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The Subject qua Other: A Hauntological Spell on Lacan

Yuan Yuan

Abstract: This project interrogates the dubious nature and the polemic role of the other in Lacan's discourse of the subject by invoking Derrida's ideas of hauntology. The *Lacanian subject*, albeit baffling and elusive, has been consistently labeled as "the subject of lack" by almost all critics including Felman, Ragland-Sullivan, Wilden, Derrida, Butler, et al. Departing from this established position, I probe Lacan's subject in terms of *the subject qua other*; contesting that in both imaginary and symbolic orders his subject is inescapably meshed with and dispossessed by some *spectral* and/or *specular* other. The mirror stage not only fabricates an optic illusion of a total self, but also situates the specular subject as overtaken by a spectral other. Similarly, the symbolic subject appears to be under the spell of a linguistic other in a double signifying conjuration—metonymic substitution and metaphorical transfiguration—that disembodies the subject into a ghost, i. e., deprived, displaced, and decentered. Further, the essay discreetly sets apart the poststructuralist Lacan from the psychoanalyst, or particularly, the *oedipalist* Lacan. The symbolic order, as known, is centralized and dominated by the veiled phallus, "the master signifier" or "the transcendental signified." This attests that Lacan's locus of the other is more than merely inhabited by general "pure signifiers" or abstract "empty words;" on the contrary, the field of the other is replete with privileged "full words" from the (dead) father in terms of sacred scriptures. Aside from addressing language as a generic other (as so inclined by past critics), this project uncovers a series of phantom others that haunt Lacan's unconscious subject: the oracular other (the father's last words), the spectral other (the ghost of the dead father), and the Holy Other (the fetish Phallus). Intriguingly, the ontology of Lacan's *subject qua other* dissipates into a hauntology of Derrida's *subject qua specter*.

Keywords: Lacan; Derrida; hauntology; spectral; other

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标题: 异(体)类的主体: 幽灵学笼罩下的拉康

摘要: 在拉康对主体的论述中, 异体这一概念甚为突出, 它不但性质含混, 作用也颇有争议。因此, 本文借德里达幽灵学的观念予以探讨。尽管拉康式的主体令人困惑, 捉摸不定, 却一直被不少学者称为“缺失性的主体”, 其中代表人物有费尔曼、拉格伦-萨利文、威尔登、德里达、巴特勒等。本文针对这一广为接受的说法, 从“异(体)类的主体”这一角度来思考拉康的主体概念, 并认为无论是在想象界还是象征界, 拉康的主体都不可避免地会和幽灵及镜像式的异体牵扯在一起, 并被其剥夺独立性。镜像阶段不仅虚构了整一自我的视觉假象, 还令镜像式主体被幽灵式异体所压制。同样, 象征界的主体看似在两个方面(即能指链上的转喻和隐喻)受制于语言学意义上的异体, 但这种能指法式使主体失去躯壳, 而成为幽灵, 最终沦入被剥夺、被移置和去中心的状态。作为后结构主义者的拉康与身为心理学家的(尤其是俄狄浦斯式的)拉康有所不同, 本文亦作出谨慎区分。一般认为, 被遮蔽的菲勒斯处于象征界中心地位, 并占主导优势, 故称之为“主控能指”和“超然所指”。以此便能证明, 拉康的异体范畴不仅仅是由

普通的“纯粹能指”或抽象的“空洞之词”所占居；相反，异体这一领域充斥着享有特权的“满载之词。”这些词源于（死去的）父亲，类似圣经经文。与过去的批评家不同，本文除了将语言视为一般性的异体，同时还一一揭示了一系列缠绕拉康无意识主体的异体幽灵：神谕式异体（父亲最后的话），幽灵式异体（亡父的幽灵），神圣异体（拜物菲勒斯）。有趣的是，拉康“异（体）类的主体”的本体论观点似乎消融于德里达提出的“幽灵似的主体”这一幽灵学理论之中。

关键词：拉康；德里达；幽灵学；幽灵；异体

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Unlike his contemporaries (Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, et al.) who have suspended or deleted the subject without any traceable symptoms of hesitancy, equating *l'etre* and *l'être* with or without *différance*, Lacan, for some obscure reasons, refuses to give up the position of the subject, evidently with due discretion. It seems Lacan situates himself precariously in a poststructural language game and retains the subject, albeit decentered, as a subject of some sort.^① The Lacanian subject, henceforth, turns into a classic postmodern case of critical impasse—notoriously elusive and perplexingly troublesome. In this aspect alone, Lacan is, to say the least, a bit *other* to other postmodern thinkers of his age.

While most critics (including Judith Butler, Shoshana Felman, Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, Anika Lemaire, Marcelle Marini, Samuel Weber, Malcolm Bower, Roger Frie, and Anthony Wilden, to name some) are inclined to address Lacan's subject as “the subject of lack”—with good reasons—due to mediation of and deprivation by images or language,^② I contest that the Lacanian subject could be, arguably, characterized as *a subject qua other*. Despite an overall tendency to tackle Lacan from a poststructuralist perspective by gaming upon the linguistic spin, I discern, instead, Lacan's subject is inexorably entangled in an intricate relationship with all kinds of otherness. In effect, Lacan himself has repetitively asserted, and in various contexts, the discourse of the unconscious is the discourse of the other, and the subject, as such, appears to be

dependably anchored in a field of otherness.

