The Wounds of History and the Strategies for Survival in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*

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Abstract: This article revisits Korean American author Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's experimental and quasi-autobiographical "novel," *Dictée.* Cha's work has been discussed primarily from the point of view of American ethnic studies by focusing on the issues of immigration, assimilation, race, gender, and ethnicity. Some of the readers of Cha's texts also highlight the author's proclivity for avant-gardist and postmodernist experimentations. This article deploys the lenses of critical theory (Agamben), deconstruction (Derrida and Nancy), and postcolonial theory (Bhabha and Spivak) to argue that the subject emerging from Cha's works occupies the spaces of exception, spectrality, and subalternity.

Keywords: Dictée, exception, subaltern, spectrality, survival

Figures of Dictation

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951-1982) was a Korean American writer and filmmaker. She was born in South Korea during the Korean War, and she accompanied her parents to America when they immigrated in 1962. She attended school in Korea, France, and the United States. She earned a BA in Comparative Literature and an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley. Cha pursued Film Studies in Paris, and upon her return from France, she went on to perform and produce a number of films. In 1979, she traveled to her native South Korea, an experience that would haunt her experimental work, *Dictée* (1982). Only a few days after the publication of this great work of art, Cha was raped and murdered in New York on November 5, 1982. Remembered as "a patron saint" of Korean American Literature (Kwon), Cha's life and work continue to inspire Asian American artists and scholars. In *Exilee and Temps Morts* (1980), Cha calls her readers "distant relatives," and expresses her wish that though not visible to each other, she can safely assume that the audience "can hear me/I can only hope that you hear me" (18-19). Her work, especially *Dictée,* continues to resonate in times of war, pandemics, and the rise of authoritarianism across the globe.

Dictée is a collage of multiple narratives, voices, genres, and languages. It is an intertextual mosaic of uncaptioned photographs and images, multiple characters from history, myth, and religion, poems echoing Baudelaire and Mallarmé, newspaper clippings, personal letters, political documents, calligraphy, and lessons in language and translation. Its experimental tendencies towards anti-developmental and seemingly incoherent narratives are enough to make the readers feel "put off by the book" (Kim 3). Elaine H. Kim attributes this remote familiarity of the text to Cha's position in the interstitial outlaw spaces between languages, cultures, histories, and nations (23), an outcome of *Dictée*'s creation and celebration of the "third space" (8). Kang corroborates this poetics of the exilic space by arguing that *Dictée*'s slipperiness and its inexhaustible fragmentariness open up provocative and meaningful readings (Kang 75), thereby changing the silenced dictée into a "liberatory voice." Lisa Lowe goes a step further to argue that *Dictée* upsets the pattern of dictation by performing an

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aesthetic of infidelity (130). According to Wong, *Dictée* refuses links to American Bildung and frustrates the "organicist teleology" of the Western aesthetics built upon the "site of reconciliation and resolution" (47).

While building upon these insightful readings, this essay tries to problematize the concept of the "third space" and its "liberatory voices" in order to flesh out the stakes involved in being the inhabitant of "outlaw spaces." *Dictée* as the "writing of disaster" enumerates the perils, rather than the exhilaration, of living in the exilic space, which is no less than what Agamben would call a sphere of sovereign ban or exception where the nomic and the anomic are indistinguishable and a person turns into a homo sacer. While arguing that the dictée of the text is a homo sacer, this essay also traces the itinerary of modern "indistinguishable" subjects with their overlapping identities and conflicting histories, and it argues that the moment of colonial encounter resembles what Agamben calls "the dislocating localization" (175).

Agamben's analysis of the sphere of exception of course does not mention some of the events and instances evoked by Cha, for instance, the Japanese invasion of Korea and the imposition of a series of new laws, new language, new dresses, and new names to ban everything that is Korean. *Dictée* seems to portray the sphere of exception where one neither belongs to the patriarchal pre-colonial Korea, nor to the colonial regimes of drafting and disciplining, nor even to the post-colonial (uniformed) military rules, let alone to the First World, where the dictée is merely someone "from afar." This ban or abandonment in *Dictée* is more effective and immediate than Kafka's open door of the law, for it censors and dismisses (Cha, *Dictée* 58).

