, Anne Burleigh, which he discovered in an old diary of Anne's sister, Sophie. One summer, Brian Calvert, came to visit the Burleighs hoping to profit from Judge Timothy Burleigh's influence on his own career in law. He and Anne fell in love. One day, Timothy Burleigh found them in an embrace, kissing, and presumably killed Calvert in a sword fight. Anne fell ill after this incident and died shortly after. As it turns out, the duel happened in the house's long chamber, the guest room Beatrice Vesper is staying in during her visit. Upon her

hostess's questions, she admits having encountered a presence in the room. She admits that Brian Calvert's ghost showed her that true love exists and how it feels. Knowing about this, she declares that she will never be able to return to her husband again. Beatrice leaves Burleigh House shortly after and, a month later, Molly learns that she has died.

"The Long Chamber" uses Beatrice's ghostly encounter with true love in the form of Calvert's ghost to dramatize that the New Woman ideal of the early twentieth century that propagated sexual autonomy and the possibility for women to gain a divorce in an estranged marriage[20] only really applied to middle- or upper-class women who were able to afford to divorce their husbands. Since Beatrice had to marry her husband to ensure her own and her family's financial security, she does not have any economic security without him, which means that divorce is not an option. Simultaneously, however, the story suggests that staying married to someone she does not love is also no longer socially acceptable at the time since Beatrice and her marriage are constantly judged by the other characters in the story—even though they do not know all her reasons for marrying him. In fact, one of the first things Molly tells the reader is that she had talked to her husband, David, "[p]icturing [Beatrice] as the only woman [she] knew whose marriage had been complete self-immolation" (Dunbar 707). She goes on to explain

> Those of us who wore our fetters with a more modern jauntiness had resented, form our ill-informed distance, what seemed to be her slavish submission. She might as well have been chained in a cave—the rest of the world had not a glimpse of her. Dr. Vesper—a mild enough tyrant in appearance—did not care for society, so they had literally no visitors. There prevailed a legend that he was the most miserable of dyspeptics; and that Beatrice devoted most of her time to preparing the unheard-of substances that fed him. The financial concerns—for important mining interests had sprung from the geological work in which he had become famous—kept him in the city throughout the year, and Beatrice had never left him for a day, even in torrid midsummer. (707-08)

The narrator considers Beatrice to be completely submissive to her husband—almost a slave to his wishes. What is more, the husband himself, Dr. Vesper, is described in an almost vampiric way—there are legends about how much of a tyrant he is and how he feeds on unknown substances. In the eyes of the narrator, then, Beatrice's marriage is close to a nightmare—a Gothic horror story in which she is imprisoned and forced to serve her rich, yet villainous, husband. David, however, whom Molly describes as "sturdily unmodern, refuse[s] to be astonished" by Molly's description of her friend's marriage. "'Why not, if she's in love with him?' he asked." Molly, however, insists that she is not (708).

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[20] See, for example, Patterson 17.

This early discussion of Beatrice's marriage introduces the story's central conflict of "modern" and "unmodern" ideals of womanhood and marriage. Indeed, the focus on "modern" versus "unmodern" is essential here as it illustrates the two different versions of femininity at stake in the story: the modern wife and New Woman of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, who claimed a certain amount of freedom, agency and choice in her own affairs and her choice of husband, and the traditional mid-nineteenth-century ideal of true womanhood which demanded complete submission and domesticity of married women. While Molly clearly considers herself to be the former by proclaiming to possess "a more modern jauntiness," she sees Beatrice as an out-of-date example of the latter by being submissive and domestic—and Molly blames Edward Vesper for this backwards behavior of his wife.

Beatrice is aligned with the house's previous mistress, Anne Burleigh, in her fulfillment of the nineteenth-century ideal of true womanhood. In accordance with the perception Beatrice's friends have of her, Anne's sister Sophia's diary reports that "Sophia heard him [Timothy Burleigh] praise her [Anne Burleigh] for her obedience, saying that it was the prime virtue in a wife" (Dunbar 712). When retelling her story, Anthony even describes Anne as a "forlorn little Maeterlinckian heroine, treated as a child by her husband and practicing rigidly the submission he exacted of her" (712).[21] While mocked for their submission to husbands they do not love, both Anne and Beatrice turn out to be unable to survive in a world where they choose their own happiness and love over the submission to their husbands or societal ideals. Indeed, Anthony describes Anne's and Calvert's love as

> love of the kind that absolutely cannot yield to reason, and that could never adapt itself to a slow cooling and decline—'
> 'Of course, they had to die,' Beatrice Vesper broke in. 'One cannot love like that—and live.' Her voice held somber secrets. It was as though she were speaking of something intimately real. I [Molly] tried to see her face, but the shadow veiled it. (712)

The intimate reality Molly is observing in her friend's voice relates to the fact that Beatrice has already encountered Calvert's haunting presence in her room. As she later describes to Molly: "[i]t's the man who loved her [Anne], who loved so well that he did not need to live. You see his love was so complete that it gained an earthly immortality of its own. It is here—now. I did not know such things could be. And, oh, Molly, I have tried *not* to know" (714). Calvert's ghost thus not only represents love and desire but also the knowledge that these things exist in the first place and how they feel—a kind of knowledge that Beatrice tried to avoid but which cannot

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[21] The description as a Maeterlinckian heroine presumably refers to Belgian playwright Maurice Maeterlinck, who won the Nobel Prize in literature only three years before "The Long Chamber" was published.

be disregarded once it is learned. Just as Anne was caught in a love affair that could not "yield to reason" (712), Beatrice now experiences the same emotion. And similar to her exclamation in Anne's story that both lovers must die after knowing that these intense emotions were indeed possible, she admits to Molly that she "shall never see [her husband] again" (713). As the reason for this, she explains that "after this, [she] can never—*pretend* to love" (714). At the same time, however, Beatrice also cannot choose love because she needs economic stability—a stability that marriage affords her. Consequently, as Molly learns at the end of the story, "Edward Vesper never saw his wife again, and a month after Beatrice's going word came to [Molly] that she was dead" (714).

While Anne defied the ideals of true womanhood by claiming sexual autonomy in her love affair with Calvert, Beatrice defies the ideals of the New Woman by choosing financial security instead of love and choosing a domestic lifestyle and complete submission to her husband. The tragic death of both women, then, suggests that neither defiance is acceptable in their respective societies. What is more, Beatrice's dilemma suggests that the freedom and autonomy of the New Woman were not equally accessible for all women from all class backgrounds. Without any financial means of her own, Beatrice literally cannot afford to enter a marriage for love and thus has to continue to suppress her sexuality.

Beatrice's guilt of not being able to "love [her] husband as he so wonderfully loved [her]" (Dunbar 711) finally manifest itself in Calvert's ghost—the embodiment of true love. Confronting her own anxieties also means that Beatrice finally opens up to her friend and talks about her experiences in her marriage. Her previous silence, which was met with rumors and accusations against her husband from her friends who only saw her submitting to a husband who overworked her, is finally replaced by her telling her truth. Beatrice tells Molly that she "had married for [her] own advantage a man who gave [her] perfect love. Facing this, [she] saw that from that moment [she] was bound to give more than [she] had ever dreamed of giving" (711). Her confession highlights that she is very much aware that the societal ideal at the time was for marriage to be happy and pleasurable for both partners. If it was not, female rights activists advocated for women's rights to seek a divorce (Patterson 17). However, since divorce is not an option for Beatrice, the only other way out of her marriage is death. In fact, she foreshadows her own death in exclaiming "One cannot love like that—and live" (Dunbar 712) in response to Anthony's telling of Anne's story and later admitting to Molly that she "shall never see [her husband] again" (713). She knows that whatever she has experienced at Burleigh House has changed her in such a way that she can no longer live in a relationship not based on mutual love and affection.

In contrast to Davis's "The Room on the Roof," Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" remains ambiguous in its representation of the ghost. Due to the homodiegetic narrator, Molly, the reader never actually encounters the ghost since it is not Molly but her guest Beatrice who experiences Brian Calvert's haunting of the Long Chamber. Towards the end of the narrative, after Anthony revealed the story of Anne Burleigh, Molly insists on spending the night with Beatrice. Neither of them sleeps much, and, in the early morning, Molly observes "Beatrice's strained eyes bent steadily on Anne Burleigh's garlanded mirror," which serves as a symbolic connection to the house's past and especially to Anne Burleigh throughout the story. Molly, however, must admit that "to [her] its unrevealing surface presented merely a reticent blur" (Dunbar 714). This scene clearly shows that the reason why the reader never encounters Calvert's ghost is the narrative situation. Molly can only relate what she herself sees. She can observe the consequences of the haunting in her friend's behavior and her physical appearance, but she cannot encounter the ghost herself.

In addition, another reason why neither Molly nor the reader ever encounter the ghost firsthand is that Brian Clavert's ghost symbolizes female sexual desire and Beatrice's encounter of the ghost her own sexual awakening. This is also the reason why Brian Calvert's ghost is one of the few male ghosts that can be encountered in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories written by women. With the emergence of the ideal of the New Woman, married women were increasingly "encouraged to express heterosexual desire" and marriages were expected to be pleasurable for women as well (Patterson 17). This idea of sexual autonomy and sexual pleasure for women stood in stark contrast to earlier ideas of true womanhood during the nineteenth century in which the prevailing belief was that "white women should be insulated from sexual knowledge because their highest calling was a spiritual and domestic one" (16). Consequently, it is imperative that it is Brian Calvert's ghost that haunts the long chamber rather than Anne's ghost since the heteronormative structures of patriarchal US society also increasingly pathologized homosexuality at the time (17). Through Calvert's ghosts, then, Beatrice learns to experience the emotion of true love and, maybe more importantly, sexual desire—something that she lacks in her marriage. Beatrice needed to marry Dr. Vesper to support herself and her family financially. Consequently, the reason why Molly cannot see Calvert's ghost, but Beatrice can, is the similar experiences Beatrice shares with Anne. Just as Anne Burleigh married a much older man, Judge Timothy Burleigh, when she was only seventeen, Beatrice Vesper married Dr. Edward Vesper at the age of nineteen; a man, who according to Molly, "has cared for her ever since she was a child" (Dunbar 708). In addition, both women experience a sexual awakening when encountering Brian Calvert—or his ghost.

As was the case in "The Room on the Roof," present and past experiences mirror each other. Neither Anne nor Beatrice married out of love and both women's youthfulness in addition to Beatrice's back story with Dr. Vesper suggests that their choices in husbands were limited. In fact, Beatrice learned shortly after her wedding, that her "marriage had been urged, hurried, by her poor, desperate mother, who, with four younger children, was at the end of everything; and how Dr. Vesper's money had supported all ever since" (Dunbar 711). However, while Edward truly loves Beatrice, she only feels a "childlike affection" for him—not the kind of heterosexual desire that is increasingly encouraged in marriages at the time. For this reason, Beatrice feels like "the least abatement of unremitting devotion would be treachery" (711). What Molly perceived in the beginning to be "complete self-immolation" and "slavish submission" (707) of her friend, turns out to be Beatrice's apology for entering a relationship in which she cannot return her husband's love.

Calvert's haunting presence in the Long Chamber, then, confronts Beatrice with her suppressed sexuality as well as her anxieties and her guilt about choosing financial security for herself and her family over romantic love. These anxieties, in turn, manifest themselves in symptoms of illness—as was the case with Katharine Sinclair in "The Room on the Roof." As Molly observes, Beatrice loses "the look of freshness and vigor she had worn on coming to" Burleigh House. Molly blames the changes in her friend on her overworking herself proofreading the pages from her husband's book, which "further depressingly renew[…] themselves by express every few days." When she shares her concern that Beatrice is "under the thrall of an inhuman husband who is overworking her from the other end of the world and practically denying [them] any share in her" with Anthony and David, David muses: "Are you sure it's overwork […] and not the beginning of typhoid?" He even suggests calling for a doctor because, in his opinion, Beatrice "looks downright ill" (Dunbar 710). When Molly finally decides to confront Beatrice with her concerns, Beatrice admits: "Yes—he [Edward Vesper] will find me changed. […] But that is something I must face alone" (710).

Ultimately, Beatrice's anxieties remain invisible to the people around her throughout the story—just like Clavert's ghost. Her friends' initial and long-lasting misconception of her and her marriage to Dr. Vesper, proves that her life and anxieties were invisible to them. All they saw was deduced from their own prejudices. Even after Beatrice contradicts these rumors about her marriage to Edward Vesper when talking to Molly, Molly's inability to see Calvert's ghost suggests that even though she heard her friend's story, she does not really comprehend her reasons for behaving the way she did. In addition, rather than confronting her husband with her changed attitude and convictions, Beatrice states that she "shall never see him again" (713).

Communicating her anxieties and emotions to him, is not an option. Unable to communicate her anxieties to the world around her, on the one hand, and unable to continue living the way she did, on the other, death is the only solution.

While Katharine in Davis's "The Room on the Roof," is interpellated to the patriarchal ideology in returning to her foreseen place as Alick's wife and lady of the Catalpas, Beatrice Vesper in Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" chooses to rid herself of the ideological constraints put on her and decides to not return to her husband. Ultimately, both ways lead to the women's deaths. Staying in a marriage which confines her to her role as wife and the space of the Catalpas, make Katharine literally sick and lead to her death. Similarly, experiencing the possibility of true love, Beatrice realizes she has no choice but to resist interpellation and not return to her husband. Even though it remains unclear what she does after leaving Burleigh House, her death shortly after suggests that she has chosen death over being interpellated to a life in submission and dedication to a husband she could not love.

Both women's experiences of being confronted with their own anxieties in their marriage and their immediate reaction to it with illness, hint towards a medicalization of the female subject. The event that drives the narrative of "The Room on the Roof", is Katharine's illness which befalls her only when being confined in the male space of the Catalpas. Her illness represents her anxieties of confinement and isolation from other women within a presumably loving but ultimately suffocating marriage to Alick. Even though Alick tries to protect and support her, he fails because he cannot escape the gender expectation that society puts on both him and Katharine. Therefore, he is blind to her anxieties and his own inability to change eventually leads to her death. Similarly, Beatrice develops symptoms of sickness during her stay in the Long Chamber and her confrontation with her own love-less marriage as a symptom of patriarchal power structures in which women found their only economic security with a husband culminates in her experience of being haunted by Calvert's ghost. Her previously silenced anxieties about her marriage become acknowledged by her seeking confidence in Molly and relating her experience to her. Nevertheless, Molly remains unable to see Calvert's ghost until the end of the narrative, implying that even though she listened to Beatrice's emotional dilemma, she was unable to completely comprehend it. The focus on health or alleged (mental) illness in connection to women's lives and marriages, which is raised in both stories, is further explored by other ghost stories. In the following sub-chapter, I show how women authors used the ghost story to criticize the silencing and medicalization of the female subject in the late nineteenth century.

4.2. The Rest Cure and the Making of Ghosts: Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel"

In Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," first published in *The New England Magazine* in 1892[22] as well as in Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel," (1913) published in a short story collection focused on the fictional Doctor Stanchon and his cases, the rest cure is portrayed as an ideological tool used to silence women and indoctrinate female patients with an allegedly healthier domestic lifestyle. In Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," the autodiegetic narrator is subjected to the rest cure by her husband and doctor John—notice the double position in power he holds in relation to her. Her stay in the summer mansion, which she chronicles in her diary, dramatizes white and middle-class women's oppression in patriarchal society and offers a strong critique of the deadly perils of the rest cure. In contrast, Bacon's "The Gospel" celebrates the rest cure for its achievements in women's health. Nevertheless, as I show throughout my analysis, situating Bacon's short story in the discourse of women's ghost stories in general and particularly in a dialogue with Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," subverts this celebration and indeed supports Gilman's terrifying image of the rest cure as a deadly tool of ideological conditioning and silencing. Both stories thus dramatize and ultimately criticize the epistemic injustice female patients were subjected to by denying their rights to produce knowledge about their own experience and silencing them through the rest cure.

S. Weir Mitchell's infamous rest cure was first developed in 1872 to "treat soldiers with battle fatigue," and its popularity did not falter for the next five decades (Bassuk 141). According to Ellen L. Bassuk, "many benefited but others, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Virginia Woolf, became even sicker and condemned both Mitchell and his treatment" (139). The treatment combined measures such as "isolation, physical inaction, massage, mild electrical stimulation, and fattening" because it considered "the body as the site of health and disease" (Thraikill 526). It was used on both men and women; however, as Bassuk notices, "most patients described in the literature were nervous females who were suffering from battle fatigue on the homefront" (141). In addition, the treatment's process differed significantly

[22] The story was originally published under the surname Stetson, not Gilman. However, since the author is today mainly remembered as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, I will use Gilman as her surname throughout the entire article to avoid any irritation. I will also use the original spelling of the title.

based on the patient's gender. While the treatment for male patients included "vigorous exercise and intellectual work once the patient had sufficiently recuperated," female patients received no such measures (Thraikill 529).

On the contrary, in line with the medical discourse of the nineteenth century, any mental activity for women was considered unhealthy; any other work than domestic work was assumed to "threatened the health of her children" (Warren 61).[23] The rest cure was firmly rooted in these medical justifications of woman's inherent domesticity and was used as an ideological tool to enforce these traditional roles—which was criticized by many women at the time; a critique that found its most famous literalization in Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper." Since the rest cure was practiced well into the twentieth century, its role in the oppression of women reached into the twentieth century as well.

In practice, the rest cure consisted of two lines of treatment: In the beginning, the physical body received primary attention and was tended to "through a strict, iron-rich feeding schedule and a regimen of strengthening therapies." The goal of this first step was "[t]o reverse the depleting effects of a hectic domestic environment" (Thraikill 539). Specifically, this first step relied on "bed rest for six weeks to two months" depending on the individual patient (Bassuk 141). During this time, patients were tended to and fed by a professional nurse, who also administered baths and physical treatments,[24] but also "read to [them] for brief periods" (141). In addition, to counteract "the ill-effects of prolonged immobility and confinement to bed, the patient was subjected to various passive exercises such as massage, electricity, and hydrotherapy" (141). Sometimes, the physician also proscribed medicine in order "to facilitate rest and relaxation […]. Tonics, stimulants and nutriments were given to improve general health and promote digestion; none were thought to act specifically" (142). Furthermore, the treatment usually was administered somewhere different than the patient's home, and visits by family members were strictly regulated and limited (142).

The second line of treatment was psychological and was meant to result in a "moral reeducation" of the patient (Bassuk 142). It was administered as soon as the physical health of the patient started to improve and consisted "of various techniques such as suggestion, logical argument, and support of the patient's will power" (142). Hereby, "the exclusive authority of the physician provided the patient with willpower (the doctor's) without any expenditure of her

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[23] On a detailed discussion of women's role in the nineteenth century United States and the justifications of this role distribution by the medical discourse of the time, see also Smith-Rosenberg and Rosenberg.
[24] For further information and a more detailed description of the specific treatments that were part of the rest cure, see Bassuk.

own mental resources," and she was physically and mentally "retrained to more efficiently bear the burden of her domestic functions" (Thraikill 539). In particular, the female patient was supposed to learn "how she is to regain and preserve domination over her emotions" (Mitchell 8) and the treatment was supposed to stop her "from sharing [her] feelings with others" (Bassuk 143). In addition, she was supposed to adopt the workings of the rest cure to her daily life and "repattern [… her] routine daily activities" by designing intricate daily schedules (143).

Both Gilman's "Yellow Wall-Paper" as well as Bacon's "The Gospel" dramatize various of these aspects of the rest cure. They use the subversive potential of the ghost trope to dramatize the invisibility and silencing of women's experience in the medical discourse that prescribes them a treatment that harms rather than helps them. What is more, both stories use the literary trope of the ghost to negotiate the ways in which women must relinquish all agency to their doctors and be interpellated to patriarchal ideology to be considered "healthy." Taking charge of their own (mental) health leads to them being diagnosed with nervous disorders. Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is usually not read as a ghost story—despite the fact that there is abundant literary evidence for its participation in the ghost story genre.[25] Since its republication by the Feminist Press in 1973, it "has experienced near unprecedented attention in literary criticism" (Golden 72). What stands out in the story's critical reception history is the fact that most contemporary critics fall in line with John, the narrator's husband and doctor, by attempting to diagnose the narrator as mentally ill. In fact, in her afterword to the story in the Feminist Press publication, Elaine R. Hedges already framed the story as "[the narrator's] descent into madness" (129).

Since then, other literary scholars have proceeded to pathologize the story's narrator by offering various diagnoses. Elaine Showalter, for example, diagnoses Gilman's narrator with a "self-destructive illness, suicidal feelings, and infanticidal impulses" (133). Furthermore, she refers to the narrator's "hallucinations," and her "postpartum psychosis," and finally concludes that "[a]t the story's end, the narrator is completely mad" (132, 133). Similarly, Carol Margaret Davison argues that the narrator has lost her sanity at the end of the narrative (66). Slightly more specific, Martha J. Cutter claims that, at the end of the story, "the narrator's personality splits" (109). Finally, Monika Fludernik poses the question whether the narrator might be schizophrenic and additionally diagnoses her with an "acute state of depression" (80), "dementia" (81), "psychological projection (persecution mania)" (87), and "rampant paranoia"

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[11] For one of the few readings of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" as a ghost story, see Owens.

(89). Denise D. Knight is one of the few scholars who questions this insanity interpretation. Instead, she proposes that the story's end constitutes "a deliberate act of rebellion—an expression of the tremendous rage she [the narrator] feels toward her husband, John" (73).

Presumably, this apparent urge to pathologize the narrator and the wish to identify accurately whatever is ailing her are rooted in the fact that until this day most critics have discussed "The Yellow Wall-Paper" within an autobiographical frame considering Gilman's own experiences with the rest cure. Indeed, in her essay "Why I Wrote the Yellow Wallpaper?" published in *The Forerunner* in 1913, Gilman writes that the story was born out of a "rejoicing by this narrow escape" from "utter mental ruin," which she faced after following a doctor's advice to apply the rest cure to her own life even after leaving his care (86). However, in this essay, Gilman also notes that she did, indeed, include "embellishments and additions" to the story since "[she] never had hallucinations or objections to [her] mural decorations" (86). It is these "embellishments and additions" that situate the story firmly in the genre of the ghost story and which invite a reading that does not only focus on aspects of mental illness and madness, but one that explores how these added elements of ghostliness are used to criticize patriarchal power structures.

I argue that the significance of reading "The Yellow Wall-Paper" as a ghost story lies in its recognition of the female narrator as a woman able to produce knowledge about her own experience while the alternative, more dominant reading of female madness denies her that power. Indeed, it is important to note that "The Yellow Wall-Paper" evokes the ghost story genre from the very beginning onwards. In the context of the ghost story, the woman trapped in the wallpaper constitutes a haunting element along the lines of the mysteriously appearing and disappearing room in Wynne's "The Little Room" or the haunting presence of true love in Dunbar's "The Long Chamber." And just like other ghosts in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories, the ghostly woman behind the wallpaper represents epistemic injustice against women in the form of silencing their voices and casting their experiences as invisible as well as female confinement in patriarchal ideology. I therefore agree with Owens' claim that the story is a ghost story. However, I wish to offer an alternative reading of the story's ending. I argue that the ending of the story can be read as the narrator's attempt to free herself from patriarchal oppression through suicide. Returning as a ghost, the narrator finishes writing her diary and concludes her story by telling the reader that she herself has joined the ranks of the ghost women haunting the old mansion and mental asylum. The narrator's death and subsequent return as a ghost thus dramatizes the reach of patriarchal ideology beyond death. Even after choosing her own death, and thereby removing herself from patriarchal control the

narrator is not free but rather continues to creep around the room. Her continued creeping and subjugation indicate that even in death she cannot free herself from the oppressive ideology she tried to escape.

Taking part in a Female Gothic, the narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" describes the house she and John rented for the summer as "ancestral halls" and "[a] colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, […] a haunted house." In addition, she observes "something queer about it" (Gilman 647), a "ghostliness" and she cannot rid herself of the feeling that "there is something strange about the house" (648). This imagery situates the house in the line of classical Gothic mansions that appear sublime in their beauty, yet ghostly, strange, and queer. According to Davison, the "leased estate" constitutes the "Americanized, domesticated format of the psychically charged contested castle" prominent in Female Gothic narratives (57). Moreover, Mary Jacobus links the opening of the story back to the beginning of the Female Gothic tradition and draws references to, for example, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) (283-84). However, Jacobus then claims that it seems like "Gilman's story has had to repress its own ancestry in nineteenth-century female Gothic" (284). By contrast, I argue that it has rather been literary scholarship that has repressed or ignored the Female Gothic elements in the story—along with its similarities to Gilman's other ghost stories.

Indeed, the initial description of the house in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is reminiscent of Gilman's earlier ghost story "The Giant Wistaria." Here, the protagonist Jenny exclaims "what a lovely house! I am sure it's haunted!" (Gilman 40) when she first sees the "old mansion" (41). Again, it is a hereditary estate, "[t]he heirs were in Europe, but" nevertheless Jenny and her husband George succeed in obtaining a lease for the summer (41). As George tells their friends, Jenny "made up her mind at first sight to have ghosts in the house." Jenny herself adds "that a house like this, with a garden like this, and a cellar like this, is […] haunted!" George's sister agrees that the house "is a *real* ghostly place" (42). The houses in both stories are thus described as old, hereditary estates that have something ghostly about them and might be haunted. The expectation created for Gilman's readers who read the earlier published story "The Giant Wisteria" (1891) is therefore clearly that the narrator of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892) might encounter a ghost in the mansion just as Jenny and her friends encounter the ghost of a young woman in their version of Gilman's haunted house.

As in other stories by Gilman, the narrator of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" clearly takes part in a discourse of Gothic literature. She fashions herself the Gothic heroine, who will likely face danger in the alleged haunted house, and who—just as other Gothic heroines before her—is incarcerated in the old mansion. She spends her time in the room with the yellow Wall-Paper,

imprisoned by the "barred windows, and […] that gate at the head of the stairs" which keep her from wandering about the house (Gilman 649). The room's "great bedstead [is] nailed down" (655) to the floor, as if pre-installed, presumably to keep patients from moving it. In addition, "the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered" (650). The signs of violent destruction in the room all point towards an unpleasant history of imprisonment, symbolized by the bars designed to keep someone inside, and subsequent escape attempts which can be reconstructed from the scratch marks on the floor that a desperate former inmate left in her efforts to free herself.

These signs of destruction constitute yet another link between "The Giant Wistaria" and "The Yellow Wall-Paper:" The implication that the house has a violent history that only waits to be uncovered—a history that manifests itself in the haunting figure of the female ghosts in both stories. Jenny in "The Giant Wistaria" is "convinced there is a story, if [they] could only find it" (Gilman 42). Indeed, "The Giant Wistaria" opens with the narrative of a young girl who has born a child out of wedlock. The party renting the house for the summer roughly a hundred years later encounters the ghost of the same young woman in the well by the cellar—recognizable by the "small carnelian cross" she wears as a necklace (39). Moreover, the three couples discover the bones of a newborn baby at the bottom of the well next to the bones of the young woman "in the strangling grasp of the roots of the great wistaria" (47) that covers the entire house. The untold story behind that discovery is that the young woman refused to marry her cousin—as ordered by her father—and rather killed her newborn baby than abandon it. In addition, the woman herself also died in the space of her violent confinement—whether through suicide or maybe the violent wrath of her father remains ambiguous.

The narrator of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is aligned with this young woman whose ghost haunts the house in "The Giant Wistaria." Like the young woman, the narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" remains nameless and detained in the house against her wishes. In addition, after her final death, she is also tied to the space of her imprisonment and death and haunts the room for future patients to observe. The image of imprisonment becomes apparent in the bars in front of her window which are later also mirrored in the wallpaper itself. In fact, the narrator starts to observe the pattern forming "bars" in the moonlight while "the woman behind it is as plain as can be" (Gilman 653). Therefore, the setting is reminiscent of "traditional Female Gothic setting[s]" and "carries a variety of ambivalent associations that are perhaps best captured in the word 'asylum,' a term popularly employed in the Female Gothic" (Davison 58-59). Considering the reoccurring motif of the bars it is unlikely that the room has been a nursery, as the narrator assumes. On the contrary, the setting, in its seclusion from society and the room's

resemblance of a holding cell, suggests that the narrator is not the first woman to be treated there.

Furthermore, the narrator is aligned with Jenny from "The Giant Wistaria" because they both wish to uncover their respective house's violent history. This history, which is never fully uncovered in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" but whose signs we can detect throughout the narrative, is the fact that the house has served as a former mental asylum in which other women were detained before her. Showalter, for example, writes that "it seems clear that it [the estate] is an abandoned private mental hospital" and that the bars in front of the "windows are not to protect children, but to prevent inmates from jumping out" (133). In addition, "[t]he walls and the bed have been gouged and gnawed by other prisoners" (133-34) who also ripped off parts of the wallpaper. Just as the young woman in "The Giant Wistaria" haunts the space of her violent death, then, the former patients haunt this previous mental asylum in the shape of "creeping women" (Gilman, "Yellow Wall-Paper" 656), the narrator observes outside of her window, as well as the woman behind the wallpaper. Showalter similarly proposes that the other women the narrator observes creeping outside her window "are perhaps the ghosts of former patients" (134). However, she does not follow this argument to its end but leaves it open for further inquiry.

This interpretation of the summer estate as a former mental asylum and space of repeated female imprisonment strengthens the argument that the "creeping women" (Gilman, "Yellow Wall-Paper" 656) are the ghosts of former patients. This reading thus also partly contradicts the interpretation of insanity and unreliability Monika Fludernik proposes in her reading of the story. Fludernik claims "that the narrator *herself* has been engaged with ripping off the paper" (86) and her trying to move the heavy bedstead suggests that she might also be responsible for "the gnawing at the feet of the iron bedstead" (83). However, if the story is read as a ghost story, those signs of insanity and unreliability could also be explained in a different way. Following Davison's and Showalter's assumptions that the summer estate is a former mental asylum, in which other women were subjected to the rest cure before the narrator arrives there, the torn off wallpaper and the gnawing in the bedstead establish a history of female imprisonment and resistance to that imprisonment. It suggests that former patients are responsible for the damages in the room, not the narrator herself. The creeping woman the narrator later encounters behind the wallpaper, this "strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" (Gilman 650), can consequently also be read as the ghost of the room's former patient who died while being subjected to the rest cure.

The ghost woman the narrator encounters in her room uses the wallpaper to communicate and draw attention to her imprisonment. Dara Downey, for example makes a similar argument by drawing references between Gilman's story and Emma Frances Dawson's "An Itinerant House" (1897), and Mary Wilkins Freeman's "The Southwest Chamber" (1903). Downey argues that these stories feature "a female figure returning from death and manifesting her presence through domestic objects, in particular the patterns used to decorate the material and paper which cover walls and furniture." However, Downey also states that these women "mak[e] use of domestic objects, rather than appearing as ghosts," thereby negating the existence of an actual ghost in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" ("The Dead Woman" 38). The reading of the summer estate as a former mental asylum, however, makes clear that there is, in fact, the ghost of a previous patient in the room. Instead of manifesting as the wallpaper, then, the ghost woman is trapped behind it and uses it in an active attempt to draw the narrator's attention to her existence and warn her of her own fate should she not succeed in escaping her imprisonment.

This distinction of the ghost woman and the wallpaper as two separate entities becomes even more apparent when comparing the wallpaper to the rocking chair in Gilman's later ghost story of the same name. In "The Rocking-Chair," two young journalists, the autodiegetic narrator and his friend Hal, rent adjoining rooms. They choose the house specifically because they observe "the golden head of a girl" through the window as she is sitting "in a high-backed rocking-chair with brass mountings that glittered as it swung" (Gilman 51). Once they move into their rooms, however, they cannot find the girl anywhere. In fact, for most of the story they only see her when looking in from outside. However, during their stay the old rocking chair seems to develop a life of its own—just as the wallpaper in "The Yellow Wall-Paper." Hal claims that "[t]his chair evidently 'walks,'" when it mysteriously moved from the window to the bed while he and the narrator take a nap ("Rocking-Chair" 53). During another night, the narrator himself hears the chair from his adjoining room "rocking for hours", even though Hal claims the next morning that "[he has] been in bed all night" (55). The implication is that the ghost of the girl they both repeatedly see through the window moves the chair as she haunts the rooms—invisible to the male inhabitants.

Similarly, the narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" observes "a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare out at you upside down" (Gilman 649). She observes how "they crawl" and how "the eyes go all up and down the line" (650). It is as if the pattern of the wallpaper itself was moving and ever changing. However, just as the chair in "The Rocking-Chair" does not move on its own, it is also not the wallpaper that moves

and changes, but it is "[t]he faint figure behind [who] seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out" (652). When comparing the rocking chair to the wallpaper, it thus becomes apparent that both only move because they are actively moved by the female ghosts.

In addition, the ghost woman behind the wallpaper and her movements mirror the narrator's attempt to break out of her imprisonment and the patronizing treatment of her husband. Both women are confined within patriarchal structures, mirroring each other's attempt to free themselves. One night when the narrator tries to talk to her husband, she observes how "[t]he faint figure behind [the wallpaper] seem[s] to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out" (Gilman 652). But just as the woman in the wallpaper is unable to break out of the pattern, the narrator is unable to convince her husband to trust her self-perception. When she wakes him to talk about her condition, he opens the conversation by asking her "What is it, little girl" (652), further strengthening the unequal power distribution between them. Elevating himself over her by calling her a "little girl," he claims the right to make decisions for her. He indulges her opinion, but he does not take her seriously or respect her as an equal partner.

What is more, the story also dramatizes epistemic injustice in the form of silencing women's voices and the invisibility of their experience in the medical discourse. In fact, when the narrator asks her husband to leave the house because she thinks it would do her good, he dismisses the idea and tells her that she is doing much better. Her self-perception that her health is deteriorating instead of improving is brushed over by his assurance that he as a physician knows better. He assures her that "you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you." Her own contradicting perception that she did not gain any weight, and that her appetite is worse than it was before, are disregarded by him with the belittling comment "Bless her little heart! […] she shall be as sick as she pleases" (Gilman 652). The epistemic injustice thus lies in the fact that the narrator is actively prohibited from creating knowledge about her own experience and fails to communicate it effectively to her husband because his status as her physician automatically elevates him to a position of power in which he is the one producing knowledge while she has to submit to his assessment and relinquish all agency to him as demanded by the rest cure.

Neither John nor his sister Jennie, who takes care of the narrator while John is out caring for his patients, recognize the narrator as an individual woman with her own needs, opinions, and emotions. John's diagnosis stems from his own inability or unwillingness to seriously engage with his wife, her worries, wishes, and her experience, and thus represents the patriarchal power to silence women and cast their experience and own bodily knowledge as

invisible and unreliable in the patriarchal medical discourse. In fact, rather than working on his own inability, John turns his wife into an unreliable source of perceiving reality. As argued by Jacobus, the story's underlying insanity manifests itself in "what Doctor John's philosophy cannot dream of, and his repressive refusal of the unconscious makes itself felt in the narrator's inconsequential style and her stealthy confidences to the written page." According to Jacobus, it is this historical context of the "age of doctors" the story originates in that "ha[s] made the tale of supernatural haunting a story about hysteria" (284). Ill equipped to understand the female experience that he considers untrustworthy or simply ignores, as he has proven through his condescending and dismissive behavior towards his wife, John eventually has to accept that "[h]e has repeatedly misdiagnosed, or misread, the heavily edited behavior with which his wife has presented herself to him[…]. But given his freedom to read (or […] misread) books, people, and the word as he chooses, he is hardly forced to discover for himself so extreme a text [as his wife]" (Kolodny, "A Map" 459). In other words, since John holds all knowledge-producing power in the story, his assessment of his wife and her health—however wrong it might be—is considered the 'truth' in patriarchal discourse, which ultimately also absolves him of any responsibility to even attempt to understand his wife and decipher her behavior to reach a more accurate conclusion.

In light of John's dominant patriarchal perspective, which has repeatedly been adopted by literary scholarship, it comes as no surprise that the narrative situation of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is oftentimes argued to be an unreliable one. Fludernik, for example, claims that "[t]he narrator is unreliable to the extent that she pretends to be perfectly sane and […] turns out to be ravingly mad." More specifically, she argues that the narrator's unreliability is voiced in the "discrepancy between the discourse of the narrator and what we as readers reconstruct to be really the case" (91). I agree with Fludernik's argument that the narrative situation in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is unreliable but for a different reason. Assuming that the narrator is haunted by the ghost of a former patient instead of imagining the wallpaper to move, her unreliability cannot stem from her madness, simply because she is not mad. On the contrary, the narrator actively chooses to be seen as unreliable by everyone reading her journal as an attempt to escape the patriarchal control of her husband. More precisely, she creates her own unreliability to facilitate her eventual suicide. In addition, she uses it to dramatize the invisibility of her own experience and the silencing of her voice in patriarchal discourse.

I argue that the narrator is very much aware of her own unreliability because she consciously creates and controls it. She is aware of her powerlessness in patriarchal discourse because she is repeatedly dismissed and silenced by John whenever she tries to make herself

heard, as, for example, when she asks him to move to another room or asks to leave the estate. This awareness of her powerlessness and untrustworthiness in John's eyes results in her consciously keeping things from both her husband as well as the reader. Indeed, the reader should not be seen as taking an uninvolved, outside perspective when reading the story in form of the narrator's diary. Rather, they should be seen as an intruder into her thoughts just as John is. Fludernik argues that the reader cannot trust the narrator, but the reverse is the case: Knowing that by writing she engages in an activity forbidden by her husband, and aware that outsiders might have access to her most private thoughts and feelings by violating her privacy and reading her diary, it is the narrator who cannot trust the reader. The narrator's relationship with the reader thus needs to be understood in the context of the fear that any reader might agree with John's perspective and seek to confirm his diagnosis rather than understand and accept her experience of haunting—a fear that has been proven justified when considering the abundant psychoanalytical literary criticism, the narrator and her story have received.

The unreliability of the narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" is thus voluntary and consciously self-constructed. She decides which events and emotions she relates and which ones she keeps to herself. In fact, she outright admits that she refuses to write down some of the things she thinks or experiences because of her mistrust that other people might read her diary behind her back. At one point, she relates to the reader that she has "found another funny thing, but […] shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much" (Gilman 655). Notice that she writes "people" instead of specifying that it is John and Jennie she does not trust. By using the more encompassing term "people" she also includes the reader into this group. Therefore, she keeps information from the reader and presumably also relates incorrect information to them. One such moment occurs at the end of the narrative, when she claims that she would never jump out of the window: "Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued" (656). In the light of her previous admission of not relating certain thoughts and experiences, this statement needs to be taken with caution.

The narrator's ultimate attempt to free herself from the constrictions of patriarchal ideology is her suicide at the end. In her afterword to the Feminist Press edition of the story, Hedges compares Gilman's narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" to Kate Chopin's heroine, Edna Pontellier, in *The Awakening* (1899). She writes that "[i]t is symptomatic of their times that both Gilman's story and Chopin's novel end with the self-destruction of their heroines" (124). However, her comparison stops there. Instead of following the parallel to its end—to the fact that both women in the end commit suicide because they no longer feel able to live in an

oppressive patriarchal system—she claims that Gilman's "heroine [is] reduced at the end to the level of a groveling animal" (125). Hedges identifies "the madness that descended upon the heroine in 'The Yellow Wall-Paper,'" as a distinctly different "dramatic indictment[…]" than Edna's suicide (132). Possibly, the fact that Hedges explicitly rules out suicide as an ending of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" in her interpretation that framed the story's republication has kept later critics from interpreting the ending as suicide as well. Knight even claims that the narrator "is still rational enough to rule out suicide" at the end of the story (78-79). In contrast, I argue that the narrator of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" does, indeed, commit suicide. She decides to remove herself from the oppressive system she is incarcerated in. Consequently, she is not reduced to an animal but reappears as a ghost after her death, haunting the space of her former imprisonment.