Historically, the dubious *otherness* has been fretfully dreaded as one of the thorniest issues in western theological or metaphysical tradition.^③ As a provocative thinker and a heterodox analyst, Lacan has persistently probed the polemic other throughout his career and frequently capitalized on the other—a usual suspect—to advance his radical theories of the subject. So much so that one may even be amused at a provocative conjecture that Lacan might have been feverishly pursuing as well as neurotically obsessed with the mystique of the other to the end of his life—haunted perhaps?^④

Actually, no critics ever failed to take note of the inscrutable otherness in Lacan's theory and some of them even ingeniously came up with all sorts of charts, figures, or numbers—some illuminating, others baffling or even misleading—to expound the complex ideas of Lacan's others as well as their different functions for the subject.^⑤ This essay does not intend to propose a more accurate reading or offer any conclusive statements of the otherness in Lacan. Instead, I opt to entertain a different way to unpack Lacan's others by sidestepping the typical poststructuralist track, since, as I note, few, if any, venture to tread into a mystic territory and probe the topic in the light of “hauntology,” an intriguing concept and a spectral terrain brought forth by Derrida. It appears that the *haunting* relationship between the subject and the other in Lacan's discourse, a discernable issue, has been largely ignored so far or has remained hitherto

unexplored. I pose that this subject of the unconscious, named as such, deserves further exploration in a different term, i. e., “the subject qua other.” From this position, we might query what kind of unconscious (otherness) inconceivably lurks in the Lacanian “subject of lack”; or to bend Derrida to this occasion: what type of other (s) perchance looms largely and figures spectrally in Lacan’s subject? In recent years, the subject, regardless dead or not, has often been likened to a haunted house of being, fraught with clandestine and ghostly narratives of otherness. Though theories of haunting thrived recently, hardly has anyone tried to apply Derrida’s hauntology to probe Lacan yet. To dispel the cryptic otherness in the Lacanian subject, let’s evoke Derrida’s Hauntology.

I. Derrida’s Hauntology: Spectral and Specular Conjunction

Theories of ghosts are usually deemed nonsensical or supernatural and so few scholars in the past, sensible or not, would feign to claim authority of any sorts on this ethereal area. Surprisingly enough, nobody else took the risk to challenge this topic but Derrida, allegedly one of the most profound thinkers and the most skeptical critics of the late twentieth century. Specifically in *Specters of Marx*, Derrida conjures up a bewitching word and casts a spell—“hauntology”—to unveil the spectral conjunction in all ideological or ontological systems, and appropriates the cryptic figure of the ghost to expose, I quote him here, “all the forms of a certain haunting obsession that seems . . . to organize the dominant influence on discourse today” (37).^⑥ Henceforth, “hauntology”, or theories of haunting, gradually took the center of critical and cultural discourse since early 1990s and has been frequently invoked as a disarming critical trope or, in Collin Davis’s words, “the structural opening” (379), to interrogate mysterious operations and unconscious functions of all kinds of symbolic orders. True to what María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren

observed in their Introduction to *The Spectralities Reader: Ghosts and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory*, the publication of Jacques Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* in 1993 played a pivotal role to initiate the so-called “spectral turn” and marked “a new era of investigation” (2); moreover, the spectral studies has so much haunted our current critical inquiries that “everything becomes ghostly” (34). Collin Davis remarks, paradoxically, spectrality becomes “the ungrounded grounding,” “both unthinkable and the only thing worth thinking about” (378) in current discourse. Unexpectedly, Derrida’s *Specters of Marx* has evoked all kinds of “hauntologists” towards unsettling “the limits of the spectral turn” (Luckhurst 526) in the postmodern era and theories of ghosts or “spectral studies”, in one way or another, pervaded all fields of research in the past two decades. It is utterly astounding that the figure of the ghost turns from an embodiment of nothing to a disembodiment of everything. No wonder Derrida himself declared: “The spectral logic is de facto a deconstructive logic” (Blanco and Peeren *Spectralities Reader* 39).^⑦

In *Specters of Marx*, Derrida opines, all ideological systems or ontological orders involve production of “ghosts,” “illusions,” “simulacra,” or “apparitions,” and moreover, Derrida alerts, “Haunting belongs to the structure of every hegemony” (45, 37). At the center of all hegemonic orders resides a ghost figure in terms of a *spectral other* that haunts. To mark the difference between ontology and its near homonym hauntology, Derrida clarifies, “Ontology opposes it [hauntology] only in the movement of exorcism,” and “Ontology is a conjunction” as well as “exorcism of the spectral simulacrum” (161, 170). Derrida further points out that the “singular ghost . . . , arch-specter, is a father” (139). Hence, this singular ghost, or the spectral Other, in either sacred or secular form, occupies a transcendental position: absent but dominating. It suffices to say, ghosts share one uncanny trait: they all haunt by a formidable presence of absence. To illustrate this spectral

paradox, Derrida teases, “How do you recognize a ghost? By the fact that it does not recognize itself in the mirror” (156).