If Agamben in his analyses demonstrates how law passes periodically and continually into the extra-legal, *Dictée* weaves the personal genealogy of utter rootlessness and breaks with national history. It also combines the trope of dictation, apprenticeship, and education to articulate how learning prefigures various forms of dictations at work repeatedly throughout history. The book shows how inversely the figures of the ban can be turned into a real source of dictation towards unlearning the dictations of history and the possible healing of history's wounds. Three theoretical strands are evoked here: Kant's definition of Enlightenment as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage" (Kant 263); Derrida's notion of heterodidactics in *Specters of Marx*, a kind of learning from the borders of life and death, which he seems to suggest is impossible to do by anyone else than an immigrant (Derrida, *Specters* xviii), for the latter has the benefit of a certain spirit of spectrality or de-ontologized existence: a displaced, stateless and nomadic ghostliness; and the recurring guidelines for global justice in Spivak - learning from below or the apprenticeship to the muted others of history. That is to say, Cha's use of dictée is nuanced and ambivalent inasmuch as she engages the trope to elucidate and expose the patterns of dictation, control, and hegemony in all of their "metaphysical subtleties" along with thwarting the lessons learned under duress. Cha also opens the possibility of lending a voice to, learning from, and "figuring" the repressed others of history. Cha's narratives do not necessarily evoke an act of displacing a "being" that dictates, for we need to raise the question of whether the victims of history (of colonial regimes and patriarchy) are attributed to any "being" in the first place. The "impossible" learning from the aphasic is testimony rather than teaching or training. It is to attend and bear witness to the ravages of history that erased the survivors' proper names, tongues, and bodies into ghostly anonymity.

Jean-Luc Nancy opens *The Inoperative Community* with the evocation of this "gravest and most painful testimony": the testimony of the dissolution and the dislocation of community (Nancy 1). Not only that *Dictée* imagines and performs what Nancy calls an "inoperative community," based on communication without communion, an event without the work, a community yet to come; but also, that, like Nancy's community, *Dictée* is haunted by loss and death. In the same way, as Nancy goes beyond the myths of immanence, sociality, or intersubjectivity and "the phantasms of metaphysics" with his singular logic of "being- together or being-with, and of the crystallization of the community around the death of its members" (14), *Dictée* constellates issues across cultures, nations,

and languages by bringing, for instance, Greek muses and Korean history of resistance together. My reading of *Dictée*, therefore, is not only a bringing together of texts that try to say what is too traumatic for words, too heavy for memory, yet too painful to not breathe a word: "*It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater than is the pain not to say. To not say* (Cha, *Dictée* 3); but it is also a demonstration of how learning or, in Nancy's terms, "communication" takes place at the limit, the borders of nations and selves, with the singular exposure to the other, and her loss and death (Nancy 67).

If the "third, extra-legal space" *Dictée* opens is also the political space of complete severance, abandonment, and exile, dictation in it is not only a socio-political or pedagogic hegemony critiqued in postcolonial and anti-canon readings, nor just as an instrument of correction, civilizing, disciplining and silencing, but also as a strategy for articulation or a politics of ventriloquism. Dictée can be traced back to Latin *dictare*, to write down, to fore-tell something to be written down, to poetize, or *dichten*, as the Germans would say. If etymologically dictée signifies poetizing in general, it is also a "graphematology" that tries to inscribe (in this case) what is otherwise considered not worth recording. Or as the act of for-telling by the *diseuse*, it inaugurates, to recall Nancy, without trying to found any myth or community (Nancy 68).

Elaine H. Kim identifies three silences *Dictée* is trying to address and articulate: the absence of Korean history from the master narratives of the West, the absence of women from the recorded Korean history, and the absence of Korean Americans in both of them (Kim 19). Two more explorations complicate this gesture of articulation: Lisa Lowe's Althusserian reading of *Dictée* in which she discerns a subject coming into being through interpellation, or by being hailed by various state apparatuses and institutions; and Anne Anlin Cheng's Judith Butlerian response to Lowe, which identifies the echo already in the subject before any interpellation or dictation and tries to locate the "being" of *Dictée* in that very echo, reading the text as an echo chamber of racial melancholy, a fantasmatic echolalia of decontextualized and disembodied voices and displaced beings. Trinh Minh-ha's poetics of "keeping and transmitting" also falls into this category, which defines *Dictée* as "a lifetime story" handed down from "Diseuse, Thought-Woman, Spider-Woman, griotte, storytalker, fortune-teller, [and] witch" (Minh-ha 121). I am interested in the task of "bringing into figuring," (not "being,"), the exterminated (rather than the interpellated) subjects through learning and reading as resurrecting (Cha, *Dictée* 33). The learning proposed in *Dictée* is therefore a reopening of the wounds and the tombs of history, a pursuit of "figures" untimely burnt as in Spivak and the unreceived armies of ghosts and "Specters" as in Derrida; it is an attempt at restoring and reiterating the lost documents and missing narratives; a perpetual search for healing and an indefatigable move towards a lost reference, or towards a contested site of home "forever in the making" (Wong 47). In the course of following these fading but forceful figures dictating *Dictée*, I will also juxtapose them: specters v. subalterns, the exiles v. the native informants only to venture a suggestion in the end that the distinction between the specters and the subalterns gets blurred in Cha; and *Dictée* ends with a figure, who learns from all spaces but is left with none for herself, in whom there opens a wound instead, a monstrous leakage between the specter and the native informant, between mothers and daughters, and nations and generations.