Subjected to the rest cure against her wishes, the narrator is left with no other choices than complete subjugation or death. Locking the door to her room and throwing the key out of the window, she starts to find a spot to fasten the rope she hid. She observes the numerous "creeping women" out of the window and decides that she will not experience the same fate (Gilman 656). For her, in that moment, the creeping women outside represent women living under the restraints of an oppressive ideology, for the rest of their lives subjugated to a creeping position by the ominous pattern of patriarchy. As did the creeping woman behind the wallpaper before her the narrator chooses death rather than being interpellated into a life in the oppressive patriarchal ideology. Her suicide is implied in her statement that she is "securely fastened now by [her] well-hidden rope" (656), a rope that she presumably tied somewhere to the room's ceiling. Both Showalter and Fludernik acknowledge the references to suicide in the narrative (Showalter 135; Fludernik 83, 85), but both ultimately deny that the narrator really does it. The reason for this is the insanity paradigm they both apply to the story by identifying the narrator as mad.

However, reading the woman behind the wallpaper as a ghost instead of a manifestation of the narrator's insanity strengthens the argument that the narrator commits suicide because it further aligns the narrator and the ghost woman. This alignment becomes especially obvious in the narrator's wonder about the other creeping women outside: Did "they all come out of that wall-paper as [she] did?" (Gilman 656). Indeed, just as the ghost woman, whom she observed during her entire stay, she also becomes a ghost creeping around the room after her suicide. The wallpaper thus becomes a metaphor for patriarchal society in general. The narrator—just as other women before her—chooses to step out of patriarchal society, i.e. the wallpaper, by committing suicide. However, rather than being freed from the oppressive ideology, as she

hoped she would be, she realizes that she is still subjected to it even after death—just like the protagonist in Wharton's "The Fulness of Life."

John's fainting at the end of the story—"right across [her] path by the wall, so that [she] ha[s] to creep over him every time" (Gilman 656)—is further proof of the narrator's death. Previously, his fainting has been read as a reaction to discovering his wife's madness. Kolodny, for example, states that he faints because he is so shocked about "his wife's now totally delusional state" ("A Map for" 459). However, this interpretation constitutes yet another psychological diagnosis. The female narrator is pathologized inside the story by John as well as outside of it by literary criticism reading her behavior as madness rather than as an attempt to break free. Since psychoses, nervous depressions or even altered personalities are deeply imbedded in the medical discourse of the time as well as its discourse on femininity—it is because of this discourse on female mental health issues that the narrator finds herself in this position in the first place—any further exhibition of delusion and madness cannot be considered subversive. On the contrary, another psychotic breakdown would presumably only lead John to take his wife to Weir Mitchell—as he has threatened to do earlier. It would, however, not justify his extreme reaction of fainting—a reaction that is stereotypically associated with women's shock rather than with men's. In fact, as Downey argues, by fainting John is "assuming a conventional marker of femininity—hysteria" ("The Dead Woman" 41). This extreme reaction that subverts traditional gender assumptions indicates that the observation John makes when entering the room must be equally subversive to his belief system.

This subversiveness of the situation lies in the removal of the female subject from the medical discourse altogether; a removal that can only happen through suicide. Indeed, earlier the narrator confesses that she is "getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise" (Gilman 655-56). However, at the same time she realizes that "the bars are too strong." Even though she tries to convince the reader that she "wouldn't do it," her tying the rope suggests otherwise (656). In addition, as I have shown above, her assurance that she would never commit suicide needs to be treated with care due to her self-constructed unreliability. As her growing mistrust towards John and Jennie—and ultimately the reader—suggests, she does not dare to write down the truth before the actual deed is done. Instead of trying to break the bars in front of the window to jump out, then, she fastens the rope to the room's ceiling. Her confession that "[she is] securely fastened now by [her] well-hidden rope" combined with her determination "you don't get *me* out in the road there!" (656), mark the moment of her suicide.

Her final statement "I've got out at last, […] in spite of you and Jane? And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!" (Gilman 656) confirms this reading. She has rid herself of enough of the ideology represented by the wallpaper that she is now able to decide over her own body and life. Instead of further submitting to her husband and accepting his control over her, she chooses to take matters into her own hands. But since the discourse of women's ghost stories at the turn of the nineteenth century does not allow for her to recover her agency and survive at the same time, she dies. After her death, she "creep[s around the room] as [she] please[s]" (656). When entering the room, John faints because he finds his wife's body hanging from the ceiling and her ghost creeping around the room.

Coming back to my initial argument that the story needs another reading that does not conform to the insanity paradigm of previous interpretations, one could now argue that suicide can also be considered an indicator of mental illness. For the most part, I would agree with that. However, in the context of "The Yellow Wall-Paper" I understand suicide rather as an extreme—and not at all unproblematic—means to escape oppression and incarceration by her husband and physician and thus as a conscious choice rather than a symptom of mental illness. In fact, the narrator has undertaken several previous attempts to escape her situation and better her life condition before making this extreme choice to end her life. From the very beginning onwards, she informs the reader that she "disagree[s] with their [her husband's and brother's] ideas. […] But what is one to do?" (Gilman 648), a question that appears three times (in slight variations) within the first few paragraphs. This rhetorical question and its repetition indicate that the narrator has no choice and no say in her situation but is completely dependent on her husband. This choice-lessness also reappears in the selection of rooms: The narrator voices her wishes to move into one of the downstairs rooms, "there are such pretty rooms there," but John denies her request and she must stay in the room with the haunted wallpaper (649). Later, she asks John to "take [her] away" from the house because she feels like her condition is deteriorating rather than improving. Again, her request is brushed away as "a false and foolish fancy" (652). After these fruitless attempts to end her isolation and incarceration by appealing to her husband who holds the power to end or change the conditions of her stay, the narrator is finally only left with the choice to completely remove herself from her husband's influence. Suicide is thus the only way in which she can reclaim her agency and make a self-controlled decision over her own life, which is otherwise dictated by John.

The sad irony and horrific conclusion of the story, then, lies in the narrator's continued creeping "across [her] path by the wall" (Gilman 656). Contrary to her belief that death would finally free her of patriarchal ideology and the constraints of gender expectations, domesticity,

and the medicalization of the female mind and body, this continued creeping after her suicide dramatizes ideology's reach even beyond death. Just as the protagonist in Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" starts her afterlife by waiting dutifully for her husband to join her in death, Gilman's narrator continues to creep around the room in which her husband imprisoned her. Instead of being free to leave the place of her imprisonment, she is restricted to it as a ghost just as the woman in the wallpaper was before her. As a ghost, she observes her husband fainting upon finding her body. Her earlier exclamation "you don't get *me* out in the road there!" (656) is thus proven wrong because the creeping women outside were not, as she assumed, living women interpellated and forced to a creeping position by patriarchal ideology, but former patients of the mental asylum who are haunting the place just as she now is. Her final self-sacrifice to escape subjugation is thus ultimately in vain because she cannot escape that which oppresses her. Instead, she must continue creeping around the floor and haunting the room for future patients to observe—and suffer being diagnosed as insane by generations of scholars.

Josephine Daskam Bacon's "The Gospel," which was published in the short story collection *The Strange Cases of Dr. Stanchon* in 1913, twenty years after Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," also dramatizes this reach of patriarchal ideology beyond death—even though it does so somewhat involuntarily. In the story, a white, upper-class woman is ordered by her psychiatrist, Dr. Stanchon, to spend some time at a small cottage, owned by three women, to learn how to accept social change and her own descent on the social ladder. After days of bed rest, the nameless protagonist is finally able to move through the house on her own and converse with the three women who live there, the sisters Ann and Hester and their mother. In addition, at nightfall she repeatedly encounters a woman on the balcony and converses with her about women's roles in society. By the end of the narrative, she learns that the woman was a previous patient of Dr. Stanchon, whom he was not able to heal and who died there a few years ago. The exact reason for the protagonist's presence at the cottage remains unclear. The reader only learns of a "dreadful attack" that she experienced and which her doctor calls "the day of surrender"—supposedly to her decreased social status and the resulting mental health issues (Bacon 239).

"The Gospel" reads like a step-by-step instruction to the rest cure and a celebration of its success in healing women's nervous conditions. When the protagonist first consciously finds herself in the cottage, she spends her days lying in bed, watching the world outside her window, being served breakfast in bed, and receiving regular massages in between her naps (Bacon 235-36). Several days pass like this, before the protagonist recognizes any noises inside the house and starts to pay attention to other surroundings than the idyllic scene outside her window.

Presumably, the time is needed to reach the reversal of "the depleting effects of a hectic domestic environment" (Thraikill 539). Indeed, the patient in this early stage of her cure is described to be "sick to her very soul of all that the words 'domestic arrangements' implied; sick with an actual spiritual nausea" (Bacon 235). To be cured of this sickness, she is isolated in a cottage somewhere in the countryside, she is physically inactive, she receives massages to stimulate her inactive muscles, and she does not engage in any kind of intellectual work. Days later, when she can move around the cottage on her own, she still spends most of her days either in bed or in a chair on the balcony. But even after she has regained some of her liveliness, she is unable to engage in any kind of intellectual activity. On the contrary, laying on the balcony she finds herself "not so soothed by her little pile of books as she had looked to be. Beautiful, pellucid thought, deep-flowing philosophies, knife-edged epigrams and measured verse lay to her hand, but they seemed unreal, somehow, and their music echoed like meaningless words shouted, for the echo merely, in empty halls" (245).

The core conflict dramatized by the story is that between two competing ideologies of femininity and domesticity. While the women living at the cottage represent a traditional version of femininity close to the ideals of true womanhood, the protagonist represents a more progressive form of femininity in line with the ideas of the New Woman by calling for women's education and inclusion in knowledge producing discourses. Indeed, the protagonist is convinced "that every woman would take the first opportunity of relieving herself from the strain of household drudgery, which any ignorant person can accomplish" (Bacon 241). In contrast, the three women living at the cottage, promote the ideal of the always busy domestic woman. In addition, the protagonist is convinced that every woman should "cultivate herself as far as she can" and spend time thinking about "the whole Scheme, life, and one's relation to it" (244). She thus calls for women's education and inclusion in philosophical discussions about human life—and ultimately also women's inclusion in knowledge production about those issues. In opposition to this conviction, the women of the cottage believe that it is a woman's most important task to engage in "steady work" (248), meaning domestic work, since it is mostly women who think too much that appear most "sickly or cranky" (249). Nevertheless, the mother admits that some women are "needed by the world, for books and music and the like" (249). The role of women is thus clear in her mind: they are either domestic workers or great artists. A role outside of these two opposite extremes or too much mental work make women "sickly or cranky" (249). When the protagonist admits that she has never written a book or something similar, the mother asks surprised "what made ye so mortal tired, then, deary?" (249). The answer to this question remains unanswered throughout the story.

While struggling to adapt to this new—or rather old and much more conservative—version of femininity and domesticity, the protagonist has several conversations with a woman in a grey dress, who she initially presumes to be another patient at the cottage, but who turns out to be the ghost of a previous patient. As the psychiatrist confirms during their return journey, this previous patient "used to tell [him] that the duty of her life, here and through Eternity, ought by rights to be the preaching of the gospel she learned there." He regrets not having been able to cure her and muses that "[if he] could have cured her, she would have been a great—a really great novelist" (Bacon 251). Instead, she died at the cottage (251). What the psychiatrist does not know is that she is still fulfilling her life's task just like she predicted by visiting the other patients at the cottage and relating to them the ideals she learned there herself. In the highly religious context of the story, then, she almost assumes the role of an angel, preaching to the other patients thus saving them from their 'wrongful' ways and leading them to a better life.

Part of this better life the "The Gospel" advocates for is domesticity as the ideal for women. In fact, the protagonist is slowly but consistently transformed into the perfect housewife, who relishes in her domestic achievements. Repeatedly, she observes the daughters of the house doing their housework and enjoying it. One time, the protagonist observes Hester singing while scrubbing the floor of her room. She hears the

> swishing of water and the sound of scrubbing; soon the strong clean flavour of soapy boards floated out, and the flick of the drops into the pail; from where she sat she could see out of the corner of her eye the fluff of snowy suds that foamed over the shining bucket as Hester rubbed the milky cake of soap with the bristle. Her strong strokes had a definite rhythm and set the time of the stern old hymn-tune she crooned. […] her strong, muscled arms shot out in a measured curve; on her little island of dry boards she sang amid her clean, damp sea, high-priestess of a lustral service as old as the oldest temple of man, and the odour of her incense, the keen, sweet freshness of her cleansing soap, rose to the heaven of her hymn. (239-40)

This highly aestheticized imagery of the domestic work Hester is doing clearly idealizes it as the highest form of fulfillment for women. Instead of the horrifying suffocation Gilman's narrator is feeling in her patient's room in the Gothic summer mansion, Bacon's protagonist finds herself in an idyllic place of peacefulness. The sounds of domestic labor are positively associated not only with cleanliness but with strength and joy. Indeed, Hester is singing while doing the scrubbing, her movements following the rhythm of her song and her placement "on her little island of dry boards" (239) sounds rather like she is on a vacation than in her patient's room, scrubbing the floors. Moreover, Hester as a domestic worker is elevated to the status of high priestess, the highest status anyone could assume in a religious hierarchy. This comparison of Hester to a high priestess reiterates a popular image in the nineteenth-century United States. In 1869, physician William H. Halcombe wrote: "She is priest, not king," (qtd. in Smith-

Rosenberg and Rosenberg 337) thereby justifying woman's confinement in the domestic sphere as moral and spiritual educator rather than acting as queen, governing the public sphere. In fact, his refusal to use the term 'queen' already indicates that the highest political authority could only be a *king*, a man.

Perfecting this connection between women and spirituality or religion, the story ends with a biblical discussion the protagonist has with the ghost woman during her last night at the cottage. They argue about the sisters Mary and Martha, who were visited by Jesus and his disciples (Luke 10, 38-42), and remember that "[i]t was Martha who was reproved" for doing household chores while Mary simply sat and listened to Jesus. The protagonist wonders whether this reproval should not be considered in this domestic ideology. The ghost woman answers: "One would imagine that every woman to-day judged herself a Mary—and that is a dangerous judgment to form, one's self" (Bacon 250). The dilemma is resolved in the protagonist's final epiphany that she is not supposed to do the work "for [her]self" but rather "[f]or some one else" (251). In other words, she should not expect praise for it but devote herself completely to the service of others. In the opinion of the ghost woman, then, the cause for Martha's reproval was not the fact that she did domestic work during Jesus' stay at her home but rather her complaint that she had to do domestic work while Mary was allowed to sit and listen. The implication is that, if she had accepted her role gracefully instead of demanded praise for it, she would not have been reproved. Ultimately, the story thus unites both the medical and religious discourse to present one uniform message for women's role in society: domesticity and devotion to her role as servant of others.

In addition, there is yet another way in which the protagonist is encouraged throughout the story to change her New Womanhood ideals: By altering her view on women's way of thinking, their education, leisure activities and their participation in the philosophical discourses of their time. One day, while she watches Ann work in the garden, she wonders: "Are you always busy, Miss Ann? […] Always in the morning, of course […] But in the afternoon you are ironing, and Miss Hester tells me you do a great deal in the garden." This observation is followed by the question "When do you rest?" Ann's simple answer to this is: "In my bed" (Bacon 244). The protagonist is shocked and further argues that "surely every one needs time to think—to consider" (244). Ann apparently disagrees because according to her, all she needs to think about is the planning of the next day. She does not share the protagonists view that "everyone," including women, should take time to consider "the whole Scheme, life, and one's relation to it." Neither does she share the protagonist's definition of "cultivation" for when the protagonist proposes that "[i]t is surely every woman's duty to cultivate herself as far

as she can" all Ann answers is that she knows she has "to cultivate strawberries, if you want to get more of 'em" (244). It is again the ghost woman who later further convinces the protagonist of this ideology. The indoctrination the protagonist experiences is thus aimed at the New Woman ideas of seeking higher education for women. According to the story, all the education a woman needs is how to adequately nourish her family—both physically as well as spiritually.

Resulting in the transformation of the protagonist to the happy domestic wife that stands in clear contrast to her initial state of being over-whelmed and tired, the story represents the rest cure as a successful tool to cure women's mental health issues. The rest cure leads them back to the fulfillment and safety of a domestic lifestyle. After watching the women at the cottage do the housework for several days, the protagonist finally decides to prepare her own breakfast one day and even clean the dishes afterwards—the first time "since childish banquets filched from an indulgent cook." And indeed, she notices that "[i]t is surprising how—how satisfactory it makes one feel, really, […] to deal with this sort of work. One seems to have accomplished something that—that had to be done…" (Bacon 248). That same evening Dr. Stanchon returns to the cottage and declares her 'cured'. Thus, even while portraying the rest cure as a tool of ideological indoctrination, the story does not criticize this function but rather celebrates it for its success in curing women's mental health issues which arise from lifestyle free from domestic work.

When situating this conservative dramatization of women's place in patriarchal society in the discourse of women's ghost stories, however, this positive image is completely subverted. In her brief introduction to the story, Lundie claims that "Bacon's 'The Gospel' implicitly provides a complete refutation of Gilman's fictionalized experience with the rest cure" ("Introduction" 17). However, the exact reverse is the case. The story contradicts Gilman's story on an obvious, explicit level of content by celebrating the rest cure for its achievements and idealizing its process. Implicitly, however, the story very much confirms Gilman's horrifying image of the rest cure. The reason for this is the ghost. By featuring a ghost mentor (rather than a living mentor in the form of another patient) "The Gospel" takes part in the discourse of the ghost story genre. As I have shown, the corpus of ghost stories published by women writers from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century create a subversive counter-discourse to the dominant patriarchal discourse of the time.

Within this counter-discourse, the ghost woman in the grey dress establishes the same history of female confinement as the ghost woman behind the wallpaper in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" or the grey woman in the room in the boarding house in "The Room on the Roof": they all died at the site of their imprisonment and death and are now haunting that space to save

future patients from the same fate. Therefore, the ghost woman stands as a warning symbol of what will happen to women, who are not successfully 'cured' during the rest cure's psychological conditioning: they die because the patriarchal society at the time did not leave room for women's existence outside of the hegemonic gender expectations. Constricted by patriarchal ideology, women had the choice of either subjugation or death. Both the ghost women in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and "The Gospel" refused subjugation during the rest cure and died. As warning symbols, they are only visible to those who are in danger of becoming a ghost themselves—the other female patients who are because of their sickness, a threat to the existing power structure. Meanwhile, Hester, Ann, and their mother as well as Dr. Stanchon remain oblivious to her haunting of the patient's room's balcony.

The ghost woman in Bacon's "The Gospel" is thus a mirror image of the woman behind the wallpaper in Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper." As former patients who were treated in the same space, both women try to save the other women from the same fate they experienced—they do, however, choose different approaches. While Bacon's ghost woman is successful in her mission of saving the other patient's life by indoctrinating the protagonist with the ideology of domesticity, the ghost woman in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" chooses to rather point the narrator's awareness towards the oppressive ideology she is living in. It is her very haunting which first enables the narrator to deconstruct the oppressing pattern of patriarchal ideology, and it is the narrator's resistance to this ideological pattern which finally results in her suicide. In both stories, then, freedom is only an illusion—something the grey woman in "The Gospel" had realized and tried to communicate to the protagonist at the cottage.

Moreover, in the context of the ghost story, the peaceful and idyllic cottage becomes a space of ideological indoctrination, psychological conditioning, or even brainwashing. The protagonist is sick, weak, and tired when she arrives because she has a 'wrong' conception of femininity and does not fulfill her role as mother and wife as she is supposed to in the eyes of the ghost woman, Ann, Hester, their mother, Dr. Stanchon, and society in general. Consequently, to be considered 'cured', she must submit to the ideal of domesticity as the life fulfillment for women of all classes. The story suggests that women can only leave the cottage once they are considered 'cured,' meaning they accepted their domesticity with joy and grace as the nameless protagonist did. If they resist that interpellation, the only alternative is death as represented by the fate of the ghost woman who died rather than being 'cured.' Again, there is little room for women to find a place outside of the dominant ideology.

In this Female Gothic context, Dr. Stanchon is transformed into the Gothic villain—just as John in "The Yellow Wall-Paper." He kidnaps the protagonist, the story's Gothic heroine,

takes her to his version of a haunted castle, in this case a haunted cottage, and imprisons her there until he himself considers her 'cured.' Notice, that the readers never actually learn what exactly led to her stay there. As is the habit in Mitchell's rest cure,[26] he as the doctor is the one in control. According to Bassuk, Mitchell "felt that they [women] should abdicate control of treatment to their doctors, who were usually male. This was particularly necessary with bedridden nervous women who, Mitchell thought, were profoundly selfish and tyrannical" (143). Therefore, it lies in Dr. Stanchon's power alone to decide who must be submitted to the cottage to get 'cured' and he is the one who decides when, and if, a patient can be considered 'cured.' The women's perspectives on their own state of health are neither required nor welcomed.

Right from the start, Dr. Stanchon behaves in a patronizing way towards the protagonist. When she first wakes and asks for the reasons of her being at the cottage, he interrupts her several times in her questions (Bacon 238-39). In addition, he treats her like the "selfish and tyrannical" (Bassuk 143) person, Mitchell would have considered her to be. When she is surprised that she is not in an institution but in Ann and Hester's private house, he informs her that "[i]t is private because it *is* their own home—just that, […] That is what a home is. It is a simple fact, but one that seems not to have been included in your education" (Bacon 238). Upon her question what brought her there, he diagnoses: "Your father is a multimillionaire and your husband is not. But it is your constant ideal, nevertheless, and your failures to realise it, even in the degree to which you have tried, have sapped your vitality to a point which even you can understand now, I should suppose" (238). Here, he deliberately belittles and ultimately silences her by his choice of words implying that she is too stupid or too selfish to comprehend her own life. Instead, he is needed to explain it to her. For this purpose, he has brought her to Anne and Hester's cottage where she can observe and learn how she should behave.

Bassuk links the development of the rest cure and the nervous condition the female patients suffered from to the rapidly changing gender norms in late Victorian society. She claims that in this "context of potentially increased independence both inside and outside the family and the possibility of greater sexual expression, many women developed emotional symptoms, became bedridden and then received the rest cure" (148). In fact, for many women, Mitchell's rest cure may, indeed, have "offered care and protection, a respite from adult sexuality and sexual expression, and a prescription for dealing with troublesome desires and

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[26] Mitchell's method solely relied on his own "powers of observation" to judge whether or not a patient was cured and did not include any kind of self-assessment of the women subjected to his cure (Thraikill 532).

wishes" (149). Bassuk furthermore argues that the "[t]rue resolution of Victorian woman's conflicts meant that she must abandon her symptoms and transcend both her physiology and traditional domestic roles" (148). The rest cure can thus be described as a safety net. Rather than having to come to terms with changing gender expectations and new-found independency, but also new-found responsibility, the rest cure offered the comfort of guidance through an authoritarian physician. This implies that a female patient at the time could either overcome her sickness and become an independent woman, transcending old domestic stereotypes or submit to the rest cure and stay save within old boundaries.

Bacon's "The Gospel" as well as Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," however, show that this transcendence Bassuk describes was in fact not an option. On the contrary, refusal to submit to the rest cure and its inherent ideological indoctrination, resulted in death, as the ghost women symbolize. The ghost woman's preaching of "'the gospel' of domesticity" in "The Gospel," which she herself had learned too late (Lundie, "Introduction" 17), is an attempt to save the other female patients at the cottage from the same fate she herself has experienced. Because she knows that the only alternative to interpellation is death, the ghost woman indoctrinates the other woman with this ideology herself by "preaching the gospel she learned there" (Bacon 251) just as she had promised the doctor. The ghost woman is thus a dramatization of the fact that there is no room for women outside of the hegemonic ideal of femininity and domesticity. In fact, there is not even room for women outside of this ideal once they die, since—as the ghost woman proves—this ideology still governs women's existence even beyond death.

4.3. Conclusion: Mesmerism, Epistemic Violence and Racism in Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood. Or; the Hidden Self*

So far, I have primarily focused on the employment of the ghost trope in white women's ghost stories. However, it is important to note that the subversive trope of the ghost is also employed by women of color to question hegemonic systems of knowledge production—particularly regarding race and racism—and criticize the epistemic violence inherent in nineteenth-century ideologies of race. In a postcolonial discourse, "epistemic violence," as coined by Gayatri Charavorty Spivak, encompasses a complex system of othering and silencing the colonial subject in and through Western discourses (280-81). This process of othering and silencing can, of course, also be applied to the treatment of African Americans in the United States and the

construction of race that defines "Black" as the other of "white." As a result, Black Americans were silenced within the hegemonic discourse in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century society. Thus, referring to the work of James R. Cochrane, Claudia Brunner points out that racism is essentially an "equivalent of epistemic violence" (132, my translation).

Pauline E. Hopkins's *Of One Blood. Or; the Hidden Self* first serialized from November 1902 to 1903 in *The Colored American Magazine*, uses both the medical discourse of the time as well as the subversive trope of the ghost to criticize the epistemic violence of racism and the hegemonic construction of race and the racial line in early-twentieth-century US society. Specifically, the novel uses references to the nineteenth-century discourse on the occult, particularly mesmerism, as a sort of counter-discourse to the medical discourse at the time. In addition, the novel employs the ghost story genre to negotiate issues of knowledge production and epistemic violence against Black Americans. Even though the novel later turns into an "Afrotopian" (Faust xvi) narrative, leaving behind the initial generic conventions of the ghost story—and only returning to it briefly at the very end—the well-established discourse of the supernatural serves as a starting point to criticize hegemonic structures of knowledge and power.

Of One Blood focuses on the stories of Reuel Briggs, Dianthe Lusk, and Aubrey Livingston, who are later revealed to be siblings who have been separated as children. Dianthe is a singer in a band of Black artists. Reuel and Aubrey are aspiring doctors at Harvard University. While Reuel carefully hides his African descent from his friends and colleagues, Aubrey is unaware of his since he has been raised as the son of the Southern plantation owner, who has fathered all three siblings—raping the enslaved woman, Mira.[27] Evoking the ghost story genre, Reuel sees Dainthe's ghostly shape once when she first arrives in Boston and a second time when she is victim of a train accident and is dying in a hospital. Using mesmerism, Reuel succeeds in bringing her back from death and eventually marries her. However, Aubrey has also fallen in love with her—despite being engaged to be married to another woman, Molly—and immediately uses his opportunity when Reuel takes part in an expedition to Africa: While Reuel is away, Aubrey kills his fiancé and forces Dianthe to marry him. Meanwhile, Reuel is crowned king of the hidden town Telassar, a far advanced African utopia. It is Mira the former enslaved woman and mother of all three siblings, who appears as a ghost throughout the narrative to both Reuel and Dianthe whenever they are in grave danger to protect and save

[27] In line with the dominant discourse on slavery, I will speak of 'enslaved people' rather than 'slaves' to acknowledge that enslavement was something done to them and not the core characteristic of their identity.

them from harm. However, despite her efforts, Dianthe dies in the end, Aubrey is forced to commit suicide, and Reuel returns to Africa suggesting that there is no happiness to be found for African Americans in the United States.

Mira's ghost and Dianthe's abduction by Aubrey firmly anchors the story in the Female Gothic. Mira's ghost dramatizes that violence against women bridged lines of race in nineteenth-century US society. In fact, Mira's ghost can be read similarly to the ghosts of countless white women in ghost stories such as the alleged ghost in Harriet Beecher Stowe's previously discussed "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House;" the ghost of a young woman who was killed by her father in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Giant Wistaria"; or the ghost of a woman who was imprisoned by her husband and died in isolation in M.E.M. Davis "The Room on the Roof: A True Ghost Story." Those ghosts return after they were victims of violent assaults at the hands of their husbands or fathers to make sure that their stories are heard and seen. Similarly, Mira's ghost returns to protect her children and thereby draws attention to the rape countless Black women had to endure from their enslavers.

Consequently, Mira's ghost must also be read as a dramatization of the cultural heritage of slavery. As such, it represents not only past oppression and violence but the continued reach of that oppression into the present time. Indeed, both Reuel and Dianthe still struggle with oppression long after the abolition of slavery, showing the continued existence of power structures that were first established by colonialism and imperialism. As long as that oppression lasts, the ghost of their mother serves as a reminder of the cultural trauma of slavery and as an attempt to protect later generations. She appears to Dianthe when she is imprisoned by Aubrey, the Gothic villain of the story, and she points Reuel in Africa towards the fact that one of the caravan's local guides is planning to murder him. Other than most of the ghosts in ghost stories by white American women writers, Mira's ghost is thus not bound to space but to blood, or people.

As I have argued throughout this chapter, ghost stories established a counter-discourse to the hegemonic discourse of the time and provided women writers with a literary space to negotiate issues of knowledge and truth and thereby criticize hegemonic structures of knowledge production and epistemic injustice against women in patriarchal power structures. *Of One Blood* utilizes the subversiveness of this counter-discourse by evoking the context of the ghost story genre and the supernatural right at the beginning of the narrative. The novel thus expands the subversiveness of the ghost trope to criticize not only the silencing of women in patriarchal society but also the silencing and othering of African Americans in white US

society. This becomes particularly obvious in the fact that Reuel is a student of a kind of knowledge that is discredited by the (primarily white) institutions of his time.

Interestingly, in addition to the ghost story genre, it also uses the context of the medical discourse as an entry point for its critique. Reuel, a medical student at Harvard, is introduced as he reads "'The Unclassified Residuum,' [a book] just published and eagerly sought by students of mysticism and dealing with the great field of new discoveries in psychology." Indeed, Reuel is reported to be "a close student of what might be termed 'absurdities' of supernatural phenomena or mysticism, best known to the every-day world as 'effects of the imagination,' a phrase of mere dismissal" (Hopkins 2). As I have shown throughout this chapter, ghosts in women's ghost stories are usually considered exactly this: an "effect of their imagination," or a dream that is dismissed by their husbands. *Of One Blood* clearly evokes the same theme by firmly situating Reuel in the category of "believers" in the supernatural.

In addition, the frame of mesmerism also clearly situates the story in the larger discourse of the occult and the supernatural. According to James Whorton, most of professional physicians in the nineteenth century considered mesmerism as part of the occult and not a real science (108). Mesmerism was a medical practice that developed out of experiments in magnetism by Austrian physician Franz Anton Mesmer, who hypothesized in the 1770s that "the gravitational pull of the sun, moon, and planets created tides in the earth's atmosphere, and that this aerial ebb and flow could affect the nervous fluid within the human body" (140). Magnetism and mesmerism were then introduced to America in 1835 by Charles Poyen (109).[28] The novel introduces mesmerism as the other to medical science—a conception that is increasingly deconstructed throughout the narrative because Reuel actually succeeds in using mesmerism to resurrect Dianthe from the dead.

Reuel's study of mesmerism is thus aligned with the function of the ghost trope in other ghost stories: He believes in knowledge that others call "absurdities" or "effects of the imagination." Later, when Reuel stands in front of Dianthe's dead body in a hospital, he refuses to accept her death. Instead, he firmly believes that it was "some mysterious mesmeric affinity existing between them, [that] had drawn him to her rescue" (Hopkins 30). Building on research he has read on "experiments in animal magnetism" Reuel succeeds in returning Dianthe to life. The fact that he is successful in restoring life through this discredited method of mesmerism introduces the idea that a counter-discourse might be discredited without any other reason than

[28] For a detailed description of the development from magnetism to mesmerism in the United States, see Whorton.

that the hegemonic power wants to maintain its hegemony. In fact, knowledge that is considered false—mesmerism—by the hegemonic discourse—medical science—might very well be valid.

The novel uses this dichotomy of mesmerism and medical science as an entry point to criticize the epistemic violence inherent in hegemonic (Western) practices of knowledge production, particularly regarding the construction of race. To illustrate the construction of this so-called "knowledge" and dramatize its violent implications, everything that is considered "true" regarding race by US society at the time is reversed once Reuel arrives in Ethiopia. Instead of having to hide his ancestry because it would harm his career options, he is praised for it in the hidden town of Telassar. Instead of being the son of enslaved individuals, he is part of the royal line. In addition, Aubrey's ignorance of his own descendancy and relation to Reuel and Dianthe and the fact that he has been raised as the son of a plantation owner who now enjoys every aspect of white privileged, shows how race is socially and politically constructed. The story concludes this counter-discourse on race at the time with a religious argument: "who shall judge the handiwork of God, the Great Craftsman! […] for His promises stand, and He will prove His words, 'Of one blood have I made all races of men'" (Hopkins 222). The phrase and title "of one blood," that is repeated several times throughout the narrative, finds its literal manifestation in the fact that Aubrey as a representative of the Southern white upper class, and Reuel and Dianthe as representatives of Black citizens and former enslaved people turn out to be siblings in the end and are—quite literally—*of one blood*.

Hopkins's novel is an early example of how the ghost trope is used by women writers of color to criticize racial injustice and epistemic violence against people of color in US society. Particularly in the second half of the twentieth and early twenty-first century women writers of color start to turn to the ghost story genre to use its subversive trope to denounce the silencing and invisibility of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American voices and stories in white hegemonic discourse. In the second part of this study, I will thus jump to the second half of the twentieth century and open a dialogue between these nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century texts I have discussed so far with contemporary novels by women of color. I argue that, despite all cultural and historical differences, contemporary ghost novels by women of color use the subversive potential of the ghost trope in many similar ways as nineteenth-century white women writers: to give a voice and visibility to marginalized and ostracized people and criticize white, patriarchal systems of knowledge production and epistemic violence.

Part II:

Resisting Silencing and Invisibility: Contemporary Ghost Novels and Epistemic Violence

5. Introduction

> The first reports started at the height of the recession. The first victims—the first women—had not been seen in public for weeks. Many of the concerned friends and family who broke into their homes and apartments were expecting to find dead bodies.
> I guess what they actually found was worse.
> […] there she was, in the most sun-drenched corner of her bedroom, hidden by the light. She was naked, and trying to conceal it. You could see her breasts through her arm, the wall through her torso. She was crying. The sound was so soft that the inane chatter of the landlord had covered it until then. But then you could hear it—miserable, terrified. (Machado 127-28)

In Carmen Maria Machado's short story "Real Women Have Bodies" (2017), living women start to fade away into invisibility and incorporeality for no apparent reason and essentially become living ghosts. One day, the protagonist discovers several of these women in a seamstress workshop being literally sawn into dresses—"they […] just fold themselves into the needlework, like it was what they wanted" (135). The resulting dresses sell better than anything the seamstress has produced before. Petra, her daughter and the protagonist's girlfriend, muses that "[i]t's like people want them like that, even if they don't realize it" (135). Of course, she speaks about the dresses. However, her statement is somewhat ambiguous and can just as well be applied to the invisible women who have lost all agency. The women in the dresses remain there, motionless, and even when the protagonist tries to cut them out of the dresses and free them in the end, "they remain. They don't move, they never move" (148).

The short story dramatizes the invisibility and marginalization of women and suggests that women are still not considered equals in contemporary patriarchal society. Indeed, Chris and Casey, the protagonist's male co-workers turn this essentialist crisis of women losing their corporeality, their voice, and agency by turning into living ghosts into a problem for male sexual gratification. "'Hips,' Chris says. 'That's what you want. Hips and enough flesh for you to grab onto'" (Machado128). He continues: "All I'm saying is, […] if I want to fuck mist, I'll just wait for a foggy night and pull my dick out" (129). This short conversation reduces both living and fading women into sexual objects for male pleasure and completely disregards the female experience, the women's worries, emotions, and horror. Just like they themselves, their

emotions are invisible and silenced. This disregard for the female experience of "fading" is further emphasized when Casey tells them about an incident in which he "photographed a woman who had started to fade." When Chris asks him whether he told her she was starting to fade, Casey replies that he did not because "[he] figured she'd find out soon enough" (129).

Additionally, the story dramatizes the conundrum that women are often seen as a threat to patriarchal order even though they are completely invisible in it. When Petra, the protagonist's girlfriend, starts to fade away, she does some research and finds "out that they think that the faded women are doing this sort of—I don't know, I guess you'd call it terrorism? They're getting themselves into electrical systems and fucking up servers and ATMs and voting machines. Protesting" (Machado 144). Considering the motionlessness of the faded women the protagonist experiences in her clothing shop, the reader remains unsure whether this protest is real or whether faded women simply become a scapegoat for issues that are not easily fixed. If the protest is not real, this scapegoating of faded women further emphasizes the marginalization of women in patriarchal society. Rather than trying to find a solution to the problem, the women are vilified and ostracized as "terrorists." A news show on TV further strengthens this reading: "They are talking about how we can't trust the faded women, women who can't be touched but can stand on the earth, which means they must be lying about something, they must be deceiving us somehow" (146). The alleged threat posed by "women who can't be touched" suggests that their incorporeality removes them from physical patriarchal control. This loss of control, then, results in suspicion and ostracization.

The story thus constructs two different versions of the faded women: one, which is experienced by the protagonist who witnesses the women letting themselves be sawn into dresses and remaining motionless in a clothing store. And another one, which is the dominant narrative created in public discourse, in which the faded women are ostracized as terrorists rather than recognized as victims in need of help. What both narratives have in common is that women are pushed to the margins of society, either because they are passively accepting their fate of 'fading away' or because they are constructed as the dangerous other by hegemonic society. The story thereby criticizes how women are reduced to living a life on the margins of society. Indeed, "they [are] fading younger and younger" (Machado 136) and, as the protagonist eventually realizes: "Soon, [she]'ll be nothing more, too. None of [them] will make it to the end" (147).

Machado's short story picks up on several of the issues dramatized in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century women's ghost stories discussed in the first part of this study. First, when read in comparison to Wynne's "The Voice," which I discussed in the introduction to

Part I, Machado's "Real Women Have Bodies" suggests that not that much has changed for women in patriarchal society: they are still fading away. What is more, they also remain entirely silent and motionless once they have faded completely. The story thus offers an even bleaker outlook on women's situation in contemporary US society than Wynne's "The Voice" did over a hundred years earlier: women can eventually neither be heard nor seen.

Moreover, the story continues a similar discussion as Harriet Beecher Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House," in which the town debated whether there was a living woman or a dead woman in the house. Aunt Lois' musing that "Perhaps it would be best ef 'twas a ghost" (Stowe 151), is mirrored in Machado's story when the narrator suggests that when the concerned friends and family of the faded women did not find dead bodies in their home apartments, "what they actually found was worse" (Machado 127). Just as aunt Lois suggests that being dead would be better than being mistreated by the Captain, the narrator in "Real Women Have Bodies" suggests that being reduced to a voiceless and invisible, life in incorporeality is much worse than actual death. Machado's story thus puts a twist on Stowe's story: While aunt Louis suggest that being a ghost would be better than being mistreated in life, Machado's story suggest that ghostliness is even worse than death because it freezes the faded women in a permanent state of liminality in which they can neither participate in real life nor move on beyond death.

All these stories therefore suggest that women's real-life experiences are marginalized to the extent that women themselves become ghost-like and ghost-ed in patriarchal society. This theme of becoming ghost-like and ghost-ed in patriarchal society that Machado's story dramatizes in the form of the faded women is a theme I examined in the fourth chapter of this study, in which characters like Katherine Sinclair in "The Room on the Roof," Beatrice Vesper in Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber," or the nameless protagonist in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" slowly lose all life-force and eventually die or become actual ghosts themselves. Machado's "Real Women Have Bodies" thus illustrates that similar themes that were already important and widely spread in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories are still prevalent in contemporary ghost stories.

In the first part of this study, I have almost exclusively focused on the short story when analyzing the cultural function of the ghost trope in women's literature. More specifically, I have focused on short stories written by middle class white women from the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century. However, as the example of Hopkins' novel *Of One Blood*, which I discussed in the conclusion of Chapter 4, shows: the literary trope of the ghost is not bound to the generic form of the short story nor is it only used by white women writers. And it also is

not limited to the nineteenth and early twentieth century—as Machado's story illustrates. On the contrary, by the second half of the twentieth century the main domain of the ghost trope shifts from literature produced by white middle-class women to the area of ethnic literatures, specifically African American, Indigenous, Korean American, and Latinx literatures, and particularly to the genre of the novel. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* might be the most famous example of how the literary trope of the ghost resurfaces in writings by women of color at the end of the twentieth century. Sethe's long dead baby daughter Beloved returns from the dead to haunt the women in house 124, symbolizing the continuing trauma of slavery not only for Sethe herself but also for her other daughter Denver, who struggles to find her own identity and place in society.