Perhaps more importantly, Derrida unravels the knotty relationship between the “spectral” and the “specular” by disclosing a speculating conjuration of the ghost. Explicating the figure of the armored Ghost of Hamlet, Derrida uncovers an intriguing scheme, i. e. , the specter always generates a “visor effect”: “This spectral *someone other looks at us*, we feel ourselves being looked at by it” (7). And Derrida further explains, “Speculation always speculates on some specter, it speculates in the mirror of what it produces, on the spectacle that it gives itself and that it gives itself to see . . .” (146). In other words, to speculate means to conjure up or frame up a ghostly reflection, and the spectral figure, a phantom itself, does not give back the reflection at all. Instead, it produces or evokes an apparition, a spectral figure *as if* it were a reflected image by “the effect of this mysterious mirror” (156). In this case, the specular image “reflected” by the *spectral* other is nothing else but a phantom “projected” by a ghost and, as Derrida observes, the specular image “does not return the right reflection . . . , it phantomalizes” (156). Derrida concludes, “The specular becomes the spectral at the threshold of this objectifying naturalization” (156). As a result, the “visor effect” of an uncanny specter gazes and reflects, speculates and mirrors, conjuring someone into someone *other*. In short, in the name of hauntology, Derrida attempts to dispel the ontological phantom of the subject by invoking the specter, as in a rite of sorcery, and, henceforth, the subject is disembodied into a ghostly other. Lacan’s subject, either in the imaginary or the symbolic order, is a case in point.

II. The Imaginary Subject and the Spectral Other

Specifically in “The Mirror Stage” and “Aggressivity in Psychoanalysis,” Lacan inquires

the optic illusions reflected in the mirror and speculates on the subject’s formation via the other in terms of “the imaginary.” He observes that, at the age of six months old, a child sees in the mirror a reflected image that initiates a paradoxical process of unification and separation, identification and alienation. Lacan postulates that the mirror initiates a deceptive relationship where the subject “assumes an image” and “man projects himself, with the phantoms that dominate him” (*Écrits* 2,3). This illusory phantom of the “ideal-I” in the imaginary order is but a specular other in terms of projection rather than *reflection*. That is to say, the imaginary subject is instituted and inscribed by a specular other or a phantom that prefigures the subject in the sphere of fantasy. Lacan notes, “it is in space of the Other that he sees himself” and “it is in the Other that the subject is constituted as ideal . . . , as ego, or ideal ego” (*The Four* 144). Hence, the imaginary order, consisting of elusive images and narcissistic fantasies, opens the way for the child to anticipate the mirage of a unified body and an integral subject that he objectively lacks. That is why Lacan insists, it is “the function of *méconnaissance* that characterizes ego in all its structure” and it is “the *méconnaissances* that constitute the ego, the illusion of autonomy” (*Écrits* 6). The imaginary, in Lacan’s view, inaugurates the locale of misrecognition where the phantasmagoric other, or an idealized image of a unitary being, is *introjected* as a subject of totality. The yearning for this spectral and specular other divides, displaces, and decenters the subject—vaguely reminding us of an incorporeal body in surrealistic paintings—hysterical perhaps?⁸

Moreover, what is dramatized in this transactive mirroring dialectics reveals that the imaginary stage not only conjures up a falsified self, but also situates the subject in such a way as only to be possessed by a phantom other. And what characterizes the imaginary relationship is not simply that a projected ethereal other is mistaken as an idealized imago for the subject, but rather that the

subject itself is overtaken and displaced by a spectral other. If the subject is transfixed by *a specular image of the self* in terms of *a spectral other* in the mirror, then the subject's ontological or hysterical "coming into being" in the imaginary stage becomes a sort of Derridean hauntology. The imaginary subject, in this case, turns out to be an uncanny ghost figure, both *specular* and *spectral*. Contrary to the expectation of all "egologists," ontology of *the subject qua other* translates into a hauntology of *a subject qua specter*.