Unlike Cheng's grudge about *Dictée*'s politically neutral intentions, as she thinks it is difficult to locate a political subject in it (141-2), and unlike Ling's critique of its heavy 'materiality,' by which he means its text-centricity devoid of practical or ideological work, a politics of dehistoricization and despatialization, which he calls an offspring of "Nietzschean perspectivism," or an "avant-garde celebration of difference" (Ling 9), *Dictée* belongs to "the political" inasmuch as the "bare life" of the dictée inclusively excluded in a zone of indistinction between articulation and aphasia, between citizenry and the state of being a mere human, has not only the "capacity to be killed," (Agamben 125), but *pace* Agamben, is actually and perpetually victimized by the national and international states of abandonment, capture, and exception. On the one hand, therefore, we need to rethink the

concept of sovereignty in the international context, on the other hand, we need to redefine Schmitt's friend-enemy antagonism, which for him is *the* determining characteristic of the political (Schmitt 26), not only in terms of the *demos* and people but also nations. Referring to the partition of Korea, which is largely, *a la* Cha, an act of "friendship," or more precisely an act of friendship by the "liberators," who as the invisible enemy-friend severed Korea in two, and "who have conveniently named the severance, Civil War. Cold War. Stalemate" (Cha, *Dictée* 81), Cha interrogates the concept of the political and sovereignty not only by exposing what Derrida, while discussing Schmittian analysis of two forms of diaphorá: *pólemos and stásis*, calls "a pathology of community," or "an evil naturally affecting nature" (Derrida, *Politics* 92); but also by critiquing the role that the friends and liberator nations played in the partition:

> The "enemy." one's enemy. Enemy nation. Entire nation against the other entire nation. One people exulting the suffering institutionalized on another. The enemy becomes abstract. The nation the enemy the name becomes larger than its own identity. Larger than its own measure. (Cha, *Dictée* 32)

In other words, Cha not only interrupts the Schmittian myth of friendship without any discord, the myth of one nation, one tongue, and one home without "articulation" or division; but by implicating the rest of the world in the act of deciding or proclaiming the enemy, she interrogates the concept of sovereignty as an intra-state matter between the people and the state. The unruly muse of *Dictée* alternates between high poetic eloquence and severe traumatic aphasia, while the pulse of the text throbs back and forth between the Greek muses to the Korean version of the Geisha, between ancient myths to post/colonial histories, French poetry to Taoist tables, and modern films to Chinese calligraphy. As the frontiers of a nation get drawn and redrawn, along with the fate of the dispersed and the displaced people, who find themselves "lost," sometimes groaning like the immigrant in the new world (Cha, *Dictée* 3), and other times whispering one's language under the ban like birds (48), not even like "bare humans," *Dictée "*inaugurates" the discourse of those whose "destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile" (Cha, *Dictée* 81). It poses a challenge to reading as mastery insofar as the text constantly reminds us of what we, in spite of our best efforts, miss in the very process of reconstructing it. Like the narrator in "Melpomene Tragedy," who goes to Korea only to witness her brother's cold-blooded murder once again, a reader, too, encounters a perpetual return of defeat and loss of meaning.