The reason why ghosts appear more prominently in novels in the late twentieth and twenty-first century might be connected to the fact that the form of the novel replaced the short story as the most popular literary form by the early twentieth century. While in the mid-nineteenth century, the short story genre was "among the most popular literary forms in North America" (Basseler 22), "the genre [then] lost some of its popularity and influence with a wider mainstream readership" (36). Nowadays, "the short story has long ceased to be a popular form in the narrow sense of the term. It is placed on the lowest shelf in the remotest corner of the bookstore. Thus marginalized and bereft of its readers, the genre has become highly unprofitable, especially for younger writers" (36). One of the primary reasons for the decline of the short story genre, is thus that it is no longer "competitive in economic terms" (36). The twentieth and twenty-first century can truly be called what Leslie Fiedler terms "the Age of the Novel" (xvii).

Consequently, ghosts featured in novels appear more prominently because the novel appears more prominently in public discourse. In contrast, short stories or short story collections like Machado's *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017), which contains the short story "Real Women Have Bodies," are less popular—even though they may be praised by critics.[29] Interestingly, just like in the nineteenth and early twentieth century when ghosts populated the stories of the popular press magazines like *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly* as well as stories in the "high culture" magazines like *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, ghosts today fill the pages of books from little known authors published by small, no-name publishers like Mary Castillo's *Lost in the Light* (published by Reina Books, 2012) to books from critically acclaimed

[29] Machado's short story collection, for example, was finalist of the National Book Award.

and best-selling authors like Toni Morrison (usually published by the Penguin Random House Group) or Louise Erdrich (in the US usually published by HarperCollins). In addition, ghosts—then and now—populate(d) fictions from genre fiction like the Gothic, horror, fantasy, or detective fiction, or generic hybrids consisting of any one of those and others, to more traditionally "high culture" literary works using elements of magical realism to include the figure of the ghost in their plot.

Indeed, as mentioned in the Introduction already, magical realism is particularly important when examining works by writers of color in contemporary US literature. Magic realism, to use David Lodge's words, describes a narrative mode "when marvellous and impossible events occur in what otherwise purports to be a realistic narrative." Although this narrative mode is "especially associated with contemporary Latin-American fiction […,] it is also encountered in novels from other continents" and "has been enthusiastically embraced by a few native English novelists, especially women novelists with strong views about gender" (114). In contemporary ghost novels, it is usually the ghosts that appear as the marvelous event or marvelous aspect within a realist story world—at least if we approach the texts from a Western or Eurocentric perspective in which the existence of ghosts is denied. Since I cannot rid myself from my own positionality in Eurocentric Western thought, I will approach these narratives from such a perspective and consider the ghosts in them as marvelous elements in the line with magic realism rather than fully realist elements—even though it is presented as such in the narrative. More than that, I also argue that these texts all participate in a Western literary tradition, in which ghosts are considered supernatural elements rather than realist ones, by oftentimes explicitly evoking intertextualities with white American novelists.

In fact, many of the novels discussed in this part enter a direct dialogue with famous texts from white American literature. In Chapter 6, for example, Silvia Moreno Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) can be read as a re-writing of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse* (2022) enters into a dialogue with Stephen King's *The Shining* (1977), and Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* (2021) partly reimagines the Puritan captivity narrative. In Chapter 7, Suzan-Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), rewrites William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Importantly, this reinvention of canonized works by white male authors can also be observed in works by nineteenth-century women writers. Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Giant Wisteria" can, for example, be read "as a rewriting of the masculine literary tradition and, in particular, of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1859)" (Weinstock, *Scare Tactics* 177). Women writers of the ghost story genre have thus always engaged with their mostly white, mostly male predecessors to criticize "maleness" and

"whiteness" of the American literary canon and—by appropriating and commenting on their work in their own stories—claim a spot beside them. As Weinstock writes, in examining American women's ghost stories from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century "we are eavesdropping on a conversation of sorts—an exchange among women in dialogue with the larger tradition of American and British supernaturalism" (172). Over a hundred years later, a similar conversation is taking place between women writers of color and their white, middle-class forbears.

In this second part of my study, I will focus on the appearance of ghosts in contemporary novels—not because they do not exist in short stories or poems or other literary genres, but because the most prominent literary genre in the twentieth and early twenty-first century is the novel—just as the short story was the most prominent literary form in the nineteenth century. Furthermore, I will examine the cultural work performed by the ghost trope in novels by American women writers of various ethnic backgrounds to investigate how women writers continue to use its subversive potential to criticize hegemonic power structures. Indeed, just as most of the ghost stories in nineteenth-century magazines were written by women, "women have turned to the genre of cultural haunting in larger numbers" (Brogan 24). I am particularly interested in how the subversive potential of the ghost trope, that was used by white women in the nineteenth century to criticize their marginalization and exclusion from knowledge producing discourses in patriarchal society, is reclaimed by women writers of color, who often write from a cultural background in which ghosts and spirits have a very different place in life than in Christian, Western thought.

I thus disagree with Kathleen Brogan's statement that "[t]he story of cultural haunting needs to be distinguished from the more familiar ghost story, that genre of short fiction that blossomed during the nineteenth century, leaving us with thrilling fireside tales of haunted houses, graveyard revenants, and Christmases past" (5). On the contrary, I propose that opening up a dialogue between these two versions of the ghost story is very fruitful in examining the subversive potential of the ghost trope across not only historical and ethnic boundaries but also across different literary genres (short story/novel) and different narrative odes (Gothic/Fantastic/Magic Realism). Kathleen Brogan calls contemporary ethnic literature that features the figure of a ghost, "literature of cultural haunting" (8). She argues that, particularly, in recent African American literature, the function of the ghost is to "signal an attempt to recover and make social use of a poorly documented, partially erased cultural history" (2). She goes on to argue that cultural haunting narratives are deeply "concerned with the issues of communal memory, cultural transmission, and group inheritance" and that they "share the plot

device and master metaphor of the ghost as go-between, an enigmatic transitional figure moving between past and present, death and life, one culture and another." What is more, cultural haunting narratives, are, according to Brogan, a "hybrid category of literature drawing upon a wide range of cultural traditions, the story of cultural haunting crosses the generic boundaries of the novel, the historical novel, the novelistic memoir, short fiction, drama, and, to a lesser extent, the lyric" (6).

While I fully agree with these assessments, I will not adopt Brogan's term "story of cultural haunting" (5) and instead use the term 'ghost novel' to emphasize the continuity with the 'ghost story' from the nineteenth and the early twentieth century discussed in the first part of this study. Of course, I do not wish to conflate the issues faced by people of color in the second half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first century with the issues faced by white middle-class women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Rather, I am interested in examining the subversive potential of the literary trope of the ghost and its specific uses by women writers as well as the ways in which it provides them with the literary space of a counter-discourse to white patriarchy. Putting mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century ghost stories into a dialogue with contemporary ghost novels by women of color, answers one of Brogan's research questions: "why might a heightened interest in how ethnicity intersects with gender find especially full articulation in the telling of ghost stories?" (25). It is precisely the subversive potential of the ghost trope for criticizing epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in a white, patriarchal society that leads women from diverse backgrounds to turn to ghost stories.

Indeed, it is noticeable that despite different cultural backgrounds contemporary female writers of color often actively evoke the well-established genre of the Gothic and the ghost story to make use of the subversiveness of the literary trope to criticize the marginalization, the silencing, and invisibility not only of women but of people of color more generally in contemporary US society. Hence, it is not only important to pay attention to the different cultural backgrounds from which these writers write and in which ghosts are often considered to be a much more 'real' than in Western epistemology. On the contrary, many of these writers actively evoke the century-old white, Western tradition of Gothic literature and the ghost story to use the subversive potential of the ghost trope to criticize contemporary distributions of power—particularly in the context of knowledge production and distribution.

Therefore, I will again specifically focus on how the ghost is used in these narratives to criticize epistemic injustice, epistemic violence, and colonial patriarchal practices of silencing. Gina Wisker also highlights the importance of silence as a theme in contemporary ghost stories by pointing out that "[c]ontemporary ghost stories, particularly those by women, are socially

and culturally engaged with the problems, lies and *silences* of history and the present" (1; my emphasis). More precisely, situated against the background of a colonial past and present, the ghost trope in ghost novels is used to criticize hegemonic power structures of race, gender, and epistemology—and I claim that all of them are inextricably linked. Indeed, all the narratives I examine in this second part negotiate issues of colonial power hierarchies that persist in US society today.

In addition, I argue that ghosts in contemporary novels by women of color are increasingly used to criticize structures of what Mills has coined as "white ignorance" (15) particularly regarding the historical dimensions of contemporary racism. I thus consider white ignorance to constitute a specific form of epistemic injustice because, as Benjamin R. Sherman and Stacey Goguen argue, "a large portion of the time, white ignorance involves a failure to recognize and appreciate what nonwhite people know, and a failure to attend to facts that support the credibility of nonwhite people" (7). Very roughly, white ignorance, as defined by Charles Mills, refers to a "privileged, group-based ignorance" and it is tied to white supremacy. Importantly, as pointed out by Mills, memory—in connection to amnesia—is essential for white ignorance. He argues that

> [a]t the level of symbolism and national self-representation, […] the denial of the extent of Native American and black victimization buttresses the airbrushed white narrative of discovery, settlement, and building of a shining city on the hill. But the editing of white memory has more concrete and practical consequences also: […] it enables a self-representation in which differential white privilege, and the need to correct for it, does not exist. (31)

Importantly, this white amnesia Mills refers to, relates to the "silences of history and the present," Wisker mentions in the above quoted passage, and the silencing of the past conceptualized by Trouillot. Therefore, I will show that it is particularly this connection between memory, history, and white ignorance that is criticized through the ghosts in many of the novels I discuss in the following two chapters. In many ways, these ghosts refuse to be 'edited' out of memory and ultimately history and return to make sure that their stories are seen and their voices are heard—despite all efforts to silence them or make them invisible.

In the sixth chapter, I will first turn to contemporary ghosts who dramatize the epistemic violence of silencing by remaining voiceless even as ghosts. Similar to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghosts, these specters cannot speak up even after they have died. They sometimes scream to make their anger known but they mostly have to rely on living characters to uncover the injustices done to them and bring them to peace. In Mexican Canadian writer

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) and urban Native[30] writer of Apache/Chickasaw/Cherokee descent Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse* (2021), for example, women who were violently silenced and killed by their husbands or fathers return to haunt living women. The haunting in both cases can only be ended by uncovering and righting the wrong done to the victimized women. In addition, *Mexican Gothic* criticizes and challenges the epistemic violence of racism, while *White Horse* dramatizes and criticizes the intersection of testimonial injustice, silencing and sexual violence experienced by Indigenous women.

In the second section of the chapter, I discuss Otoe/Pawnee writer Anne Lee Walter's *Ghost Singer* (1989) and Chippewa writer Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* (2021), which dramatize epistemic violence, hermeneutical injustice, and white ignorance experienced specifically by Indigenous people in the US. However, since the novels were written in very different historical contexts with more than thirty years apart, they use widely different approaches in their critique. *Ghost Singer* particularly deals with institutionalized hermeneutical injustice in the context of museum collections that dispossess Indigenous peoples of their cultural heritage. By evoking the Gothic motif of the haunted house—the Smithsonian is haunted by the angry ghost of an Indigenous warrior who refuses to be edited out of history—the novel, however, perpetuates the common trope of Indigenous ghosts haunting white spaces in horror literature. *The Sentence*, in contrast flips the script by having a white woman haunt an Indigenous bookstore. White ignorance is approached on a level of both personal as well as cultural history. Furthermore, while *Ghost Singer* suggests the only way to escape hermeneutical injustice and white ignorance is for Indigenous peoples to separate themselves from white society, *The Sentence* has a much more conciliatory ending by ultimately offering redemption to the white woman's ghost—a redemption that is denied to the Indigenous warrior ghost as well as the white characters in *Ghost Singer*.

In the conclusion of the chapter, I show how LaTanya McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* (2021) not only dramatizes the lasting effects of slavery in contemporary US society but also various forms of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence that are inextricably intertwined with racial injustice in the US today. More specifically, as a Southern Gothic novel, the text places contemporary forms of racial injustice into a historical dimension with slavery. It does so by featuring the ghosts of Black people who were violently victimized and killed during slavery and who come back to haunt present day generations, demanding their stories to

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[30] Urban Natives are Native American and Canadian Frist Nation peoples who live in urban areas and not on tribal lands.

be seen and heard. They thereby criticize the silencing of Black voices and stories as well as white ignorance particularly regarding the historical dimensions of contemporary racism. The novel thereby negotiates who 'owns' the past or who possesses the authority to interpret the past and present by asking whose stories are told and how the past—and maybe more importantly, which past—is remembered.

In the seventh and final chapter, I will turn towards ghosts that refuse to stay silent any longer. Examining the phenomenon that Melanie R. Anderson has proposed to call "*spectralized narration*" (103), I argue that the literary trope of the ghost is used in these novels to resist colonial and patriarchal processes of silencing. Anderson defines "spectralized narration" as a form of narration "where multiple versions of the past and the text itself are mediated through a specter" (103). The novels discussed in the seventh chapter of this study thus all share one important commonality: they feature one or several narrators, who are already dead in the narrative present. Even though some of them are not explicitly referred to as ghosts in the novels themselves, it is surely not too far-fetched to read first-person narrators who are said to be dead by other, living narrators in the narrative present, as ghost narrators. Indeed, in addition to evoking the magic realism mode in other parts of the novel, these ghostly narrators use their positionality of speaking from beyond the grave to call out epistemic and physical violence against their voices and bodies that they have experienced as living women—something that they were not able to do while they were still alive. Rather than leaving it to live characters to uncover these crimes, then, as is the case in the novels I discuss in Chapter 6, these ghostly narrators return to speak up for themselves. They thus refuse to be made invisible and be silenced by the dominant colonial, patriarchal discourse. Consequently, they share two of the key functions with other, oftentimes more explicit, ghost characters: they symbolize the resistance to colonial, patriarchal practices of silencing and criticize the invisibility of the experience of women of color in white patriarchal society.

In Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) and Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997), which I discuss in the first section, victimized women return as ghostly narrators to denounce the sexual, physical, and epistemic violence that they experienced while they were still alive. They thus resist their silencing and instead speak up about the injustices they experienced. In both cases, they enter a dialogue with living relatives—the daughter Beccah in *Comfort Woman* and the sister Dedé in *In the Time of the Butterflies*—and thereby create a female support network that reaches beyond death. It is through this communication, this female dialogue between the dead and the living, that knowledge about the female experience of sexual and epistemic violence and the intersections of the two is produced. The

spectral narration in these novels is thus not only used to resist processes of silencing but also to criticize and ultimately rewrite a masculinized and Westernized historiography.

In Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) and Suzan Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), on which I will focus in the second sub-chapter, ghostly narrators return to uncover and denounce violence against women in patriarchal discourse. Indeed, in *Love*, ghost narrator L actively battles hermeneutical injustice by helping to create a literary space in which sexual abuse can be named and denounced. It is primarily through L that the reader learns that the image of the family's patriarch, Bill Cosey, is not as bright and shiny as the public, patriarchal discourse suggests. L's ghostly narration thus helps to create a counter-discourse to the official patriarchal discourse. In Parks' *Getting Mother's Body*, matriarch Willa Mae returns by singing the blues and thereby loudly demanding her living relatives to remember her. Simultaneously, her spectral blues singing offers support and guidance to her daughter Billy, who relives her version of her mother's life.

I conclude the chapter with a discussion of Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), in which the ghost of 12-year-old Richie returns from death to find out how he died. Just as the other ghosts in this chapter, he refuses to be edited out of history and demands to hear his own ending, demands to be part of the community rather than ostracized from it. In addition, similarly to other ghosts discussed in this second part, he dramatizes the silencing of Black voices and stories in a white-washed history and symbolizes the historical trajectory of structural racism from the Jim Crow era to today. In contrast to the other ghost narrators in this chapter, however, his narration is marked by a quest for knowledge rather than a provision of it.

6. Invisibility and the Violence of Silencing

Epistemic injustice and epistemic violence in the form of silencing as well as invisibility and ignorance have been common themes in American women's ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth century onwards—and they are still of central importance in contemporary ghost novels. However, in contrast to earlier ghost stories contemporary ghost novels highlight not only the invisibility and silencing of women's experiences in white patriarchal discourse but oftentimes the invisibility and silencing of communities of color more generally. Like earlier literary ghosts, the ghosts in the novels I discuss in this chapter return from the dead because they have been violently silenced. They return because they want their stories to be seen and heard. However, like the ghosts in earlier ghost stories, many of these ghosts remain speechless even in death, which means that they still lack the language to communicate properly. All they can do is scream out loud against the injustice and violence inflicted upon them. In other words, even though their physical voice is still intact—they can still scream, after all—they lack the words and thus the epistemic agency to tell their stories.

In the first part of this chapter, I examine Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* (2020) and Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse* (2022). I argue that both novels use the literary trope of the ghost to dramatize a disruption of and female resistance to post-colonial and patriarchal power structures that often enable, euphemize, or dismiss violence against women. More precisely, I argue that both novels use the subversive trope of the ghost to criticize epistemic und physical violence against women and the silencing of the female voice in patriarchal society. In Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, which is heavily influenced by Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892), female ghosts disrupt the patriarchal power structures at the Doyle's Gothic family mansion to help protagonist Noemí escape from patriarchal-colonial imprisonment. Similarly, in Wurth's *White Horse* protagonist Kari is haunted by the ghost of her dead mother, who refuses to stay silent after she is dead and instead demands retribution for her violent death at her father's hands. Her ghostly screams articulate a resistance to patriarchal practices of silencing and a subversion of the power structures that enabled her father to kill his own daughter and get away with it. In addition, Kari is haunted by the ghost and memory of her deceased best friend. This twofold haunting experience, then, also comes to dramatize willful ignorance about one's own past and symbolizes the hold the past still has over the present.

Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer* (1989) and Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* (2021), which I focus on in the second part of this chapter, negotiate epistemic injustice, particularly

hermeneutical injustice against Indigenous communities more generally. In addition, both novels criticize white ignorance regarding this epistemic injustice. However, considering the time span between the two publications, it comes as no surprise that they both deal with the issue quite differently: While *Ghost Singer* constructs a clear us-versus-them narrative, *The Sentence* takes a more nuanced approach by interweaving the histories and fates of its white and Indigenous characters. What is more, while *Ghost Singer* relies on established Gothic tropes such as the aggressive ghost warrior haunting the Smithsonian, *The Sentence* deconstructs this stereotypical narrative by having the ghost of a white woman haunt an Indigenous bookstore.

All these themes of epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, white ignorance, silencing of voices and stories, and violence against women are also negotiated in LaTanya McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* (2021), which is why I conclude this chapter by discussing McQueen's novel. Here, a former plantation is transformed into a luxury resort that is haunted by the ghosts of former enslaved people who threaten to kill an entire wedding party on the anniversary of a slave revolt. The past is brought into the present through the ghosts who violently demand their stories to be heard and seen. Ultimately, these novels can be read as an attempt to resist colonial, patriarchal silencing. Indeed, the literary trope of the ghost is used to personify this resistance. By returning from death to make themselves heard, these ghosts defy hegemonic power structures and literally demand a reckoning with the past, as suggested by the novel's title.

6.1. Patriarchal Violence and Silencing: Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* and Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse*

In this subchapter I will examine how both Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* and Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse* rewrite traditionally Western Gothic and horror motifs to criticize the epistemic violence against and the silencing of women of color in colonial, patriarchal power structures. Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* uses several of the themes and images from Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" to criticize the silencing and invisibility of the Indigenous/Latina female experience in white supremacist and patriarchal discourse. I argue that *Mexican Gothic* puts Indigenous women's and Latinas' resistance to hegemonic power structures into dialogue with and in a continuance of nineteenth-century white women's

resistance to patriarchy. Ultimately, the novel suggests that to escape colonial patriarchal control, the entire system needs to be dismantled.

Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse*, on the other hand, heavily draws on Stephen King's horror fiction—most prominently on *The Shining* (1977). Given King's problematic use of Indigenous imagery and stereotypes, particularly the idea of an Indian burial ground as the source of great evil in novels like *Pet Sematary* (1983), Wurth's dialogue with his work rewrites these stereotypes and establishes a strong Indigenous presence in contemporary American horror fiction. Just as *Mexican Gothic* uses references to the "The Yellow Wall-Paper," *White Horse* uses references to one of King's most celebrated novels, one that is also hugely populated with all kinds of ghosts, to claim a place next to it. Funnily enough, Silvia Moreno-Garcia has written the endorsement blurb on the cover of *White Horse* and calls the novel "Perfect new-wave horror." This intertextuality makes it even more interesting to read these two novels next to each other.

Silvia Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* is set in 1950s Mexico and tells the story of Noemí Taboada. Noemí travels to her cousin Catalina's husband's house in rural Mexico after her father receives an alarming letter from Catalina in which she claims that her husband is poisoning her and the house they are living in is haunted by ghosts. When Noemí arrives at her cousin's new home, called "High Place" (18), in the mountains of rural Mexico, she also starts to experience strange dreams and other supernatural occurrences. Eventually, she discovers that the entire house is infested with a fungus that allows its inhabitants to extend their mortal life by entering a symbiotic relationship with them. It is this mycorrhiza network called "*the gloom*" (211) that also keeps the ghosts or memories of its deceased former inhabitants—primarily the women—present, if not quite alive, and allows them to haunt the house and place of their violent deaths. In the end, it turns out that the gloom originates from the corpse of the family's patriarch's first wife, Agnes, whose dead body Noemí finds in the house's basement, in the center of the fungal infestation.

By situating itself firmly within the Anglophone and American Female Gothic literary tradition, *Mexican Gothic* rewrites and appropriates several themes from nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories that I have discussed in Part One. However, unlike the short stories I discussed in Part One, which exclusively focus on white, middle- to upper-class women, *Mexican Gothic* adds a racial dimension to the issue of medicalization and invisibility of the female experience. Howard and Virgil Doyle, father and son and heads of the family, are established not only as misogynist patriarchal figures but also as racist from the beginning. The Doyle's racism and misogyny becomes most obvious in Howard asking about Noemí's

"thoughts on the intermingling of superior and inferior types" and his summarizing of a paper he recently read that argues "that harsh natural selection has allowed the indigenous people of this continent to survive, and Europeans would benefit from intermingling with them" (Moreno-Garcia 30). As is revealed at the end of the novel, it is precisely this idea of intermingling blood lines that has motivated the Doyle family to first marry Virgil to Catalina and then later trying to marry Virgil to Noemí after Cataline proves unfit to form a symbiotic relationship with the fungus infesting the house. The Doyle's presume that they would "benefit from intermingling with [Indigenous people]." As it turns out, decades-long incest has eventually caused the Doyle women to become infertile, threatening to end the family bloodline. What is more, the fungus that keeps the family alive can only successfully enter symbiotic relationships with some people and Catalina turned out to be incompatible. Noemí, however, proves to be "quite strong," according to Virgil (236). She thus eventually recognizes that all she is to the Doyle's is "*Dark meat* […] Nothing but meat, she was the equivalent of a cut of beef inspected by the butcher and wrapped up in waxed paper. An exotic little something to stir the loins and make the mouth water" (236-37). Noemí is thus both sexualized and exoticized by the European colonizers.

In addition, the novel explicitly situates itself in the context of British colonialism. In fact, it clearly distinguishes between British and Spanish colonialism by contrasting the small former mining town of El Trufino—the name clearly pointing towards Spanish roots—to the slightly removed mansion High Place where Catalina lives with her husband's family. Francis, Virgil's cousin who picks up Noemí from the train station and who also supports her and Catalina in their flight attempts at the end of the novel, explains that "[they] don't speak Spanish at High Place." In addition, he describes High Place as "very English […], a little piece of England" and reveals that his uncle Howard "even brought European earth here" (Moreno-Garcia 18). This taking of British soil to Mexican land is reminiscent of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), who also brings his own soil from Transylvania to England to regain his strength in a foreign land. *Mexican Gothic* thus clearly establishes High Place as a British mansion in the line of traditional, eighteenth-century Gothic castles, and the Doyle family is aligned with vampires feeding on the lives of the local population.

The Gothic setting in *Mexican Gothic* is introduced before Noemí even arrives at the mansion. Firstly, the novel's title firmly situates it both geographically in Mexico as well as generically in the Gothic genre. Secondly, Noemí's cousin Catalina's letter that initiates Noemí's journey to the countryside also evokes traditional Gothic elements. Catalina describes her situation in her husband's house:

> *…he is trying to poison me. This house is sick with rot, stinks of decay, brims with every single evil and cruel sentiment. I have tried to hold on to my wits, to keep this foulness away but I cannot and I find myself losing track of time and thoughts. Please. Please. They are cruel and unkind and they will not let me go. I bar my door but still they come, they whisper at nights and I am so afraid of these restless dead, these ghosts, fleshless things.* (Moreno-Garcia 7-8)

In her letter, Catalina features herself as a traditional Gothic heroine entrapped in her husband's house, locking herself in her room because she is afraid for her life. Virgil, on the other hand, is constructed as the Gothic villain of the story, who tries to poison his wife. In addition, the letter introduces the monstrous motives of the "*restless dead, these ghosts, fleshless things*" that invade Catalina's private space and seem to infest the entire house. The house itself is personified in its sickness, "*stink*[ing] *of decay, brim*[ing] *with every single evil and cruel sentiment*." This personification foreshadows the existence of the fungus infesting the entire house and thereby bringing it to life.

Like the stories discussed in chapter 3, *Mexican Gothic* uses the literary trope of the ghost to negotiate domestic abuse and the testimonial injustice experienced by women when talking about domestic abuse in patriarchal discourse. When Noemí asks her father whether he believes Catalina's claim of domestic abuse, i.e. her husband poisoning her, he answers that: "She claims, in that letter, that he is not only poisoning her but ghosts walk through walls. Tell me, does that sound like a reliable account?" (10). In fact, Noemí's father considers Catalina's account to be "nothing but exaggerations and marital trouble." He characterizing Catalina as having a "tendency toward the melodramatic," and marks her letter as nothing more than a "ploy for attention" (7). He thus sees her as the stereotypical, melodramatic, attention-seeking woman instead of believing her and taking her account seriously. As a consequence, he subjects her to testimonial injustice by not recognizing her as an epistemic agent able to produce and share knowledge about her own experience. In addition, he admits that he has started "asking about good psychiatrists around town" (7). Catalina's description of her own experience as being poisoned by her husband and haunted by ghosts in the house is thus immediately dismissed by the patriarchal authority figure of her birth family. Similar to her nineteenth-century forebears in the short stories discussed in chapter 4, Catalina is, at best, considered melodramatic and untrustworthy to interpret her experience correctly and, at worst, pathologized.

As it turns out, Catalina—like some of her nineteenth-century predecessors such as the nameless narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper"—is subjected to the rest cure at High Place. Upon her arrival, Noemí finds her cousin seated in a chair by the window. After a brief conversation with her cousin, Catalina receives her medication from Francis' mother, and is put

to bed by her with the explanation "[s]he needs her rest" (Moreno-Garcia 26). The next day, the family's doctor confirms that he has diagnosed Catalina with tuberculosis and claims that "the 'rest' cure still holds true. Plenty of sleep, plenty of relaxation, and a good diet are the true solution to this malady" (51). When Noemí voices doubts about her cousin's changed personality and troublesome letter, the doctor explains: "[y]our cousin is a very anxious girl, quite melancholic, and the illness has intensified this." When Noemí contradicts him by stating that "Catalina is not anxious," he demands to know whether "[she] den[ies] her depressive tendencies" (52). Similar to the nameless narrator in "The Yellow Wall-Paper" or the protagonist in Bacon's "The Gospel," then, Catalina is diagnosed with mental and other maladies despite her own and Noemí's better judgment and subjected to the rest cure. Neither Catalina herself nor Noemí are recognized as realizable sources of knowledge about Catalina's health and are both silenced by the doctor.

Consequently, *Mexican Gothic* can be read as a contemporary re-writing of Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper." Indeed, soon after her arrival at High Place, Noemí starts to have troubling dreams. First, she "dream[s] that a golden flower sprouted from the walls in her room" only to then "recogniz[e] the bulbous shapes" of mushrooms (Moreno-Garcia 55). These "bulbous shapes" recall the "bulbous eyes" of Gilman's wallpaper (Gilman 649). What is more, in her inspection of the wall and the "golden bulbs [that] seemed to turn into smoke, bursting, rising, falling like dust upon the floor" (Moreno-Garcia 55), Noemí suddenly becomes "aware of a presence in the room." She sees "a woman in a dress of yellowed antique lace" standing in the door: "Where her face ought to have been there was a glow, golden like that of the mushrooms on the wall." Both the golden color of the "bulbs" as well as the yellow color of the woman's dress are, again, reminiscent of Gilman's *yellow* wallpaper. Thus, the golden woman in *Mexican Gothic* can be read as a reimagined version of Gilman's woman behind the wallpaper. Furthermore, once Noemí wakes from her dream, she immediately wants to inspect the wall "as if to make sure there was nothing strange lurking behind the wallpaper" (57). Importantly, the ghostly golden woman in Noemí's dreams remains speechless—just as Gilman's woman behind the wallpaper. During their first encounter, she tries to communicate with Noemí, "but having no mouth since her face was a golden blur, no words [come] out [of her mouth]" (56).

In contrast, the female ghostly presence that visits Noemí in her next nightmare appears as a voice rather than a physical shape. *Mexican Gothic* thus picks up on yet another common motif from nineteenth-century ghost stories which dramatizes that women in patriarchal discourse can either appear as a physical shape or receive a voice but can never have both at

the same time. They are either invisible or inaudible. The same is true for the female ghosts in *Mexican Gothic*, at least initially. In another nightmare, Noemí dreams that family patriarch Howard Doyle steps into her room at night, "approaching her bed and tugging at the covers. […] It [is] chilly and he [is] undressing her." Unable to move,

> she felt a presence […] and the presence had a voice; it leaned close to her ear and it whispered. 'Open your eyes,' the voice said, a woman's voice. There had been a golden woman in her room, in another dream, but this was not the same presence. This was different; she thought this voice was young. (Moreno-Garcia 80)

As Howard Doyle slowly transform into Virgil Doyle in Noemí's dream, he proceeds to sexually assault her by "press[ing] a hand against her mouth, pushing her back against the bed." Again, the female voice urges Noemí to "Open [her] eyes" (81). Eventually Noemí obeys and opens her eyes, thereby escaping further assault. The voice thus fulfills a protective function that prevents Noemí from being further assaulted.

The longer Noemí stays at High Place and the more she learns about the mansion's past and the Doyle family inhabiting it and suffers from Virgil's unwanted sexual advances and Howard's misogynist and racist comments, the more direct her interactions with the ghost women of the house become. Indeed, the longer Noemí stays at High Place, the less restricted the ghost women are to her dreams, and she starts encountering them outside of her dreams as well. Of course, the reader later learns that the reason for this is that with every day she spends at High Place the fungus infesting it strengthens its symbiotic relationship to her, thereby incorporating her into its gloom and the supernatural world contained in it. One night, Noemí wakes up because she "hear[s] a heart beating, as loud as a drum, calling for her" (Moreno-Garcia 116)—a clear reference to another nineteenth-century Gothic story: Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843). As she leaves her room to find the source of the heartbeat, "[s]he fe[els] it beneath her palm, when she presse[s] her hand against the walls." Again, the focus on the wall, if not the wall*paper,* establishes a strong connection to Gilman's short story. On her search, Noemí spots the ghostly memory of Ruth, Francis' cousin who murdered several Doyle family members before she committed suicide. Noemí sees Ruth standing "in the middle of the hallway" wearing "a white dressing gown, her hair like a golden halo, her face bloodless" (116). Ruth is not quite a ghost, but rather a memory that is replayed by the house's gloom. Through this, Noemí learns that Ruth's attempted to kill of Howard and subsequently committed suicide (117). After the memory scenes have passed, Noemí sees the golden woman from her first nightmare again. In the next moment, Virgil stands behind her telling her she has been "sleepwalking" (118), thereby denying and silencing her experience of haunting.

As the boundary between dream and reality starts to become blurry, the novel's structure starts to disintegrate as well. This disintegration of a clear narrative structure separating dreamed events from waking events marks the disintegration of female autonomy and agency. While the first few dreams are clearly indicated as such by paragraph breaks and verbal markers like "[t]hat night she dreamed that […]" (Moreno-Garcia 55), later encounters with the ghost are no longer indicated as clear dreams. In the above-described alleged sleepwalking incident, for example, Noemí, in one moment, "raise[s] her palms to desperately ward off—" only to then feel "[a] firm hand on her arm" in the next line—which turns out to be Virgil's hand (118). In another instance, Noemí is taking a bath and even though the text states that "[s]he close[s] her eyes" (181), the free indirect discourse of her thoughts continues without any additional switch in narrative voice or structure. Again, she watches Virgil enter the room attempting to assault her. And again, Noemí hears the voice telling her to "*Open [her] eyes*" only for her to realizes that "her eyes [are] wide open" (182). Suddenly, the scene changes and Noemí finds herself in a coffin. When she finally proceeds to "snap […] her eyes open," she is in Vigil's room, who tells her that "[she] managed to sleepwalk into [his] room"—still dripping water from her bath (184).

Virgil's invasion of Noemí's dreams, which are not quite dreams, yet also not quite real, suggests that the patriarchal and racist power structures in High Place create "the gloom" as an oppressive tool to suppress female agency—regardless of race. Indeed, the reader eventually learns that Doyle turned his first wife, Agnes, into the gloom by feeding her to the fungus which "needed a human mind that could serve as a vessel for memories, that could offer control. The fungus and the proper human mind, fused together, were like wax, and Howard was like a seal, and he imprinted himself upon new bodies like a seal on paper" (Moreno-Garcia 283). The gloom thus is a manifestation of patriarchal ideology, slowly but surely subjugating all women who enter High Place to patriarchal control. As such, the gloom is reminiscent of Gilman's yellow wallpaper. Just as the wallpaper represents patriarchal ideology subjugating women, the gloom fulfills the same function.

What is more, the more Noemí tries to revolt against the power structures imposed on her, the more she is integrated into the gloom. One night she sees Ruth sitting at the foot of her bed and she asks herself whether she is

> [a] memory? A ghost? Not quit a ghost. She realized that what she had been seeing, the voice whispering to her, urging her to open her eyes, was the mind of Ruth, which still nestled in the gloom, in the crevices and mold-covered walls. There must be other minds, bits of persons, hidden underneath the wallpaper, but none as solid, as tangible as Ruth. (Moreno-Garcia 233)

This imagery is again reminiscent of Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" in which the narrator observes "so many of those creeping women" (656) outside of her window, but none of them is as tangible as the one behind the wallpaper in her room. In *Mexican Gothic*, at least one of the women in the gloom (behind the wallpaper) has a name—Ruth—and she has a very similar purpose as her nineteenth-century counterpart, namely, to protect and save Noemí from patriarchal control and subjugation.

Nevertheless, it is despite or perhaps also, quite paradoxically, precisely because of its function as a tool of patriarchal control that the gloom also creates a subversive space of female resistance and female knowledge production and distribution. This becomes evident in the fact that it is the only space in which Agnes' ghost—the golden woman—can appear in a physical shape and Ruth can both walk and talk freely to Noemí. Indeed, as I have shown earlier, Ruth actively uses the gloom to warn and protect Noemí and eventually also to tell her that she must kill Howard to finally dismantle the patriarchal power structure of High Place and set the women imprisoned in the gloom free. By using the very tool of their oppression against their oppressors, then, Ruth and Agnes eventually enable Noemí to dismantle them altogether. As she stands before Agnes' corpse in the family crypt below the house, Noemí realizes what must happen: she throws "the lamp against the corpse's face. It instantly ignite[s] the mushrooms around Anges's head, creating a halo of fire, and then tongues of fire beg[i]n to spread quickly down the wall, the organic matter apparently as good as kindling, making the mushrooms blacken and pop" (Moreno-Garcia 290). As Noemí, Catalina and Francis Doyle, who has been helping Noemí since her arrival in High Place, finally emerge from the mausoleum, they watch "[t]he house blaze[….] in the distance. Let it burn until it [is] all reduced to ashes" (293). The novel's suggested solution to dismantle colonial patriarchal power structures is thus to burn it all to the ground.

In conclusion, then, *Mexican Gothic* sees contemporary structures of racism and white supremacy in relation to British colonialism and male supremacy. The patriarchal structures are literally imported to Mexico with the English soil upon which High Place is built. In Mexico, then, the Doyles' ideology of male supremacy is further developed to incorporate a strong sense of white supremacy and epistemic violence as well—both of which become evident in their treatment of Catalina and Noemí. What is more, the novel sees resistance to those patriarchal, colonial power structures and epistemic violence in continuance of nineteenth-century female resistance. It is precisely because Agnes and Ruth remain present in the gloom and appear as silent or invisible helpers to Noemí that the latter is able to eventually dismantle the patriarchal power structure by setting the house on fire. However, the novel also suggests that female

resistance alone is not sufficient—it also needs white, male allies to dismantle those misogynist and racist ideologies, evidenced by Francis Doyle and his assistance to Noemí throughout her fight for freedom.

In Erika T. Wurth's *White Horse*, protagonist Kari, urban Native of Apache and Chickasaw descent, is haunted by the screaming ghost of her dead mother Cecilia who returns from death to resist the epistemic violence of her silencing. Bound to an ancient Indigenous bracelet, Cecilia's ghost always appears when Kari touches the bracelet. Initially convinced that her mother left her as a baby, Kari uncovers the cruel truth behind her death over the course of the novel: Cecilia's father Michael killed her in a fight after she confronted him about abusing her and her sister Sharon. Throughout the novel, Michael often takes the shape of a mythical Indigenous monster, the Lofa whose presence is threatening Kari. Kari's tasks over the course of the novel, then, are to confront Michael in the shape of the Lofa, to reconcile with her dead mother and avenge her murder, and, finally, to reconcile with her own past. Indeed, Kari is also haunted by the ghost and memory of her deceased best friend, Jaime who died of a drug overdose and for whose death Kari feels responsible for. While Jaime's ghost is a manifestation of Kari's survivor's guilt, Cecilia's ghost dramatizes a resistance to epistemic violence in the form of colonial patriarchal silencing.

The first ghost Kari and the reader encounter in the novel is that of her deceased best friend, Jaime. Sitting in her cousin Debbie's car in front of a roller skate park, Kari sees Jaime's ghosts as she

> rolled the manual window down and the lights snapped on in front of Roller City. It was dim, and the bulbs flickered on and off, making an electric clicking sound as they did. There was a slight, smoky mist rolling in, and I watched it roil up under the light, under the awning […]. It was as if … no, was that … a person? There had been no one there a second ago, […]. I was really peering now at what, at first, had seemed like a bit of movement in the shadow. And then, under the awning, like a dream, like a goddamned childhood nightmare, there she was, as if she'd never gone, standing in the shadows of the roller rink—her shy, yet defiant expression, her curly chestnut hair floating in the soft, evening wind. Her beautiful Blackness like a dream. Jaime. My Jaime. (Wurth 17-18)

The imagery of flickering lights, the fog rolling in, the shadows in front of the building clearly evokes the aesthetics of a horror movie and so does the description of the scene as a "goddamned childhood nightmare." The narrative style of an interior monologue, indicated by the uses of ellipses and questions in which the reader gains direct insight into Kari's thoughts, further strengthens the experience of horror. Indeed, it is as if the reader encounters the ghost alongside Kari. In this creepy atmosphere, Jaime's description presents a surprisingly stark contrast because she is described with more soft and light adjectives: Kari describes Jaime as

"*shy*" and "*beautiful*" with her "curly chestnut hair [is] *floating* in the *soft*, evening wind." Jaime is "*like a dream*" and thereby diametrically opposed to the image of a nightmare (18; my emphases).

Jaime's description also stands in stark contrast to how Cecilia's ghost's is described. Kari encounters her mother's ghost for the first time at her favorite bar, the titular White Horse.