III. The Symbolic Subject and the Unconscious Others: A Language Game Between "Empty Words" and "Full Words"

In regard to Lacan's symbolic order, critics in general tend to lean heavily on a poststructuralist perspective to track down the subject's paradoxical positioning in terms of *the subject of lack*. The typical narrative runs like this: the Lacanian subject is displaced, dispossessed, and dissipated in an incessant flow and flux of words that both calls it into being and simultaneously renders it de-centric; or the subject keeps sliding along a slippery chain of signifiers, and the poststructural bar between signifiers and the signified can never be crossed — somewhat echoing what Lacan himself has illustrated in his elaborate reading of Poe's short story, known as "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," as well as one of his founding essays "Rome Discourse".^⑨ This trendy analysis, restricted to a poststructuralist view, abounds in critiques of Lacan's symbolic order. Their broad characterizations, more or less, can be roughly summarized in Lacan's own words: the symbolic subject meshed in language — or the field of the other — is subject to the "double play" of the signifying game — metaphorical transfiguration and metonymic displacement (*Écrits* 166). For instances, in *Jacques Lacan: The French Context*, Marcella Marini reiterates this position, "the Lacanian texts turn the human world into a puppet theater where the puppets are

manipulated by the threads of the signifiers" (82); and Fredric Jameson in "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan" extends similar observation, "the subject's gradual experience of his or her own subordination to an alienating signifier is . . . his Copernican attempt to assign to the subject an ex-centric position with respect to language as a whole" (369). That probably explains why Derrida in "For the Love of Lacan" wants to straighten up Lacan's theory and fit Lacan into a Derridean philosophical framework. However, the notion of language as an indiscriminate other in generic terms informs only one perspective to approach Lacan whereas what is hidden behind or beneath the unanimous and generic other deserves further investigation. It certainly begs the question: Are there some *other* others in the symbolic order that require evocation?

Lacan speculates, "the subject is subject only being subjected to the field of the Other" (*The Four* 188). Hence, signification implicates subjugation, and moreover, inauguration of the subject means subordination to the locus of the Other. Put differently, the subject is, so to speak, disposed and dispossessed by some mystic other in capital terms. From this view, the subject's coming into being via other, i. e., the symbolic signification, morphs into a fort-da game of hide-and-seek both in and beyond language in generic terms. In "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'," Lacan states, "it is that the displacement of the signifier determines the subjects in their acts, their destiny . . . , in their end and in their fate," and moreover, everything "will follow the path of the signifier" (338). In other words, a discreet linguistic game is played out between the *generic* "empty words" and the *particular* "full words" in terms of otherness. In this case, we need to track carefully, amid the labyrinthine language game and beyond the abstract designation of the "empty words", *which particular signifier* the subject "will follow" toward his destiny, or *whose special letter* will be purloined to displace or misplace his destiny. Specifically, what lurks in the unconscious and haunts the subject in terms of the spectral other?

In psychoanalysis in general, the subject is usually called the subject of the unconscious, but what lies in the unconscious, from the very onset, has always been subject to debate. To put the topic in context, I will limit the discussion only to those issues relevant to the inquiry of the unconscious in terms of the other. Lacan's sophisticated metonymic game in configuring the unconscious actually reveals a chain of others, so much so that we have to demarcate prudently what is veiled or exposed, slipped or elided in this play. As a space of alterity, the unconscious is laden with linguistic *différance* as well as cultural traces. In the Lacanian discourse, I contend, on the one hand, the field of the other seems to be technically meshed with and mediated by a generic linguistic game in abstract terms, and on the other hand, this "other" realm is satiated with and governed by noted speeches and privileged metaphors that prescribe its prevalent values, meanings, and culture.¹⁰ Therefore, we have to discreetly discern, beyond the generic play and abstract mediation of language, *whose speeches* function as the authoritative demand and, ultimately, *which word* figures as the "mystic" signifier in the name of the transcendental Other that dominates the entire field of otherness.

The others, as noted, pervade Lacan's discourse of the subject. Among the various others named by Lacan are the mirror image, language, speeches, and the unconscious. Oddly enough, I note, the phallus, the figure central and pivotal to the entire structure of the symbolic order, is seldom explicitly erected as the Other.¹¹ Here it requires us to tactfully set apart the poststructuralist Lacan from the psychoanalyst, or particularly, the *oedipalist* Lacan. Though hardly distinct from one another, the *poststructuralist* Lacan points to language as the other whereas the *oedipalist* Lacan leans upon *Phallus* as the Other. Lacan's return to the unconscious often tends to highlight the father's words and speeches as well as a specific object of desire, i. e., the phallus. Father's speeches are anticipated as the

sacred words and the phallus is worshipped as the holy cult. In this case, the locus of the other is not, as is usually assumed, merely inhabited by generic "pure signifiers" or "empty words" at all. On the contrary, the field of the other, as it turns out, is replete with the privileged "full words" from the (dead) fathers. Aside from the theory of language as the general other, I propose to uncover how this field of otherness is registered, governed, and circumscribed in these specific terms, i. e., the oracular other (father's speeches), the spectral other (the *afterword* of the dead father), and the mystical or Holy Other (the Phallus).