In Kant, the root of aphasia is traced back either to the unenlightened tyrants, who demand complete submission without arguments, or to the self-cultivated human fears and prejudices, and myths and religions that keep us into a state of cowardice and immaturity, and he believes that separation of public and private uses of reason would explode the aphasic state of humanity into a bustling age of enlightenment in which one is allowed to argue as much as one likes, but is expected to obey in return (Kant 263-264). This is exactly what is impossible in *Dictée,* not only because the arguments are literally impossible for the mimicking and groaning dictée, but also because the boundaries of the private and the public in it are eroded through the self-replicating rounds of layered dictations. The grainy picture, "with which the text opens" (Wong 46), is an inscription on the wall by a Korean drafted worker in a Japanese coal mine, which only prefigures the brutalities of the Japanese and their imposition of a new language, laws, and government on Koreans. The colonial dictation is repeated by the religious dictation, which is no less coercive with its injunctions about sins, confession, and later excommunication (Cha, *Dictée* 105). This religious dictation is further complemented in the text by marital dictation: "Still the apprenticeship of the wife to her husband" (104). And a couple of pages later: "Perhaps she learned to love him" (110). Even the "survivor's identity" of the First World is cast in the same relationship of learning and apprenticeship: "One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give an American Passport. . .. And you learn the executive branch and the legislative branch and the third. Justice. Judicial branch. It makes the difference. The rest is past: (56).

Rituals and religions in *Dictée* occasion speech. The evocation of the nine Greek muses and the catholic novena, which could be the echo of the ancient Korean text, *Nine Cloud Dream* (Stephens 197), constitute the formal principle of this otherwise amorphous text. The dictée also makes most of the memory by memorizing the lesson and by evoking *Mnemosyne*, the Mother of muses, which replicates Cha's attempts to "write" her mother with her suffering during her exile in Manchuria, all instances of counter-memory to the official version of history. She also exploits the catechism, its otherwise strict rules and regulations, to subvert it without arguments: "*I am making up the sins. For the guarantee of absolutions. . . I am making the confession. To make words. To make a speech in such tongues"* (17) (emphasis original).

Cha not only re-mythologizes enlightenment, but she also tries to work out absolution through dictation. She "grounds" Kant's tendency to exalt reason to the sky, at the same time to reduce it to mere reasoning by foregrounding the gendered body (Cooley 123) over the vacuous enlightened self. In contrast to Lee's elision of the geographically, racially and sexually marked body in the text, *Dictée* has "no textual body" . . . "no corporeal entity" (Lee 243), *Dictée* is body writ large with "words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, . . .," as runs the epigraph, and the body it evokes is a pulverized body full of festering wounds - the wounds of history: Yu Guan Soon's stabbed body, the "decapitated forms" of the Koreans during the Japanese occupation, the students' bleeding bodies that left indelible marks of blood on the stone pavement, the exile's "formless, immaterial body given to disuse or dissolution limb by limb" (Cha, *Dictée* 161), the broken tongue of the pupil at work in speaking, the map of Korea ripped into two by the DMZ, the drafted Korean's scar-like etching on the wall, the only lead towards the nameless subjects and the missing narratives of colonial history, to say nothing of the wounding and bleeding made coexistent to the act of writing, the multiple wounds of the saints and proleptically, the wounds to which the writer of this text herself succumbed to.

Learning from Above and Below

For Cha aphasia is as much a result of our affective state caused by our fears and prejudices as it is historical, physical, political, and textual, impacting our bodies including the body of the nation, the body of the texts, and the bleeding bodies of the workers and the comfort women. If Kant's enlightened individual is a split subject that harkens at once to reason as well as to the ruler, Cha's narrators conjure *Mnemosyne* to recall Yu Guan Soon, the Korean woman leader against the Japanese occupation. The narrators in *Dictée* come close to Spivak's pupils in a rural Indian night school without electricity, where they do basic letters and numbers in their spare time from the daily chores and are bound to rely more on memory than what they see on the page, hence the necessity of memorization and the possibility of "reading" something quite different from the page they are following with finger and eye (Spivak, *Thinking* 19). This deconstructive misreading or dictation gone awry is not what Homi Bhabha calls "emulate but equivocate" when he describes "colonial mimicry" that he thinks partializes colonial presence (Bhabha 88). The dictation also differs from Neil Larsen's fear of subalterns turning into agents of deconstruction to the effect of making Derrida superfluous (Larsen 48). This delicate learning with obedience but unavoidable freedom is what Spivak calls "learning from below," as opposed to teaching and correcting the subaltern from above. The dictée disturbs dictation sessions by being too faithful to what is being dictated. Not unlike Spivak's students in the night school, Cha's dictee spells out punctuation marks instead of using them as signs: "Open paragraph It was the first day period She had come from a far period" (Cha, *Dictée* 1).