> There was a woman standing by the pool tables who hadn't been there moments before. […]
> Her head was down, her long, dark hair covering her face. Her skin was brown, but gray—not the color of a living person. At all.
> She was just standing there, still.
> […]
> A sound like bones cracking came from her limbs, and abruptly, she moved jerkily a few inches in my direction, her head still down.
> […]
> She raised her head up sharply, her eyes white, her mouth pouring blood, and screamed. (Wurth 29-30)

Again, the passage evokes horror film imagery and aesthetics through the blood pouring from her mouth and the white eyes. The ghost's "long, dark hair covering her face" as her head is lowered also clearly recalls images from *The Ring* (2002). What is more, before seeing the ghost, Kari is overcome by "[a] feeling of darkness, dread. Pain even." The temperature in the room drops rapidly and her breath starts to freeze in front of her (29), which are all other common horror film motifs. In addition, the act of screaming is significant here because it introduces the theme of resisting silencing. What is more, the blood pouring from her mouth emphasizes that body part and consequently her voice as the essential wound that was inflicted upon her through epistemic violence. Even though Cecilia, like other ghosts before her, is not quite able to talk as a ghost, she nevertheless attempts to resist the epistemic violence of silencing by screaming out loud.

In addition to evoking horror film aesthetics, the novel uses Stephen King references, particularly to *The Shining*, to firmly situate itself in a Western tradition of horror literature—just as *Mexican Gothic* uses references to "The Yellow Wall-Paper" to do the same. In fact, Kari is introduced as a Stephen King fan in the book's blurb already: "Heavy metal, ripped jeans, Stephen King novels, and the occasional beer at the White Horse have defined urban Indian Kari James's life so far." Kari's pronounced self-identification as Stephen King fan thus further emphasizes the novel's numerous references to King's works. According to Kari, "[w]hen Jaime […] died, [she] read *The Shining* over and over again" because, apparently, "[it] was the only thing that distracted [her] enough from [her] own pain for any amount of time" (Wurth 180). In addition, the reoccurring motives of alcoholism, drug abuse, child abuse, and patriarchal violence also strongly link *White Horse* to *The Shining*.

The most apparent intertextual reference, however, is that part of the novel is set at the Stanley Hotel, which inspired the Overlook Hotel in King's *The Shining*. When Kari checks in to her room, she sees "that room 217's key was more ornate than the others—and flipped the opposite way," and she realizes that it "had been King's room" (228). Just as King's Overlook Hotel, the Stanley Hotel in *White Horse* turns out to be haunted. At night, Kari wakes to find "the huge, wooden arch in-between the bedroom and the bathroom—the Indian carvings, the one [she] hadn't remembered from the book or movie, the one featuring Apaches […] moving" (246). The male and female figures on the archway gesture for her to rise, whispering her name. As Kari walks to the archway, her gaze follows one of the women's pointed finger to a mandala carved in the wood. When she pushes it, a secret compartment opens. It is in this compartment that Kari finds a wooden Apache war club—the one that she has been dreaming about and the one that eventually helps her to defeat Michael. Rather than becoming a death threat like the Overlook Hotel, then, the Stanley Hotel in *White Horse* becomes a source of power for its protagonist. Finding the war club is an important step for Kari to reconnect to her Apache heritage and to thus break out of the cycle of violence and guilt she is stuck in.

Her visit to the Stanley Hotel is a significant step for Kari to overcome her willful ignorance about her own and her mother's past. Indeed, willful ignorance is one of the core themes in the novel and both Cecilia's and Jaime's ghosts confront Kari with her own ignorance. The blurb on the novel's front cover also introduces this theme: "when her cousin Debby finds an old family bracelet that once belonged to Kari's mother, it inadvertently calls up both her mother's ghost and a monstrous entity, and Kari's *willful ignorance* about her past is no longer sustainable" (Wurth; my emphasis). Kari's willful ignorance concerns her mother's past, on the one hand, and her own involvement in and survivor's guilt over her best friend's death, on the other hand. The fact that Cecilia and Jaime are somewhat aligned in the novel, is indicated early on, when Kari introduces "Jaime and [her] mother" as "[t]wo people I despised talking about—hell, even thinking about, for very different reasons. The past was the past. […] If Jaime had to die, at least she'd sacrificed herself for something, I thought guiltily. But I'd made my peace with it—by moving on" (Wurth 22). Kari's unwillingness to talk about her mother stems from her life-long conviction that her mother had left her as a baby. She thus resents Cecilia (and her ghost) at the beginning of the narrative. The haunting, however, forces her to confront her ignorance and incorrect 'knowledge' about her mother and to reconcile with her.

Kari's unwillingness to talk about Jaime, on the other hand, stems from her own survivor's guilt that is already hinted at in the earlier quoted passage: When thinking about

Jaime, Kari can only do so "guiltily" (Wurth 22). The reader learns that Jaime has died and Kari's reflection that "[her] life[… is] safe and good—and one in which [she] waitresse[s], read]s], and most of all, [doesn't] do drugs" (22) foreshadows the revelation of a past in which Kari was neither safe nor good and she did do a lot of drugs. Kari's statement that she has made peace with the past and moved on from it, is clearly proven wrong when she starts to see Jaime's ghost and starts thinking about their past regularly. Indeed, seeing Jaime's ghost triggers a similar process of memory flashbacks as the bracelet that evokes Cecilia's ghost—the only difference being that the flashbacks triggered by Jaime's ghost are flashbacks of Kari's own past, in which she relives her time with Jaime. After her first sighting of Jaime's ghost, the next chapter starts with the sentence "I am thirteen years old when my new best friend Jaime and I sneak behind the school to smoke cigarettes" (19).

Notably, while the narrative present is written in past tense, these memory flashbacks are written in present tense. It is this contradictory use of tenses that dramatizes from the beginning that Kari has, indeed, not moved on but still lives in the past by reliving her best friend's life and death and is still plagued by her own survivor's guilt. Throughout the novel, several chapters start with a memory written in the present tense: First, "I am fifteen years old when I tell Jaime to get the fuck out of my house" (Wurth 120); then, "I am sixteen years old when I break Debby's heart" (213); and, finally, "I am twenty-four when Debby saves my life" (278). In the latter, the final memory chapter, the reader learns that Kari found Jaime's body after she overdosed and attempted to commit suicide by overdosing herself. It is this suicide attempt that Debbie saves her from. Earlier in the narrative, Kari admitted that "[Jaime]'d looked terrible for a year before she'd ODed. But I'd been too busy getting high, being selfish. And now she was gone. And it was my fault. […] If I had done something she'd still be alive" (221). It is exactly this survivor's guilt and the responsibility she feels for her best friend's death as well as her own suicide attempt that Kari must overcome over the course of the narrative.

Jaime's and Cecilia's ghosts are further aligned through this use of present tense which further emphasizes their importance. In fact, in addition to the flashbacks to her earlier life, the only other sections in the novel that are written in present tense are dreams Kari has in which she is her mother as well as one episode in which she encounters her mother's ghost after waking up. Just as there are four chapters in which Kari lives through her earlier life with Jaime again, there are four chapters in present tense centering on Kari's experience with her mother's ghost and her mother's past—three dreams in which she realizes "I am my mother" and one episode in which she wakes up and sees her mother's ghost in her room. In the first episode written in present tense, Kari encounters Cecilia's ghost after waking up. Significantly, it is in

this present-tense episode that Cecilia's ghost attempts to speak: "Her mouth opens, and blood drops out, a curtain of red, and she begins to whisper something then, something faint at first, something that begins with an 'L.'" When Kari does not understand her, she starts to scream again "her black eyes peering straight into mine—turning white, screaming a word over and over and I cower. I close my eyes. It finally stops. I open them, and she is gone" (Wurth 90). Similarly, every time afterwards that Kari wakes up from a present-tense dream in which she is her mother, her mother stands "above [her] bed" (136) or "in the window" (159). The first time this happens, they scream together, the second time, Cecilia only stares at her and finally speaks a whole word: "Sharon," in a breaking voice, crying (160). After the final present-tense dream episode, Cecilia's ghost speaks again: "'Father,' she whispers, full of sadness, and then she's gone" (222).

Cecilia's ghost is also evoked in memory flashbacks that Kari experiences in the body of her mother whenever she touches the bracelet. Significantly, it is in one of those flashbacks in which Kari inhabits Cecilia's body that she finally uncovers the truth about her mother's death. More precisely, she witnesses the night that Cecilia returns to her parents' house, determined to confront her father, and take her sister, Sharon, away with her. As Cecilia's mother opens the door, she begs her daughter: "*Please. Sharon is going to be fine*" (Wurth 255) upon which Cecilia asks, "*Was it fine with me*?" (256). Her mother insists that "[she] *didn't know*, [… she] *swear*[s]*, […]. He's come to God. He says he won't do it again. He's sober*," which is immediately echoed by Cecilia's father himself, who confirms: "*I was drunk!* […] *I'm sober now*" (256). However, Cecilia refuses to leave, and in the following altercation, Michael becomes "the Lofa, the beast, his hair long, his teeth nightmarishly longer, his smell like nothing from this Earth, the glass spilling onto the carpet as his fingernails became claws" (256). He hits Cecilia and she falls to the ground, hitting her head on the radiator and dying almost instantly. Michael's transformation into the monster can be read as another reference to King's *The Shining* in which it is also the father, Jack, who—also sparked by his own alcoholism—eventually turns into a monster, albeit not a real one, on a killing-spree. Cecilia thus dies because her father wants to keep her silent about his abuse and because he wants to maintain his control over at least one of his daughters.

Cecilia's return as a ghost is an act of resistance to this patriarchal silencing. Just as she spoke up in life against her father's abuse, she still speaks up in death. Indeed, in the moment of dying, she realizes that she must stay for Sharon "or he would do it to her too" and for her baby daughter, who is "only two days old. All alone" (Wurth 257). It is out of this sisterly and motherly sense of duty to protect those she loves that she returns as a ghost. Similar to other

ghosts, Cecilia thus does not pose a threat to the person she is haunting, her daughter Kari, but rather to the patriarchal order by urging her daughter to uncover the reasons for her death and to finally bring her father to justice. As it turns out over the course of the narrative, the word Cecilia tries to whisper when Kari first sees her in her room after waking up, the word that starts with an 'L,' is "Lofa." The Lofa is a monster that is also depicted on the bracelet that conjures Cecilia's ghost. Shortly after receiving the bracelet, Kari starts to dream about the figures depicted on it, "especially the monster, coming to life. It had long, dark hair and yellow claws that curled up at the end, sharply. It was also surreally tall, its hot, rancid breath reeking of human meat" (Wurth 28). Those

> [h]orrible, wrenching nightmares […] would start with a man standing near a little boy in bed. He'd tell the boy to pray. And then he'd start touching him. Then, the boy would turn into the monster figure on the bracelet. It was familiar somehow, like it was maybe from a story Auntie Squeaker had told me. (34)

At the end of the novel, it becomes clear that Michael was the boy being abused, and later repeating this cycle of abuse and violence in his own family. When Kari faces Michael in the final showdown, she recognizes him as the child from her earlier dream and realizes: "You were touched when you were young." Michael nods and confirms "My father" (288).

In the context of colonialism and Indigenous history, however, the dream also conjures the image of Catholic priests abusing Indigenous children at boarding schools. Cecilia's utterance of "father" not only implicates Michael as her murderer, but it also evokes the figure of the Catholic priest as a father figure in Catholicism. The forced Christianization of Indigenous peoples is further evoked through the command to "pray," that the father in the dream utters before he starts to molest the boy. Moreover, Kari learns at the local Native shop that "according to some, to legend, […] the Lofa and [her] family, well, they're intertwined—probably for some historical reason, something to do with [their] family history and their relationship with it" (Wurth 96). The word "legend" specifically implies a history that reaches further back in time than Michael's childhood. In addition, the phrase "historical reason" implies a broader historical context that is then intertwined with their "family history." In the context of colonialism in the US, this "historical reason" could well refer to the forced Christianization attempts of Indigenous peoples in, for example, boarding schools and the inherent epistemic violence of these institutions designed to suppress Indigenous cultures.

The link to colonialism and epistemic violence against Indigenous peoples also becomes evident in Michael's hybrid identity not only between monster and human but also between Indigenous and white heritage. Initially, Michael is introduced as a descendant from "ranchers

in Texas" (Wurth 109), which establishes him as a representative of white, colonial, patriarchal society. During the final showdown between Kari and Michael/the Lofa, however, Kari learns about Michael's suppressed Indigenous heritage. He tells her that his wife, Nessie (Apache) "used to ask [him] why [he] didn't take the girls to stomp dance, in Oklahoma" (Wurth 287), a dance tradition that is associated with the peoples of the "Caddo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Delaware, Miami, Natchez, Ottawa, Peoria, Quapaw, Seminole, Seneca-Cayuga, Shawnee, Wynaodotte, and Yuchi" in Oklahoma (Jason Jackson 237). When Kari asks him why he did not do that, he says that "[his] family gave all that up long ago. Was illegal anyway for a long time" (Wurth 287). This implies that his family was forced to renounce their Indigenous heritage because it was outlawed. They were thus forced to assimilate to white culture. Michael continues that "[his] connection was lost. And besides. We'd gone Christian. And there's good there too." Upon Kari's remark that things can be reclaimed, he insist that "[s]ome things[…] are gone forever. You do things, or people before you do things—even if they're forced to, and a line is drawn. A border, a boundary that cannot be crossed" (287). With these statements he confirms the earlier implied forced Christianization of and epistemic violence against his family and Indigenous peoples more generally. Due to colonialism they were forced to renounce their heritage and thus permanently silenced in colonial discourse.

The novel thus suggests that the ever-repeating cycle of violence and abuse is a direct result of this epistemic violence of forced disconnection from one's Indigenous roots and heritage that Michael experienced. In addition, Kari's as well as Sharon's history with drug abuse and Jaime's death all become symptomatic of ongoing processes of settler colonialism in which the past still very much affects the presence of people's lives. As Michael says during the showdown: "It's a big, dang, ugly, circle, girl" (Wurth 289), referring to the fact that Jaime's death and her own survivor's guilt are the reason why Kari was never able to "heal when it came to [her] mother. And [her] wounds around [her] mother are why [she] became friends with Jaime in the first place" (289). To break that cycle of violence and guilt, then, Kari must go back to her Apache roots, evidenced by the fact that she uses an Apache war club to finally defeat Michael.

In conclusion both *Mexican Gothic* and *White Horse* criticize patriarchal colonial violence against women and the silencing of women's voices within patriarchal colonial discourses. In addition, they both use the literary trope of the ghost as an indicator of resistance to those processes of silencing. Particularly *White Horse* highlights issues of ignorance and the importance of coming to terms with one's own history and past to move towards a more sustainable future. These themes of epistemic violence, ignorance, silencing, and the emphasis

on reconciling with the past are also central topics in Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer* and Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence*, which I analyze in the next subchapter and which both focus on the epistemic violence and epistemic injustice experienced by Indigenous communities in the US—albeit in different ways.

6.2. White Ignorance and Hermeneutical Injustice in Anna Lee Walters's *Ghost Singer* and Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence*

In this chapter, I examine how Anna Lee Walters's (Pawnee/Otoe) *Ghost Singer* and Louise Erdrich's (Chippewa) *The Sentence* use the literary trope of the ghost to dramatize the marginalization of Indigenous people. More precisely, both novels criticize epistemic violence and epistemic injustice, particularly hermeneutical injustice, against Indigenous communities in the settler-colonial society in the United States—and they do so in two different historical contexts that are more than thirty years apart. *Ghost Singer*, which was first published two years before the United States Senate passed the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* in 1990,[31] negotiates exactly those issues of dispossession that the bill later tried to rectify. The novel criticizes the absence of legislation to protect the property and ownership of cultural artifacts and human remains of Indigenous peoples and thereby dramatizes how this legal issue of Indigenous property and ownership intersects with issues of hermeneutical injustice. In addition, I argue that *Ghost Singer* challenges the epistemology of white ignorance engrained in institutions like the Smithsonian.

Similarly, Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence*, examines ignorance about the past and Indigenous history on an individual as well as a national level. In addition, the novel subverts earlier tropes of "unquiet Indians" that haunt places (Erdrich 55) and instead turns a white woman into a ghost haunting an Indigenous bookstore. The novel thus fulfills a similar cultural function as Erika T. Wurth's previously discussed *White Horse* by reclaiming stereotypes and subverting traditional ghost narratives that feature Indigenous ghosts as silent and aggressive and ultimately evil. Rather than reconstructing the us-versus-them narrative of *Ghost Singer*,

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[31] The *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* acknowledged Indigenous ownership of Indigenous human remains and 'cultural artifacts.' Museums were instructed to comprise an inventory of collections of that sort in their possession and return them to the respective peoples upon request. For a summary of the bill see United States, Congress.

The Sentence tries to understand the origins of and motivation behind the ghost Flora's ignorance and privilege. In the end, the novel offers a reconciliation between white and Indigenous characters in an attempt to move forward by trying to understand each other. Written and published during the Covid-19 pandemic and following the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, *The Sentence* can be read as a call for unity and mutual respect and understanding rather than division. At the same time, the novel emphasizes the past and presence of epistemic violence against Indigenous communities that is oftentimes silenced and forgotten. It thus attempts to fill these silences created in the telling of the past in line with Trouillot.

The linear narrative of *Ghost Singer* switches between several settings from Washington, D.C. to Arizona, the most important of which are Washington D.C., the Navajo Reservation, and several settings in Oklahoma. The D.C. narrative focuses on Willie Begay, a young Navajo researcher, David Drake, a white historian wanting to write a history of the Navajo people,[32] and the two tribal officials Russell Tallman (Kiowa/Caddo/Pawnee/ Comanche/Cheyenne) and George Daylight (Creek/Cherokee). During their work for the Smithsonian Institute several white and Indigenous researchers—amongst them Willie Begay—are confronted with the collection of Indigenous 'cultural artifacts'[33] and human remains that are hosted at the Smithsonian. Everyone who gets too close to those 'artifacts' and human remains starts to experience symptoms of illness and starts to see or is even attacked by the spirit people connected to them—specifically the spirit of a former warrior, who exhibits the most aggressive behavior particularly towards the white characters. As a consequence, there has been a series of unexplainable deaths and suicides amongst the staff members of the museum since the beginning of the collection.

The ghosts or rather the "spirit people," as George Daylight points out (Walters 123), that haunt the Smithsonian in *Ghost Singer,* symbolize a trajectory of dispossession of Indigenous peoples from colonialism to the late twentieth century.[34] As explained by Rebecca Tsosie, "[d]uring the late 19th century and early 20th century, […] federal agents […] punished

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[32] On David Drake and the ways in which he perpetuates epistemic violence by silencing Indigenous voices in his 'history' project, see, for example, Tillett (93-94) or Aigner-Alvarez (51-53).

[33] I will refer to the items in the Smithsonian's collection as 'artifacts' in quotation marks to indicate the different perspectives on them. As Grunewald mentions, "labels such as 'object,' 'artwork,' 'thing,' and 'artefact' [are problematic when they] are used for entities that, from a Native perspective, may have qualities and agencies of personhood and narratively address other-than-human-related cosmologies" (249). I consider this to be the case here because there are still spirit people bound to these 'artifacts' in the novel, indicating that they are more than mere 'objects' and thus do, in fact, "address other-than-human-related cosmologies" (Grunewald 249).

[34] Although the Indigenous characters talk about 'spirit people' in the novel, the narrative clearly evokes the Western genre of the Gothic and the ghost story. Therefore, I will use the term 'ghost' rather than 'spirit people' in my analysis.

the active practice of Native ceremonies and cultural traditions on the reservation, often appropriating sacred objects from practitioners and selling them to various museums and collectors" (358). Indeed, one central concern of the novel, according to Aigner-Alvarez, is the "deconstruct[ion of] the dominant society's educational justification for acquiring and displaying Native American items such as medicine bundles and other sacred objects, mummified bodies, and body parts" (45-46). Moreover, the novel criticizes what Trouillot calls the silencing of the Past—particularly in regard to the silencing of Indigenous stories and perspectives in US history. As Rebecca Tillet points out, in the novel "the monstrous is situated within the power and agendas of academia; within the construction of 'national' history through the silencing of minority voices, and the consequent power and authority assumed by 'legitimate' or legitimating historians" (86). The ghost warrior in the novel dramatizes this silencing.

In addition, a collection of bodily remains that are kept in the attic of the Smithsonian—amongst others the mummified body of a child, the scalp of an Indigenous man with the ears still attached, or strings of Navajo ears—represents this history of colonial appropriation and dispossession of Indigenous cultures as well as Indigenous slavery. Consequently, they also represent the hermeneutical injustice against Indigenous peoples that resulted from these dispossessions and appropriations. According to Tsosie, "[t]he hermeneutical consequences of these appropriations were massive and enduring" because Indigenous peoples not only "lost physical possession of vast amounts of their cultural heritage" but also "the authority to interpret their own history and culture, as well as their authority to protect themselves from further appropriation" (358). This means that Indigenous peoples were denied taking part "in the creation of epistemic practices and excluded from the institutions where meaning is made" (358-59). The authority to interpret Indigenous cultures shifted from Indigenous peoples themselves to academic institutions such as museums which turned Indigenous people into "*objects* of the epistemic practices of anthropology" (359). Being turned into objects of study furthermore constructs Indigenous peoples as the other. Consequently, this form of hermeneutical injustice can also be read as a form of epistemic violence as conceptualized by Spivak because Indigenous peoples are othered by colonial discourse to such an extent that they lose the ability to speak for themselves.[35]

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[35] On the entanglements of colonization and slavery also see Gómez.

George Daylight criticizes this hermeneutical injustice towards Indigenous communities through the shift of interpretative authority from the Indigenous communities who originally created the items to US institutions such as the Smithsonian: "American society don't even know what it has here! Not even the Board of Directors, or Trustees, or whoever governs the operation of this here place is the caretaker. It's possible that not even they know for certain what's in their possession" (Walters 125). In addition, even though Indigenous researchers like Willie Begay are allowed access to the collection, they are not the main caretakers of the collection but rather dependent on the white museum personnel to grand them access to their own cultural heritage. George points out this discrepancy by telling Donald: "Evans, you're the caretaker! You're also the only one who really knows for certain what's up here!" (125). Therefore, it is not only the lack in access to the collection that is being criticized but also the very knowledge about what the collection entails in the first place.

What is more, *Ghost Singer* criticizes that this knowledge about the collection created by white researchers like Donald Evans is incorrect and instead characterized by what Mills conceptualizes as white ignorance and white amnesia. Donald's claim that "[t]hese objects and items stored up here are from dead cultures" (Walters 125) is challenged by George who explains that

> [t]he cultures who created these items ain't dead simply because you're blind to them and deem them so! These cultures manifest themselves differently now […]. *The people* who created these things *exist*—they're still here! Whether or not they have recollection of the items here being a part of their cultural inventory don't change that fact. The fact that these items are now in your possession don't change it either. (127)

George argues that Indigenous cultures are very much alive but marginalized and cast as invisible by the dominant American discourse, which chooses to remember them as dead to not have to reckon with its own involvement in the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples. This marginalization and metaphorical killing of Indigenous cultures by simply arguing they are "dead" inflicts not only hermeneutical injustice but also epistemic violence against these cultures because they may no longer be aware that certain items are "part of their cultural inventory" as pointed out by George and are othered in the settler colonial discourse of the United States to such an extent that they are unable to speak. Even if they are aware of the items in the collection being part of their culture, the removal of the items from Indigenous possession has also removed interpretative authority of the cultural history of Indigenous communities from themselves and placed both the items and the authority firmly into Anglo-American institutions such as the Smithsonian.

The ghosts haunting the collection, then, are a result of exactly this epistemic violence against and marginalization of Indigenous cultures and knowledges through these colonial practices of dispossession. According to George, "like people, these creations have characteristics and a nature. As long as these articles exist, these characteristics, this nature, and their power are embodied in that creation" (Walters 127). Indeed, this "extraordinary nature and quality of some items" in the collection "transcend language and a particular culture" (127) and eventually find expression in spirit people haunting the collection because they are still connected to the items and remains. Pointing to "coiled strings of human ears hanging on the nail above [Donald's desk]" (128), for example, George asks Donald: "Where's the rest of those people?" Donald admits that he has "[n]ever thought about that" thereby proving his white ignorance and his unwillingness to learn from George Daylight's knowledge. George suggests: "You should think about that, Evans. Those people are still probably mad as hell" (129). This rage, then, is embodied by the giant warrior ghost, who "illustrates the lack of respect shown to, and expresses the very real anger of, the Indigenous human remains and cultural artifacts housed in American museums" (Tillett 86). Indeed, when George leaves, Donald is attacked for the first time by the warrior ghost, "a true giant," who lifts him up from the ground and throws him down (130). The anger that is expressed by the ghost is caused by the fact that he—and ultimately his entire culture—was silenced by Western discourse and remains silenced by it.

This silencing of the Indigenous past and the disconnection between present and past generations becomes most obvious in Willie's encounter with the ghost warrior. The ghost warrior represents the past that is still haunting the present. When Willie encounters the ghost, he describes that "The Indian was a giant of a man, standing almost seven feet tall. As he advanced through the unknowing people at work in the room, each step he took around the tables emphasized his size and power towering over everyone there" (Walters 81). The ghost tries to communicate because Willie hears him "[saying] something, *howl*[*ing*] something" (81). But even Willie does not understand any of the words the giant ghost speaks which symbolizes a disconnection between past and present generations. This disconnection emphasizes the severity of the epistemic violence inflicted on Indigenous peoples because it shows that even Willie cannot understand what the warrior is saying and consequently his story remains silenced and invisible—even within his own culture. Similar to the female ghosts in nineteenth-century ghost stories, the ghost of the Indigenous warrior thus remains silenced in hegemonic discourse.

What is more, from a white perspective this imagery of the warrior ghost haunting the Smithsonian is reminiscent of portrayal of Indigenous peoples as 'savages': he is a giant and screams angrily, howls even, a term ascribed to an animal rather than a human. In the context of the novel, then, the warrior ghost dramatizes how the very stereotype of the savage Indian comes to haunt those that created it in the first place: the white colonizers. During a visit to Wilbur Snake, a medicine man and tribal elder of the Ioway tribe, Russell learns that this particular spirit is "crazy[…]. But his craziness ain't his own doing. Someone or something made him that way" (77). This something is implied to be colonization and epistemic violence. Later, Russell explains to Donald that the ghost man "died in battle […] That's also why he's naked. In those days, the men stripped completely before going to war. … In a sense, he's still on that path. And the others who are here, believe it or not, Evans, they each have a story, too" (241). The fact that the most dominant ghost in the novel is that of a former warrior emphasizes that the ghosts haunting the collection are fighting for recognition, for having their stories told and heard in the dominant discourse and for having the bodily integrity of their people respected—something that the Smithsonian's collection of human remains clearly does not do. It also suggests that the Indigenous fight against settler colonialism is reaching into the presence and far from over—despite the dominant discourse that colonialism is a thing of the past.

What is more, the ghosts represent the immense consequences of the hermeneutical and testimonial injustice against Indigenous communities. Indeed, the debate over who has authority and can claim ownership of the 'artifacts' and human remains in the collection is mirrored in the debate over the ghosts and the interpretative authority of the instances of haunting in the Smithsonian's attic. The Indigenous characters draw from traditional knowledge to cast the haunting as a result of colonial practices and Indigenous slavery. As Wilbur explains to Russell: "those peoples up in that building—the ones in the attic—can be looked at a lotta ways. We can say they's dead. We can say they's just bones or pieces of a man's hide. We can say they ain't no room for questions 'bout anything up there." But Wilbur cannot "think that way. A lotta old peoples thinks that nothing ever dies" (Walters 201). What is more, a man's body is considered to be "[…] holy […]. Any part of it stands for the whole…a hand, fingers, a breast, the hair. And the body itself—the blood, flesh, and bones—stands for the unseen part of the man…his memory, his mind, and his spirit. A man ain't fully a man without them" (201-02). From this perspective, then, the violation the collection at the Smithsonian poses is not only one of material dispossession of living generations but it is the enslavement of the spirit people still connected to those remains.

In contrast, the reactions by representatives of the dominant white, patriarchal discourse in *Ghost Singer* can be situated in the discourses of female medicalization and white supremacy that are already familiar from the other stories and novels in this study. This medicalization and white supremacist rhetoric highlight the white ignorance of the white characters in the novel. Communication about the experience of haunting is always met with disbelief, dismissal, and silencing by representatives of the dominant white, male discourse. Early in the novel, Jean Wurley, a staff member at the museum and David Drake's sister, is subjected to testimonial injustice by her brother when she tells him that "[a]bout two years ago, [she] began to see things, people, ghosts, whatever they are, almost on a regular though not daily basis" (Walters 7). David's reaction to his sister's revelation is reminiscent of the reaction other representatives of patriarchal power structures in nineteenth-century ghost stories or novels such as *Mexican Gothic* exhibit. Rather than believing her, he notices her "too bright eyes" (5), comments on her lacking appetite, implying that she does not eat enough, and finally suggests for her to take a break and come back with him to visit his family (7). In his eyes, her seeing ghosts is clearly a sign that something is not right with her. Donald later similarly explains to his girlfriend, Elaine, "that Jean Wurley was as nutty as a fruitcake!" and that "[h]er sanity was in question" (173). Importantly, in contrast to the white men's reactions to Jean's claim that she has seen a ghost, Elaine makes the decision that "[i]f Donald said the incident had occurred, it must have happened just the way he described it" (173). This highlights that it is, in fact, the white *patriarchal* discourse that is dismissive. Moreover, it again emphasizes the power of the male experience to create truth and knowledge, while the female experience is denied the same right.

The different approaches to understanding the ghost or spirit people haunting the Smithsonian are used to criticize white ignorance. More specifically, the novel suggests that Indigenous truth claims—particularly regarding Indigenous histories and cultures—should be considered "equally spurious" (Mills 15). When testing out different truth claims of how to deal with the haunting on an equal basis, it should become obvious that the Indigenous way offers the best results. In fact, as pointed out by Aigner-Alvarez, "Orally communicated tribal knowledge is the key to survival for both Indians and non-Indians who come into contact with the spirit people who exist among and within the Native American collection in the Smithsonian's Museum of Natural History" (46).

Consequently, the novel criticizes white ignorance as a form of what Pohlhaus calls "willful hermeneutical ignorance." According to Pohlhaus, "*willful hermeneutical ignorance* describes instances where marginally situated knowers actively resist epistemic domination through interaction with other resistant knowers, while dominantly situated knowers

nonetheless continue to misunderstand and misinterpret the world" (716). This becomes particularly evident in *Ghost Singer* in the white character's refusal to be educated about Indigenous knowledges and in their dismissal and silencing of Indigenous characters. Thinking about George Daylight, for example, Donald dismissively considers his worldview to "border[…] on superstition" and describes "George and his kind" (Walters 122) as "simple heathen types" (123). This racist description of Indigenous people evokes the discourse of colonialism by describing them as "simple" and "heathen types" thereby implying them to be 'uncivilized.' Through this, Donald denies them any right to produce legitimate knowledge and clearly subjugates Indigenous cultures to Anglo-American culture. Consequently, when George Daylight pays a visit to Evans and asks whether he has ever heard of "spirit people," Donald just "smile[s], careful to hold his laughter inside" (123). His micro-aggression of smiling at George for even mentioning the idea of spirit people, demonstrates Donald's dismissal of the ghosts or spirit people as mere superstition. What is more, he also shows no effort in trying to comprehend what George explains to him over the course of their conversation. Only after he himself has been attacked by the warrior ghost does he start to believe in the haunting.

Ultimately, then, the novel also suggests that the dismissal and rejection of Indigenous knowledges in Western society has harmful consequences not only for the Indigenous communities themselves but also for Anglo-American society. Since Western epistemology proves to be inadequate to intelligibly interpret and respond to the hauntings, those characters relying on this framework to make sense of their experience either commit suicide or die in freak accidents over the course of the narrative—further proving their white ignorance and willful hermeneutical ignorance. Only Donald Evens eventually realizes that he needs help from the Indigenous community and appeals to Russell and Wilbur. And even though Wilbur agrees to help, he confides in his son, Junior, and Russell that "[t]ruth be, I can't help him […]. Fact is, he has to do it hisself." Junior adds: "Will anything change because Daddy helps him out? Is he going to change the way he thinks or the way he is? Is he going to do anything about those things he's keeping in the attic up yonder?" to which Russell finally has to concede that "[n]othing will change, Junior. You know it. I know it. What he is is forty years of thinking that way. It'd be unrealistic to expect too much" (Walters 200). In other words, Russell suggests that Evans is himself interpellated by settler colonial ideology to such an extent that it is unrealistic for him to step out of that ideology completely.

Therefore, the haunting not only dramatizes hermeneutical injustice against the Indigenous community, but also a self-inflected harm to the Anglo-American community that is a result of settler colonial ideology. It is precisely because Donald does not understand the

hermeneutical harm he is perpetuating as caretaker of the collection and his unwillingness to change the status quo that makes him a target of the vengeful warrior ghost. Consequently, the novel suggests that the only way to overcome the harm that is inflicted on both the Indigenous and Anglo-American communities by keeping problematic and possibly illegally obtained collections like the one in the Smithsonian is by confronting the illegitimacy of the collection itself and the white ignorance about its contents but also its history. The novel thus ultimately asks to return hermeneutical authority to the respective communities whose 'artifacts' and human remains have been misappropriated. The novel also asks for a complete change in ideology that acknowledged the continuing harm of settler colonialism.

Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* negotiates similar themes of ignorance as Walters's *Ghost Singer*—albeit it was published roughly thirty years later. This suggests that white ignorance about Indigenous history and the silencing of Indigenous stories and voices is still a prevalent issue in society today. In contrast to *Ghost Singer*, which uses well established narrative templates of horror fiction in which Indigenous cultural and bodily remains are the source of malicious haunting, Louise Erdrich's *The Sentence* deconstructs this form of narrative. Instead, Erdrich's novel features the ghost of a white woman, Flora, haunting an Indigenous bookstore. The novel focuses on the time between November 2019 and election day 2020. In this time of political and cultural upheaval, most prominently the Covid-19 pandemic, the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent riots nationwide as well as the 2020 presidential elections, the figure of the ghost is used to negotiate issues of white ignorance and ignorance about one's own and the United States' past more generally. In addition, *The Sentence* emphasizes the importance of books as sources of knowledge and criticizes the silencing of the past through the uncovering of lost books and written stories that become essential to solve the presence of haunting in Tookie's, the main character's, life.

Flora's ghost, the ghost in the novel, is introduced as the embodiment of the white savior trope and represents cultural appropriation. According to the first-person narrator Tookie, "it figured" that Flora would refuse to leave after she died since "she was a stalker—of all things Indigenous" and "a very persistent wannabe." Tookie explains that

> Wannabe is from want to be, as in this phrase I've heard many times in life. *I used to wanna be an Indian*. It usually comes from someone who wants you to know that as a child they slept in a tipi made of blankets, fought cowboys, tied a sister to a tree. The person is proud of having identified with an underdog and wants some affirmation from an actual Indigenous person. […] At its most fervent, this annoying impulse, *I used to wanna be an Indian*, becomes a kind of personality disorder. It turns into a descriptive noun if this fascination persists into adulthood. Over time, Flora disappeared into her earnest, unaccountable, persistent, self-obliterating delusion. (Erdrich 36)

Indeed, Flora used to tell everybody that "she had been an Indian in a former life" (36). When she found out "that 'Indian in a Former Life' was a much ridiculed cliché" (36), she "discovered a shadowy great-grandmother" who she claimed was Indigenous (37). Flora thus embodies a stereotypical New Age white woman wanting a connection to Indigenous culture and thus apparently manifesting one. She attended "every powwow and protest and gathering" (37). What is more, Flora is also introduced with a white savior complex. She "fostered Native teen runaways, raised money for a Native women's refuge, worked in the community." In addition, she would bring gifts to "her favorite Native people," and "buy meals, loan money, help sew quilts for ceremonies" (37).

As mentioned above, Flora's ghost in *The Sentence* rewrites stereotypical horror narratives. As Tookie notices "[m]any books and movies ha[ve] in their plots some echoes of [her] secret experiences with Flora." However, there is one significant difference: "Places haunted by unquiet Indians [are] standard. Hotels [are] disturbed by Indians whose bones l[ie] underneath the basements and floors—a neat psychic excavation of American unease with its brutal history. […] Unquiet Indians" (Erdrich 35). Both Celine in *White Horse* as well as the warrior ghost in *Ghost Singer* can be understood as such "Unquiet Indian" ghosts that return as a manifestation of "American unease with its brutal history" of colonization, dispossession, and genocide. All this finally leads Tookie to wonder: "What about unquiet settlers? Unquiet wannabes?" (55). By featuring an "unquiet settler," an "unquiet wannabe," *The Sentence* flips the power dynamic. All of a sudden, it is whiteness that is cast as the haunting other.

What is more, *The Sentence* also flips the power dynamic in regard to knowledge production. Particularly, the setting of the bookstore is significant. Commonly, books are associated with learning and knowledge production. They are considered educational in one way or another. Consequently, it is notable that Flora haunts a bookstore because "[f]or unless with her ectoplasmic eyes Flora [is] able to read books without removing them from the shelves, she [is] browsing without the power to open a book and scan its pages" (Erdrich 63). In other words, Flora is excluded from any kind of knowledge hidden in those books since "she [does] not have the power to heft a book, get the feel of it, weigh it in her hands before opening it to look at the words" (63). Flora is thus powerless in her pursuit of knowledge and dependent on others to hand it to her. It is the Indigenous women working at the store, and particularly Tookie, who are cast in a position of power and thereby become the guardians or gatekeepers of the knowledge hidden in those books. Indeed, Tookie starts "to leave books open, if they were heavy enough to stay open" so Flora's ghost can have a glimpse at them (63). However, at the

same time the fact that Flora, a white woman's ghost, haunts an Indigenous bookstore symbolizes the ways in which whiteness has infiltrated and haunts Indigenous knowledges. In other words, Flora's ghost is an embodiment of epistemic violence that refuses to leave the bookstore. In contrast to other ghosts in this study, then, she is the one perpetrating epistemic violence rather than being a victim of it.

In addition, the context of the Covid-19 pandemic in the novel highlights the fragility of Western knowledge. Importantly, the early days of the pandemic were characterized by a state of unknowing. As Tookie notes: "The new rules for being alive kept changing" (Erdrich 183), which not only refers to the fact that the rules that govern social live kept changing but also the rules for 'staying alive' in the sense of avoiding infection. Since the virus is new, there are no medical studies, let alone books, one could consult for knowledge about it. Trying to work their way through the little knowledge there is, Tookie and her partner, Pollux, start making lists for "figuring the odds" of survival (184) by adding and subtracting points for different criteria said to influence a Covid infection. However, tellingly, they must work through legitimate and illegitimate knowledge when making that list as evidenced by their brief discussion of the influence one's blood type might have. When Tookie states that they "both get a point for having blood type O" because she "heard type A is more susceptible," Pollux immediately questions this information: "Really? I' not sure. I'd question that" (184).

The context of the pandemic thus highlights the struggle for knowledge production in a moment of crisis and showcases the struggle to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate knowledge. What is more, given the fact that rules and information were disseminated by the government during the pandemic, the government itself is cast in a position of unknowing in the novel. This state of unknowing in the context of the pandemic is then paralleled to other forms of knowledge in the forms of the books in the bookstore and, more importantly, national history. This parallelism between different knowledges, then, questions the process of knowledge production more generally. Furthermore, this juxtaposition of a cultural moment of unease and unknowing with the primary setting of the bookstore as a place of infinite knowledge emphasizes the importance of books as sources of knowledge.

Indeed, the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic is used to emphasizes books as essential sources of knowledge. As businesses are forced to close their doors in the early weeks of the pandemic, the bookstore Tookie works at receives early news that they are considered "essential," which means that they "can stay in business. Not open [their] doors, but keep selling. It means [their] state considers books essential in this time" (Erdrich 190). Importantly, this essentiality is not connected to the fact that they also do "school orders" but their

application to keep working was granted on the basis that they are a bookstore alone, which "means books are *essential*" (190). This stressing of books as essential items not only to school education but to the human experience in general emphasizes the importance of books as sources of knowledge in general—not only in schools. Indeed, in many ways *The Sentence* constitutes a love story to books—referencing more than I could possibly account for in this subchapter. Consequently, I will focus on the most important kind of book in the context of my analysis: the Indian captivity narrative.