IV. The Ghost Narrative and the Sacred Oracles: Father's Name, Words, and Laws

Lacan asserts, "the unconscious is constituted by the effects of speech on the subject" (*The Four* 149) and "the subject inhabits the world of symbol . . . , a world of others who speak" (*Seminar I* 171). In addition, Lacan inquires, rhetorically, "Who is this other who speaks in the subject . . . ?" (*Psychoses* 239). The other that speaks in the symbolic order is by no means an unknowable other. Lacan makes it clear that the symbolic order, instead of being organized by a random word, is centered on a specific privileged signifier — *le-Nom-de-Pere* or the Name-of-the-Father — the locus of the signifying Other. Kristeva, for instance, alerts to the significance of unveiling "an ideal other who is the speaking other" (*Kristeva Reader* 252). Since women, from a feminist view at least, constitute the unspeakable and unspeaking in the symbolic order, the only one granted the prerogative to speak is inalienably a paternal figure, i. e., father's speeches figure in the capacity of sacred oracles that subscribe the unconscious desires for the subject. That is to say, when Lacan claims to insert words into the unconscious of the subject, he is in effect installing into the subject father's words in terms of an oracle.

If the unconscious of the subject is dominated

by father's words, then the subject qua other is saturated with authoritative speeches of the phallogocentric culture "in the name of the father" (*Écrits* 67). Hence, the entire domain of language in terms of the other is haunted by father's words as the Other. That is probably why Lacan insists that "it is qua Other that he desires" (*Écrits* 312) and "he is but the Other's desire" ("Position" 265). Consequently, summoned by the words from the father, the subject desires what the Other desires: inheriting father's name, repeating (after) father's speeches, and implementing father's order as the law. For instance, under the spell by his father's ghost, Hamlet is commanded to remember his father's name as the cultural legacy and repeat his father's words as the sacred oracles. "The father, the Name-of-the-father," Lacan reminds us, "sustains the structure of desire with the structure of law" (*The Four* 34). Evidently, this "law" does not refer to the generic laws governing the linguistic operations, i. e., effects of metaphor and metonymy, but the phallogocentric laws centralized by the father's name, words, and desires.

"The symbolic father, in so far as he signifies this law, is the dead father" (*Écrits* 199). The father, for Lacan (and for psychoanalysts in general for this matter), is always a dead one, a ghost figure that is retroactively restituted after his disappearance and returns in the shape of an apparition. Oddly enough, it seems unlikely that the power of the father, instead of diminishing after his demise, is generated precisely in this scheme of departure and return. The dead body of the father is mysteriously translated into a phantom of the father, an ontological absence into a spectral presence — a return of a ghostly other or a holy father of some sort. In "Desire and Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," Lacan explains to us that the neurotic subject, Hamlet, is not so much haunted by the *disappearance* of the father's dead body as by the *return* of the father's specter. His dead father's words, a sort of *afterword* from a spectral sphere, implausibly haunt Hamlet like an oracle or a holy

text. It is very much the spirit's cryptic speech or a ghost narrative, so to speak, that inevitably predestines Hamlet's fate. In other words, at the spell of a spectral other, Hamlet's subject is written as of a ghost narrative and his life is disposed by the sacred *afterword* of the dead father.

As a result, Hamlet follows faithfully the path of the afterword of the spectral father in a "blind submission to his secret" (*Specters* 7). In this context, the field of the other the subject enters appears to be a spooky landscape of ghosts instead of merely a linguistic territory of words. This *other* terrain is not only resonant with father's speeches, but also laden with the ghostly *afterword* of the spectral paternal figures in terms of sacred oracles. In short, for Lacan, it is by submission to the spell of this spectral other — the ghost of a father and his oracular narrative — that the subject finds himself defined, displaced, decentered, and deleted, whereby turning oneself into a ghost or phantom subject — an *other qua specter* in the realm of hauntology.

V. The Spectral Phallus: The Uncanny Other and the Holy Ghost

In his seminal essay "The Function and the Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," Lacan concludes in this way, "The psychoanalytic experience has rediscovered in man the imperative of Word as the law that has found him in its image" (*Écrits* 106). To a certain degree, this sounds like a remote echo from the holy text, specifically, St. John's: "God is the Word and the Word is God." Similarly in Lacan's discourse, there is a God-Word, a seminal and original *Word* that initially founds and subsequently hosts the symbolic order, embodies the universal law, and institutes the subject. That probably explains why Lacan alerts his subject that "he should see, beyond this signification, to what signifier . . . he is, as a subject, subjected" (*The Four* 251). Instead of any other words, the subject as such is submitted to a particular holy word of

scriptural significance, a meta-signifier, a primal metaphor with inseminating power in terms of a transcendental Other, i. e. , the phallus. In short, a phallic specter haunts Lacan's theoretical body of the subject.

