

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Speculations*

What does it mean to speak of ghosts in post-Enlightenment culture? If we have come to discount the “spirit world” – out there – we have also internalized the notion that our *thoughts* are somehow spectral and that we can be haunted by them. This special issue of *West Coast Line* called for contributors to speculate upon Jacques Derrida’s assertion in *Specters of Marx* that “everyone reads, acts, writes with *his* or *her* ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other” (139).

In *Ghostworks*, scholars, poets, fiction writers, and visual artists explore the notion that talking *with* ghosts does not only mean being in conversation with them; it also means to use them instrumentally and, in turn, whether one knows it or *not*, to be used by them. As Hélène Cixous claims, “We don’t know, either universally or individually, exactly what our relationship to the dead is ... Each of us, individually and freely, must do the work that consists of rethinking what is your death and my death, which are inseparable” (12). In this spirit, *Ghostworks* is an attempt to do some of the “work” of such a “rethinking” which necessarily raises the question of revenance. In other words, what returns to us is what we inherit. But an inheritance is never transparent. According to Derrida, an inheritance “call[s] for and at the same time [defies] interpretation” (16). What remains to be seen are ghost works; these tell us that if the dead shape the lives we are able to live, then they not only compel what we are able to read and to write but they also make it possible. This issue is dedicated to them.

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– JC

WORKS CITED

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Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*. Trans. Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 1994.