The importance of books, particularly the Indian capitivity narrative, as sources of knowledge becomes further evident when Tookie learns early on that Flora died reading a book. In fact, Kateri, Flora's informally adopted foster daughter, hands said book to Tookie when she invites her to her mother's memorial service. Soon, Tookie starts to wonder whether "maybe Flora was trying to find her book, the one Kateri had given me" whenever her ghost roams the bookstore, leaving "piles of papers and books askew" (Erdrich 47). The book Flora died reading is called "The Sentence: An Indian Captivity, 1862-1883" (71). Instead of engaging primarily with the literary tradition of Gothic and horror fiction like the other novels discussed so far, then, *The Sentence* refers back to what many scholars have described as the first American genre: the captivity narrative.[36] Indeed, even though the captivity narrative Tookie discovers is from the late nineteenth century, the genre itself immediately evokes its own origins in the Puritan society of colonial New England.

By featuring this captivity narrative in the novel, *The Sentence* once more reverses stereotypical narratives that include prejudicial representations of Indigenous peoples. While the Puritan captivity narratives usually focuses on a white woman who is captured by a Native tribe and who must endure her captivity as a trial of her faith, "The Sentence" is "the opposite. A Captivity narrative by a Native woman" (Erdrich 71). When Tookie skims through the book's pages, one "line popped out, *sentenced to be white*" (72). Whiteness or rather the forced renunciation of one's own Indigenous identity is thus presented as a government-sanctioned punishment since 'sentencing someone to something' is also used as a term for legal punishment. The theme of legal punishment is then not only mirrored in the title itself, which could also refer to a sentence in the context of legal conviction, but it is also mirrored by Tookie's backstory, who served time in jail for stealing a corpse. It was in prison, that Tookie discovered her love for books—which are themselves made up of a multitude of different

[36] On the captivity narrative see, for example, Kolodny, *The Land* 17-34; or Fitzpatrick.

sentences in a linguistic sense. Moreover, the significance of the book is foreshadowed when Tookie finally closes it after a first examination: "The book had its own volition and would force me to reckon with it, just like history" (73).

The book of the Indian captivity narrative thus metaphorically represents history itself. What is more, it dramatizes that history needs to be confronted rather than forgotten or white-washed. After first opening the book, Tookie realizes "[o]ur history marks us. Sometimes I think our state's [Minnesota] beginning years haunt everything: the city's attempts to graft progressive ideas onto its racist origins, the fact that we can't undo history but are forced to either confront or repeat it." This haunting history consists of "blood dispossession and enslavement" (Erdrich 72). Consequently, the attempt to first burn and then bury the book (when it does not burn) to get rid of Flora's ghost is unsuccessful because history cannot be buried but must be confronted. Indeed, Tookie soon realizes that "[b]y not addressing what had happened here, I was not much different […]. I was an avoider. This all had to do with Flora. If I wanted to get rid of my ghost, I'd have to find out what was keeping her here" (79). In other words, to stop the haunting, Tookie must confront the past. By having its protagonist reckon with her own and Flora's past, the novel asks the nation to do the same. It implies that the only way to stop the haunting of history, is to confront and work through it.

In fact, by juxtaposing the nation's past of colonization and Indigenous genocide with the contemporary history of the Black Lives Matter Movement, the murder of George Floyd, and the resulting riots in Minneapolis and all over the United States, which are strongly featured in the novel's narrative present, the novel suggests that those events must be placed in a historical trajectory reaching back to the origins of the US, meaning slavery and dispossession. The novel thus suggests that the remnants of slavery and colonialism are still haunting the present and the only way to get rid of the haunting is to work through the past. The novel thereby urges its readers to confront the historical origins of contemporary forms of racial violence rather than seeing them out of context. Just as much as the captivity narrative from Puritan New England reaches into the present of Indigenous characters in the novel, so does the past of slavery and colonization reach into the present of people of color.

This power the past, represented by the captivity narrative, still holds over the present becomes further apparent when Tookie tries to decipher the book's illegible writing. Particularly when trying to read the page Flora marked just before her death, Tookie loses all control and agency over her own body:

> I felt my body disintegrating in a cascade of cells. My thoughts bleeding into the obliterating gray. I saw my atoms spinning off like black snow into the air of my bedroom. I watched

> myself on the bed, and found that I was looking from different perspectives—at the walls, and out the windows. I had become kaleidoscopic. I was many-eyed, all-seeing. The cells flew from my body faster and faster until, pop, I was gone. There was nothing for a long time. (Erdrich 84-85)

This complete loss of self that Tookie experiences when trying to decipher the book suggests that Flora's and Tookie's fates are deeply intertwined, given that Tookie has this near-death experience reading the exact same page Flora died after reading. In fact, before Tookie starts reading the book, she wakes "as a ghost" thereby further aligning herself with Flora (83). As turns out later, the book first belonged to Asema, one of Tookie's co-workers, from whom Flora stole it. Asema later reveals its full story: It was written by a young Indigenous woman who was enslaved by a white family. Her clan name was Maaname, her white name Genevieve Moulin. She was able to escape to a small town where she was taken in by another kindly looking woman, who "fed her, then drugged her and forced her into prostitution. This woman who ran the brothel became Maaname's nemesis. She was a true sadist" and tortured her in multiple ways until, finally, one of the men visiting the brothel "took pity on her. A third time she was abducted, but this time by a man with a redeeming characteristics or two. He married her to his son and moved them to Rolette, North Dakota" (301). According to Asema, "Flora stole this manuscript, a woman's testimony, because she hoped it would validate her assumed identity" of Indigeneity (301).

Flora's stealing of the manuscript symbolizes the silencing of Indigenous voices by white colonizers and the editing of history by removing those voices from public access—symbolized by Flora taking the book for herself. As Asema states "[s]he [Flora] essentially removed a vital piece of history" by stealing the manuscript, and "as if to punish her, the book killed her" (Erdrich 301). More precisely, it is the realization that she is not one of Genevieve's descendants, as she assumed, but rather a descendant of the white woman who ran the brothel and tortured Genevieve that finally kills Flora. As it turns out, Flora died of shock when she uncovered the truth about her ancestry: she is the descendant of a "[white] woman who was known for keeping other women locked in a bedroom" (344). As soon as Flora, whose full name turns out to be Lily Florabella, recognized that woman's name as the same name that is also written on a photograph that she has of her great-grandmother, whom she believed to be Indigenous, "Flora's identity turned upside down. Everything that she'd concocted about herself turned out to be its opposite" (345).

The same turns out to be true for Tookie herself, which symbolizes how deeply intertwined Indigenous history and identity is with European colonization. The only way for her to end Flora's haunting is to confront her own willful ignorance about her past. Indeed, as

Tookie confesses at the end of the narrative, "[she] ha[s] carefully kept [her]self in a cloud of unknowing, but now [she] underst[ands]" (Erdrich 357). As is revealed at the end of the narrative, Tookie's full "*name is Lily Florabella Truax Beaupre*, named after the woman who helped [her] mother, the woman who became [her] ghost" (360). Apparently, Flora kept Tookie's mother, a drug addict, sober during her pregnancy with Tookie. Consequently, he only way to get rid of her ghost is for Tookie to thank her for that—whether sincerely or not does not seem to make a difference—so she finally speaks the sentence: "'Miigwech aapiji, Flora.' [She pitches her] voice in that special register that expresses something true, however grating, or sells something broken. Thank you for saving my life'" (356). The novel's ending is thus bitter-sweet. On the one hand, it demands for Tookie to confront her own past. On the other hand, this confrontation means that she must admit that Flora in her white savior complex has actually made a difference in her life.

Flora's ghost is particularly interesting when comparing its power and agency to that of other ghosts discussed in this chapter so far. Even though Flora is just as speechless as the other ghosts, she nevertheless possesses greater power—stemming from her whiteness. Indeed, she almost succeeds in fully possessing Tookie one time by trying to enter her body forcefully, "pulling [Tookie's] shoulders apart" and attempting "to press aside [her] spine" (Erdrich 308). Therefore, Flora's white ghost not only invades the Indigenous space of the bookstore, but also attempts to invade the Indigenous body and challenges Tookie's bodily autonomy and her agency. Flora is thus one of the few ghosts in the novels discussed in this study that pose a threat to the living protagonists—which is reminiscent of the threat posed by white settlers to Indigenous peoples.

In fact, the image of Tookie feeling "the shark-fin edge of her [Flora's] hand sink into [her] back" (308) like a knife, is reminiscent of the historical interactions between settlers and Indigenous peoples, in which treatises were broken, tribes dispossess and killed, and individuals enslaved. With Tookie lying on the floor, "Flora open[s] the rest of her body carefully, unzipping [her] like a wet suit" and trying to fit herself into Tookie's body, her own body with Tookie's (309). In addition, her confrontations with Tookie and the maliciousness implied within many of them, particularly the attempted possession symbolize that she has a different status than ghosts of color. Rather than wanting Tookie to right an injustice done to her, she demands her to thank her for saving her life—despite her attempt to take over Tookie's by possessing her body. Just as in life, she seeks affirmation that her help is essential for Indigenous survival.

As a ghost then, Flora finally tries to perfect her process of cultural appropriation by literally inhabiting an Indigenous body. Indeed, one of Tookie's colleagues from the bookstore analyzes that as "[a] wannabe […] She wanted to *be*. Flora wanted to exist inside of a Native body. But a certain kind of Indigenous body, big and tough. She wanted to be recognizably Indian so badly that she spent her life trying to engineer an identity. But she knew, on some level, that none of it was real. Thus, her desperation" (Erdrich 346). This refusal to acknowledge the truth, finally also turns Flora's ghost into the embodiment of white ignorance. She willfully ignores what she knows to be true: "Flora *knew* there would be a reckoning, that someone, maybe Kateri, would figure out that she'd pulled together elements of other people's lives to fake her own." What is more, as Asema points out: "She *knew* we struggled, she *knew* we were sometimes tentative, she *knew* we sought our own sense of belonging. She *knew* that some of us have to make a choice every day to hold on, to speak our language, to dance, to pay our dues to the spirits" (347; my emphasis). Yet, she ignores that knowledge. Flora manufacturing an Indigenous identity from a position of white privilege completely disregards those struggles and is disrespectful to Indigenous peoples' lives, who do not get to make that decision from a position of power, but who have to struggle to maintain their identity on a daily basis.

6.3. Conclusion: Ghostly Resistance in LaTanya McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes*

The themes of violence against women, epistemic violence in the form of silencing and white ignorance as well as the reckoning with the past that have been discussed throughout this chapter so far are also negotiated in LaTanya McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* (2021). The novel can be firmly situated in the Southern Gothic genre since it draws from the unique history of the US South, particularly slavery.[37] In the novel, the former Woodsman plantation in North Carolina is transformed into a luxury resort that is haunted by the ghosts of former enslaved people who violently demand their stories to be both heard and seen. The novel thereby situates contemporary white ignorance and racial injustice into a historical trajectory that can be traced back to slavery. In the novel, Celine, who is the only white out of three childhood friends, plans to have her wedding at the former plantation. What is more, as it turns

[37] On Southern Gothic see Crow, "Southern American Gothic."

out her wedding coincides with the anniversary of a slave revolt that took place on the plantation. Celine's two childhood friends, Mira and Jesse, both of them Black, are shocked at her choice of venue and try to make her understand the implications of that plan, but Celine refuses to listen and ignores their pain. Celine thus serves as the novel's embodiment of white ignorance—similarly to Flora in *The Sentence*.

The thematic focus of reckoning with the past and countering epistemic violence by reclaiming ownership of Black stories and voices is already introduced at the very beginning of *When the Reckoning Comes*. Indeed, the title itself already implies a reckoning with the past. What is more, throughout the narrative there are sections printed in italics, emphasizing the haunting. The novel starts with the words:

> *They are coming. In life, heavy was the crown of chains meant to keep their bodies down, but their spirits soon will rise. They are coming with their shackles, wearing them like armor, fuel that reminds them of their purpose. They bring the chains made from wrought iron, used across the wrists and ankles as they were stolen onto ships. […] They are coming with the branding irons shaped with the initials of the men who seared their flesh, forever marking them with their names. Their own names were taken, erased, but they have them back now.* […] *They come bringing tools to slaughter and maim*. (McQueen 1)

Here, the novel introduces the ghosts of former enslaved people whose "*spirits soon will rise*" and who will return to take back their names, and therefore situates the entire story in the context of the Southern Gothic. What is more, the very tools and items used to enslave, imprison, and control the ghosts during their lifetime now serve as weapons to "*slaughter and maim*" the descendants of those that are responsible for the enslavement. The novel here employs a similar pattern of past and present tense as Wurth's *White Horse*: While the main narrative centering around Mira and her childhood friends is written in past tense, the italicized excerpts centering on the ghosts of former enslaved people is written in present tense. The past is thereby literally transported into the present further emphasizing its haunting effect.

In addition, the text goes on to ask:

> *How long, did you think, after all of this, it would be before their souls finally came for you in the night? These men and women remember. They remember the sight of their husbands and sons hanged from the trees they worked under. They remember the feel of the cold metal on their ankles. They remember the taste of it as the iron bit was forced in their mouths. They remember […].*
> *It is too late to speak of such stories now, for they are coming—[…]they will not flinch, they will not hesitate, they have come for you, they have come, and as you open your eyes the last thing you'll see is the ax as the blade strikes down.*" (McQueen 2)

The repetition of the phrase "they remember" emphasizes memory as one of the central themes in the novel. More specifically, it evokes communal memory about one's own family's and

community's past but also historical and cultural memory in connection to slavery that is erased by the action of turning a former plantation into a lush holiday resort.[38] The statement "It is too late to speak of such stories now" criticizes the epistemic violence of editing history that silences and erases certain stories in favor of other narratives. The stories that are silenced are those of violence experienced by the former enslaved people. The statement furthermore suggests that the time to reconcile with this past has passed and instead there is a violent reckoning coming to avenge the violent enslavement of these people.

The combination of memory and silencing is reminiscent of what Mills analyzes as the connection between memory and amnesia. More precisely, Mills argues that collective memory and collective amnesia "go together insofar as memory is necessarily selective—out of the infinite sequence of events, […] we extract what we see as the crucial ones and organize them into an overall narrative." This overall narrative constitutes what Jan Assmann defines as "cultural memory" (110), and which Mills refers to as "[s]ocial memory." Mills explains, "[s]ocial memory is then inscribed in text-books, generated and regenerated in ceremonies and official holidays, concretized in statues, parks, and monuments" (29). Building on John Locke's and John Gillis' arguments about the dependencies between memory and identity, Mills concludes that "in all societies, especially those structured by domination, the socially recollecting 'we' will be divided, and the selection will be guided by different identities, with one group suppressing precisely what another wishes to commemorate." Accordingly, in those societies, there exists both an official as well as a counter-memory, highlighting the conflict between different group's assessments of what is important enough to remember and what is not, "what happened and does matter, what happened and does not matter, and what did not happen at all." In regard to race, then, Mills points out, "there will obviously be an intimate relationship between white identity, white memory, and white amnesia, especially about nonwhite victims (29).

This divided "socially recollecting 'we'" is also introduced in the earlier quoted text excerpt from *When the Reckoning Comes*. The opening of the novel immediately establishes a social division, an 'us-versus-them' narrative by juxtaposing "they" and "you" in two oppositional roles—"they" as the ones doing the haunting, and "you" as the ones being haunted. Therefore, the repeated use of the pronoun "you" also casts the reader in the position of being haunted. Given the context of slavery and revenge, the fictional addressee is thus cast as white.

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[38] On the different forms of memory and their distinction, see Assmann.

What is more, the pronoun "they" is reminiscent of processes of epistemic violence and othering in which enslaved people were cast as 'the other.' It is this 'other' in line with a Southern Gothic tradition that now comes back to haunt present day generations and thus resists the epistemic violence against their voices and stories. Moreover, "they" are part of a counter-memory of an official memory that has been whitewashed and suppressed by the dominant group of white patriarchy. In the context of the ghost novel, then, this return of the ghosts can be understood as an act of resisting the process of silencing and invisibility. They return because they violently demand their stories to be seen and heard. Later in the novel, Mira realizes that she experiences the most haunting and repeatedly sees ghosts of former enslaved people all over the Woodsman plantation because the "ghosts [are] trying to show [her] their story" (McQueen162).

But the themes of (in)visibility and epistemic injustice, particularly testimonial injustice, are also already introduced in the first chapter following this opening section. Indeed, the first sentence of the first chapter reads: "After, people had asked Mira what she saw" (McQueen 5). The novel thus introduces three central concepts in the narrative presence as well: firstly, the importance of the past symbolized by the preposition "after;" secondly, the theme of seeing or visibility by asking the protagonist, Mira, "what she *saw*" (my emphasis), referring to an incident in the friends' childhood, when Mira and Jesse had gone to the Woodsman Plantation despite rumors that it was haunted by "the ghosts of slaves" (25); and thirdly, the theme of epistemic injustice, particularly testimonial injustice, by expecting Mira to answer the question even though she knows that no one will believe her. People asked her "what happened out in those woods? At the house? Were there others like they say? Ghosts, we've heard. Spirits. Demons. We've heard the rumors and want to know. There must be more than you're telling. Has to be. What'd you see?" (5). The references to the woods, the (presumably haunted) house, the ghosts, spirits, and demons all firmly situate the novel in the Southern Gothic mode. During their visit, Mira sees a man "large and looming in the dark of the room. This man walked toward the broken window frame, toward her, […] and what she saw was blood, blood covering his face, blood fresh and dripping down the front of his clothes, blood staining his hands" (42). At first, Mira does not mention the encounter to anyone—not to Jesse and not to the police when they find "pieces of a body less than a half mile away from the Woodsman Plantation, washed up against the riverbank," a few days later. Next, Jesse is arrested as a murder suspect (44).

Mira's inner confliction about whether to tell the police about the ghost she saw, is grounded in her fear about experiencing testimonial injustice and not being believed because she is a Black woman. Indeed, when she thinks about the encounter, she hears her mother's voice in her head: "No one believes women like us, […] We're women and we're black, you

think anyone is going to listen to you? You think anyone's gonna hear? We've always been nothing. We're never gonna be seen" (McQueen 48). Here, Mira's mother criticizes both the silencing and the invisibility of Black women in white patriarchal society. What is more, she actively distinguishes between listening and hearing, implying that even if somebody would take the time to listen to Mira, they would not actually hear what she is saying. This distinction between listing and hearing refers to the distinction between having a physical voice, the means to make sounds, and having a voice in the sense of having opinions that are 'heard,' meaning taken seriously, in the dominant discourse. Just as most of the ghosts in this study don't have a voice in the latter sense of the word and are thus silenced in dominant discourse, so Mira and her mother are voiceless in white patriarchal society.

Mira's fear of testimonial injustice is confirmed when she finally decides to relate her story to Sheriff Brody. She tells him that "She'd been with Jesse and she'd seen a man. Someone else was with them in that house besides Jesse. Someone else was on the property. Someone else hurt Mr. Loomis, not him [meaning Jesse]" (McQueen 49). The sheriff, however, immediately responds in a patronizing manner by asking: "Someone else, huh? Sweetie, you going to have to give me a little more to work with" (49). When he is not satisfied with her stammering answers, he confirms his bias by stating: "This is how I see it. I see a girl who can't seem to answer any of my questions with any sort of specifics. A girl who is maybe trying to concoct some sort of story to help her friend. Maybe it's because she likes him. Maybe it's because she wants him to like her back. That's what I'm seeing from the looks of things" (51). Rather than further investigating her statement, then, the sheriff assumes that she fulfills the stereotype of a young girl who is desperately in love with a boy and would do anything to get into his good graces—even lie to a police officer. When her mother finally pulls her out of the interview, she again confirms: "They're never going to care about what you say." What is more, the fact that she is a young *Black* girl clearly contributes to this testimonial injustice as well because when Celine, their white friend, "confirmed what Jesse and Mira had insisted was true," Jesse is finally let go. "One look at her was all Brody needed, and so the police accepted Jesse's alibi, even though they didn't fully believe it" (52). It is Celine's whiteness that gives her the necessary credibility in the eyes of the police because that is the only superficial difference between her and Mira that can be detected by "one look."

Celine thus functions as the embodiment of white privilege and white ignorance in the novel—just as Flora did in *The Sentence*. Her white ignorance becomes particularly evident in her reaction to the supposed haunting of the Woodsman Plantation as well as her decision to get married at that place in the first place. Indeed, she repeatedly ignores what both Mira and

Jesse try to explain to her. In a conversation amongst themselves, Mira tells Jesse that "[She] asked her [Celine] about it. Last night. She said she hadn't owned slaves. She'd had nothing to do with the place's past and so it wasn't the same" (McQueen 154). Jesse replies that to him it is the same because "[s]he didn't care about the hurt her actions could cause. […] It's like the difference between drowning someone and not caring if someone drowns nearby. In both scenarios the person ends up dead" (154). While Jesse wants to leave the whole wedding party to die when the ghosts of the former enslaved people return to take revenge on "[a]ny descendants of those who harmed them or their kindred" (165), Mira rushes back to warn them. In the end, there is no real slaughter. Instead, Mira witnesses several episodes in which she sees and relives the memories of those who died on that plantation—thereby satisfying their need to be heard and seen.

One important theme in those relived episodes is, again, violence against women. Just like *Mexican Gothic* or *White Horse*, *When the Reckoning Comes* dramatizes how women in general, but also specifically women of color, are marginalized and victimized in white patriarchal society. Interestingly, past episodes of gendered and racialized violence are foreshadowed by an act of violence in the narrative present. As soon as Mira arrives at the plantation to warn the wedding party about the imminent danger of a ghostly slave revolt, she is informed about Celine's death, whose body is found in the Tobacco fields the night before the wedding. When Mira hears about this, she muses

> [t]he ghosts must have lured her into the woods, wanting to show her the horrors of their lives. Come and see, they'd whispered, wanting to show her the knitted scars, their bruises and cuts. They held up their hands and showed the empty spaces where fingers used to be. They told her to come, following deeper, showing her where they were captured and slaughtered. Come and see. Their heads on spikes, the skin of the chin sagging, the hollow caverns where the eyes were gouged out, mouths open but nothing inside, tongue cut, teeth stolen, every part taken except the shell of a face. Come and see, come and see, come and see. (McQueen 178)

The whole episode and especially the final repetition "come and see" highlight the importance of seeing and invisibility. It is an invitation not only for Celine to come and see but also for the reader. Mira's first reaction to Celine's death and the realization that "[t]he ghosts must have lured her into the woods" is to wonder whether Celine had, in fact, seen what they wanted to show her. "She must not have, refused to see what they'd tried to show her, and they killed her for it. If they had come for Celine, then they were coming for them all" (178). The reaction by Celine's father and fiancé, on the other hand, is to again accuse Jesse, the only Black man in the wedding party, thereby proving their racism. However, it turns out that it was neither Jesse nor the ghosts that killed Celine but her fiancé Phillip. As it turns out, she wanted to leave him

shortly before the wedding, so he killed her. Her death therefore symbolizes that despite her white privilege and ignorance, as a woman, Celine is still subject to patriarchal control and violence.

This theme of violence against women is also negotiated in the episodes from the past Mira witnesses during her search for Jesse to save him from the white lynching mob. Just like Kari is cast in her mother's body in the memory flashbacks triggered by the bracelet in *White Horse*, Mira suddenly finds herself in the body of Marceline, one of her ancestors who was an enslaved woman on the Woodsman Plantation. All Mira knows is that "[o]ne of [her] ancestors had a relationship with one of the Romans [the plantation and slave owners; last name: Woodsman]. She had children, at least one, maybe others" (McQueen 93). Marceline might have "been Roman's lover" or "his daughter" but either way, "[s]he was important enough to be buried in th[e] graveyard with the rest of the family" (94). Mira's questions about her ancestor are finally answered when she is cast in her body to witness a gruesome scene in which Roman Woodsman rents out the bodies of enslaved women to men from the community—all but Marceline's, which he takes for himself. While Mira fights for her/Marceline's bodily autonomy against Roman Woodsman, she knows that "[i]n other rooms were other women, women who knew what would happen if they fought, and so they lay on their stomachs and backs while these men got on top of them […]. In other rooms were other women, each one rented out by masked men who wanted to relinquish their desires in the safety of secrecy" (192). The 'love' relationship suspected by Mira, is thus one of rape and violence.

When escaping Roman's control in Marceline's body, Mira witnesses another scene of racialized violence. Mrs. Woodsman orders a young girl, Lucy, to spin around on command—like a dog doing tricks. Indeed, when Lucy falls because she loses balance after twirling around her own axis for too long, Mrs. Woodman scolds: "No treat for you" (McQueen 196). What is more, Lucy is further dehumanized by Mrs. Woodsman by making her sleep in a cage next to her own bed. When she is asked to go to bed, "Lucy got on her hands and knees and began to crawl across the floor. She crawled toward what looked like a wire cage. It was barely big enough for her to fit. The metal brushed against her back as she squeezed herself inside." Unable to stand, Lucy curls herself up on the floor "as Mrs. Woodsman closed the door and locked it shut" (197). The racialized violence, that the ghosts want Mira to witness, is thus carried out against all members of the community, including children.

Mira's experience of haunting suggests that she not only has to learn about her own family's and community's past but also about the white ignorance of her childhood friend and how it has affected and still affects both her and Jesse's lives. In addition, through Mira's

experience of haunting, the reader starts to recognize how past forms of racialized violence still very much influence contemporary forms of racism. Indeed, in one of the haunting episodes Mira witnesses past and present seem to merge: After returning to the resort, Mira fears for Jesse's life who she believes to be hunted by the white men from the wedding party. But the mob she believes to follow and shoot Jesse in the present turns out to be the ghosts of white slave owners searching for escaped enslaved people in the past. The parallel suggests that what has happened before can easily happen again because the underlying structures of racism and white supremacy still exist.

7. Resisting Processes of Silencing

What stands out from the stories discussed in the first part of this study and most of the novels discussed in the previous chapter is that almost none of the ghosts who populate these stories are able to speak for themselves. In fact, the only ghost who actively engages in an elaborate dialogue with the living in the first part of this study is the woman in the grey dress in Bacon's "The Gospel." The reason why she can speak but the other ghost women cannot, is her compliance with hegemonic ideology. Instead of trying to communicate about issues such as domestic abuse or the problematic medicalization of the female mind and body, that is silenced in the other stories, the grey woman in "The Gospel" tries to interpellate the protagonist into hegemonic gender ideals. Her story thus suggests that as long as female ghosts stay within the boundaries of hegemonic discourse and patriarchal ideology, they are free to communicate.

However, the fact that the issues they want to communicate about are suppressed in patriarchal discourse, is only one reason why the ghost women cannot speak. Another, equally important reason is hermeneutical injustice experienced by them which does not provide them with the concepts and a common language to talk about their experiences such as domestic abuse. Since the dominant discourse does not provide them with the language to talk about that which it denies, they stay voiceless. In the previous chapter, finally, some of the ghosts become more able to say at least a few words, such as Cecilia in Wurth's *White Horse* or Flora in Erdrich's *The Sentence*. Importantly, while Cecilia's communication is mostly limited to single words pointing her daughter in the direction of her killer, Flora's ability to speak is more pronounced due to her privileged status as a white woman. This suggests that the voicelessness of oppressed and violated women in patriarchal power structures is increasingly challenged in ghost novels women of color from the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century.

This challenge is particularly pronounced in the form of the ghost narrator, which is the focus of this chapter. I argue that ghost narrators in novels by women of color create a narrative space in which that which is oppressed in white patriarchal discourse can finally be spoken out loud. More precisely, in novels like Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997), Susi Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003), Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) or Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017) dead women (and sometimes also children) return as ghostly narrators to reclaim their voice and produce knowledge about what it means to be a person of color living in the aftermath of colonialism, racial oppression, and US military and economic hegemony.

Melanie R. Anderson has proposed the term of "*spectralized narration*" (103) to describe this phenomenon of ghost narrators. She defines "spectralized narration" as a form of narration "where multiple versions of the past and the text itself are mediated through a specter" (103). However, while this may be true for some ghost novels, other narratives feature several different narrators, who all take turns telling their stories. In those ghost novels, the ghost narrator does not always function as a mediator but is sometimes just one of several narrative voices. The narrative function of the ghost then lies in its subversive potential to criticize epistemic and physical violence against and oppression of people of color. In many cases, a character who suffered epistemic and physical violence and was silenced by the hegemonic power returns as a ghost to actively reclaim their own story, body, and voice. As ghost narrators these women seek to reveal the truth about the female experience under patriarchal and colonial oppression. However, unlike their white predecessors, their experience of gender oppression is inextricably intertwined with issues of ethnicity and racial oppression.

More specifically, the ghost narrators in the novels I analyze in this chapter are concerned with sharing knowledge about the experience of Dominican, Korean, and Black women resisting colonial and patriarchal oppression and epistemic violence. Moreover, in telling their truths, these ghost narrators often do not adhere to hegemonic white masculine epistemological frameworks but rather make use of alternative epistemologies to challenge hegemonic narratives of communal and collective experience. In fact, another shared aspect in these ghost narratives is their challenge to hegemonic white, male historiography by criticizing the silencing of the past, as Trouillot calls it. Indeed, as Trouillot points out, "any historical narrative is a particular bundle of silences, the result of a unique process, and the operation required to deconstruct these silences will vary accordingly" (27). Consequently, the ghost narrators in the novels I analyze here all have a unique approach to deconstruct these silences and demand their stories to be included into a historical narrative. However, what they all have in common is that all the ghosts in these narratives return from the dead to challenge the dominant narrative of events established during their lifetime. Since they are as ghosts no longer subjected to patriarchal and colonial control and silencing, they can return to challenge these dominant accounts, and thereby resist colonial and patriarchal processes of silencing as well as epistemic injustice and epistemic violence against themselves and their communities.

The novels discussed in this chapter feature a ghost narrator that draws on their experience to share knowledge about the female or non-white experience in light of patriarchal and colonial oppression. The ghosts of Minerva and Patria Mirabal in Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), for example, return after they were murdered by the Trujillo

regime to talk about their experience and thereby challenge the hegemonic narrative constructed by the regime. Similarly, Soon Hyo's ghost in Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997) returns as the ghost narrator of a formerly enslaved woman by the Japanese army and uses her experience to contest epistemic violence as well as the historical memory of the 'comfort woman system.' Finally, L's validation of her ghostly narration in Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) stems from the fact that she is the only one who knows how Bill Cosey died—her being the one who killed him to finally stop his abuse.

It is essential that the knowledge that is communicated in these narratives, is produced by someone who is legitimized to produce that kind of knowledge by their own experience: the ghost narrators. The women return as ghosts because they are the only ones who can meaningfully talk about and share their experience and truth with later generations to help them navigate their own experiences of violence, thereby resisting the hermeneutical injustice they were often subjected to during their lifetime. In addition, all the novels in this section are unified in their critique of violence against women. Finally, despite the vastly different cultural and historical context, each one of the novels in this section dramatizes the establishment of a female support network to help present day characters to navigate sexual and epistemic violence in an oppressive society.

In the first subchapter, I examine Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) and Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997). Both novels dramatize a resistance to patriarchal and colonial oppression by utilizing ghostly narrators to denounce epistemic and sexual violence against women and to reclaim the female voice after it has been silenced. In the second subchapter, I focus on Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) and Suzan-Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003). I argue that the humming and singing of the ghost narrators L and Willa Mae create a strong subversive counter-discourse to patriarchal discourse and fills the silences of the past. Finally, I address Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), which unites both themes from the first two subchapters. Here, the ghost narrator functions as a personified carrier of cultural memory to dramatize the linear trajectory of Jim Crow laws to the New Jim Crow of mass incarceration and contemporary structures of racism and violence.

7.1. Speaking from Beneath the Grave: Subversive Voices in Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* and Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*

One of the central themes negotiated in ghost novels by women of color in the US is epistemic violence in the context of the legacy of colonialism and US American interventions. Both Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) and Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997) give voices to women who were violated and silenced by colonial power struggles. Alvarez's novel is set in the aftermath of Spanish colonialism in Latin America, specifically in the Dominican Republic, during the Cold War, and tells the true story of the four Mirabal sisters, whose undercover names in the resistance movement were "Las Mariposas," the butterflies. They were killed on November 25, 1960, by the Trujillo regime because of their involvement in the resistance movement. In contrast, Keller's novel is situated in a Japanese occupied Korea during World War II and in present-day Hawai'i. It tells the story of Soon Hyo, a Korean woman sold into sexual slavery at a Japanese military camp. After she escapes, she marries an American missionary and moves to the US where they have their daughter, Beccah. Unlike *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *Comfort Woman* is not based on the real-life experience of a historical figure, but rather is inspired by stories of countless Korean women sold into sexual slavery during World War II, who started to come forward during the early 1990s.

I will read both novels as examples of ghost narrators. In Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*, I will examine Minerva and Patria Mirabal as ghost narrators, and in Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman*, I will read Soon Hyo as a ghost narrator. Importantly, neither one of the two novels explicitly identifies either Minerva or Patria Mirabal or Soon Hyo as ghosts from the beginning onwards. Both novels do, however, evoke the ghost story genre by including other ghostly or spectral encounters. In fact, the figure of the medium is an integral part in both narratives. What is more, both novels introduce the theme of death from the first chapter onward, stating that Minerva and Patria Mirabal as well as Soon Hyo are dead in the narrative present. Their parts of the narrative are told in retrospect and since they are told from a first-person perspective, I consider this narrative technique as spectralized narration. Finally, Minerva and Patria Mirabal as well as Soon Hyo can be considered ghost narrators because they share significant functions with other, more explicit ghosts, discussed in other novels in this section: they speak up to tell their own story that was silenced during their life time, thereby resisting colonial and patriarchal practices of silencing; they return as ghosts to function as a

female support network for their surviving relatives; and they speak up to criticize hegemonic historiography of white patriarchy and denounce sexual and epistemic violence against women.

Although the primary colonial powers in the novels are Spain and Japan, the texts nevertheless also negotiate the influence of US foreign policy and (non)intervention in the respective (post-)colonial settings. In Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*, for example, the US influence is felt only indirectly because of the US's "Good Neighbor policy" that was applied to the Trujillo regime. According to Eric Paul Roorda, the "Good Neighbor policy" was meant "to improve Latin American relations through nonintervention and friendship that developed during the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations" (1). It emerged "as an effort to encourage order, solvency, cooperation, and liberalism in Latin America through persuasion and benefits, rather than by force" (4). Essential to this policy was the fact that "to oppose European and Asian fascism, the United States required a bloc of allies to the south" (4), which also included dictatorships such as the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic.

Trujillo's ascendency to power in the Dominican Republic is, according to Roorda, also "directly attributable to the US Marine occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916-24" (2). In fact, "[t]he Dominican intervention was supposed to establish a representative system supported by an apolitical police force, but instead it created a military dictatorship with a single-party state organized on the principles not of democracy but of hero worship" (2). However, Roorda also points out that this Good Neighbor policy regarding Trujillo was far from simple or unified. On the contrary, "Trujillo was seen as an embarrassment to the United States by many in the State Department, the news media, and Congress, who opposed close ties with him." However, he also had several powerful supporters who advocated for his interests in the United States (3). Thus, after World War II, "the military culture Trujillo shared with ranking US admirals and generals assured his later place as a Cold War ally of the United States" (5).

Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* criticizes the Trujillo regime and specifically its violence against women through the ghostly narrators Minerva and Patria Mirabal. Each chapter is titled according to the sister whose memory it relates and the year(s) these memories are from. Over the course of the novel, each of the four sisters' perspectives is related three times—except for the surviving sister Dedé, who also narrates the novel's epilogue. While Minerva and Patria speak for themselves as ghost narrators, their other deceased sister María Teresa, also called Mate, is involved in the narrative through her diary which makes up her chapters. Dedé's perspective, finally, is mediated through a heterodiegetic narrator and it is not until the epilogue that she speaks up with her own, autodiegetic voice. In a way, then, one of the novel's

central quests is for Dedé to find her own voice—a quest that can only be fulfilled because her dead sisters return as ghostly narrators throughout the main part of the story to support their surviving sister in her attempt to tell her and her sisters' life stories to a Dominican American journalist and later also to Minerva's daughter Minou.

The novel begins in 1994, in present tense, told by the voice of an omniscient narrator. Dedé, the surviving Mirabal sister, is visited by a Dominican-American journalist, who wants to "come over and talk to Dedé about the Mirabal sisters" to tell their story to an US American audience (Alvarez 3). The final section of the first chapter recounts Dedé's memory of a family moment in "circa 1943" (3): "[Dedé] remembers a clear moonlit night before the future began" (8). Dedé's memory is related through the same omniscient narrator speaking in present tense. The section ends with the narrator telling us that young Dedé realizes that her father, who predicted that "[s]he'll bury us all" (8), only told her future and not those of her sisters. In consequence, "[a] chill goes through her, for she feels it in her bones, the future is now beginning. By the time it is over, it will be the past, and she doesn't want to be the only one left to tell their story" (10). It is after this scared confession by Dedé that Minerva, one of Dedé's dead sisters, takes over the narrative. Throughout the novel she is represented to be the boldest, most rebellious, and outspoken of the four sisters. It is therefore only fitting that she is the one whose ghost rushes to Dedé's help first. Just as she was the first to join the revolution, she is the first to rise from the dead to support her surviving sister in telling their stories. Consequently, she is the first to resist natural laws of life and death by speaking up as a ghost. Minerva is later joined by her other sister, Patria, who reluctantly adds in her own perspective by the fourth chapter, after María Teresa's first diary entries have been related.

By telling their own stories as ghost narrators, Minerva and Patria Mirabal reclaim their voices and resist the epistemic violence of silencing their voices and silencing their past in patriarchal discoruse. What is more, their stories criticize the US "Good Neighbor Policy" by highlighting how it sustained a system of abusive power and violence against women. Significantly, then, the Mirabal sisters speak of their own experience rather than having somebody else speak for them. By becoming ghost narrators, Minerva and Patria resist the problematic power dynamic of silencing and speaking for those that are marginalized by the dominant discourse[39] and they fill in the silences created by hegemonic historiography. In addition, the novel's form of alternating between the four sisters constructs a dialogue that

[39] On the issues of speaking for others, see Alcoff, "The Problem."

slowly reconstructs the truth about the Mirabal sisters and their experience of violence under the Trujillo regime.

The fact that Minerva and Patria speak as ghost narrators has been ignored by previous scholarship. Charlotte Rich, for example, who draws on Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of the novel, argues that the sisters' intersecting voices constitute a "manifestation of polyphonic consciousness in the novel […], which cumulatively evoke the experience of living under a political dictatorship in a way that transcends the narrative of each individual voice" (167). She claims that "[t]he novel's generic traits, polyphony, and dialogism are also metaphoric of one of its central themes: resistance to a totalizing[…] force" (179). She concludes that "Alvarez's text is a representation, through form, narration, and theme, of the act of rebellion against […] political oppression. Indeed, even though the three sisters are killed by Trujillo's secret police at the close of the novel, they can be seen to speak beyond the ending" (179).

However, she does not further elaborate on the significance of the sisters speaking even "beyond the ending," even though the fact that Patria and Minerva speak as ghostly narrators is established early in the novel and confirmed at the end. In addition to Minerva answering Dedé's call for help, the ghostly return of her sisters is also thematized in Dedé's narrative. In the beginning of Dedé's interview with the journalist the reader learns that after the death of the three sisters their spirits have supposedly been channeled by Fela, one of the family servants who acts as a medium. Even though Dedé herself does not believe in Fela's powers—she calls it "nonsense" (Alvarez 64)—her niece "Minou [Minerva's daughter] stops by at Fela's whenever she comes to visit her aunt" to talk to her mother (64). At the day of the interview, Minou arrives at Dedé's house shaken because neither one of the sisters would answer to Fela that day, making the medium speculate that "they must finally be at rest" (174). It is after Minou tells her this that Dedé realizes "they've been here [at her house where the interview took place]. All afternoon" (174). This scene suggests that it is indeed the spirits of the dead sisters speaking the entire time.