In "The Signification of the Phallus," Lacan states, "the phallus is a signifier means that it is in the place of the Other that the subject has access to it" (*Écrits* 288). Lacan also insists, "The position of the phallus is always veiled" ("Hamlet" 48). We are compelled to inquire: Why is the phallus "always veiled" and put "in the place of the Other"? Is it possibly that, in this linguistic game of displacement, the phallus masquerades itself in the field of the other merely *in name* or, more accurately, only in the *pseudonym* of the other? Camouflaged, the phallus discreetly occupies a central and transcendental position, absent, but powerfully present, spectral in a sense. Hence, the Lacanian subject is suspect of being uncanny: both present and absent, both familiar and strange. That is to say, the capitalized Other as a strange singular signifier metonymically stands for another familiar signifier in disguise, i. e. the *Absolute Subject* in a metaphysical sense of the word. In this case, the phallus is *misplaced* into the other territory where it does not belong. This is probably why Derrida in his reading of Lacan's "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'" accuses him of "a displacement of a signifier" as "the end of La signification du phallus" ("Purveyor" 48, 99). By interrogating the phallus in the dubious field of the other, we uncover the metaphysical center of Lacan's symbolic order and reveal a transcendental figure, a holy ghost, even if called by any *other* names.¹² Lacan reminds that "the phantom of the Omnipotence" is "not of the subject, but of the Other in which his demand is installed" (*Écrits* 311). Thus, the phantom of the phallus figures as a mystical signifier, an arch-ghost, or "*the Other*," that tops the entire sphere of the otherness or the symbolic order. As to its spectral statues, Lacan simply mocks, "one cannot strike the phallus, because the phallus, even the

real phallus, is a ghost" ("Hamlet" 50).

The Oedipus complex — the ontology as well as hauntology of psychoanalysis — rests upon the phallic mythology that represents the father's name, words, laws, and desires in a spectral fashion. By repeating, after the dead father, the same language, same name, same law and perpetuating the same mono-myth of the patriarchal culture, the subject is in effect duplicating itself, genealogically speaking, from the father to the son and circulating the same property of father's symbolic order so that the *afterword* from the spectral Other can be memorialized to eternity, echoing the Ghost Hamlet's departing words: "Remember me." As previously discussed, what hides behind the veiled Other in Lacan's discourse is not at all an ex-centric *other* at all, but the renowned holy ghost of the *Absolute Subject*, the Spectral Other of the Singular Same — uncanny indeed. In this case, Lacan's other is a pseudo-other without any traces of *alterity* or *difference*. In other words, Lacan's others lack *otherness* after all.

To a certain extent, an intriguing dialectics of polarities seems to permeate and define the Lacanian discourse of the other. On the one hand, language figures as the generic other and operates in an infinite game of metaphorical transfiguration and metonymic displacement, and on the other hand, in the name of the father, there is a cultural legacy of the phallus as the singular *Other* that both restricts and lies beyond the incessant play of abstract words. Hence, the spectral Phallus as the mythical embodiment of the dead father's sacred *afterword* limits, governs, and transcends the free linguistic play or the poststructuralist *jouissance*. Lacan's schemata of the symbolic order is largely decided and inextricably enclosed between the structure of language, the sliding power of metaphors and metonymies, and the unconscious of the culture, the patriarchal laws in the name of father's ghost and his sacred oracles.

VI. Repeating and Haunting: Lacan's Return and Derrida's Spell

In "The Freudian Thing, or the Meaning of the Return to Freud in Psychoanalysis," Lacan situates himself conspicuously and also, perhaps, dubiously in his blatant poststructural "return to Freud." Lacan suggests, "One began only to repeat after Freud the word of his discovery: *it speaks*" (*Écrits* 125). Hence, the proposed return to Freud seems to initiate a humbling as well as a haunting repetition, i. e., "only to repeat" Freud's words after his death. After all, Freud is acknowledged as the father of psychoanalysis, a kind of Holy Father to some degree. Ironically, the poststructural return to Freud somehow waywardly turns into a repetition of the sacred words of a holy father, symptomatic more of an *oedipalist's* obsessive identification rather than of a poststructuralist's departing *différance*.

In "The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious," Lacan implicitly alludes to Hamlet's expectation from his father's ghost to illustrate the subject's position to the Other in terms of anticipation of an oracle. Lacan writes, "That is why the question of the Other . . . comes back to the subject from the place from which he expects an oracular reply" (*Écrits* 312). To evoke Hamlet's Ghost here, "remember me" are the ghost's departing words or a kind of "afterword" from a dead father that reappears in a *postmortem* form. Similarly, by returning to Freud and repeating after his words, Lacan likely intends to resurrect Freud's Ghost and haunt the psychoanalytic discourse with the sacred words from the spectral Freud. Ironically, the return to Father Freud becomes a return of the ghostly other, and Lacan's post-Freudian discourse evolves into a neurotic repetition after the Ghost Freud. That is to say, if Freud attempts to solve the riddle of man in terms of a "neurotic subject" according to his master-code, the Oedipal complex, then Lacan, more or less acting out like Oedipus, is obsessed

with the oracles or the sacred words from the ghost-father Freud and endeavors to decrypt the enigma of the subject from where "*it speaks*," i. e., the locus of the spectral Other.

