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Ghostworlds: Transnational Documentary and the Politics of Re-Enactment

This paper focuses on British documentary filmmaker Nick Broomfield's film *Ghosts* (2006), a re-enactment of the drowning of 23 Chinese migrant workers in Morecambe Bay, England in 2004. Produced in collaboration with "real" Chinese immigrant workers, the film was used to promote a fund-raising campaign for the families of those who lost their lives in the tragedy. Drawing on recent research on Chinese migrant labor in contemporary Britain, my paper seeks to problematize the film's production as itself a site of immigrant labor: for all its good intentions, Broomfield's film subjects its own Chinese migrant workers to a labor regime disturbingly similar to that of the workers whose role they are playing, at one point even endangering their lives as the crew is almost swept away by a rising tide during a location shoot. The paper concludes by calling for a clearer understanding of filmmakers' own ethical relation to their subjects.