

Introduction

DAWNE McCANCE

Act I, Scene 5, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*:

Hamlet: . . . Swear.

Ghost [Beneath]: Swear.

Hamlet: Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! So Gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you;

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do, to express his love and friending to you,

God willing shall not lack. Let us go in together,

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint: Oh Cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right.

Nay, come, let's go together.

The *time is out of joint*: Before 11 September 2001, I took these to be familiar words. They are the words with which Jacques Derrida opens *Specters of Marx*, a book to which several of the essays in this issue refer. I thought I knew the book well: I've studied it and written about it, and last year I taught it in a graduate seminar, "The Ghost in Theory." But, after 11 September 2001, Derrida's analysis of Hamlet's haunting words asks for rereading. In this "disjointed or disadjusted now" (3), the specter comes back and calls to be thought.

Like a specter itself, this special issue of *Mosaic* arrives on the out-of-joint scene both too early and too late. The issue was formulated some eighteen months ago. And it was over eight months ago when I visited New York City and went from there to Binghamton, where the interview that opens the issue took place. William Spanos is, in Robert Kroetsch's words, "an incredible talker." As Kroetsch says, and as I learned during the interview with Spanos, "Where you renew language quite often is not only in your writing, but in talk and teaching"—and in conversation. The memorable conversation we had on the morning of 2 February, still early in 2001, was, for me, an experience of the way that "Bill renews through talk. He recovers the language." It was still early when we did the interview—but it was already too late for the gods. In this interregnum, this between-time, in which we live, Spanos ventures citing Heidegger's Hölderlin, this "No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is coming," the "project of rethinking thinking is an urgent one." The task of criticism, says Spanos, is to rethink the instrumentalist thinking that informs the modern age and that attempts to pacify the specter—the alienated and unhomed, the political refugee, the intellectual "nobody." What Spanos calls *the specter* refers "to that ineffable 'reality' that the language of reification identifies as not part of being in order to rid itself of it"; but, "no matter what this language does to obliterate it, the specter always comes back to haunt the obliterator." Now is the time to think this ghost.

In "Rethinking the Specter: Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*," Assimina Karavanta begins to rethink thinking, ponders "the question of belonging, representation, and silence that the haunting politics of the specter provokes," by way of focussing on certain aspects of Ghanaian woman writer Ama Ata Aidoo's *Anowa*, a text that has itself been neglected by a critical "politics of exclusion," perhaps for the reason that it demands a questioning of our "postcolonial" present. Michael O'Riley's "Specters of Orientalism in France, Algeria, and Postcolonial Studies" also opens postcolonialism to question, suggesting that, in Franco-Algerian cultures, postcolonial criticism remains haunted by orientalist images and practices from the colonial period. Evoking this motif of haunting, O'Riley's essay examines the work of Francophone writers Azouz Begag and Leïla Sebbar. Postcolonial criticism is again in question in Nancy Von Rosk's "'Exhuming Buried Cries' in Assia Djebar's *Fantasia*." Djebar, a North African woman writer, brings feminist perspectives to the task of negotiating a postcolonial identity. Her novel *Fantasia* "has much to teach us about a critical identity politics, and about the complicated cultural and historical processes behind terms like *postcolonial subject*, and *postcolonial identity*."

The specter, then, in this special issue of *Mosaic*, is a theoretical and political “reality” that haunts the discourse of the centre. Marty Roth, in “Gilman’s Arabesque Wallpaper,” offers a socio-political reading of Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s tale, arguing that the text is “haunted by an ‘Oriental’ fantasy (i.e., the yellow wallpaper),” and that the “imperialist implications” of “The Yellow Wallpaper” have their lineage in the work of Edgar Allan Poe and in the Anglo-American tradition of haunted house fiction. Arthur Redding’s “‘Haints’: American Ghosts, Ethnic Memory, and Contemporary Fiction” asks, with particular reference to Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*, “how cultural practices articulate individual or collective subjective sensibilities by excavating alternative histories, or ‘ghost’ stories, by imaginatively summoning into presence those voices and beings that have been sacrificed to the march of progress and consolidation of American literary and cultural traditions.” Concerned as well with alternative histories and identities, Duncan Greenlaw, in “Preying on Foresaid Remains’: Irish Identity, Obituaries, and the Limits of Mourning,” asks how writers’ remains, those of Beckett, Yeats, and Joyce in particular, “allow the Irish simultaneously to gain and lose a fixed identity of themselves.” Also concerned with memory, with haunting as a question of inheritance, James A. Hansen, in “The Uncreating Conscience: Memory and Apparitions in Joyce and Benjamin,” puts Walter Benjamin’s “Theses on the Philosophy of History” in dialogue with the “Scylla and Charybdis” episode of Joyce’s *Ulysses*, so as to explore the problems that history presents for both writers, and thereby to analyze “what ‘thinking historically’ means for critical theory and to enact a dialectic of totality that opposes memory to teleology.”

The issue concludes with two essays that relate spectrality to the constitution of community. In “Addressing a Dead Body: From Dedication to Tele-Community,” Shu Kugé reads an eighth-century long poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, a poem addressed to an anonymous corpse washed up on a shore, finding in the poet’s apostrophe to a silent addressee the situation of every writer, and suggesting that community is made possible precisely through such dislocation. Finally, in “Jack Spicer’s Ghosts and the Immemorial Community,” Ross Clarkson explores ways in which Spicer’s relation to the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca provides the grounding for a postmodern “community of absence.”

Haunting 1: The Specter—this is a challenging issue, which I am proud to introduce. I am particularly grateful to William Spanos and Robert Kroetsch for the opening interview. This issue will be followed by a second

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special *Mosaic* issue on the haunting theme, *Haunting 2: Citations* (Volume 35, Number 1).

WORKS CITED

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.