Refusing to let someone else speak for her, Minerva's ghost starts her story by telling: "I don't know who talked Papá into sending us away to school" (Alvarez 11). By opening her first chapter with the pronoun "I" she makes clear from the beginning onwards that she is the one speaking, the past tense suggests that she is speaking from memory, recounting scenes from 1938, 1941 and 1944, the years she spent at "Inmaculada Concepción," a Catholic boarding school. By speaking up for herself, Minerva resists the epistemic violence of her silencing and claims the right to tell her own story. It is during those years that Minerva first remembers to have gotten into contact with the Trujillo regime through other girls' stories. Minerva therefore

uses her ghostly narration to also give voice to the stories of other girls and women that were—just like her—silenced and victimized by the Trujillo regime. She speaks out all the crimes against women that she was first-hand witness to or survivor of. She remembers that

> That's how I got free. I don't mean just going to sleepaway school on a train with a trunkful of new things. I mean in my head after I got to Inmaculada and met Sinita and saw what happened to Lina and realized that I'd just left a small cage to go into a bigger one, the size of our whole country. (13)

What she means by "I got free" is that through conversations with the other girls she learns about the violence of the Trujillo regime and thus slowly steps out of the dominant ideology that heroizes him. Instead, she begins to recognize patriarchal patterns of oppression that do not only affect her but women in general. These patriarchal patterns correspond to her image of the "cage." Although she and her sisters fought to be allowed to go to school, she recognizes that despite the success of leaving the cage of her father's house, she is still subjected to the patriarchal ideology and oppression that structure the entire nation.

The fate of Lina, one of the other girls at the boarding school, influences young Minerva to adjust her knowledge about the Trujillo regime and advances her personal development into a rebellious young woman who fights for the resistance and—maybe more importantly—the rights of women. In fact, in Minerva's as well as in her sister's later narratives the rebellion and resistance against the Trujillo regime become inextricably intertwined with the feminist cause of resisting the epistemic violence of patriarchal silencing and (sexualized) violence against women. Lina catches Trujillo's eye on a visit he pays to "some official's house next door" (Alvarez 21). He starts courting her, and initially the girls think his visits are "exciting" (22). However, when Lina does not return to school after a visit home, Minerva learns from her father that she is now living in one of Trujillo's mansions. Minerva is shocked given the fact that "Trujillo is married" and asks: "How can he have Lina as a girlfriend?" Her father informs her that "He's got many of them, all over the island, set up in big, fancy houses" (23). These "fancy houses" are prisons and the women in them prisoners to the sexual fantasies and desires of a powerful man.

It is this threat of sexual exploitation that Minerva fights against when joining the resistance movement and that she speaks out against as a ghost narrator. In fact, another shaping moment in Minerva's memory is the "Discovery Day Dance" on "October 12," 1949, which she visits with her two sisters Dedé and Patria, their father as well as Dedé's and Patria's husbands (Alvarez 93). To emphasize the significance of the episode and highlight her personal development since those early days at the boarding school, Minerva tells this section in present

tense. At the dance, Minerva is invited to sit at Trujillo's table, a clear sign that she has caught his interest just like Lina once did. From the table she looks at Dedé, who "touches her glass and gives [her] the slightest nod. *Don't drink anything you are offered*, the gesture reminds [her]. We've heard the stories. Young women drugged, then raped by El Jefe" (95). From that moment onward the threat of sexual violence is a constant presence in Minerva's encounters with Trujillo. When they finally dance in this part of her narrative, "[h]e holds [her] out in his arms, his eyes moving over [her] body, exploring it rudely with his glances" (98). In his eyes, she is nothing more than a "jewel" he wishes to "conquer" (99). When her verbal insistence that "[she's] not for conquest" (99) remains ineffective and "[h]e yanks [her] by the wrist, thrusting his pelvis at [her] in a vulgar way," she slaps him in the face (100). The scene is exemplary for Minerva's refusal to subjugate herself to Trujillo's wishes while she is alive.

It thus comes as no surprise that she also refuses to subjugate to his wishes in death. In fact, her return as a ghost narrator can be read as an act of resistance and defiance to the epistemic violence of patriarchal silencing and forced subjugation by the Trujillo regime. As Dedé remembers in the epilogue of the novel:

> I didn't want to hear how they did it. I saw the marks on Minerva's throat; fingerprints sure as day on Mate's [the fourth sister] pale neck. They also clubbed them, I could see that when I went to cut her hair. They killed them good and dead. But I do not believe they violated my sisters, no. I checked as best I could. I think it is safe to say they acted like gentlemen murderers in that way. (Alvarez 303)

It is thus not Minerva's refusal to become another one of Trujillo's conquests that finally leads to her murder but rather her refusal to stay quiet and leave the resistance movement. As the fingerprints on their throats indicate, their deaths were meant to silence their voices not to possess their bodies. The fact that physical violence is used to make sure they stay silent is what turns this into epistemic violence rather than epistemic injustice. The patriarchal power makes sure that they stay quiet at all costs and even use physical violence to ensure their voices are muted, thereby robbing them of all their agency, all capacity to create or share meaning, and even takes their life. And it is exactly this epistemic violence of silencing that Minerva and Patria resist in returning as ghost narrators—even if they cannot resist the physical violence by returning to life entirely.

However, the sisters' most daring resistance to their murders is not their return as ghost narrators, but rather their refusal to include their murders into their life narratives. This is also the most obvious way in which Minerva tries to subvert hegemonic historiography. In the novel's epilogue, Dedé remembers that even when "it all came out at the trial of the murderers[…], there were several versions. Each one of the five murderers saying the others

had done most of the murdering. One of them saying they hadn't done any murdering at all" (Alvarez 302-03). It is significant that none of these versions—not even the ones from the sisters' perspectives are told in the novel. In fact, Minerva, who tells the final part of the story before their deaths, stops short just before their ambush on the lonely mountain road. The last thing she tells those who are listening to her is that "it was as if we were girls again, walking through the dark part of the yard, a little afraid, a little excited by our fears, anticipating the lighted house just around the bend—" and concludes in the final sentence: "That's the way I felt as we started up the first mountain" (297). Ironically, then, Minerva produces her own set of silences about her and her sisters' deaths by ending her story where she does—the difference being that this time it is her choice which parts of the narrative to leave out and which to include.

Indeed, Minerva's ending in silences is an ending of anticipation and hope and stands in direct contrast to the official narrative that ends with the violent subjugation of the three women. In Minerva's ending, the sisters are afraid, yet also excited and the anticipated "lighted house just around the bend" seems like the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. Her refusal to put into words the one moment where she did not successfully resist but was violently subjugated by those aiming to silence her for good, is her final act of defiance. Rather than giving power to her murderers by having them have the last word, she decides to end her story beforehand, when she is still moving towards a more hopeful ending—and still possess all of her agency and her life. By this, she is almost daring the reader to imagine a different ending for her and her sisters, one where they are successful and survive long enough to tell their own stories. In addition, her ending of their stories restores their childhood innocence and girlhood to the sisters since Minerva concludes "it was as if we were girls again" (Alvarez 297). She thereby attempts to erase all the patriarchal violence that was done to them as women and returns them to an innocent state of young girls, yet untouched by patriarchal violence.

Ultimately, then, the primary function of the ghost narrators is to shift the focus of narrative from the oppressor to the oppressed. In doing so the sisters denounce violence against women—just as other ghost women did in the previously discussed works. Indeed, the Mirabal sisters use their ghostly voices to reestablish themselves as protagonists of their own stories, and thereby claim the right to write themselves into history. Consequently, the novel must be seen as an attempt to rewrite history from the perspectives of the marginalized and victimized and as a critique of colonial and patriarchal oppression. Furthermore, the ghosts of her sisters establish a female support network for Dedé. They accompany her throughout her time of grieving, always there to tell parts of the story with her so that she would not have to suffer through everything again on her own. It is this telling of their story in dialogue with her sisters

and Minerva's insistence on a more hopeful ending, which finally enables Dedé to recover her own voice.

In fact, the epilogue is the first time that Dedé becomes an autodiegetic narrator and does no longer need an omniscient narrator to speak for her. It is thus only after her sisters were allowed to tell their own stories that Dedé finally also finds her own voice, and it is her sisters speaking to and with her from beyond death that helps Dedé to come to terms with her past and her own guilt about not joining the revolution as passionately as her sisters did. For the longest time, Dedé was living in the company of her dead sisters, listening to

> [t]heir soft spirit footsteps, so vague I could mistake them for my own breathing.
> Their different treads, as if even as spirits they retained their personalities, Patria's sure and measured step, Minerva's quicksilver impatience, Mate's playful little skip. They linger and loiter over things. (Alvarez 321)

However, the night after Dedé has told the stories of their lives to the journalist and Minou, "it is quieter than [she] can remember" (321). She tries to listen for her sisters, but the only noises are "[her] own breathing and the blessed silence of those cool, clear nights under the anacahuita tree before anyone breathes a word of the future." After they had the opportunity to speak and tell their stories, her sisters have finally found peace in the spirit world. Dedé can claim her own voice again and realizes that she is, in fact, "the one who survived to tell the story" (321). When Minou asks her that night, "Mamá Dedé, what do you think it means that the girls might finally be at rest?" (319), Dedé answers: "That we can let them go, I suppose" (320). It is, however, the other way around. It is because Dedé is finally ready to let her sisters go and is not dependent on their spiritual support anymore that they can finally find rest and their ghosts disappear.

In my discussion of *In the Times of the Butterflies*, I have almost exclusively focused on Minerva Mirabal although her older sister, Patria, also returns as a ghost narrator. I did this because Minerva is the one driving the narrative and making all the narrative decisions. She is the one to first answer Dedé's cry for help and sisterhood, and she is the one who waits to tell the last portion of their stories—making the decision to omit the part about their actual deaths and thereby subverting reader's expectations. In contrast, Patria, who is the most pious of the sisters throughout the narrative, is mostly motivated by her wish to protect her family, which is also the major reason for her joining Minerva in their quest for spectral resistance and supporting their sister Dedé in her narrative.

As a Dominican American ghost novel *In the Time of the Butterflies* can simultaneously be situated in the ghost story traditions of the US and Latin America. As I have shown in the

first part of this study, ghost stories have a long tradition in women's literature in the US Similarly, "Latin America is rich in ghostly traditions," as well (Ajuria Ibarra 233). However, according to Enrique Ajuria Ibarra, Latin American cultures have a very different relation to the supernatural in that they "freely acknowledge the presence of the supernatural with a sense of wonder." In fact, "[t]he Latin American ghost story[…] manifests a complex *mélange* of traditions, transmitted across multiple narrative forms that engage differently with the tension between the natural and the supernatural, past and present, the local and the foreign" (234). In other words, "spectres in these stories elicit a process of cultural hybridity marked by the simultaneous coexistence of pre-Hispanic spirits and shapeshifters, of African rites and demons, as well as of ghosts tormented by the religious impositions of Roman Catholicism" (234).

This can also be observed in Alvarez's novel, particularly in its mixture of several different cultural traditions to dramatize the lasting impact of colonialism. Minerva Mirabal, for example, bears the name of Roman goddess Minerva, while her sister's name, María Teresa, testifies to the influences of Catholicism and thus, by extension, Spanish Colonialism. This Catholic tradition that the sisters are raised in suggests that they are descendants of Spanish colonizers. Their cultural heritage clashes with the spiritual tradition of Fela, a Black servant at the Mirabal farm, who "has been with them forever" (Alvarez 63)—a not so subtle hint at the legacy of slavery. The fact that Fela functions as a medium who channels the voices of the dead sisters illustrates the clash of different cultures and traditions because it implies that she is, in fact, not Roman Catholic but rather of African ancestry. However, because Fela's Afra-Dominican voice is completely silenced in the novel (Zimmerman 97), the reader does not know where her ancestors originally came from, and which culture specifically creates the clash to Roman Catholicism here. Fela and the erasure of her voice is thus another example of the epistemic violence of colonialism in the novel. What the reader does know is that the bishop asks Dedé to stop Fela's spirit communication which has drawn an audience from "as far away as Barahona to talk 'through' this ebony black sibyl with the Mirabal sisters" (Alvarez 63). The reference to the figure of a sibyl draws on Greek mythology, adding yet another cultural influence and another symbol of the legacy of colonialism. Nevertheless, the influence of colonialism remains implicit throughout the novel and can mostly be found in this mixture of cultural traditions as well as the historical context and the fact that the Dominican Republic is a post-colonial nation.

In contrast, Nora Okja Keller's *Comfort Woman* (1997) negotiates colonialism much more explicitly while also highlighting patriarchal patterns of oppression and criticizing

epistemic violence against women in colonial and patriarchal discourses. The novel's narrative alternates between the perspective of Korean American Beccah and her Korean mother Akiko, whose real name is later revealed to be Kim Soon Hyo.[40] Beccah starts the novel with a childhood memory about one of her father's death anniversaries and a subsequent explanation on how her mother came to be a spirit medium in their community in Hawai'i. She concludes her exposition with the revelation that "[her] mother is dead" (Keller 13), referring to her actual death in the novel's narrative present. This death theme is picked up by Beccah's mother, Soon Hyo (under the name Akiko), who starts the second chapter with a reference to her previous metaphorical death: "The baby I could keep came when I was already dead" (15). She talks about Beccah while at the same time referring to a forced abortion she had as a 'comfort woman,' a woman in sexual slavery in a Japanese military camp during World War II. She explains that "[she] was twelve when [she] was murdered, fourteen when [she] looked into the Yalu River and, finding no face looking back at [her], knew that [she] was dead" (15). Soon Hyo's physical death in the narrative present of Beccah's storytelling is thus doubled and tripled by her self-reported memory of other forms of death she experienced after being sold into sexual slavery by her older sister. Beccah's narrative of coming to terms with her mother's death frames the entire novel and is concluded by her giving her mother a traditional burial.

Soon Hyo's emphasis on death after Beccah's revelation that she is physically dead in the narrative present, can be read as an indicator for her return as a ghost narrator to tell her own story to her grieving daughter as well as the reader. My interpretation of Soon Hyo as a ghost narrator contradicts earlier interpretations of the novel. Maria Rice Bellamy, for example, argues that the narrator or rather author of both stories is Beccah, who is "channeling her mother's spirit." Supposedly, "Beccah reveals her creation of the text by changing Akiko's name to Soon Hyo in the chapter after she learns her mother's true name" (Keller 124). Similarly, Kun Jong Lee reads the novel as Beccah's "imaginative dialogue with" and "elaborate obituary" to her mother (452), also suggesting that it is Beccah's uncovering of her mother's past that structures the narrative. However, taking into account the repeated emphasis on death in the opening chapters of the novel and the fact that the mother's and daughter's narratives are both told from an autodiegetic perspective, and that are, in addition, characterized by some significant differences such as the fact that Soon Hyo's narrative—in contrast to

[40] Contrary to the novel, which initially features all chapters from Kim Soon Hyo's perspective under the name "Akiko," I will use her actual name, Soon Hyo, from the beginning onward to not reiterate the same epistemic violence of colonial silencing and name-taking.

Beccah's—does not use quotation marks to indicate direct speech, it makes more sense to read their narratives as two different voices and consider Soon Hyo as a ghost speaking up after death.

This is further strengthened when reading the novel in dialogue with other ghost novels such as Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Similar to Minerva and Patria Mirabal, Soon Hyo refuses to be silenced through the epistemic violence of colonialism and instead returns as a ghost narrator to tell her own story and simultaneously help her daughter to find her own place amidst her own Korean American heritage. Therefore, while Beccah spends the narrative present remembering her childhood and trying to make sense of her mother and the legacy she left her, Soon Hyo uses her death to finally reveal her past which has been silenced by patriarchal and colonial power structures. More specifically, Soon Hyo speaks up to denounce the entanglement of Japanese and American colonialism enacted in Korea as well as on her own and other women's bodies and the epistemic violence inflicted on their voices. Soon Hyo uses her narrative to openly speak about various forms of colonial oppression and violence, most specifically sexual and epistemic violence that become inextricably intertwined over the course of the novel—just as they are in *In the Time of the Butterflies*. Her narrative thus fulfills a similar function as Minerva and Patria Mirabal's narratives: It shifts the focus from the oppressor to the oppressed. In speaking about her story and the story of other women like her, Soon Hyo reclaims her own body and voice. However, the only way for her to finally reclaim her birth name lies in the reestablishment of a functional mother-daughter relationship with Beccah. Just as the spirits of the Mirabal sisters only leave the house of their surviving sister Dedé once she has found her own voice in the epilogue, Soon Hyo only rests when Beccah performs a traditional burial rite for her and thereby accepts her mother's Korean heritage.

Most prominently, Soon Hyo uses her ghostly narrative to speak about the atrocities of sexual slavery under Japanese colonialism. According to Pyong Gap Min et al., "[t]he most brutal crime committed by the Japanese military during the Asia-Pacific War (1931-1945) was the forced mobilization of a large number of Asian women (50,000-200,000 women) to military brothels to sexually serve Japanese soldiers as 'comfort women'" (1). These horrors were not known to the wider public in the US until 1991, when survivor Kim Hak Sun came forward and testified about her experiences. In 2016, more than two decades after this first testimony, the Japanese and Korean governments seemed to have finally reached an agreement about the "comfort woman" issue. However, it was "immediately condemned by a number of organizations supporting the survivors and denounced by the survivors themselves" (Stetz 62). According to Margaret D. Stetz, the issue has not been resolved legally since "[n]o one

responsible for designing, implementing, or administering the 'comfort system,' which trafficked thousands of military sex slaves across Asia by land and sea, has ever been prosecuted or punished" (62). Thus "[a]t the present moment [written in 2019], matters are really no further along, in terms of legal or political solutions, than they had been in 1991 […]. Even in matters regarding education and historical memory, nothing has been decided" (63).

Soon Hyo's narrative is part of a counter-discursive feminist historiography that criticizes the epistemic violence inherent in the euphemistic language of 'comfort camps' and 'comfort women' in hegemonic, in this case Japanese, historiography. This can especially be seen in the fact that the novel adopts the term 'comfort woman' as its title. By graphically representing the atrocities of sexual slavery, then, the novel highlights the euphemism of the term and reframes it as rape and sexual slavery. This subsequently also highlights the epistemic violence of objectifying and silencing the women in these camps and counteracts this epistemic violence by giving them the fictional voice of Soon Hyo. The novel thereby educates its readership about this aspect of Japanese colonialism and thus creates a fictional space for the voices of potential survivors. Moreover, the narrative structure of the novel creates a dialogue between mother and daughter—just as the narrative structure of *In the Time of the Butterflies* created a dialogue between the Mirabal sisters. Most importantly, however, Soon Hyo's truth is, again, validated by her own experience of violence and the oppression of her voice and even her entire Korean identity through colonial and patriarchal power structures. By returning as a ghost narrator, then, Soon Hyo just like Minerva and Patria Mirabal resists the epistemic violence of colonial patriarchal silencing.

Indeed, one of the "deaths" Soon Hyo refers to in her opening of her story can be found in the loss of her identity through sexual violence and colonization. According to Silvia Schultermandl, in *Comfort Woman* "the loss of individuality through rape and sexual molestation restores the memory of a portion of history that has been largely suppressed by Eurocentric, patriarchal, and colonial discourses." She argues that Keller's "depiction of rape as a means of political warfare, […] re-establishes identity for the female bodies whose fates remained occulted and obscured because of their 'unspeakable' status as rape victims" (83). Following her opening declaration that she died when she was only twelve years old, Soon Hyo relates the story of how she was sold to the Japanese soldiers by her older sister, and how she became Akiko 41 after "Induk—the woman who was the Akiko before [her]—" was killed by the soldiers (Keller 20). Consequently, one of the deaths she refers to is the death of her childhood as well as the death of her Korean identity, which is replaced by the enforced identity of a Japanese sex slave in the military camps. As Soon Hyo's replacement of Induk as "Akiko"

in the slavery system of the military camp shows, one of the most effective ways in which the women in the Japanese military camps are silenced is by renaming them.

Indeed, the act of re-naming and the taking away of their birth name emphasizes and firmly grounds the women's subjugation into sexual slavery at the military "recreation camp" (Keller 15) into language itself and thus highlights the interactions of sexual violence and epistemic violence. As Patricia Chu puts it, "Keller emphasizes how language is complicit with forms of domination that tinge imperialism with patriarchy in myriad examples, such as the narrator's forced renaming, first in the Army camp, where her Korean name is obliterated" (69). What is more, in addition to a new name, each woman receives a number which dehumanizes them even further and makes it easier for the oppressors to violate their rights and bodies. They turn them into objects that can be replaced as soon as they no longer fulfill their purpose. Consequently, Soon Hyo is only named "Akiko 41" once "Akiko 40" is dead. Finally, the taking of the women's and girls' names symbolizes not only the attempted erasure of their Korean identity and humanity, but also the taking of their voices.

The sexual violence in the camps is thus deeply intertwined with epistemic violence. This is dramatized by the fact that the women are kept apart from one another and are unable to communicate with each other directly in the camps. Accordingly, the other of Soon Hyo's "deaths" that she lists at the start of her narrative is a form of death that José Medina calls "hermeneutical death." According to Medina, hermeneutical death occurs when "a subject completely loses her voice and standing as a meaning-making subject, under conditions of extreme epistemic oppressions in which one's status as a subject of knowledge and understanding is barely recognized" (47). Relying on Emerick's distinction between epistemic injustice and epistemic violence, I considered hermeneutical death to constitute epistemic violence rather than epistemic injustice based on the extreme harm inflicted and the subsequent loss of any kind of agency, self-identity and integrity.[41] Since the women in the camps are denied any form of sexual agency as well as their humanity in general, it is not far-fetched to argue that they are denied any form of epistemic agency as well. Indeed, their status as bearers of knowledge is completely suppressed. By keeping them in "stalls, behind mat curtains, most of the days and throughout the night" (Keller 19), the women are kept from sharing their experience and are cut off from each other entirely. This separation denies them their "epistemic

[41] In his conceptualization of silencing as epistemic violence, Emerick "adopt[s] Vittorio Bufacchi's definition of violence as violation of integrity" (30). Even though Emerick talks about silencing specifically, I believe that his theorization of violence in connection to when instances of epistemic injustice become instances of epistemic violence is still useful here.

life and status as a meaning-making subject in expressive and interpretative practices" (Medina 47).

However, the women nevertheless try to resist this form of epistemic violence. It is in this resistance that Soon Hyo first shows herself as a subversive and rebellious character. The other women in the camp use Soon Hyo "to pass messages" (Keller 20) because she is still too young to join their ranks when she first arrives at the camp. Soon Hyo comes up with alternative means of communication to enable exchange between the silenced women by singing to them "as [she] braid[s] their hair or walk[s] by their compartments to check their pots. When [she] humm[s] certain sections, the women [know] to take those unsung words for their message" (20). Soon Hyo thus initially fights her and the other women's hermeneutical deaths by coming up with alternative ways of communication. According to Samina Najmi, "*Comfort Woman* redefines language, [and] distinguish[s] it from speech" (223). Indeed, Soon Hyo starts to develop her own "feminine language" using song, body language and stories (224).[42] I argue that it is her attempt to resist her hermeneutical death in the military camp where she first starts to develop this resistant language by singing and humming messages to the other women. However, Soon Hyo's resistance is only momentarily successful. As soon as she becomes "Akiko 41," she does not enjoy the same freedom of passing between the other women's stalls anymore. Thus, with the subjugation of her body, her voice is also killed. In fact, when Soon Hyo arrives at the American missionary camp after her flight from the Japanese military camp, she realizes that "[she] could not hear the sound of [her] own voice." She even questions her own cries for help to Induk's spirit, who accompanies her on her escape, by doubting herself: "maybe I had not even called for her, my voice lost with my hearing" (61).

Soon Hyo's early resistance to patriarchal and colonial processes of silencing anticipates her later return as a ghost narrator. As a ghost narrator, she once again does not allow herself to be silenced by her death—just as she resisted her earlier hermeneutical death. What is more, her return as a ghost narrator becomes even more obvious when reading her development in comparison to Induk's story, whom she is aligned with on several occasions throughout the novel—the most obvious alignment being their shared "identity" as the camp's "Akiko." Indeed, it is Induk's resistance to this killing of her Korean identity that leads to her physical death. Soon Hyo remembers that "[o]ne night she talked loud and nonstop. In Korean and in Japanese, she denounced the soldiers, yelling at them to stop their invasion of her country and

[42] Also see Schultermandl and her discussion of subversive body language in the novel.

her body" (Keller 20). Colonialism therefore becomes inextricably intertwined with sexual violence against women. "All through the night she talked reclaiming her Korean name, reciting her family genealogy, even chanting the recipes her mother had passed on to her" (20). Induk's verbal "revolt[…] against Japanese colonization of Korea" can be read as "a political act […] a declaration of Korean independence writ small" (Lee 442) or "an act of nationalistic emancipation" (Schultermandl 95). However, just as the Mirabal sisters are silenced by the regime, Induk is silenced by the soldiers through murder. And just as the Mirabal sisters refuse to stay silenced, Induk later returns to Soon Hyo as a guiding spirit when she finally escapes the camps, and she remains with her for the rest of her life.

Soon Hyo's victimization and silencing in the Japanese military camp are later mirrored by similar experiences of oppression through a group of American missionaries, who take her in after her escape from the Japanese military camp. Just as the women's Korean names and identities are taken by the Japanese colonizers, the American missionaries "call all of the girls Mary" (Keller 58). Indeed, when Soon Hyo is taken in by the American missionaries, one of the sisters starts calling her "*Mary Magdalene*, a curse, whenever I passed her way" (66). What is more, the imposed name 'Mary Magdalene' implies another form of epistemic injustice as well: just as the term 'comfort woman' was used by the Japanese to euphemistically justify the continued rape of the women in their camps, the implication of prostitution inherent in the Christian name 'Mary Magdalene' again redefines Soon Hyo's experience of repeated rape as something that she supposedly had at least some agency in. Moreover, when the American minister Richard Bradley, who marries Soon Hyo later on, first talks to her, he asks: "May I call you Akiko?" and, without waiting for her reply, he muses: "Rick and Akiko, our names somehow match." Even though "[Soon Hyo feels] as if he had slapped [her] with the name the soldiers had assigned to [her]," she remains silent, feeling that she does not have any "right to use the name [she] was born with. That girl was dead" (93). Rick thus continues the act of epistemic violence and suppression of her identity by carelessly using the name that was first used to erase her identity. His use of "Akiko" further aligns him with the Japanese soldiers.

In addition, Soon Hyo connects her husband to the Japanese soldiers in her memory of the sexual violence she experienced from both. According to Lee, "[t]he American husband shares the major underpinnings of Korean patriarchy: the misogynist ideology of female chastity and its concomitant preoccupation with shame" (449). Indeed, when Soon Hyo narrates her experience of their wedding night, she remembers that "[she] let [her] mind fly away. For [she] knew then that [her] body was, and always would be, locked in a cubicle at the camps trapped under the bodies of innumerable men" (Keller 106). Her husband is thus just another

one of the colonizing men using her body for his own sexual gratification. He is further aligned with the Japanese soldiers in his pedophile thoughts because, as Soon Hyo remembers, "at night that is how he wanted [her]: hair down in braids to [her] waist; eyes wide and blank; lips dropped into a pout and ready to cry" (107). The imagery is clearly reminiscent of a little girl rather than a grown-up woman, thereby not only highlighting her husband's pedophile preferences but also their power imbalance.

In addition to these acts of epistemic and sexual violence that align the Christian missionaries with the Japanese colonizers, Soon Hyo's narrative denounces yet another form of epistemic violence connected to the missionaries: the suppression of traditional Korean Shamanism through American Christianization attempts. This suppression of traditional Shaman knowledge is primarily negotiated in a memory Soon Hyo shares from when she first escapes the Japanese military camp. Shortly after her escape, Induk's spirit leads her to "Manshin Ahjima, [… o]ld lady of ten thousand spirits" so that she might perform the "proper rites of the dead" (Keller 38). Alienated from her body and caught between the worlds of the dead and the living, Soon Hyo finally reaches the old shaman, who tells her: "Olppajin-saram. You've lost your soul. That is why you came to the graveyard. You were trying to steal someone else's spirit, a wandering spirit, maybe, one that was confused about where it belonged." She tells her that she "need[s] a pyong-kut, a healing ceremony." Yet, when Soon Hyo asks her whether she can help her, the shaman informs her that she "cannot perform a kut […] because [she] no longer do[es] the devil's work." She shows Soon Hyo a small neckless with a cross, informing her that "[she has] been saved" (57). This scene criticizes the epistemic violence of suppressing and eventually even potentially erasing traditional Shaman knowledge in the process of Christianization. Due to the Christian missionary attempts by the Americans traditional Shaman knowledge is either being erased or has been reframed as "the devil's work" (57). Because it is now considered evil, Manshin Ahjima can no longer perform the ceremony.

In the novel, both forms of epistemic violence—the one that is enacted on the women individually to kill their voices as well as the one that suppresses traditional culture and knowledge—severely harm matrilineal relationships. By returning as ghosts, both Induk and Soon Hyo aim at repairing those severed ties to provide hold and support for the survivors. Indeed, after her escape from the camp, Induk's spirit leads Soon Hyo away and even transforms corporeally into Soon Hyo's mother: "her form would blur until it doubled, then quadrupled, and she would become Induk and my mother, and in turn my mother's mother and an old woman dressed in the formal top'o of the olden days. I realized I was walking with my ancestors" (Keller 53). Induk's spirit makes visible Soon Hyo's female genealogy and enables

her to draw strength from it. Therefore, Induk's spirit becomes a source of feminist empowerment. Just like, the Mirabal sisters return from the dead to support their surviving sister, so thus Induk's spirit return to support Soon Hyo—and so does Soon Hyo later return as a ghost narrator to support her daughter, Beccah.

Indeed, when Soon Hyo returns as a ghost narrator after her death in Beccah's narrative present, she tries to establish the same female support to her daughter. In doing so, she contests the epistemic violence of her husband's silencing as well as her culture's epistemic violence in general that has kept her from connecting with Beccah. In the first chapter, Beccah refers to "[her] mother's craziness" and admits that she was afraid that somebody might "lock her up" when she was still a child. She also admits that "[i]t wasn't until [she] reached high school that [she] actually started hoping that that would happen" (Keller 12). It becomes clear that mother and daughter are alienated from each other in the beginning of the novel. Soon Hyo's ghostly narrative serves to overcome this alienation. In fact, in the last chapter that she tells under the name "Akiko"—the only name Beccah knows her by—Soon Hyo ends by directly addressing her daughter: "You are a rockhead like your mother and your mother's mother. Only a thousand times better" (154), thus integrating her daughter into her matrilineal genealogy.

In the next chapter, told from Beccah's point of view, Beccah discovers letters by the American Embassy in Seoul and the Red Cross, reporting to "*Mrs. Akiko (Kim Soon Hyo) Bradley*" that they were not able to trace any of her three sisters in Korea (Keller 173). Beccah comes to understand that "[her] mother once belonged to a name, to a life, that [she] had never known about. […] and that [her] mother, once bound to others besides [her]self, had severed those ties—[her] lineage, her family name—with her silence" (173). After this realization, Soon Hyo finally reclaims her Korean name and tells her final chapter as "Soon Hyo" instead of as "Akiko." Beccah, in turn, recognizes that "[she] had always been waiting for [her] mother, wasting time in the hallway of her life, waiting for an invitation to step over the threshold and into her home" (173). This invitation is finally extended in Soon Hyo's death. The communication that was impossible for her while being still alive, is achieved by her spirit. Soon Hyo's silence, that was caused by patriarchal acts of violence and that has kept her quiet and severed not only the ties to her former family in Korea but also to her daughter Beccah, is finally broken.

The matrilineage is further restored in Soon Hyo's final chapter, which she relates under her real name "Soon Hyo." In this chapters, she moves beyond her own story and instead tells the story of her mother, who also "died more than once in her life" (Keller 175). This focus on multiple deaths echoes Soon Hyo's introduction of her own story in the very beginning of the

novel. Again, female death is tied to colonial invasion and oppression—of both the nation and the female body. This alignment again highlights the entanglements of colonialism and violence against women. As it turns out, Soon Hyo's mother was "on the streets of Seoul" in March 1919 when Japan first invaded (175). In the invasion, her boyfriend is killed, along with "[s]even thousand, five hundred and nine" other Koreans (179). After this event, Soon Hyo's mother is married to "a man she had never seen" before (179), and after her wedding she "never heard her name again" (180). The loss of her name is thus another form of inter-generational violence suffered by both mother and daughter. Indeed, just as Beccah only knows her mother as "Akiko," Soon Hyo does not know her own mother's real name. Consequently, Beccah "will never know her grandmother's name" (183).

Therefore, Soon Hyo remembers how she recorded a tape for her daughter while still alive, beginning "with our names, my true name and hers: Soon Hyo and Bek-hap. I speak for the time when I leave my daughter, so that when I die, she will hear my name and know that when she cries, she will never be alone" (Keller 183). The tape remains hidden until after Soon Hyo's death when Beccah finds it amongst her mother's possessions and starts "listening to her [mother's] accounts of crimes made against each woman she could remember, so many crimes and so many names" (194). It is after Beccah has finally recovered this tape that Soon Hyo stops her ghostly narrative. Beccah's finding of the tape symbolizes her final acceptance of her mother. And it is Soon Hyo's ghostly narrative that leads her to this recovery and acceptance. In fact, Beccah realizes that "[her] mother waited for [her] to fly to her, waited for her to tell her [she] was ready to hear what she had to say. [Beccah] never asked, but maybe she was telling [her] all the time and [she] wasn't listening" (191).

Significantly, Beccah finds the tape next to "an envelope stuffed with paper and yellowing newspaper articles[…], most of them clipped from the *Korea Times*" (173). This symbolizes that despite Soon Hyo's best efforts to prove her knowledge claim about sexual slavery under Japanese colonialism, the truth still needs to be confirmed by scientific methods considered reliable in Western (or, in this case, Japanese) historiography: it needs to be recorded in some way to be considered valid. Thus, just as María Teresa's diary entries function to satisfy Western historiographic needs for recorded and written history in *In the Time of the Butterflies*, so do the tape, the letter from the embassy, and the newspaper clippings fulfill the same function in *Comfort Woman*. Soon Hyo's ghostly narrative thus not only dramatizes the silencing of women's voices and the invisibility of their experiences in patriarchal discourse, but also the silencing and suppression of a feminist historiography more generally.

Indeed, the novel suggests that knowledge derived from a resistant feminist epistemology is still considered inferior in patriarchal society visible in the fact that Soon Hyo's story needs to be confirmed by historical records such as recorded tapes and newspaper clippings to be considered truthful historical knowledge. Consequently, the novel criticizes one central issue in the decade long debate about the 'comfort woman' issue: the refusal of patriarchal authorities to turn women's stories into historical truth without any records to support their claims. The irony, of course, lies in the fact that the records are usually kept by those in power, which further strengthens the cycle of oppression, and makes it almost impossible to correct historical knowledge.

Nevertheless, Soon Hyo's ghostly narrative—and the novel more generally—establish a powerful counter-discourse to the official, patriarchal discourse, which euphemized or, for a very long time, ignored the fate of women like Soon Hyo entirely. According to Lee, "Soon Hyo ultimately criticizes the Japanese patriarchy buttressing the emperor system when she proclaimed that the military sex slavery was designed, legalized, and practiced by the Japanese imperial state under the order of the Japanese emperor" (446). In other words, the novel not only denounces the sexual violence against women enacted by imperial Japan, but it also contests the epistemic violence connected to the issue of sexual slavery during Japanese colonization of South-East Asia and the practices of historiography that created historical knowledge about it in the aftermath—or rather, omitted it from historical knowledge, thereby hiding it in silence. Soon Hyo's narrative thus emerges as an exemplary "non-Western, counter-monolithic historiography that accounts for the sexual assaults on her in a Japanese military camp" (Schultermandl 78). Soon Hyo's narrative fills the silences created by hegemonic historiography.

Ultimately, then, both *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *Comfort Woman* dramatize the power struggle between hegemonic colonial, patriarchal power structures, and resistant female voices. In this power struggle, the narrative space of Minerva Mirabal's and Soon Hyo's ghostly narratives becomes a source of female empowerment because they offer a subversive space to represent and criticize acts of violence against women. Therefore, they can both be read as acts of resistance to patriarchal and colonial power structures that emerge out of feminist epistemological frameworks to create and share meaning about the female experience in their respective (post-)colonial settings. A very similar power struggle between patriarchal silencing and female resistance in the form of a ghost narrative can be observed in novels by African American women writers, such as Toni Morrison's *Love* or Suzan-Lori Parks's *Getting Mother's Body* discussed in the following section.

7.2. Singing from Beneath the Grave: Subversive Music in Toni Morrison's *Love* and Suzan-Lori Parks's *Getting Mother's Body*

Just as Minerva Mirabal and Soon Hyo speak from beyond the grave to resist the epistemic violence of silencing their voices and experiences in white, patriarchal discourse, L in Toni Morrison's *Love* (2003) and Willa Mae Beede in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003) sing from beyond the grave with the same intention. In addition, they both sing or hum about their own experience, and thereby enter a dialogue with the living to create a shared knowledge about the Black female experience. What is more, Willa Mae's and L's subversive ghostly voices become even more subversive by evoking the subversive potential of African American musical tradition. In her analysis of Toni Morrison's use of music as "ghostly emanation" (Bennett, Juda 70), Juda Bennett argues that Morrison's "musical references invite readers to consider the subversive force of slave songs and spirituals, which contained the seeds of rebellion, resistance, and counternarrative" (74). Similarly, Kokahvah Zauditu-Selassie points out that humming is particularly valued in oral tradition. Accordingly, "In *Love*, Morrison's L counters the current state of affairs by reaffirming the power of humming. The power of the hum to calm and still the mind connects L with other 'women who know things'—those who rock, hum, and create an aura of spiritual space to center themselves" (191). While L's humming frames the narrative in *Love*, Willa Mae's Blues songs repeatedly interrupt the polyvocal narrative of *Getting Mother's Body*.

Importantly, music has a unique significance in African American culture.[43] According to A. Yemisi Jimoh, it connects African Americans back to the oral cultures of the "Old World" and "the Old World tradition of singing the lives of a people was continued by the late-nineteenth Century African American minstrels and vaudevillians, college groups […], and the early twentieth century blueswomen and jazzmen" (1). The African American musical tradition goes back to the spirituals of enslaved Africans which were used to express "historical discontinuity, alienation, loss, despair, recognition of the incongruity inherent in life, and rejection of societal mythologies and ersatz histories" (6). Music, in African American culture, is thus connected to two different aims: it is connected with the oral cultural tradition of "singing the lives of the people," and it symbolizes "rebellion, resistance, and counternarrative," thereby providing a musical counter-discourse of resistance to the

[43] For a detailed analysis of music in African American fiction, see Jimoh.

hegemonic discourse of white patriarchy. Both of these aspects become obvious in the songs of L and Willa Mae Beede.

In addition, the conception of death needs to be considered more precisely as well. Suzanne E. Smith, for example argues that "[h]istorically, death in the African American cultural imagination was not feared but rather embraced as the ultimate 'homegoing'" (17-18). She explains that "[t]he roots of African American burial and mourning customs can be traced back to West and Central Africa" (18) and further specifies that "[t]he profound cultural significance of the funeral in African society, and subsequently in African American life, arose from the basic but essential belief that one's deceased ancestors have direct relationship with and authority over the lives of their descendants." According to this belief, "[t]he dead are not 'alive' in the most literal sense; rather, they exist as powerful spiritual beings who continue to influence the living world through the actions of their descendants" (19-20).

Upon this background, it comes as no surprise that the matriarchal figures of L and Willa Mae remain spiritual influences in the lives of the living and even repeatedly offer their (oftentimes unsolicited) commentary, advice, and judgement. Furthermore, as ghost narrators they combine the Western tradition of literary ghosts with the African belief of a spiritual relationship between the living and the dead. Like the Mirabal sisters and Soon Hyo, neither L nor Willa Mae are explicitly identified as ghosts in these novels. Nevertheless, they both appear as first-person narrators in a story in which they are already dead in the narrative present. While the reader only learns about L's death at the very end of the novel, Willa Mae's death is established in the very first chapter. However, L's narrative is highlighted as different to the rest of the novel by being printed in italics, and by opening the novel as an untitled section before the first chapter starts. This indicates that L does inhabit a special space within the narrative. Similar to the Mirabal sisters and Soon Hyo, I thus consider both women as ghost narrators. This reading is further strengthened by the narrative function both women fulfill that also firmly situates them in the ghost narrator trope.

