

**Postgraduate Student Conference 2014, Literature & Culture Colloquium
Tuesday, 6 May 2014, “Kostis Palamas” Building**

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“From the Crypt of the Other: Writing and Spectrality in Paul Auster’s *Ghosts*”

Paul Auster’s novel *Ghosts* is a postmodern detective story that plays on the traditional motif of criticism that views the criminal as author and the detective as reader. However, in *Ghosts*, both subject positions are unstable and interchangeable. Detective and criminal are both effects of linguistic operations, trapped in the textual web that is weaved around them. Auster creates an extended metaphor on literary writing after the death of the author. Reader and writer are both ghosts; simulacra infinitely repeated in a dizzying *mise en abyme* in which the self dissolves into the other and reality is reduced to a play of reflections. Hunter and hunted, ghost and haunted, engage in a ferocious confrontation whose outcome is violence and death. But the identity of the survivor remains an open question. The text, an (auto)biography of both detective and criminal, is finally expropriated by the specter that returns to claim his inheritance. The novel is read through the lens of Derridean notions that unsettle the ontological presuppositions of Western metaphysics by problematizing the opposition between speech and writing.