

## **The Narrative is Out of Joint: Crossmapping the Spectre in *A Ghost Story* and *How to be Both***

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### **Abstract**

Following Bronfen’s intermedial approach of crossmapping, this paper brings together literary and cinematic texts to carve out a contemporary conception of the seeing subject. In focusing on the underlying “will to formalization” in aesthetic texts (Bronfen 2018, 3), I examine how the figure of the specter negotiates shifting conceptions of visibility in contemporary media. As a figure enmeshed in paradoxical (in)visibility, this juxtaposition traces how the figure brings together cultural and technological shifts to stage “a new and discrete perceptual mode of existential and embodied presence” (Sobchack 2004, 139). Thus, by tracing the specter in David Lowery’s film *A Ghost Story* (2017) and Ali Smith’s novel *How to be Both* (2014), this paper reads these contemporary ghost stories as articulating technological and medial shifts in the contemporary mediascape. Specifically picking up on post-cinematic discourses of disconnection, I suggest the narratives find recourse in aesthetic and narrative strategies to negotiate the perceptual break between our technologies of vision and the human seeing subject. Through the crossmedial encounter of the literary narrativization and the cinematic visualization of the gaze, these texts give rise to aesthetic and narrative experimentation to formalize the visual logic of the contemporary age. Disjointed from time, this paper argues that the figure of the specter responds to a media landscape grappling with increasing fragmentation and the rise of post-perceptual scopic regimes.

### **Keywords**

Crossmapping, specter, post-cinema, visual studies, vision

**Bio**

Mansi Tiwari is a doctoral candidate in English and American Studies at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, where she earned her M.A. degree in English Literature and Linguistics and Economic History in 2020. Her writing and teaching interests include the intersection of visibility, technology, and the digital in the contemporary mediascape. She is currently at work on her dissertation project, “Beyond the Human Eye: Seeing Subjects in the 21st Century,” and has recently published work on paraesthetic vision and the dynamics of power.

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