To confront multiple dictations from above, Cha and Spivak let their texts be "informed," "figured," and "written and spoken" by the repressed and the silenced. They shuttle between the worlds, not for abstract data, but to listen to the muted others of history, and to neutralize the compulsion to repeat history in oblivion (Cha, *Dictée* 33). Spivak detects the subtle epistemic denial, an absence of the structure of responsibility to a subaltern's "effort to the death to speak" (Spivak, *The Spivak* 293); hence her critique of Foucault-Deleuze anti-representationalism, especially the latter's declaration

that representation no longer exists (Foucault 1977: 206). Cha's world is inundated, on the one hand, with the violence of colonial translation (Niranjana 32) examples of which are the brutal killing and drafting of the colonized into forced labor and the complete erasure of proper names and mother tongues. On the other hand, Cha's world also promotes a form of learning in which one articulates oneself in an obsessive and compulsive way, thereby exceeding the scope of what Cheng calls "the Althusserian hypnotic mirroring" of colonial dictation (Cheng 158) and paving the way for learning from, and apprenticeship to, the figures of the repressed other. Min's reading of the figure of dictation not as an originary, but as a secondary and sequential act (Min 310), Wong's detection of Cha's apocryphalizing of muses — (Euterpe changed into Elitiere) — (Wong 51), make it clear that by absenting the "tutelary present" in the text, Cha "dictates" the muses into relating the stories about the colonized, the displaced and the *dépaysée*:

> I write. I write you. Daily. From here. If I am not writing, I am thinking about writing. I am composing. Recording movements. You are here I raise the voice. Particles bits of sound and noise gathered pick up lint, dust. (56)

And a couple of pages later:

> *She says to herself if she were able to write she could continue to live. She says to herself if she could write without ceasing. To herself if by writing she could abolish real time. She would live.* (141) (emphasis original).

"Dictation" here therefore is not a remotely controlled command sent by a distant Master from the past, as in Ronell (1986: xvi), or a mechanically maintained docility or *dressage* (Foucault, *Discipline* 166), it is a maintenance against the vanishing time itself: "All else age, in time. Except. Some are without" (Cha, *Dictée* 38).

Spivak's call for the abuse of enlightenment from below (*Thinking* 3), her "field works of a wild anthropologist" (*A Critique* 620), and her refusal to work for information retrieval explain *Dictée*'s resistance to translate, represent, and smooth over the fragmentary narratives. However, Spivak's mythicizing of the Earth and soil as mother ("Conversation" 615; *Death* 94) to preserve this mother from the "foreign fertilizer" and her evocation of planetarity, paranationality, pre-capital culture, and alterity-directedness as opposed to globality makes her unwittingly champion the Caliban end of the debate in order to make common cause with the aborigines and tribes. She accuses the "woman of the diaspora" of "escaping from the failure of decolonization at home and abroad (*A Critique* 400-1). Spahr also argues that *Dictée* is not a postcolonial text because "the narrator, like Cha, escapes Colonialism thorough immigration" (125).

In contrast to Spivak's learning from below, Derrida evokes learning from specters, from beyond the *non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*, both in the sense of those who are not there, so absent, silenced, or exterminated, and also those who are not there yet, not born (Derrida, *Specters* xix). One is apprenticed only to the other, to death and "to come." No learning is possible without this "upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghost" (xviii). No speaking without first speaking to or giving voice to the ghost, hence the unavoidable "politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (xix). This is the only safeguard, Derrida warns, against the "the absolute evil," of the exorcised and the fully present life, "the one that does not know death and does not want to hear about it" (175). For Derrida, aphasia is rooted in our attempts to exorcize the spirit of the dead. Beginning from the daguerreotype image of the Egyptian ruins, with which *Dictée* opens its array of "punctive" photographs that evoke traumatic memories and unbearable loss (Barthes 72), Cha's text is haunted by specters of the casualties of colonial atrocities and the world wars, by the wandering Korean exiles in Manchuria and elsewhere, and by the ghostly woman who un-frames herself from the wifely regalia before she disappears inside the mist (Cha, *Dictée* 114).

