

Visibility of the Invisible (Boston, 5–8 Mar 20)

Deadline: Sep 30, 2019

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PANEL: Visibility of the Invisible: The Idea, Theory, and Ontology of Trace

From its rudimentary manifestations as smoke and fire and footprint, to theological significations of the image of Jesus on the Shroud of Turin, trace, as a visible marker of an absent presence, generates a compelling milieu to meditate on the proliferation of meaning in text and image.

Mostly confined to image studies and linguistics, and widely characterized as an interplay between presence and absence, the trace famously received (theoretical) attention from Jacques Derrida and occupied a central place in his body of work, not least in *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and, in his seminal essay “Différance.” In *Of Grammatology*—as his translator Gayatri Spivak observes—he formulates the condition of trace as “the mark of the absence of presence” (xvii), and deploys it to argue against the fixed meanings of texts, a position that stems from Martin Heidegger’s concept of writing under erasure, (*The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (1930); *The Question of Being* (1956)), which means crossing out a word within a text while printing the word as crossed out, thus displaying both the absence and the presence of the word and exhibiting the multitude of meanings in a text. In “Différance”, Derrida also resists the conceptualization of the trace and recourse to the method of negative theology, where God is refused definite descriptions of existence, but contemplated through negative statements to acknowledge his superior existence. On the other hand, outside the realm of—or on the margins of—these theoretical reflections Georges Didi-Huberman, in his book *Aperçus* (2018) treats trace, in visual arts and literature, as a kind of relic of life (survivance), and adds the idea of survival to the vocabulary of trace.

Aided by such reflections, this panel invites proposals to examine the notion, theory, idea and ontology of trace and the ways in which it can be deployed in literature, image studies, visual arts, film, art history and theory, and seeks to discuss: how can we or can we conceptualize trace? How can it be (or can it be) used as a critical tool to analyze works of art and literature? Can we speak of the ontology of trace? What role does art, textual practices and images play in our understanding of the trace?

Please submit your abstracts (max. 500 words) along with a short biographical note (max. 150 words) by September 30, 2019 via the NeMLA website (click “Submit Abstract”) https://www.cfplist.com/nemla/Home/S/18247?fbclid=IwAR0b_y0_IX31_UPiR7ytncMYEdDGMiUXWHmiCeZ6VhtCyTXMw7E4HYWVHqs

For any questions/concerns, please contact Busra Copuroglu [at] bcopurog@uwo.ca.

Reference:

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