Morrison's novel *Love* tells the story of six women whose lives are all shaped by the late Bill Cosey the owner of a once flourishing hotel and resort in the coastal community of Up Beach. First, there is Vida, former employee of Cosey and grandmother of Romen who becomes Junior's boyfriend later on. Secondly, there is May, Cosey's daughter-in-law and already dead in the novel's narrative present. Then there are her daughter Christine and Christine's childhood friend Heed who marries Bill Cosey and consequently becomes stepmother to May and step-grandmother to Christine. As a consequence, May and Christine grow increasingly hateful towards Heed. Fifth, there is Junior who arrives in Up Beach to work as a personal assistant to

Heed. In the narrative present, Christine and Heed are elderly, vengeful women who are both claiming ownership of the Cosey inheritance, but because there is no official will, they have resigned to occupy the former family house on Monarch Street, which exhibits classical characteristics of Gothic mansions.[44] They both have resorted to waiting for the other one to die first. Finally, there is the ghostly narrator L, former chef at the Cosey resort, who describes herself as having been "*reduced to singsong*" (Morrison 63).

Throughout the novel, L uses her spectral narrative or rather spectral humming to criticize and counteract epistemic violence in the form of silencing women and silencing the past. Indeed, the past in Love consists of a considerable number of silences, most of which are filled in by L's spectral humming. These silences of the past become particularly obvious in the fact that *Love* tells the story of sexual abuse, violence, and pedophilia without ever mentioning any of those words, as pointed out by Mariangela Palladino (336). It is predominantly in L's narrative that these issues and the trauma caused by them are explained while they are often only circled around in the omniscient narrative that takes up the main part of the novel. Her spectral narrative is thus a similar refusal to let some parts of the past be silenced as exhibited by previously discussed ghost narrators. Katrina Harack argues that "with the character of L, Morrison writes against a monolithic view of history, truth, and memory, showing how stories demand participation, including that of the reader, in evaluating the past." She further explains that by "constantly shifting perspectives in *Love* […] the reader [is forced] to debate what actually happened and whose perspective is in fact reliable" (274). L is the one filling in the silences of the past thus "providing a counternarrative to official history and serving as a figure of communal testimony" (272). What is more, it is in L's spectral narration, that the additional perspective of May is related, Christine's mother who is already dead in the narrative present and who's voice is sometimes filtered through L's narrative.

The novel is structured in nine chapters, each of them named after a function Bill Cosey had in the lives of these women: "Portrait" (Morrison 11), "Friend" (32), "Stranger" (51), "Benefactor" (69), "Lover" (107), "Husband" (121), "Guardian" (143), "Father" (159), and "Phantom" (181). The structure suggests that the lives of the women are subjected to Cosey's influence—during his life as well as death. Bill Cosey thus functions as the embodiment of patriarchy. Indeed, according to Anderson, "[Cosey] is the haunting hand of patriarchal power that they feel created and sustained them. He is everywhere in the novel itself as each section

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[44] See, for example, Anderson (120).

title lists a different role he fills" (117). Consequently, Mar Gallego argues that *Love* criticizes "black patriarchy and unequal gender relations in the family." She points out that "African Americans' adoption of a patriarchal model is reckoned as the greatest source of conflict in the text. The black notion of patriarchy personified by Cosey forecloses any idea of kinship and community because […] he miserably fails to foster a sense of family" (94).

While part one to eight are active roles he takes in their lives, "Phantom" suggests a more passive influence. It might seem odd at first to consider "Portrait" as an active influence such as "Friend," "Stranger," or "Lover." However, when Junior first enters Heed's room for a job interview, she sees the room "under the influence of a bed behind which a man's portrait loomed" (Morrison 25). It is, of course, Bill Cosey's portrait and the central position over the bed and its description as "looming" suggest a powerful influence on both the room as well as the people in it. In addition, Heed describes the portrait by stating that: "That's him. It was painted from a snapshot, so it's exactly like him. What you see there is a wonderful man" (26). The portrait is therefore almost personified and becomes the man himself rather than a representation of him. What is more, Heed is still very much under his influence by calling him a "wonderful man," a narrative that is increasingly deconstructed throughout L's narrative and completely abandoned in the final chapter "Phantom." "Phantom" thus clearly stands apart both in the way Cosey's influence is exerted as well as formally in its narrative structure.

Considering this structure, the narrative is not only haunted by L, the ghostly narrator, but also by the disembodied ghost of Bill Cosey who still exerts his influence over the "*Cosey women*" (Morrison 9) even after he is long dead already. In fact, his ghost even appears as a physical entity to Junior in taking form as "her Good Man. Sometimes he sat at the foot of her bed—happy to watch her sleep, and when she woke he winked before he smiled and stepped away" (116). Even in death, he still exerts power over the women living in his former house and subjects them to his objectifying gaze. In addition, his appearance to Junior foreshadows his preference for young women and girls and the final revelation of him having married Heed when she was only eleven years old. Heed's history of being sold into a version of sexual servitude by her family is thus reminiscent of Soon Hyo's story in *Comfort Woman*. And like Soon Hyo, Heed is silenced by patriarchal power structures and subject to hermeneutical injustice that prevents her from comprehending her marriage to Cosey as sexual abuse until the moment of her death, in which she can finally fully understand and communicate her experience. What is more, the trauma and violence experienced by both Heed and Christine can also be linked back to African slavery and "the experience of the captive Africans on the slave-ships." According to Jean Wyatt, "Heed and Christine lose connection with their past and its

rich field of potentials" because "of an early traumatic separation from the love that had been the ground of their childhood development." As a consequence, they are left "disoriented with regard to their present and future " (193).

Instrumental in creating a narrative space in which the truth about Heed's marriage to Cosey can be revealed and talked about is the fact that Cosey's omnipresence is consistently challenged by the humming voice of L, who regularly interrupts the omniscient narrative. Anderson, for example, argues that "L's humming, as a literal sound and as the hum of her constant presence throughout the novel, haunts the setting, the characters, and the reader" (121). In addition, Stephanie Li argues that "Humming represents Morrison's response to the constraints of the patriarchal signifier; it is a language that reorders semiotic drives into expressive form, embracing the plenitude of desire" (28). L thus comes to represent a diverse set of desires outside of heterosexual male desire such as lesbian desire or the desire for female friendship. As such, L is the only one who exists outside of Cosey's lasting patriarchal influence. She opens the narrative in an untitled prologue, thereby clearly separating herself from the rest of the novel and situating herself outside of the Bill Cosey structure and influence. While she is free to invade Cosey's narrative space, he is unable to invade hers. In addition, even though Cosey still seems to structure the story and lives of these women, he does not get an active voice throughout the narrative present—only in memory from the past. Therefore, the novel can be read as a power-struggle of female voices and stories trying to escape the control not only of Cosey but of patriarchal society in general. The fact that by the end of the narrative Cosey's influence is reduced to a "Phantom" suggests that this struggle is at least partially successful. He still is part of the structure but has receded enough into the background that he no longer takes an active part in it.

As was the case in *Comfort Woman* and *In the Time of the Butterflies*, the narrative of Morrison's *Love* is non-linear and characterized by different intersecting voices. While L's first-person narrative frames the entire novel, there are also large parts of omniscient narrative. To separate and oppose the omniscient narrative voice with L's much more subjective voice, her parts of the narrative are printed in italics. As mentioned earlier, it is not until the very end of the novel that L finally reveals her status as ghost. The formal separation in italics and non-italics thus also functions as a visual separation of the world of the living from the world of the dead. JaeEun Yoo argues that "[w]hen L's death is finally revealed, the reader realizes that s/he has been haunted by L's ghost all the time s/he was reading the novel." Therefore, Yoo goes on, "the primary site of haunting is transferred to the reader' familiar experience of reading, troubling and questioning the reader's subjectivity and sense of reality" (155). In other words,

the haunting is not only an event happening on a plot level, but it also manifests itself in the novel's form by turning L into the unmediated narrative voice communicating with the reader directly. *Love* can thus be seen not only as a novel with a ghost narrator but as a "ghost novel" (154) in which the novel itself takes on a haunting presence in the reader's reading experience (166).

In addition, Juda Bennett argues that the alternation between "L's humming narration with a third-person omniscience, *Love* […] foreground issues of the individual and its relationship to community. Questions of presence/absence and present/past are highlighted through the different narrative points of view" as well as through the typography of printing L's part of the narrative in italics (63). Juda Bennett points out the disruptive and irregular narrative structure by "collaps[ing] the points of view by sometimes placing both […] in a shared chapter and other times offering single points of view in one chapter." She claims that "the novel provides a logical sign of narrative order only to disrupt it." In addition, and very similar to this disruptive narrative structure, the novel "offers L as a central narrator only to place her centrality in question with the late revelation of her ghostly state, inviting readers to question her narration and its relationship to the present tense of the novel." Juda Bennet thus concludes that *Love* "invites us to question the ontological limits of omniscience" (63).

However, equally interesting are the *epistemological* limits of omniscience that are questioned by this disruptive narrative structure and L's ghostly presence within it. These epistemological limits of omniscience raise the questions of what can be known and by whom that ghost stories by women have explored from the nineteenth century onwards. Indeed, this disruptiveness is a clear indicator of the struggle L as well as the other women face to make themselves heard in patriarchal discourse to tell their own stories and experiences even if they go against the official discourse. Therefore, it is not only important to question L's narration and its relationship to the novel's narrative present, as Juda Bennett suggests, but it is equally important to question the seemingly omniscient narration that is part of a patriarchal system and consequently also part of a patriarchal epistemology. In fact, the omniscient narrative is coded masculine,[45] not only by its structure following Cosey's role but also by the way it portrays him as a good man for most of the novel by leaving out those parts that would function as proof of the opposite. Indeed, as Wyatt observes, "Despite the seeming diversity of its

[45] Wyatt makes a similar claim, "that the third-person narrative apparatus, including the narrator and the focalizing characters whose minds he opens to us, is biased toward the interests of the man and permeated by patriarchal assumptions about human relations" (299).

multiple voices, the third-person narrative frame as a whole is unbalanced, skewed toward the interests of the man: it protects him from blame and shifts perspective just enough to present his actions in a positive light" (204).

In contrast, as also observed by Wyatt, "L, who initially seems less reliable, […] becomes the voice of truth and authority in the novel's concluding pages" (200). It is her ghostly narrative that "offers a glimpse of a competing story of desire—one that honors the love between little girls and gives priority to girlfriends' rights to an enduring relationship" (206). Consequently, the allegedly omniscient narrative voice is infused with a sense of untrustworthiness in retrospect because, in the end, it turns out to be consumed by patriarchal ideology and a male perspective. Rather than acknowledging the perspectives, stories, and histories of the women it talks about it belittles their perspectives in order to protect Cosey's image.[46] Wyatt muses that "Morrison's narrative structure may be mimicking, and thus obliquely critiquing, a gender dynamic of African American life in which loyalty to the race prohibits the disclosure of black male abuse of black women" (204). In other words, the novel criticizes the silencing of Black women's voices regarding sexual abuse in the African American community. L's insistence on talking about it, in turn, can be seen as an act of resistance to those processes of silencing.

Indeed, it is significant that it is the ghost narrator, L, who eventually provides a full description of the events how Bill Cosey married Heed. It is L's ghost not the omniscient, allegedly more neutral, narrative voice that summarizes how Bill Cosey married his daughter-in-law May's "*twelve-year-old daughter's playmate*" (Morrison 138), eleven-year-old Heed and thereby confirms Christine's earlier statement in which she relates to Junior, that her "grandfather married her [Heed] when she was eleven" (131). According to Mariangela Palladino, "The understated disclosure of Heed's age subtly revolutionizes the reader's understanding of the story and of its characters and demands complete re-consideration of the facts" (348). In other words, previously related scenes from the honeymoon and wedding night are overhauled completely once Heed's age is disclosed in the second half of the narrative.

Similar to previous ghost narratives, the Cosey's offences of pedophilia and abuse can only be spoken in female discourse while the patriarchal, omniscient narratives circles around it and leaves it silent. Instead, it is Christine[47] and later L who fill in these silences. Christine

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[46] On a detailed narratological study of these two dialogical narratives in *Love*, see Wyatt.
[47] Wyatt identifies Christine's internal focalization as the only one through which some critique on patriarchal power structures is voiced within the omniscient narrative (207).

tells Junior—notice that this is, again, a conversation amongst women—that she and Heed used to be "best friends. One day we built castles on the beach; next day he sat her in his lap. One day we were playing house under a quilt; next day she slept in his bed. One day we played jacks; the next she was fucking my grandfather" (Morrison 131-132). Interestingly, the first statement is still phrased in passive: Heed was sat in Cosey's lap by him. In the next sentence already, however, Christine sees Heed as the active one, sleeping in his bed and sleeping with her grandfather. This active phrasing constitutes a form of victim blaming because it suggests that Heed had a choice in these things. Christine is thus firmly situated in the patriarchal discourse of the omniscient narrative.

With this reading I disagree with Palladino's assessment that it is L who celebrates patriarchy and remains silent about Heed's abuse (348). I agree that L's narrative voice is also influenced by patriarchal ideology—particularly in the beginning—as I will show in the next paragraph, but I argue that it is her spectral presence that allows the abuse to be acknowledged. Soon after Christine's revelation, L raises the question of "*who knew how much money changed hands*" in making this 'marriage' arrangement (Morrison 138). She thus suggests that Cosey's 'marriage' to Heed was not only a case of child abuse but also of slavery by buying her from her parents—thereby further aligning Heed with Soon Hyo in *Comfort Woman*. L's narration is later confirmed by Heed herself as she is close to dying and able to finally admit "He took all my childhood away from me" (194) and who remembers that "I heard it was two hundred dollars he gave my daddy, and a pocketbook for Mama" (193). In addition, L narrates that she actively advocated for the young Heed, after Cosey spanks her at a dinner party by telling him to "*never lay a hand on her again no matter what*" (140).

L states her subversion of and challenge to the patriarchal discourse from the very beginning onward when she introduces the story:

> *They* [meaning Christine, Heed, and Junior] *live like queens in Mr. Cosey's house, but since that girl moved in there a while ago with a skirt short as underpants and no underpants at all, I've been worried about them leaving me here with nothing but an old folks' tale to draw on. I know it's trash: just another story made up to scare wicked females and correct unruly children. But it's all I have. I know I need something else. Something better. Like a story that shows how brazen women can take a good man down. I can hum to that.* (Morrison 10)

Initially, her statement seems to conform to the hegemonic discourse: 'slut-shaming' Junior for her promiscuous clothing and passing judgment on the living style of the three women making themselves at home "*in Mr. Cosey's house*" she announces a story about "*a good man*," in this case Bill Cosey, taken down by the fighting, vengeful, and jealous women in his life. However, when revisiting this opening statement, in which L gives the intention of her humming

storytelling, after having read the entire novel, it becomes obvious that she is not about to tell that typical story meant "*to scare wicked females and correct unruly children*" in teaching them a morale. Rather, L is about to tell a story of "*brazen women*" who struggle to deconstruct the popular image of Bill Cosey as "*a good man*" and unmask him as a child-molester, adulterer, and a man continuously abusing his power. Page after page, this image of "*the good man*" is deconstructed until nothing but a "Phantom" is left, as the final chapter title indicates. L's narrative thus fulfills a similar function as the narrative of both the Mirabal sisters as well as Soon Hyo: it is a shifting of historical perspective from the oppressor to the oppressed.

Consequently, it is only after Cosey's popular image has been deconstructed and his name is finally no longer associated with the image of "a good man" that L is willing to reveals her own name—without ever speaking it out loud, as if she did not want it to be associated with Cosey and his actions in any way. Instead, she says that her name is "*subject of First Corinthians, chapter 13*" (Morrison 199). Importantly, the revelation of her name happens simultaneously with the revelation of her death. According to Juda Bennett, this simultaneity implies that "[w]ith the twin revelations of L's name and her ghostly state, readers should recognize that 'Love is Dead'" (61). Moreover, her refusal to ever state her full name while still working to deconstruct the popular image of Cosey as allegedly 'loving' husband, father, and friend, further supports this claim. Her narrative undermines the patriarchal conception of heterosexual 'love' as ultimate goal and life-fulfillment for every individual as well as the ideal of patriarchal love between a father and his children. Indeed, both of these love forms are shown as destructive throughout the novel. This deconstruction of heterosexual love particularly, can also be seen in the impulses of homosexual desire that run through the entire novel. In the end, it is only the love of female friendship that is—at least momentarily—repaired.[48]

L's subversive potential is therefore threefold: she unites the subversive potential of the ghost trope, the African American musical tradition, and queerness. According to Juda Bennett, L's queer desire becomes obvious in her descriptions of Celestial and Bill Cosey's long-time affair, as well as of the ocean (64). Most importantly, it is L's description of Celestial that shows her queer desire despite her attempt to conform to heteronormativity. L watches as

> [Celestial] *stretched, raised her arms, and dove. I remember that arc better than I remember yesterday. She was out of sight for a time and I held my breath as long as she did. Finally, she surfaced and I breathed again watching her swim back to shallow water.* […] *Her hair, flat when she went in, rose up slowly and took on the shape of the cloud dragging the moon. Then she—well, made a sound. I don't know to this day whether it was a word, a tune, or a scream.*

[48] On the representation of love, also see Palladino, who reads L as an embodiment of Aphrodite.

> *All I know is that it was a sound I wanted to answer. Even though, normally, I'm stone quiet, Celestial.* (Morrison 106)

L's description of Celestial is sensual. Under her gaze, Celestial is sexualized and objectified by, for example, highlighting the arc of her spine as she dives into the ocean. In holding her breath alongside Celestial, it is as if their bodies merge into one. Finally, the sound Celestial makes when exiting the ocean has a clear sexual connotation and the fact that L admits she wants to answer it indicates her own sexual desire. L's description of Celestial and the underlying homosexual tension in her description of her is reminiscent of nineteenth-century ghost stories such as Rose Terry Cooke's "My Visitation" (1858) or Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' "Since I Died" (1873), in which queer desire is also banned to the realm of the spectral. Unrealizable in nineteenth-century patriarchal society, the object of the narrator's queer desire in Cooke's "My Visitation" has to die first for them to be reunited in the end. Similarly, it is only in the moment of her death that the narrator of Phelps' "Since I Died" can admit her homosexual desire to her friend sitting at her deathbed.[49] Morrison's *Love* can thus be situated in the literary tradition of ghost stories/novels that use the spectral to represent and negotiate queerness as a subversive threat to patriarchal heteronormativity.

However, even as a ghost L is unable to fully leave behind all constraints of patriarchal ideology. On the contrary, even in death she is careful to keep up her appearance of heteronormativity, an appearance that she only gives up in the final few sentences of her narrative. In addition, she also follows patriarchal conventions in her continued shaming of Junior, whom she calls a "*modern tramp*[…]" (Morrison 67). This conformity to heteronormative standards and the 'slut-shaming' of sexually active women proves her lasting subjection to patriarchal ideology even in death. This reach of patriarchal ideology beyond the grave is another theme that ties the novel back to nineteenth-century ghost stories. As stories like Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," Bacon's "The Gospel," or Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" show, patriarchal ideology reaches even beyond death. However, when reading the final moment of *Love* and L's giving in to her queer impulses by first revealing her name and ghostly state and then singing along to Celestial at Bill Cosey's grave, *Love* also transcends its nineteenth-century predecessors, in which the reach of patriarchal ideology beyond death was uncontested. Instead, the final moment of *Love* offers a much more hopeful conclusion in

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[49] For a detailed discussion of the queer impulses in these two short stories, see Weinstock "Queer Specters."

suggesting that patriarchal ideology can be defeated after all if enough subversive voices join together in their resistance.

The only narrative space/time that seems to be completely unaffected by patriarchal ideology is the liminal and temporary—or "timeless" (Anderson 127)—space between life and death. It is here that Christine and Heed, two old childhood friends who were separated by the patriarchal control of Bill Cosey, are reunited in their friendship. It is this liminal space between life and death that Bill Cosey's influence can finally not reach anymore. According to Anderson, it is the "legacy of [L's] spirit work" that allows them to "become[…] open to liminality" and reconcile (127). In their final encounter at the old Cosey hotel, Christine and Heed face each other for the final showoff. While Junior, who takes Heed there to find a supposedly hidden will of Cosey, flees after Christine and Heed get into a fight that ends with Heed falling down the stairs to the attic, Christine and Heed both stay, one of them dying in the arms of the other. It is never explicitly stated which one of them dies, but since Heed is the one falling down the stairs it is safe to say that she is also the one dying from her supposedly fatal injuries.[50]

It is in those moments before death that Heed and Christine are able to finally escape Bill Cosey's patriarchal control, which has governed both their lives until then. Their liminality is also typographically indicated by not marking their direct speech with quotation marks as is usually the case.[51] According to Anderson, "the conversation thus becomes an organic, timeless, placeless process. The resulting story/confession/reconnection is placed in the forefront, and as the opposition between the two women dissolves, their voices blend" (127). In addition, it is as if their voices merge with the voice of the omniscient narrator as well, creating an entirely new form of discourse—a "discourse of love" as Wyatt calls it (209). This then also calls into question whether the final chapter "Phantom" is told by the same omniscient narrative voice as the rest of the novel. First, as already indicated above, there are no more quotation marks indicating direct speech, thereby eschewing familiar narrative techniques. Secondly, the tense switches from past to present, further decreasing the distance between reader and characters. Finally, it is in this closing chapter that Cosey's influence is finally banned to become phantom-like, which opens up a discursive space that is no longer under the strict influence of his patriarchal ideology. Rather, the two women can speak freely of their experiences without fear of being shamed for them.

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[50] Anderson reaches the same conclusion (128).
[51] Wyatt analyzes this scene by applying Freud's concept of "Nachträglichkeit" (197-198).

In fact, the switch in tenses already happens when both Heed and Christine arrive at the Cosey hotel in the chapter before, "Father," the embodiment of a patriarch. Yoo interprets this sudden switch to present tense as "L's ghostly presence and voice infiltrate[ing] them [the last two chapters]" because she notes that all of L's previous narrations are also written in present tense. Therefore, Yoo argues that "[a]s L […] penetrates into the main narrative, the hotel, where the haunting occurs, becomes the container of the present tense." In this newly created space the, "[l]ife and death, the ghost and the living, the past and the present, the young and the old confront, overlap and cross each other. It is the space where L, the dismissed and unrecognized ghost, breaks open the surface saturated with patriarchal conventions and their representations of daughters." Finally, Yoo concludes that "L's ghostly presence expels the specter of the fantasy father" (163).

What Yoo does not take into account, however, is that this new textual space of present tense narration is not only limited to the hotel but also extends to the house on Monarch Street. After Romen, Junior's boyfriend, picks up both women from the hotel, one of them already dead when he arrives, the new narrative situation and the absence of quotation marks in both Heed's and Christine's direct speech is carried with them from the hotel. In addition, even though Romen actively puts "the dead one into the wide backseat" (Morrison 197) both Christine and Heed are still able to continue their conversation "seated at the table" (198) in the house on Monarch Street. The simple haunted hotel explanation that Yoo offers thus does not work entirely.

In addition, while it is true that the present tense is associated with L's voice throughout the novel, the typographic setting still indicates that it is not L's voice that takes over the omniscient narrative all of a sudden, but rather that the change in tenses marks the emergence of a third narrative voice, one that resists patriarchal control. This new voice is certainly enabled by L's continuous subversion and disruption before, but it also transcends both the previous omniscient narrator as well as L herself because, as I have shown above, both are, to different degrees, subjected to patriarchal ideology. In contrast, this third narrator resists patriarchal control and finally also reveals the first moment of abuse Heed experienced at the hands of Bill Cosey—tellingly, also in present tense even though it happened decades ago: Christine and Heed "are walking across the hotel lawn when one remembers that they have forgotten the jacks" (Morrison 190). It is Heed who goes back to get them, and, on her way, she runs into Bill Cosey. He first only talks to her but then "[h]e touches her chin, and then—casually, still smiling—her nipple, or rather the place under her swimsuit where a nipple will be if the circled dot on her chest ever changes" (191). Roughly at the same time, Christine goes to find her

friend and when she "looks up toward the window of her own bedroom, where Heed would be looking for the jacks," she instead sees "her grandfather […] standing there, in her bedroom window, his trousers open, his wrist moving with the same speed L used to beat egg whites into unbelievable creaminess" (192). Initially, Heed feels the desire to tell Christine about what her grandfather did, but when she find Christine, "[h]er face is hard, flat. She looks sick, disgusted, and doesn't meet Heed's eyes" (191). Heed immediately feels like "she has spoiled it all" (191) and thus neither Heed nor Christine tells the other of what they have seen and experienced.

Their voices are silenced from the moment the abuse occurs. According to Jean Wyatt, "once the premature marriage thrust both little girls into the world of patriarchal heterosexuality, they became locked into a system of meaning that robbed girlfriend love of value and made the only love that signifies the love of a man" (198). The fact that they stayed enemies for the rest of their lives—even after Cosey's death—shows the dominance of patriarchal ideology, in which they can only ever be rivals, "first for the man's favor, then for the man's estate." According to Wyatt, "It is only from a retrospective vantage-point in a changed frame of reference that Heed and Christine can perceive the real relations of power that prevented their living full lives" (199). This changed frame of reference is one of female empowerment and friendship, that is facilitated by L's continuous counter discourse to the main narrative and that is finally realized by the new omniscient narrator. In this new frame of reference Cosey's previously unspeakable actions suddenly become speakable.

The fact that the abuse remains unspeakable for so long, proves that this patriarchal system of meaning subjects both Christine and Heed to hermeneutical injustice. They are silenced by the shame Bill Cosey's actions invokes in them, a shame that can only be invoked in a patriarchal culture of victim blaming. Just as Beccah in *Comfort Woman* never directly mentions her abuse by her father, Christine and Heed never talk about their abuse as well—not even to each other—which further strengthens the argument that rape victims are silenced in patriarchal discourse that is made in both novels. Moreover, both Heed and Christine believe it was their own fault what they saw or experienced. The new omniscient narrator recognizes that "[t]he thing that made each believe, without knowing why, that this particular shame was different and could not tolerate speech—not even in the language they had invented for secrets" (Morrison 192). "The thing" that cannot be named by them is a reference to that very culture of victim blaming. The language they invented as children and which they now rediscover in the moments of Heed's death is called "idagay" (188). But even this self-invented language does not provide the words to talk about the unspeakable which is silenced by patriarchal

discourse, and which stays silenced until the new narrative voice emerges as a resistance to and final subversion of those very rules of patriarchal discourse.[52]

However, while there is this new, omniscient voice telling the beginning of the final chapter which resists the patriarchal control of the previous chapters, the old omniscient voice of patriarchal discourse still tries to break through briefly and regain its control. In fact, the only part of the final chapter that is still written in past tense is one section from Junior's third-person perspective as she roams the house on Monarch Street waiting for Romen to return with Christine and Heed. The fact that it is only her perspective that is still literally 'stuck in the past' indicates that she is the only one still unable to free herself from internalized patriarchal ideology. Instead, she is still subject to her "Good man's," Cosey's, control. Finally, it is L's ghostly voice that ends and thus frames the entire narrative. This polyvocal construction and L's final epiphany and acknowledgement of her queer desire by finally joining Celeste's voice in song dramatize a fictional defeat of patriarchal discourse, which is successfully suppressed by the end of the novel and replaced by Black, feminist voices, who refuse to be silenced and thereby resist and even counteract epistemic violence.

A similar multi-perspective narrative structure can be found in Suzan-Lori Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* (2003). Similarly to L disrupting the omniscient narrative with her humming in *Love*, Willa Mae Beede, the deceased matriarch in *Getting Mother's Body* and the titular mother whose corpse needs to be recovered by the other characters, joins the voices of the living by singing the blues. Just as L fills in the silences of the past in Morrison's *Love*, so does Willa Mae Beede in *Getting Mother's Body*. Through her songs and short narrative excerpts, she claims the right to tell her own story and thus resist the epistemic violence of silencing her voice in the multitude of living voices, who all tell their version of events. Each chapter is told from the first-person perspective of one of the characters and those voices of the living are joined by Willa Mae's musical contributions and explanatory notes. At the center of this multi-voiced, linear narrative is Billy Beede, Willa Mae's daughter, pregnant by a man who turns out to be already married. She is joined by her aunt and uncle June Flowers Beede and Roosevelt Beede and Willa Mae's former lover Dill Smiles[53] as well as a few other characters from their community such as Laz Jackson, the son of the local funeral director, who has a crush on Billy. Because the ground where Willa Mae is buried will be turned into a shopping

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[52] On the effects this new narrative framework has on the reader, see Wyatt (199-200).

[53] I use male pronouns for Dill because it becomes obvious in Dill's narrative that Dill self-identifies as male. Thus, I propose to analyze Dill as a transgender man, and I will use male gender pronouns whenever referring to Dill even though other scholars and the other characters in the novel use female gender pronouns.

mall, the whole family sets out on a road trip across the US South from Lincoln, Texas, to LaJunta, Arizona, to recover her body—as well as the jewels that are supposedly buried with her. Since the narrative is set in July 1963, on the eve of the March on Washington, their road trip—even though it is west instead of north-east—is a mirror image to this historic moment. Parks' *Getting Mother's Body* situates itself in the American literary tradition of women's ghost stories as well as the particular trend in contemporary ghost novels that feature ghost narrators to disrupt and subvert the hegemonic white patriarchal discourse.

Brian Norman calls the novel a "neo–segregation narrative consciously engaging literary history" (*Neo-Segregation* 133). Indeed, the novel can be read as "reinventing Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* (1935) for a post-civil rights audience," in which "Faulkner's Bundrens [are swapped] for the Beedes, a black family living in material poverty at the outer edges of the Jim Crow South" (Norman, *Dead Women* 161). In contrast to *As I Lay Dying*, however, "the dead mother seeks not to rid herself of the company of her living family, but rather to reconcile. The question is whether the Beedes, especially Billy, will claim Willa Mae as one of their own." In addition, "given Parks's historical design, the question is whether the nation will write someone like her into its history" (162). What is more, as Rhonda Jenkins Armstrong points out, the shift "from burial to exhumation," in comparison to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, "reconfigures the characters' relationship to their own pasts and calls to mind the history of the reclamation of black dead bodies as reclamation of power and act of resistance" (42). Similarly, Willa Mae's ghost speaking from beneath the grave can also be seen as an act of resistance and a reconfiguration of her own relationship with the past. By refusing to stay silent in death, she claims the right to fill in the silences about her own personal history in the narratives the living family members are telling about her.

In addition, Faulkner and his use of the Southern Gothic offer Parks a literary template to negotiate "race as an experience, a signifier, and a worldview, but without having to tell yet another story about race" (Norman *Neo-Segregation* 141) because "Faulkner stands as a particularly rich resource to get at how race is present, but also isn't" (140). Norman argues that "[b]y using Faulkner for a contemporary novel about 1960s segregation, Parks gets at how Jim Crow 'is,' not 'was.'" He thus sees Parks in the context of "African American traditions that turn to literature, not just legislative reform, to reclaim and signify on an American history with the lives of black people at the center" (134). The novel therefore fulfills similar functions as other contemporary ghost novels: it challenges hegemonic historiography by shifting the focus from the oppressors to the oppressed and telling stories that otherwise would not be part of a national memory. It thereby not only "queries the legacy of civil rights and long-standing

promises of black enfranchisement, which remain subjects of vigorous debate" (*Neo-Segregation* 134), but also challenges white ignorance that presumes that the struggles of racial segregation were ended with the Civil Rights Movement.

In rewriting a modernist classic like Faulkner, Parks' *Getting Mothers Body* is claiming a spot amongst the nation's leading literary figures. It thus follows the same strategy of rewriting the white literary tradition as Moreno Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, Wurth's *White Horse*, and Erdrich's *The Sentence*. In addition, it is reminiscent of yet another strategy that was also employed by nineteenth-century women writers such as Wharton's "The Fulness of Life." The story uses references to famous examples of Western art and literature to situate itself in the long tradition of Western art and literature. Parks' reinvention of Faulkner can be read in two different ways: on the one hand, it is a clear claim of equal status and shows—similarly to Wharton—that Parks is familiar with the canonized names of American literature and able to claim her space amongst them (after all, she is a Pulitzer Prize winning dramatist). On the other hand, however, it can also be read as a subversion of that canon in taking one of the most famous modernist pieces of literature written by a white man, and claiming it for a Black, female protagonist and ultimately also a Black audience. In claiming Faulkner for this purpose, Parks writes a diverse cast of Black characters into modernist literary tradition.

In contrast to the novels discussed in this chapter so far, the main storyline in *Getting Mother's Body* is told in a linear fashion from multiple different autodiegetic narrators. Willa Mae's story runs as a subliminal counternarrative to that main storyline and is filtered through all her family members' voices as well as her own. Her story, then, represents the messy aspects of memory that is constantly constructed and deconstructed through the perspectives and testimonies of different people. Willa Mae thus becomes the underlying undercurrent of the main story, always reminding the living of her presence in interrupting their present experiences with her blues singing—as if she actively challenges them to remember her and acknowledge that their lives are not so unlike her own. This narrative situation situates Willa Mae in a subversive position because she is shown to not follow the straight and linear rules of hegemonic discourse. Instead, she sings, and speaks in monologues or even in short narrative sections and flashbacks. In addition, her own story is mostly revealed through the voices of witnesses rather than herself, painting a multi-facetted picture of her.

This subversive reading of Willa Mae is further strengthened by her singing the blues.[54] Over the course of the novel, Willa Mae speaks or rather sings up twelve times. Mostly, she sings blues songs, but sometimes she also speaks in a monologue that reflects on or foreshadows Billy's or another family member's actions. Analyzing her first blues song, Norman notices that "[t]he time frame, like all of her monologues, is unclear. Is it a flashback, a posthumous appearance on that great blues stage in the sky, or an atemporal interlude from the goings-on in Lincoln, Texas?" He concedes that the latter is the most likely and thus concludes "that Willa Mae's chapters operate as a lyrical chorus in a picaresque prose novel. A chorus, be it in a blues song, a modern guitar lick, or an ancient Greek play, is stranded with but distinct from the rising action." Therefore, this "structure holds Willa Mae apart from her community, a minor-key voice set off by time, mode, and everyday concerns" (*Dead Women* 164). Again, this association with a Greek chorus[55] firmly places *Getting Mother's Mother* in a white, Western literary tradition.

In contrast to Norman, I do not consider Willa Mae's voice to be set apart and separate from the rest of the voices. On the contrary, I think to adequately understand her role in the narrative, it is imperative that we see her as part of the community rather than standing apart from it. Indeed, African American burial rites and understandings of death can be traced back to West Africa, where the dead and the living have an active and direct relationship to one another (Smith, Suzanne 19-20). The dead are believed to "exist as powerful spiritual beings who continue to influence the living world through the actions of their descendants" (20). This is exactly the case in *Getting Mother's Body*. Willa Mae's blues songs may seem "an atemporal interlude," but they are always very intimately connected to the world of the living, a fact that Norman later also acknowledges in conceding that "while Willa Mae's downhome advice may interrupt the real-time plot, her monologues often prove quite useful for the living, sometimes consciously and sometimes less so" (*Dead Women* 167). Her songs should thus not be seen as an "interruption" of the real-time plot but rather a part of it in which she offers support to the living characters.

The fact that her chapters intersect with the voices of the living the entire time suggests that she is an invisible ride along on their journey West. And as such, her function is to offer emotional support to them. In his analysis of Jesmyn Ward's novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, which

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[54] On a discussion of her similarities to and evocations of former Black female blues singers, see Norman, *Dead Women* 163-168.

[55] Juda Bennett makes the same comparison to Greek chorus when talking about the "ghostly emanations" of music in Toni Morrison's novels 70-71.

I will discuss in the next section, as a blues novel, Marcus Charles Tribbett points out that "[t]hrough song and singing, people can bear up under abuse, finding a spiritual sustenance in a shared experience of oppression" (37). Through her ongoing singing, Willa Mae offers exactly this kind of support, guiding Billy and the others through experiences of abuse, rage, and institutionalized racism. One of the main ways in which she does this is by foreshadowing or contextualizing the experiences of the living with examples from her own life.

Several times, for example, Willa Mae's blues can be read as a foreshadowing of Billy's life. Her second song titled "Willa Mae's Blues," for example goes:

> My man, he loves me
> He bought me a diamond ring.
> Well, his wife, she found out, she says my
> Pretty ring don't mean a thing.
> […]
> She got the paper, she my man's ball and chain.
> She put her big foot down, bought me
> A ticket on the very next train. (Parks 66)

In the very next chapter, told from Alberta Snipes' perspective, Billy finds out that Snipes, her boyfriend and father of her unborn child, is already married with seven children. Billy goes to his house because he promised her to get married, but Alberta shuts her down immediately: "to my husband you ain't" (69). She puts her foot down just like the woman in Willa Mae's song. As described in the song, Billy is convinced Snipes loves her. She used her sparse financial resources to buy a wedding dress and a bus ticket to his house to meet him and marry him. Snipes, however, lets his wife take over the task of telling Billy he has lied to her all along. As it turns out he even lied about his real name: "His name ain't no Clifton, it's Clifford," clarifies Alberta (69).

At other times, Willa Mae's blues songs provide a historical perspective in that they show she had a similar experience to her descendants while being alive. When Homer Beede Rochefoucault, Billy's cousin, and Roosevelt Beede get pulled over by a police officer on their way to LaJunta, they are taken to jail because the police officer does not believe that the "late-model red Mercury convertible" (Parks 162) they are driving is, in fact, their car. Insinuating that they stole it, Officer Masterson, who narrates this specific section, informs them that "[he's] gonna have to take [them] both in" (164). While Billy and her aunt June Flowers, both driving an old truck instead of a new convertible, wait for them outside of the police station, Billy recounts memories of her and her mother being in and out of jailhouses regularly. In the next chapter, Willa Mae recounts the same memories in her song:

> I been in jail.

> From Abilene way down to Galveston.
> I seen the Gulf of Mexico through the jailhouse wall.
> I wore my chain gang stripes digging ditches by the road
> But I swear to you I never did much wrong. (176)

Considering the racial profiling Homer and Roosevelt are subjected to by the police officer pulling them over because they were not driving a car that matches his mental image of cars that could be owned by Black people, her claim of "never having done much wrong" is legitimized. In addition, situating her memory of having been to jail in the context of structural racism and police profiling in the Jim Crow south calls into question whether she was taken to jail because she actually did something against the law or whether she just did not behave in a normative way considered appropriate for a Black woman at the time.

In addition to pointing out structural racism, Willa Mae uses the subversive potential of her ghostly status and of the blues to discuss several other issues as well that are often silenced by hegemonic discourse. Like her nineteenth-century predecessors, for example, she talks about domestic abuse in one of her songs asking: "Ain't the way you treat me // Just a mistreat-treating" (Parks 158). Later, she also talks about depression, another issue that is still stigmatized even today. In one of her songs she sings about being "Deep down in this hole" where she drunkenly "crie[s her]self to sleep" and where she is "all alone." In addition, she describes it as "cold" and "lonesome" and talks about her worries and anxieties "About the promises [she] made but ain't been keeping" (218). The image of the "deep hole" is a metaphor for depression utilizing images that are usually associated with depression: loneliness and cold. In addition, she cries a lot and drinks too much—all the time feeling that she is "all alone."

At the same time, however, this song also shows a very high level of self-reflexivity and is much more self-critical than her earlier songs and monologues. Instead of commenting and foreshadowing the life of the living, this song seems to be much more concerned with expressing her own feelings of regret. She knows that there are promises she made but did not keep, commitments she broke such as in her relationship to Dill, whom she outed to the community as being biologically a woman even though he always carries himself as a man, or the commitment to her daughter, who was standing in the corner of the hotel room for two days watching as her mother bled out from a self-administered abortion (Parks 227, 102).

