

## Conversations with a Ghost/ Conversations avec un fantôme

*English version*

### **Conversations with a Ghost**

Call for papers:

The symposium is to be held in Toulouse, France, on March 17, 2023.

Proposals of about 300 words (for a 20 minute-paper), accompanied by a short bio-bibliography, should be sent to [conversationswithaghost@gmail.com](mailto:conversationswithaghost@gmail.com) by December 5, 2022. Notifications of acceptance will be sent on December 14, 2022.

Conference papers may be considered for subsequent publication following the symposium

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This symposium seeks to examine how the relation to the dead is represented and conceptualized in the literature and the arts of the English-speaking world, whenever the ghost scene involves a spirit conversing with the living.

Ghosts are in-between figures: they exist both in the world of the living and that of the dead; they belong to the past but also to the present time; they have a body and do not have one. Arguably, their function or prerogative consists in putting two different worlds in contact. But do they establish any form of *communication* between them? The literary ghost can be a mute or inarticulate presence, which may have encouraged the interpretation of the ghost as the emblem of repressed, muted affect – of what remains unsaid or resistant to language. Yet many ghosts actually speak and engage in long, insistent conversations with the living, old Hamlet being of course a case in point.

Conversing involves negotiation – the instability of subject-positions, the quest for some common ground; to a certain extent, it also posits the desirable nature of the encounter. Considering scenes of conversation with ghosts invites us to consider texts or shows which distance themselves from horrific effects and delineate new ways of *dealing* with the dead; we notably invite contributions on magic realism.

When ghosts appear in fictions of the United States and the Commonwealth, for instance in the works of Kingston (1976), Morrison (1987) or Banwo (2022) to name only a few, they invite reflections on the literary, ethical and political meanings of the spirit's voice. What or who does the ghost stand for? What muted history does it have to tell and what kind of relation is being created between the old home and the new location through the fictional dialogue with the wandering soul ?

We also welcome papers examining texts that present themselves as metaphorical *séances* creating dialogues with posthumous voices and establishing a textual mediation between the living and the dead - among these, the spirits of dead authors. We welcome papers offering to explore fictional conversations with ghosts as metafictional images of the haunting presence of past texts, myths, films, pictures and authors within the present work of art.

Please find a non exhaustive list of potential topics below:

- The treatment of posthumous voices in literature and film of the English-speaking world
- Dialogues or monologues in the presence of a ghost: forms of address, marks of dialogism: stylistic and linguistic characteristics of ghostly speech
- The poetics of ghostly conversation: what does the speech of the haunted sound like?
- The ghost as alterity and the ghost as self-image; the ghostly voice as a voice speaking in a *langue mineure*? The ghost's story as suppressed history. Political, ethical and aesthetic approaches to the ghostly other.
- Scene of terror, scene of horror, scene of encounter; generic hybridizing, comic transformation of ghost scenes
- Conversations with ghosts as allegories of intertextuality; visions of the present text as haunted by past texts and talking back to its ghosts. Interpretation of the arts from the perspective of Derrida's "hantology" (*Specters of Marx*, 1993)

#### Works Cited

Banwo, Ayanna Lloyd *When We Were Birds* [2022] Hamish Hamilton, 2022.

Derrida, Jacques. *Spectres de Marx* [1993]. Paris: Galilée, 1993.

Kingston, Maxine Hong. *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts* [1976]. New York: Random House, 1989.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved* [1987]. New York: Vintage, 2001.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* [c. 1601]. (Edited by Philip Edwards. Revised with a new introduction by Heather Hirschfeld). Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (The New Cambridge Shakespeare), 2019.