When Lacan poses, "I think where I am not, therefore I am where I do not think" (*Écrits* 166), he is obviously parodying Descartes' motto, *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) with a cunning linguistic twist or turn, detouring the Cartesian cogito in a labyrinthine language game. Derrida, instead, simply retorts Descartes by casting a spell on all ontological order in a conjuration thereby dismantling or ghosting the Cartesian cogito per se when he says, "There 'I am' would mean 'I am haunted'" (*Specters* 133). Between the two misreadings of Descartes' "I think" offered respectively Lacan and Derrida lies a distinct and disconcerting field of the spectral otherness in terms of hauntology. After all, in Derrida's views, we are all haunted, in one way or another, by ghosts of some sort. It would be especially intriguing to speculate that, despite his poised critique of Lacan's phallogocentric tendency in *Positions* as well as implicit exposure of "a theft and of displacement of a signifier" (48) in "The Purveyor of Truth," Derrida himself, to a certain degree, might not be able to escape being haunted by Lacan, as evidenced in his conversation with Lacan in regard to "playing with death" in his "For the Love of Lacan." However, the purpose of this article is not to clarify their complex theoretical relationship or rivaling tension; instead, I intend to appropriate Derrida's ideas of hauntology to entertain a spectral reading of Lacan's enigmatic and polemic other, thus exposing the unconscious position of others in Lacan's theory, outside the thematic focus of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*. The relationship between Derrida and Lacan, an intricate and fascinating one, certainly deserves a separate project by itself.^①

Notes

① See Roger Frie. *Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity in Modern Philosophy and Psychoanalysis: A Study of Sartre*,

Binswanger, Lacan, and Habermas. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Press, 1997; 168.

② There are numerous books and essays analyzing Lacan's subject via a poststructuralist lens in generic terms. Among them, Jameson's "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan" is probably considered one of the most lucid essays that explicates Lacan's subject in terms of lack, loss, and decenterment. See Fredric Jameson. "Imaginary and Symbolic in Lacan: Marxism, Psychoanalytic Criticism and the Problem of the Subject." *Literature and Psychoanalysis: The Question of Reading; Otherwise*. Ed. Shoshana Felman. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982; 338–95.

③ Currently, there is a revival of studies of otherness in various terms and for all sorts of reasons, especially in the wake of the so-called the "death of the subject." To stay focused on my topic, here I simply want to acknowledge some of the notable writers, past and present, that have contributed to the discussion of the other: Martin Heidegger, Jacques Derrida, Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray, Water Davis, Julia Kristeva, Mark Taylor, Stefan Herbrechter, Susan Handelman, Michel de Certeau, Tamise Van Pelt, William Desmond, Georges Bataille, Mikhail Bakhtin, Gisela Brinker-Gabler, Julian Pefanis, Franco Rella, Gabriela Schwab, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, Dona Haraway, Gloria Anzaldúa, and of course, Emmanuel Levinas — possibly the one who has contributed to this area most.

④ In *Heterologies: Discourse of the Other*, Michel de Certeau states, "Lacan belongs to no one. . . . He is Other, as he signs in this final declaration of 1980: 'If it should happen that I leave, you may say that it is only in order to be at last Other. One can be happy being Other like everybody else after a life spent, in spite of the Law, trying to be Other'" (48). This declaration of otherness, dated January 15, 1980, figures as an epigraph in a special issue of *Liberation* (September 11, 1980), the best among a number of periodical issues devoted to Lacan since his death.

⑤ For instance, Malcolm Bower in his Lacan mocks the Lacanian subject is the "other-infested subject" (82), forever being trailed by numerous others in various positions. For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Malcolm Bower. *Lacan*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991.

⑥ Derrida's *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* is considered one of the most sustained studies of the spectral subject in terms of hauntology. For further references, see his other works: *The Gift of Death*. Trans. David Wills. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995; *On the Name*. Trans. Thomas Dutoit.

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993; and *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*. Trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

⑦ For more materials on issues of haunting, see Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds. *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*. London: Macmillan Press, 1999; Colin Davis. *Haunted Subject: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead*. New York: Palgrave, 2007; Jodey Castricano. *Cryptomimesis: The Gothic and Jacques Derrida's Ghost Writing*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001; Kathleen Brogan. *Cultural Haunting: Ghosts and Ethnicity in Recent American Literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998. María del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, eds. *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*. New York: Continuum, 2010; and Jennifer Blessing and Nat Trotman, eds. *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/ Video/Performance*. New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2010.

Theories of haunting encompass a wide field, from exploring "ghosts and gods, in dramas and films" (Mark Pizzato 1) to "sonic hauntology" in music industry (Mark Fisher 42), from "the haunted spaces of popular culture" of every day life (Blanco and Peeren xii), to "spectral" narratology (Julian Wolfrey 3). Some works directly engaged Derrida's ideas of hauntology, for instance, Jodey Castricano's *Cryptomimesis*, while others addressed the topics of ghosts without referring to Derrida's hauntology at all. For instances, Mark Pizzato's *Ghosts of Theatre and Cinema in the Brain* investigates "cultural and neural ghosts" by using "the philosophical dimensions of cognitive science and psychoanalysis" (1); and Avery F. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* explores "those singular yet repetitive instances where home becomes unfamiliar" — a classic example of the Freudian uncanny (xvi). Henceforth, theories of ghosts, or "spectral studies," vary significantly in approaches and focuses. On the one hand, Julian Wolfrey's *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature* focuses on narratology in terms of hauntology: "all forms of narrative are spectral to some extent" and "to tell a story is always to invoke ghosts" (3), and on the other, *Spectral America: Phantoms and the National Imagination* edited by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock focuses on interrogating "the spectral America" as "a land of ghosts, a nation obsessed with the spectral" (8). Of a special note, *The Spectralities Reader: Ghost and Haunting in Contemporary Cultural Theory* (2013) edited by Blanco and Peeren is considered one of the best anthologies with