Cha's Diseuse, who allows others, in place of herself (3), who relays, recites, and delivers herself and others, who can dispel the spell cast upon time by letting the sound enter from without (123), and thereby revives the dead words, dead tongues, and like Derrida's Marx, who was and is never, nowhere received, who "remains an immigrant, a sacred, clandestine immigrant" living in the "time out of joint" and doing "a new thinking of borders," is a new experience of learning "from between the earth and sky" (Derrida, *Specters* 174):

> *Dead words. Dead tongues. From disuse. Buried in Time's memory. Unemployed. Unspoken. History. Past. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is mother, who waits nine days and nine nights be found. Restore memory. Let the one who is diseuse, one who is daughter restore spring with her each appearance from beneath the earth.* (Cha, *Dictée* 133)

With this juxtaposition of learning from below and from the space in-between, of subalterns and specters appears a pattern of justice Derrida and Spivak seek and the "name" in which they evoke it. It also raises the question of whom history belongs to — the native informant or the immigrants, deportees, and exiles. Where should we look for the sources of learning - down into the chthonic world of the native, who due to the global grid of financing and homeworking is being exploited into slow decay and vegetation (Spivak, "Ghostwriting" 71), or the world of specters, the armies of ghosts, the immense tide of deportees searching for their names (Derrida, *Truth* 329)?

Home, Hospitality, and (inoperative) Community

This learning from "between the sky and earth," and giving voice to the aphasic or asphyxiated ghosts continue into Derrida's works like *Of Hospitality*, where he makes the final "resting place" of the dead the measure of all human journeys (89). For him displaced, deported, rootless exiles and nomads, all share nostalgia to return, almost a Freudian compulsion to restore the initial stages of human life (Freud 43), yet they use their mother tongue as their prosthetic homeland. "Wouldn't this mother tongue," asks Derrida, "be a sort of second skin you wear on yourself, a mobile home? But also an immobile home since it moves about with us?" (89). The last resting place of the family for him not only defines the family, but also functions as the key habitation for defining home, the city or even the whole country where relatives, parents and ancestors are at rest. If the injunction and identity come from the land of the dead, and the learning from beyond is impossible without their visitations, apparitions or return, the question is, what happens to them whose "dead" never return, or even if they do, the living cannot hold conversation or keep company with them, for they have lost the tongue they shared with the dead. They are worlds apart in such a way that these two "immigrants," one in the First World like the narrator of "Calliope Epic Poetry" in *Dictee*, and the other in the final world, like the narrator's mother's parents, know not each other. The Korean drafted workers buried alive in Japanese coal mines, the demonstrating students shot down on the roadside, the father and mother dying in Manchuria with a regret that they could not see their home purged or die in free Korea, speak to this state of permanent disconnect between home and exile, and the living and the dead.

An extreme form of severance and abandonment is at work, which eventually returns these figures and specters that are carefully resurrected in Cha, Spivak and Derrida back to their uncanny strangeness. In spite of Derrida's hospitable move and his attempts at determining their socio-economic and cultural relations on the basis of one's links with the "restful" dead and mobile language, the narrator's Mother on her return to Korea finds that she has returned to an uncanny place, familiar, yet so strange - "You return yet you are not one of them [even though] you understand what they are saying" (56). The perfect contiguity expressed in Derrida is foreign to *Dictée*'s world of the displaced and the infantalized, where the graves are left open, the specters, far from being at rest, are loose, and the dead are running amuck all over the world, along the borders, in exile, custom offices, and street demonstrations and even in the quietude of the private rooms.

"neither one thing nor the other"

The juxtaposition of native informant v. exile; specters v. subalterns; and home v. location at once structures and fails to determine the world of Cha's *Dictée* and its complex moves between the world of the vegetating bodies, disused tongues, and the fantasmatic relation of the exiles to the lost home. The diseuse, who knows what is "to come", is also the one who can redeem the past from complete disuse. She is at once the mother above and the daughter that comes from below with the Spring (Cha, *Dictée* 133). Along with evoking planetarity and the alterity of the mother Earth, *Dictée* makes Earth porous in enunciation (160). The diluted myth of Princess Pali (Shih 157) that appears in the final section of the text seems to effect cure but is immediately frustrated by the reversal where the small girl with medicine in nine packets asks her mother to lift her up from the dark (Cha, *Dictée* 179), as if the text had come full circle and the girl had become the coal miner calling his mother for help. Instead of promising home and health, it leaves both mother and daughter suspended in the series of concentric circles (175), a state of perpetual exile and refuge without destination (80), or a state of being neither one thing nor the other (20). As a result of which the diseuse is left to "[b]ared noise, groan, bits torn from words," (3). In this state of hybridity, the state of being divided, as Agamben would say, between the city and the forest, between the beast and the man, between the lupization of man and the humanization of the wolf (Agamben 105-6), she is bound to repeat the unrelenting yet forever incomplete "sentence of the exile," while the black crows continue to mourn for her (Cha, *Dictée* 53).

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