In her references to Dill, then, it becomes obvious that Willa Mae's blues songs are just as much about reconciliation as they are about being remembered and negotiating silenced issues. In a moment of repentance, Willa Mae's ghost admits: "I found out what kind of man Dill was by feeling around in the dark." However, she confesses that she "didn't tell nobody

for a long time and when [she] did, [she] felt bad but once words leave your moth you can't get them back in. [… She] tried" (Parks 225). Willa Mae thus regrets her judgment of Dill and her interference with his self-ascribed gender identity and in her regret she invites the reader to also reflect upon their pre-conceived notion of gender and sexuality as binary. Willa Mae's subversive discourse presents the possibility to accept queerness just as L's counternarrative in *Love* does. It is precisely this acceptance through her ghostly voice that again foreshadows the final reunion of her and Dill. It is as if Dill heard her ghostly voice and, in fact, does forgive her past wrongdoings when he narrates: "I am a man," once more confirming his transgender identity, "and Willa Mae, six feet underneath the top of the ground, unfolds her hands from where I laid them crosst her chest and, with a smile, takes me in her arms" (244). This final embrace between the living and the dead symbolizes reconciliation with the past. With this reconciliation, Norman argues, "Parks offers a model for how the African American community, as well as the whole nation, can reclaim the bodies of its own cast-off sons and daughters, be they dead or alive" (*Dead Women* 174).

Ultimately, then, Willa Mae's ghost asks us to remember the past and accept both past and presence as well as all sorts of diversity populating both timelines. She utilizes the subversive cultural potential of the blues genre to sing of topics such as structural racism, domestic abuse, depression, and transphobia to remind the present-day characters that their lives are not so different than her own and are still being influenced by the same oppressive structures of misogyny and racism, despite the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement marching on Washington. In fact, her final song "Don't the Great Wheel keep rolling along" (Parks 255) suggests that there is a continuance between past and present and that her daughter is still struggling with the same difficulties.

There is the saying of 'history repeating itself' and along those lines June Flowers Beede tells Billy at the beginning of the novel: "The apple don't fall that far from the tree." Even though Billy vehemently protests "I ain't no goddamn apple" (Parks 19), her story alongside her mother's suggests otherwise. For example, Willa Mae died of a coat hanger abortion because she did not have access to the medical attention she needed. Years later, Billy turns her trip to recover her mother's corpse into a trip to dig up her alleged jewels so that she can pay for her own abortion after finding out Snipes is already married. However, as all characters painfully find out at the end of the novel: they "did find no kind of pearls at all" (256). They did, however, find Willa Mae's old diamond ring sewed into "the hem of the dress" (254) which Laz Jackson, the funeral director's son, who always had a crush on Billy, uses to propose to Billy.

In recovering her mother and making peace with her mother's past, Billy also makes peace with herself. In fact, it is the first time on the way back from LaJunta, her mother's corpse riding alongside them "beyond the hood of the truck" (Parks 257), that she first allows herself to think about the baby as a human person who could have their own name (257). Willa Mae's final image of the "Great Wheel" that keeps "rolling along" is thus appropriate: even though the same cracks and spots show themselves time and again as the wheel turns around itself, there is nevertheless the possibility for progress if the past is confronted and accepted as is the case when the Beedes literally dig up the past in form of Willa Mae's body and welcome it into their midst to be taken back to Lincoln, Texas, with them. The progress that follows this acceptance can then be seen in the image of Billy having "[her] first child running around in the yard and another one on the way." What is more, all the character's dreams are fulfilled in the end of the narrative (257).

According to Norman, what "is important[, then, is] to place the fictional Willa Mae alongside the very real tendency to rewrite national history through exhumation and reburial of citizens from past eras" (*Dead Women* 170). This tendency is especially prominent in ghost novels. Just like Soon Hyo and the Mirabal sister's claim the right to rewrite history by filling in the silences and write their own stories firmly into history, so does Willa Mae claim her spot amidst the nation's past and thus also provides the same opportunity for her daughter Billy and Dill. Norman proceeds to argue that "[t]o dig up someone like Willa Mae is not to restore her national reputation, but to bestow posthumous honor never available during her life" (170). It is the same posthumous honor that the Mirabal sisters claim in returning as ghosts to demand justice for their murder; or Soon Hyo claims by recovering her own voice, name, and body and telling of the crimes she and other women like her experienced in the Japanese military camps. It also is the same honor that L's subversive counternarrative is finally able to restore to Christine and Heed in taking away their shame by helping them realize it was never theirs to begin with.

In contrast to the Mirabal sisters and Soon Hyo, however, Willa Mae Beede and L do not sing from beneath the grave to tell their own story. On the contrary, they relate very little about themselves and rather function as spiritual companions to their living relatives—by blood or other family and community ties. L consistently subverts patriarchal discourse to help bring about the reconciliation of Christine and Heed. Similarly, Willa Mae sings the blues until both Dill and Billy have made their peace with her and welcome her back into their midst—by literally digging up her corpse and taking it back with them. *Love* and *Getting Mother's Body* respectively, are thus about inter-generational conflict and trauma. They dramatize how the

trauma of past generations, of misogyny and structural racism, still influence the next generation of Black communities, thereby illustrating that to move forward, one must confront and accept the past in all its ugliness.

7.3. Conclusion: The Silencing of Black Voices and White Ignorance in Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017), set in contemporary Mississippi, combines the three functions or quests of ghost narrators I have discussed so far: the reclaiming of one's own voice and story, thereby simultaneously claiming a spot in national history; offering reconciliation with the past and lingering guilt and shame to surviving characters; as well as a communal quest to anchor present-day experiences in a continuation from the past to dramatize and criticize lasting effects of structural racism and/or misogyny. *Sing, Unburied, Sing* combines the first-person narrations of thirteen-year-old Jojo, his mother Leonie, and the ghost of twelve-year-old Richie, former friend and fellow inmate of Jojo's maternal grandfather, River, in a mostly linear way. In addition, River's first-person account of his former incarceration and his involvement in Richie's death is filtered through Jojo's narrative. To facilitate the separation of their voices, River's story is printed in italics. Throughout the novel, Jojo hears and remembers parts of his grandfather's story so that it runs parallel to his own present-day road-trip. In addition, similar to *Getting Mother's Body*, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is constructed as a road trip through the US South to pick up Michael, Jojo's white father, after he is released from prison, thereby also bearing close resemblances to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*.[56]

Importantly, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* is the first novel discussed in this study that features the ghost of a child: twelve-year-old Richie, who returns from the dead to finally hear the story of his own death, which he cannot remember. As is revealed at the very end of the novel, Richie was killed by Jojo's grandfather River to save him from a white lynching mob—a situation that is very much reminiscent of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. In addition, it is also the first novel told from the first-person perspective of another child, thirteen-year-old Jojo, who is the only one

[56] For a detailed analysis of these similarities to Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying* and a discussion of Ward's novel based on these similarities, see Chase.

who can see Richie's ghost for the largest part of the narrative. Richie and Jojo thus mirror each other to symbolize not only the past and the present but the past and the future—since children are usually considered the future generation. Richie's ghost is central in the novel's dramatization of structural racism in the US penal system and its continuity from slavery over the Jim Crow-era to the twenty-first century. Consequently, the additional focus on Jojo as a child narrator further emphasizes the argument that structural racism not only dominates the past and present of the US but is also most like to reach into the future as well.

Moreover, it is noticeable that both Richie and Jojo are male narrators, while most of the previously discussed novels and short stories feature female protagonists/narrators and ghosts (with a few exceptions such as Anna Lee Walter's *Ghost Singer* in Part II and Olivia Howard Dunbar's "The Long Chamber" in Part I). By featuring the ghost of a young boy and situating him in dialogue with a boy narrator, the novel puts the focus on the Black male body and how the Black male body has been and still is policed in US society. It is thus fitting to close my discussion of the figure of the ghost in women's literature with Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* because the novel criticizes the silencing of voices of people of color more generally—not only women—and emphasizes how Black boys and men are affected by this history of silencing and epistemic violence against Black communities as well.

In addition to Richie's ghost, who appears almost exclusively to Jojo, Leonie repeatedly sees the ghost of her older deceased brother, Given, whenever she is high. Given's ghost just like Richie's ghost returns as a tangible reminder of racialized violence against the Black community—and against Black men specifically—that is suppressed or euphemized in the dominant discourse. Moreover, Given's ghost symbolizes what Mill's has coined as white ignorance in the novel. He is shot decades after Richie's death by a white man because he won a bet over him. The cold-blooded murder is then reframed as a "hunting accident" (Ward 50) by the white men in power, suggesting that not that much has changed since Richie's death in the Jim Crow South. By having the white men in power reframe cold-blooded murder as a regrettable accident—and getting away with it—the novel dramatizes that structural racism and white supremacy are still prevalent issues in the contemporary US South, and that they significantly shape not only people's lived experience but also communicative memory. Indeed, in line with Mills' conceptualization of white ignorance, this reframing of Given's death suggests two contesting forms of knowledge and memory: one—the dominant, white one—in which Given is the victim of a hunting accident, and one—the opposing knowledge and memory shared by his family and supposedly other members of the Black community—in which Given is recognized as the victim of a hate crime who was violently murdered.

These issues of invisibility and silencing of stories through the selective editing of memory and ultimately history become even more evident at the very end of the novel when Jojo and his sister Kayla try to get Richie's ghost to move on. In the forest behind their grandparents' house they encounter a tree:

> And the branches are full. They are full with ghosts, two or three, all the way up to the top […] They speak with their eyes: *He raped me and suffocated me until I died I put my hands up and he shot me eight times she locked me in the shed and starved me to death while listening to my babies playing with her in the yard they came in my cell in the middle of the night and they hung me they found I could read and they dragged me out to the barn and gouged my eyes before they beat me still I was sick and he said I was an abomination and Jesus say suffer little children so let her go and he put me under the water and I couldn't breathe.* (Ward 282-83)

First, it is important to notice the symbolism of the tree as another visual reminder of the Jim Crow South and the violence it inflicted on the ghosts that hang in its branches. Secondly, it is noteworthy how visibility and audibility merge in this paragraph as the ghosts "speak with their eyes." Like the ghosts in McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes*, they demand to be both seen and heard. Yet, their position in the tree also suggests that being seen does not necessarily provide visibility—just as being listened to, does not necessarily mean one is being heard. They want their stories—and particularly the violence they faced—to be told, but all of their stories merge into one as indicated by the lack of punctuation as well as the print in italics.

In the end, it is infant Kayla, Jojo's baby sister, who takes her place as a female singer amid her predecessors L and Willa Mae as she starts to sing the stories of the dead. Her song symbolizes memory and recognition and serves as a burial ritual to finally bury those that did not receive a proper burial because of their violent deaths. Like Beccah performs a burial ritual for her deceased mother in *Comfort Woman*, Kayla performs a burial ceremony for the dead who lived before her. She "begins to sing, a song of mismatched, half-garbled words" (Ward 284). As Jojo carries her back to the house, "Kayla hums over [his] shoulder, says 'Shhh' like [he is] the baby and she is the big brother, says 'Shhh' like she remembers the sound of the water in Leonie's womb, the sound of all water, and now she sings it" (285). Her song is answered by the ghosts in the novel's final word "*Home*" (285), which indicates that in being remembered they finally find peace and can move on. Noticeably, Kayla is the youngest character in the entire novel. Her age dramatizes the need for the youngest generation to be able to see themselves as part of their people's history instead of separate and alienated to it (as is

Leonie, for example).[57] Consequently, Tribbett argues that Kayla and Jojo "represent a new kind of hope for survival of the communal tradition of song" (41).

The theme of song is also evoked in a conversation Jojo has with Richie's ghost who is still unable to move on even though he "thought once [he] knew [how he died], [he] could. Cross the waters. Be home. […] Maybe, [he] could, Become. The song" (Ward 281). However, he realizes that "There's so many, […] So many of us, […] Hitting. The wrong keys. Wandering against. The song" (282). Tribbett interprets "the song" as "the song of life "that is sung as part of the oral and communal tradition that Mam and Pop, the grandparents, represent (40). Considering the musical tradition in African American culture and "the Old-World tradition of singing the lives of the people" that Jimoh points out (1), Richie's reference to "the song" refers to the stories and histories of all the people that became victims of the oppressive system—first by dying at its hands and secondly by being erased from its history in the aftermath. The violence is thus twofold: physical death and epistemic erasure of names and stories from historical records. It is because of this epistemic violence of silencing their voices and stories and erasing their faces from history, that the ghosts return to the lynching tree in Jojo's backyard, demanding their stories to be finally heard.

The importance of hearing and telling one's own story is also reflected in Richie's story throughout the novel. The first time, the reader and Jojo encounter Richie's ghost is at Parchman, the place of his imprisonment and a symbol of the continuation from chattel slavery to Jim Crow and, in the context of the narrative present, also the New Jim Crow of mass incarceration.[58] Richie asks himself:

> How could I know that after I died, Parchman would pull me from the sky? How could I imagine Parchman would pull me to it and refuse to let go? And how could I conceive that Parchman was past, present, and future all at once? That the history and sentiment that carved the place out of the wilderness would show me that time is a vast ocean, and that everything is happening at once? (Ward 186)

Like the ghosts in stories like Davis' "The Room on the Roof," or Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper," Richie is forced to haunt the space of his death—unable to communicate his own story and dependent on others to tell it for him. Instead of moving on, his ghost is pulled back down and further subjected to a racist and oppressive system. Rather than being set free in death, he is still incarcerated in the same prison even after he died, a prison that unlike any other stands

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[57] On Leonie's alienation from her parents' culture and her internalized racism, see Swartzfager 327-29.
[58] On the New Jim Crow see Alexander.

for the continuation of slavery into the Jim Crow era, as pointed out by Greg Chase (208). What is more, the prison is personified in its active attempt to "pull [him] from the sky" and in its refusal to let him go. It is as if through Parchman—the symbol of institutional racism—structural racism itself becomes an agenda, enacting its power by pulling Richie back in and refusing to let go of this power. Structural racism, then, in the logic of the novel, is not something that happens passively, but it is active, powerful, and deadly in more ways than one—as represented by the multiple violent deaths caused by racism in the novel.[59]

Moreover, by realizing that Parchman is "past, present, and future all at once" and "that everything is happening at once," Richie establishes a trajectory of structural and institutional racism that can be drawn from slavery to Jim Crow to what Michelle Alexander has famously termed as "the New Jim Crow," the contemporary system of mass incarceration that disproportionately targets Black men. According to Alexander, "[m]ore black men are imprisoned today than at any other moment in [US] history" (175). She points out that "Young black men today may be just as likely to suffer discrimination in employment, housing, public benefits, and jury service as a black man in the Jim Crow era[…]" (175-76). Similarly, Yesmina Khedhir argues that this disruption of time "seems to argue that history for African-Americans remains an unfinished process and that the legacy of slavery continues to define their lives to the present day" (19). In fact, Nicole Dib posits that the story of Jojo's great-great-grandmother's Middle Passage, which is embedded in River's story about his time in Parchman, "links the legacy of the Atlantic slave trade with the neoslavery of the prison system" (136). The historical trajectory of racism in the US, the novel portrays, thus reaches from the beginning of slavery all the way into the presence.

What is more, Richie suggests that by everything happening simultaneously nothing has really changed at all in the past two hundred years. Indeed, while none of the characters have experienced slavery, all three timelines that Richie calls "past, present, and future" (Ward 186) are negotiated in the novel. The past refers to Richie's and River's time in Parchman, while the future refers to Jojo's generation that is still target of structural racism as can be seen in a scene on the way back from prison when they are stopped by a police officer because of racial profiling. Dib, for example, sees this scene when they are stopped on the road by a police officer

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[59] It is noticeable that despite the novel's argument about structural racism it is the white father who is incarcerated. According to Chase, the five years Michael is sentenced to—and the three years, two months he is released after—mirror the sentence a white drunk driver received after killing Ward's brother. In this context, Michael's sentence and length of incarceration should be considered "as representative of larger inequities in the apportionment of jail time" (211). Therefore, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* also criticizes white privilege in the judicial system.

as an intervention "in contemporary discourse of 'driving while black' a phrase that refers to black drivers who get pulled over for simply 'being black' and the violence to which they are susceptible because of this profiling" (139). Importantly, Richie's presence in the car when the police officer points a gun at Jojo immediately aligns contemporary forms of police brutality to the Jim Crow past and thus again highlights the continuity of structural racism.

In addition to dramatizing these ongoing structures of discrimination and oppression, Richie's ghost serves as a symbol of the inhumanity of these structures of discrimination and oppression. In this, he is not unlike Toni Morrison's famous ghost Beloved. Just as Beloved comes back to haunt her mother Sethe, who has killed her as an infant to save her from the inhumanity of slavery, Richie eventually seeks out River, who killed him to save him from a lynching mob. Both Sethe and River are forced by the system to become murderers to protect and save those they love, and they are both haunted by the guilt that followed this extreme action. Richie and Beloved can therefore both be read as personifications of this guilt, who return as haunting figures with the demand to learn details about their own deaths. Just as Beloved forces Sethe to remember and confront her own guilt, it is only in the presence of Richie that River finally talks about how he "took the shank [he] kept in [his] boot and […] punched it one time into his [Richie's] neck. In the big vein on his right side. Held him till the blood stopped spurting. [Richie] looking at [him], mouth open. A child. Tears and snot all over his face. Shocked and scared, until he was still" (Ward 255). What is more, to not be punished himself, River must let the dogs mutilate Richie's corpse so that the lynch mob does not learn that he was the one who killed him.

Tellingly, it is only in Richie's presence that River finally reveals these details of his story in Parchman. In the beginning of the novel, Jojo asks River to tell him a story about him and his brother, Jojo's uncle, Stag. When River asks him "About what?" (Ward 16), Jojo answers "Parchman"—even though he admits that he has already heard it before (17). This suggests that it is not the first time that River tells the story of his imprisonment in Parchman to Jojo. However, he has never told anyone about his involvement in Richie's death. In fact, the way he cries into Jojo's arms in the end (257) suggest that it is the first time he tells this part of the story. Whereas the other parts of his story in Parchman have already entered communicative memory—as indicated by the printing in italics throughout the novel and the fact that Jojo is able to recall parts of the story during his time on the road—the end of the story is not part of communicative memory, yet, but only becomes so in the moment as River speaks it out in Richie's presence. This is also indicated by the fact that it is not printed in italics anymore but marked as regular speech with quotation marks. Like L or Beloved, then, Richie's ghost creates

a narrative safe space to speak about the unspeakable, and like L or Beloved he insists on remembering those aspects of the past that have been silenced and forgotten. Therefore, even though Richie does not find the same peace as Heed and Christine after the truth is finally out, he nevertheless offers a space of resistance in which River can finally find the words to talk about what he was forced to do.

Presumably, Richie is affected differently by the truth of his death than previously discussed ghosts because it was River who killed him. Whereas the Mirabal sisters are violated by a dictator, Soon Hyo by Japanese soldiers, Christine and Heed by the patriarch Cosey, Richie—as well as Beloved—is killed by the one person he trusted the most. In fact, River became a sort of father figure to Richie during their time in Parchman. Similarly, Tribbett argues that "knowing the facts of his own demise does not bring Richie's ghost peace […] because the act of mercy River undertook was corrupted by the larger dominating violence of the system in which he was trapped: he also had to kill Richie and make it look like the hounds had done it" (38). Both Richie and Beloved become victims of an oppressive system. And so just like Beloved, Richie returns to make sure his story is told.

One central function of ghost narrators in contemporary ghost novels is therefore the demand for being remembered, or rather the demand for remembering all versions and stories of the past rather than allowing only one dominant narrative to take hold. More precisely, they ask their readership to remember acts of racialized and sexualized violence, that the dominant discourse works to silence. Ghost narrators are used to create a narrative space for new and divergent epistemological frameworks to merge, such as song and music. In remembering these stories as part of national history the dead receive a literary burial that sets them free. The Mirabal sisters and Soon Hyo return as ghostly narrators to tell their own stories and thus contest patriarchal narratives about accidents and 'comfort camps.' L speaks up as a ghostly narrator to create a literary safe space to talk about child abuse and molestation. Similarly, Willa Mae's blues songs offer a form of spiritual support and contextualization of suffering for her surviving family and friends. And finally, Richie demands to receive a burial in song and for present-day generations to remember his story.

8. Conclusion

Over thirty years ago already, Catherine Lundie remarked that "hundreds of stories testify to the fact that there is a link between feminism and American women's supernatural fiction" ("One" 271). While Lundie's observation particularly concerns ghost stories from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, the statement certainly also applies to contemporary ghost novels. Indeed, as I have shown in the second part of this study, ghosts continue to be a literary tool to criticize various forms of violence against women in (postcolonial) patriarchal societies. What is more, the trope of the ghost is used by both nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century stories as well as contemporary novels to criticize epistemic injustice and epistemic violence as well as the silencing of women's voices and the invisibility of women's experiences in patriarchal societies. In addition, contemporary literary ghosts are employed for anti-racist and decolonial efforts. Rather than focusing solely on the silencing and marginalization of women in contemporary society, ghost novels by women of color interrogate structural racism and structures of coloniality, "the continuity of colonial forms of domination after the end of colonial administrations, produced by colonial cultures and structures in the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-system" (Grosfoguel 219). The subversiveness of the ghost trope thus lies in its potential to challenge hegemonic structures of power and knowledge and create a literary counter discourse, which provides a voice to those members of society who are marginalized, silenced, and invisible—in other words 'ghosted.'

In the ghost stories and novels in this study, silencing often takes the form of physical violence. In fact, most of the ghosts in these stories are dead because they have been killed or otherwise violated by their husbands, fathers, or other patriarchal authority figures to either keep them quiet or to further subjugate them to patriarchal control. The violence is consequently always also directed at the voices of the—mostly female—ghosts, albeit not so much their physical voice rather than their ability to communicate their experience properly and make themselves heard in the dominant discourse. What is more, ghosts are used to criticize that women are often not believed in patriarchal society because they are considered to be hysterical or too imaginative. Stories like Phelps' "The Day of my Death," Wynne's "The Little Room," Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" or Wharton's "Kerfol" dramatize the ways in which women are denied the power to produce knowledge even about their own experiences. They dramatize how women are repeatedly subjected to testimonial injustice because patriarchal authority figures do not believe them based on misogynist prejudices against them.

In addition, many of these stories negotiate hermeneutical injustice particularly regarding domestic abuse. The ghosts then come to represent the invisibility and even denial of the existence of domestic abuse in patriarchal society. Moreover, just as the ghosts are silent and unable to talk about their experience of abuse, so are the living women mirroring them.

Similarly, contemporary ghost novels dramatize epistemic violence and testimonial and hermeneutical injustice particularly against women and people of color. Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, or Walter's *Ghost Singer*, for example, employ similar themes of medicalization and disregard of women's experiences of haunting like nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories do. Keller's *Comfort Woman*, on the other hand, emphasizes how women who suffer from sexual abuse are often subjected to testimonial injustice by not being believed by patriarchal authority figures or by being blamed for their own rape. In addition, hermeneutical injustice is negotiated in various forms in novels like *Ghost Singer*, *Comfort Woman*, or Morrison's *Love*. Finally, while nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories mostly challenged male ignorance about the female experience in patriarchal society, contemporary ghost novels additionally criticize structures of white ignorance and privilege—most importantly in their connection to historiography. More precisely, novels like McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* or Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* challenge the assumption that structural racism is a phenomenon of the past, and, instead, highlight a trajectory of racial discrimination and oppression from slavery over the Jim Crow South to today.

What is noticeable when tracing the trope of the ghost through almost two centuries of women's literature is that these ghosts' responses to the violence against their bodies and voices become increasingly more active and outspoken. In fact, while most of the ghosts in mid-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories remain passive and voiceless, contemporary ghosts more often than not have agency and either scream at or even intelligibly talk with living characters. Stories like Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and "The Giant Wisteria," Davis' "The Room on the Roof," or Stowe's "The Ghost in the Cap'n Brown House" feature mostly quiet and passive ghosts pacing the spaces of their death and relying on others to tell or discover their stories. Even the exceptions to the rule like the ghost dogs in Wharton's "Kerfol" or the woman in the grey dress in Bacon's "The Gospel" only have agency because they are either non-human and thus less subjected to patriarchal control or because they submit to patriarchal expectations and use their ghostly voice to indoctrinate living characters to patriarchal ideology.

In contrast, contemporary ghosts usually possess more agency and are much louder than their forebears—even if they are in no way less violated. Some of them, like Celine in Wurth's *White Horse*, or Agnes in Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic*, use their voices to scream and formulate a few words to hint at their murderers. Others, particularly the ghost narrators in Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Keller's *Comfort Woman*, Morrison's *Love*, Park's *Getting Mother's Body*, and Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* claim the right to tell their own story and enter into elaborate dialogues with the living. What these ghosts across the centuries have in common is their violent death. All of them died at the hands of patriarchal or colonial violence. However, while nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghosts were often unable to talk about their experience, contemporary ghosts increasingly resist that silencing and return from the dead to demand retribution. They thus resist patriarchal and colonial processes of silencing—something their nineteenth-century predecessors were often unable to do.

What is more, while nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century ghost stories like Wharton's "The Fulness of Life" or Bacon's "The Gospel" dramatize the persistence of patriarchal ideology to reach even beyond death, contemporary ghost novels increasingly challenge this persistence. In fact, most short stories in the first part of this study end with a reestablishment of the patriarchal order: in Wynne's "The Little Room" or Davis's "The Room on the Roof" the space for female self-fulfillment cannot exist in patriarchal power structures and either turns into a china closet or burns to the ground. Similarly, the protagonist in "The Fulness of Life" decides to wait for her husband rather than finding her own happiness in the afterlife. In contrast, most novels in the second part of this study end with a deconstruction of hegemonic power structures: In a mirror image to the boarding house in Davis's "The Room on the Roof," High Place in Moreno-Garcia's *Mexican Gothic* is burned to the ground. However, this time it is the patriarchal space that is destroyed rather than the space of female self-fulfillment. Similarly, Morrison's *Love* ends with a deconstruction of patriarchal discourse through the emergences of a new narrative voice and other novels like Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Keller's *Comfort Woman*, Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, or McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* all successfully challenge hegemonic power structures by challenging hegemonic historiography.

Consequently, women's ghost stories constitute a subversive literary counter-discourse to patriarchal ideology. Indeed, it is the literary trope of the ghost itself that carries subversive potential. This becomes particularly obvious when considering that even though several stories from the first part of this study eventually reestablish patriarchal power structures like Wharton's "Kerfol," Dunbar's "The Long Chamber," or Davis's "The Room on the Roof," they

nevertheless dramatize the inescapable constraints patriarchal society put on women at the time and the inability to escape from them—whether in life or in death. This becomes particularly obvious in stories like Bacon's "The Gospel" that initially advocate for a very conservative gender ideology and at first glance reinforce patriarchal power structures. When read in the larger context of the ghost story genre, however, the ghost is no longer an advocate for patriarchal ideology, but becomes a subversive force that symbolizes women's complete subjugation to patriarchal power structures even beyond death.

Finally, stories like Wharton's "Kerfol," Davis's "The Room on the Roof," or Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" and "The Giant Wistaria" already raise the issue of historicity that then becomes central in contemporary ghost novels. In fact, many of the stories from the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century use the literary trope of the ghost to place women's oppression and victimization in a historical context. Ghosts like the grey woman in "The Room on the Roof," the woman behind the wallpaper, or the young woman in "The Giant Wistaria" serve as reminders of past victimizations. "Kerfol" most explicitly negotiates historicity through its narrative structure by having the male narrator transcribe the historical trial records of Anne de Cornault's murder trial. The text thereby dramatizes the historical continuity of paternalism governing women's lives, as Ohler notes, (49) because he subjects her to the same patterns of silencing and testimonial injustice she has already experienced during her lifetime.

Historicity and particularly the critique of Western historiography are even more important in contemporary ghost novels. Many of the ghosts in contemporary novels return to tell their own stories. They thereby not only resist processes of silencing but also challenge hegemonic historiography. Soon Hyo in Keller's *Comfort Woman*, for example, challenges the dominant narrative of 'comfort women' by speaking about the atrocities of sexual slavery under Japanese colonialism. What is more, Soon Hyo's ghost can be seen as a fictional re-imagination of Kim Hak-soon, who was the first to testify publicly about her experiences in Japanese 'comfort camps' in 1991.[60] Consequently, Soon Hyo should be seen as a fictional part of the counter-discourse to Japanese hegemonic historiography that was increasingly challenged in the 1990s through public testimonies of survivors as well as novels like *Comfort Woman*. Similarly, the ghosts of former enslaved people in McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* or Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* return from the dead to reclaim their voices and tell stories that

[60] See, for example, The Research Team of the War und Women's Human Rights Center ("Preface" xix).

have been white-washed or completely silenced by hegemonic historiography. In *When the Reckoning Comes*, for example, the ghosts bring back the violence of slavery to criticize the re-purposing of a former plantation as lush holiday resort. They thereby situate contemporary forms of racism into a historical trajectory with slavery and the Jim Crow South.

Consequently, ghost novels from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century should be seen in a dialogue with contemporary movements for social justice. The literary trope of the ghost is used to demand justice for those to whom it was previously denied. Walter's *Ghost Singer*, for example, must be situated in the Indigenous struggle for sovereignty and acknowledgement of Indigenous rights—particularly the protection of Indigenous human remains. Similarly, Keller's *Comfort Woman* must be seen in the context of the Redress Movement that started in the 1990s and which demanded justice for the numerous women who were subjected to sexual slavery under Japanese colonialism.[61] Finally, McQueen's *When the Reckoning Comes* and Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing* can be read as fictional texts within the Black Lives Matter discourse. They both negotiate white ignorance about the persistence of structural racism in contemporary society and its historical roots in slavery and Jim Crow. In addition, they imagine the voices of those that were violently silenced and written out of history. They thus challenge hegemonic historiography, and shift the focus of history and memory from the oppressors to the oppressed.

Erdrich's *The Sentence* is particularly interesting because it explicitly situates itself in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement by negotiating the murder of George Floyd and the following riots in Minneapolis in its plot. During a time when everything is literally shut down and people are isolated from each other, the past comes back in the form of a white wannabe ghost to haunt the presence. The novel thereby ties contemporary forms of racism that result in the violent murder of George Floyd in May 2020 not only to slavery but also to Indigenous dispossession and displacement. *The Sentence* thus establishes a common ground of victimization of Black and Indigenous peoples by white colonizers and—in contrast to the isolation required due to the Covid-19 pandemic—asks both groups to come together in their fight against structures of coloniality and white supremacy. The literary trope of the ghost, then, is deeply connected to feminist and anti-racist objectives, and it is used throughout US women's literary history to challenge prevailing power structures of patriarchy and white supremacy.

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[61] On the Redress Movement see, for example, Min et al.

Because the aim of this study was to investigate the subversive potential of the ghost trope in US American women's fiction, and how it is used to criticize issues of epistemic injustice, epistemic violence, silencing, invisibility, and ignorance, I only briefly situated the texts in their respective historical and cultural contexts. A more detailed examination of the ghost trope in specific cultural and historical contexts requires further inquiry. Indeed, it would be interesting to know more about the specific functions of the ghost trope in, for example, African American or Latinx literatures. In addition, this study emphasized the continuities in US American women's fiction across historical and ethnic boundaries. However, there are certainly also important discontinuities that warrant further investigation.

Finally, since my focus in this study was exclusively on US American writers, the questions arise whether this subversiveness of the ghost trope is specific to the North American context or whether it can also be found in other contexts as well; whether it is also used to criticize the marginalization of other identity categories than race and gender; and what kind of genres use the subversive trope of the ghost to negotiate issues of silencing and invisibility. Without attempting to answer these questions unequivocally, a quick glance at Ambelin and Ezekiel Kwaymullina's young adult (YA) Bildungsroman[62] *The Things She's Seen* (2018) from Australia suggests that this subversiveness of the ghost trope is at least appliable to other anglophone cultures, as well, and that it is, indeed, also used to negotiate the marginalization of Aboriginal teenage girls. It also emphasizes once again that the literary trope of the ghost continues to cross generic boundaries and can also be found in the Bildungsroman and YA fiction.

Importantly, Australia shares some historical similarities with the US through its own history of British colonialism and Indigenous dispossession, which also becomes evident in the novel. In the narrative, the ghost of a teenage girl, Beth, returns from the dead to support her grieving father, a detective. Throughout the novel, he is the only living person who can see and talk to her. Beth's first-person narrative is soon joined by the first-person account of the sole witness in her father's new murder case, Catching, who primarily speaks in verse form. As it turns out in the end, Catching can walk between the realms of the dead and the living and is thus neither fully alive nor fully dead. It is in this dialogue of these two women's narratives that Beth's father finally uncovers how his new case connects to the systematical kidnapping, raping, and killing of Aboriginal girls and women in the small town he was sent to.

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[62] On the Bildungsroman in children's and YA literature, see McCulloch.

The connection between ghost novel and Bildungsroman is not a surprising one. The Bildungsroman and the ghost novel seem to be inextricably intertwined because, according to Marc Redfield, "the specter of the Bildungsroman haunts literary criticism" (vii). This spectrality of the Bildungsroman and its haunting qualities links it directly to the ghost novel. Indeed, Redfield's entire study of the Bildungsroman is filled with rhetorical references to the ghost novel: he analyzes "The Phantom *Bildungsroman*" (38) as well as "Ghostly *Bildung*" (63), thereby strengthening the link between Bildungsroman and ghost novel even further. As a phantom, the Bildungsroman presents the difficulty to determine "whether this genre exists to be described in the first place" (40). The Bildungsroman as a literary genre thus shares a certain elusiveness and invisibility with the literary ghosts in this study. This connection between ghost novel and Bildungsroman invites further inquiry by future scholarship.

In *The Things She's Seen*, the ghost novel is used to put a twist on the traditional genre of the Bildungsroman. Instead of "facing the challenges to grow up" (Graham 1), Beth faces the challenges to move on. The frame of the ghost novel thus depicts that both Beth's and Catchings maturation processes are impossible. This "broken, or even impossible, maturation process" is one of the departures the post-colonial Bildungsroman makes from the classical Bildungsroman (Hoagland 219). According to Ericka A. Hoagland, "the Bildungsroman has been appropriated and adapted by postcolonial writers to engage in socio-political and ethical critiques of the colonial legacy and its postcolonial aftermaths" (218). One of the central functions of the post-colonial Bildungsroman is "the ongoing remediation of colonialism's traumatic legacy throughout the self-maturation process. Closure, at least in the way we would understand it in the European Bildungsroman, is neither forthcoming nor assured" (219). It is precisely this closure that is sought by all characters in the novel: Beth seeks closure to move on in her death, her father also seeks closure for her death to move on with his life, and, maybe most importantly, Catching seeks closure for the crimes she was subjected to—crimes that speak directly to the colonial legacy in Australia. This colonial legacy negotiated in *The Things She's Seen* is the marginalization and victimization of Aboriginal girls and their invisibility in white institutions.

Like the other stories and novels in this study, *The Things She's Seen* negotiates violence against women and girls—specifically Aboriginal women and girls. Importantly, it is always in Beth's ghostly presence that Catching relates her own story of being kidnapped and abused. Beth thus fulfills a similar function as, for example, Richie's ghost in *Sing, Unburied, Sing* or L in *Love*: she creates a narrative space for the unspeakable to be spoken out loud—or at least circumscribed. Indeed, due to the genre of the Young Adult novel, Catching never explicitly

names the violence she was subjected to. Rather, she speaks in metaphors and does not once mention rape or sexual abuse. Her narrative is a story about "Fetchers" (41), who kidnap Catching and the other girls, and "the Feed" (103), who feeds on Catching's colors. Every part of her body he touches, turns gray (109). Listening to her fantastical story, it is up to Beth's father to conclude that the metaphorical monsters of fetchers and the feed are really human beings who kidnap and rape. It is because of Beth's haunting presence that her dad is open-minded enough to "believe in monsters and[…] other-places" (24). This open-mindedness enables him to understand Catching's story and draw the correct conclusions.

Through Catching's story, the novel criticizes the lack of protection offered to Aboriginal girls and women by white institutions—similar to other novels in this study. Indeed, it is only after white characters are found dead that a proper police investigation is conducted, and Beth's father arrives in town. In addition, the novel implies that it is only because of his daughter, Beth, whose mother was also Aboriginal, that the detective listens to and believes Catching's story, and thus eventually uncovers the truth. What is more, while Catching openly talks about her experience of abuse, she does not relate her story in order to receive justice. In fact, by the time she tells her story all major predators have already been killed by Crow, the first girl they kidnapped years before the narrative starts, who has since died and turned into a bird. Retribution is thus not delivered by the patriarchal authority figures of the police, but rather by the violated girls themselves. It is then later covered up and thereby legitimized by Beth's father after he listened to their story. Finally, as it turns out, Crow's disappearance was never properly investigated by the police because she was an Aboriginal girl.

Like the other stories and novels in this study, *The Things She's Seen* again highlights the importance of being heard. When Beth asks Catching why she is telling her story if she does not want the help of her father, Catching replies: "To be heard" (96). Indeed, Catching emphasizes the importance that she is heard, meaning believed, when she tells the story about her abuse, thereby implying that she is afraid of testimonial injustice and not being heard. In contrast to other ghost novels, then, this young adult version is much more optimistic and hopeful because Chatching is never once disregarded or silenced by Beth's father. Even though she only talks in verse form and fantastical metaphors, she is taken seriously and believed by the patriarchal authority figure. The novel thereby teaches its young readers not only the importance of listening, but also the importance of speaking up and talking about their experience of abuse without fear.

Finally, as other novels in this study, *The Things She's Seen* emphasizes the importance of listening to Aboriginal girls and women's voices. It emphasizes the structural racism in white

institutions that often fail or refuse to investigate and deliver justice to Aboriginal women's disappearances and experiences of violence. The fact that the novel is framed as a ghost story through both Beth's ghostly narrative as well as Catching's liminal status between death and life, dramatizes the marginalization of Aboriginal girls and women. It is only because his own proximity to this marginalized community that Beth's father can see Catching in the first place and thus also listen to her. Indeed, the only other police officer who still investigates Crow's disappearance years after it has happened, is her white childhood friend, Allie, who also assists Beth's father in his investigation. Consequently, the novel suggests that for Aboriginal girls and women to be heard, white patriarchal society must actively engage with them and end their marginalization.

The application of the ghost story genre to the Bildungsroman and to a young adult readership in *The Things She's Seen* points towards the adaptability of the ghost trope to provide a voice to all marginalized peoples. Using the ghost trope in a YA novel suggests that the issues of epistemic violence and injustice not only have gendered and racial dimensions, but, importantly, also an age dimension. In addition, this merging of a YA Bildungsroman with the ghost novel has some practical implications, also: in contrast to other ethnic novels that I discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, *The Things She's Seen* features less explicit violence and focuses more on Beth's challenge to move on. This is certainly due to the targeted audience of teenagers rather than adults. The violence is toned down and instead the focus is more on Beth's inner development, dramatized in her journey to move on after her death. Her journey is from denial to acceptance—a journey that mirrors the traditional "journey from youth to majority" of the classical Bildungsroman (Graham 1). This journey to move on can be read in two different ways: First, it can be read to symbolize the impossibility of Aboriginal girls' maturation in an oppressive society because there is nothing but death waiting for Beth. Secondly, and this reading is much more hopeful, it can be read to symbolize the process to move on from a traumatic and violent, even deadly, past—Beth died in a car accident with her mother. In the context of British colonialism in Australia this traumatic past represents Indigenous dispossession, forced assimilation, and the victimization of Indigenous girls and women that becomes obvious in Catchings story. In urging Beth to move on from her violent past the novel offers the nation the possibility to move on from its own violent past towards a healing future.

Ultimately, then, the ghost story genre is deeply political and engages with a multitude of societal issues that cross time and space. Ghosts are used as a subversive trope to criticize the marginalization of women in nineteenth-century society as well as the marginalization of people of color in contemporary societies. As suggested by the final example of the ghost novel

as a Bildungsroman, ghosts are also used to serve an educational function. Particularly this educational function would need to be further studied by future scholarship. What is more, the ghost trope can be found across a wide spectrum of literary female voices: from white middle-class women in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to African American, Indigenous, Mexican Canadian, Cuban American, or Korean American voices from the second half of the twentieth century until today. Then and now, the ghost trope carries political implications and is used to open a literary counter-discourse to hegemonic, white, patriarchal discourse. Most prominently, it is used by women from different historical and ethnic backgrounds to criticize the silencing of marginalized voices in hegemonic society and various forms of violence against members of marginalized communities—be it epistemic, sexual, physical, or otherwise. As I have shown in this study, the ghost trope is an increasingly relevant literary trope to voice critique of hegemonic power structures and systems of knowledge production. The ghosts of the past still haunt the presence—they always have, and they probably always will.

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