comprehensive compilation of critical essays on issues of haunting as a theoretical trope, an analytic instrument, or a conceptual framework in humanities and social sciences since “the spectral turn” in early 1990s.

⑧ Lacan’s concept of “the mirror stage” is more or less associated with and perhaps shaped by surrealist images and the avant-garde art to a certain degree. Lacan has an entangled relationship with surrealist movement for a period. He has maintained a close connection with surrealists like Dali, Crevel, and others in his early academic years and even contributed to their periodical *Minotaure*. For a thorough investigation of Lacan’s complicated relationship with Surrealism, see Elisabeth Roudinesco. *Jacques Lacan & Co: A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925 – 1985*. Trans. Jeffrey Mehlman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986; and Marcelle Marini. *Jacques Lacan: The French Context*. Trans. Anne Tomiche. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1992.

⑨ Later this essay known as “Rome Discourse” was collected in *Écrits*, entitled “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis.” To set the record right, Lacan is not just read from a poststructural perspective, in fact he has contributed significantly in defining the broad field of poststructuralism, especially considering that Lacan is widely indebted to be the one that has “linguisticized” or “poststructuralized” the Freudian psychoanalysis by inserting the letter, or the sliding signifiers, into the unconscious, so to speak.

⑩ Several critics have extensively investigated the issues of the subject of desire in terms of otherness, but largely focusing on the general linguistic effects in abstract terms. See Ellie Ragland-Sullivan. *Jacques Lacan and Philosophy of Psychoanalysis*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986; and Slavoj Žižek. *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991.

⑪ In *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight*, Felman explored Lacan’s other in terms of “Father, Law, Language, the reality of death,” and “the unconscious” (105). Lorenza Chiesa in *Subjectivities and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan* listed the symbolic order, language, and the unconscious as the Other. In both cases, the Phallus is conspicuously missing from the list of the Other. See Shoshana Felman. *Jacques Lacan and the Adventure of Insight: Psychoanalysis in Contemporary Culture*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987; Lorenza Chiesa. *Subjectivities and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading*

of Lacan. Cambridge: MIT P, 2007.

⑫ Critics from various schools of thought probe the polemic nature of the phallus in the Lacanian discourse in one way or another, and it is likely each of them attempts to claim some debt from Lacan for a variety of different reasons. In *Positions*, Derrida identifies the phallus as “a transcendental signifier,” “the correlative of a primary signified,” and “the generating (disseminating) void” (86) by disclosing the full complicity between signifiers and the ultimate signification as well as the logocentric locus of the symbolic order from a poststructuralist perspective. Luce Irigaray, on the other hand, in *This Sex Which Is Not One* and *Sexes and Genealogies* exposes the phallogocentric tendency in Lacan’s symbolic order and critiques the phallus as a figure of some god in the patriarchal system from a feminist point of view. Specifically in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Irigaray holds Lacan’s phallus as a suspect of “the contemporary figure of a god,” “the ultimate meaning of all discourse,” “the ultimate signified of all desire,” and the “emblem and agent of the patriarchal system” (67). Louis Althusser, like Lacan, tentatively holds onto the notion of “individual” as a specular subject of a social category. In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Althusser appropriates the Lacanian dialectics of the imaginary to interrogate the subject’s interpellation and translates the Lacanian Other, i. e., the transcendental phallus, into the “Unique, Absolute Other Subject” (178) from a Marxist framework. In this context, each reads or misreads Lacan for a particular purpose. To repeat Lacan against himself here: the real, so to speak, is really the impossible.

⑬ Lacan and Derrida met a couple of times personally (see Roudinesco’s *Jacques Lacan and Co.: History of Psychoanalysis in France* and Derrida’s “For the love of Lacan.”) In “For the love of Lacan,” Derrida talked about their binding by death, and also pointed out that Lacan was concerned about how his works would be read after his death. For a comprehensive discussion of why “Derrida perceives Lacan as a rival” (7), what “helps Lacan to elude Derrida” (17), or their theoretical difference in terms of being “entrapped by language” or “caged by our bestial nature” (9), see Michael Lewis. *Derrida and Lacan: Another Writing*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. My article only focuses on explicating Lacan’s problematic other in terms of Derrida’s hauntology as a critical trope and an investigative framework. Their comprehensive relationship deserves a different project.

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