



The Spectral Metaphor: Living Ghosts and the Agency of Invisibility

Esther Peeren

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What does it mean to live as a ghost? Exploring spectrality as a potent metaphor in the contemporary British and American cultural imagination, Peeren proposes that certain subjects – migrants, servants, mediums and missing persons – are perceived as living ghosts and examines how this impacts on their ability to develop agency. From detailed readings of films (Stephen Frears's *Dirty Pretty Things*, Nick Broomfield's *Ghosts* and Robert Altman's *Gosford Park*), a television series (*Upstairs, Downstairs*) and novels (Hilary Mantel's *Beyond Black*, Sarah Waters's *Affinity*, Ian McEwan's *The Child in Time* and Bret Easton Ellis's *Lunar Park*) emerges an inventive account of how the spectral metaphor, in its association with various modes of invisibility, can signify both dispossession and empowerment. In reworking the spectral insights of, among others, Jacques Derrida, Antonio Negri and Achille Mbembe, Peeren suggests new responses to the practices of marginalization and exploitation that characterize our globalized world.



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