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Shane McCorristine. *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 275. \ \$33.99 (paper).

Sasha Handley

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typical of the international thought of Auguste Comte himself and of his followers as an organized movement. Yet Comte and Comtism are not discussed or even briefly introduced in the book. It would have been relevant to mention alongside the proposal to break up existing European states into smaller-scale republics that this applied only to the distribution of what Comte called “temporal power” in those states. However, there would also be the “Spiritual Power,” which would be a single one, uniting the whole “West” (and based, of course, in Paris). Similarly, Matikkala speaks of the Positivists’ proposal for joint European protectorate in Africa (106), without connecting it to the broader idea of “the West,” but this was all part of their overall international vision and already propagated by them as early as in 1866. The last paragraph of the (short) conclusion raises a similar question too (206–7). It is strange in its emphasis on the centrality of Positivism to British anti-imperialism (correctly emphasized), which is absent from the rest of the book. Several Positivists are extensively discussed, but Positivism as such is not given the limelight in the rest of the book that it is given only in the last paragraph. The Comtist “religion of humanity” is mentioned here, in the concluding paragraph, for the first time. Yet it was very much related to the Comtists’ anti-imperialist stance and overall international thought.

Some closely related works published in recent years are absent from the bibliography. The reason seems to be that the book is based on the author’s doctoral dissertation without much engagement with literature published after the thesis was submitted. Thus, recent books by Duncan Bell and Gregory Claeys do not appear in the bibliography, although Bell’s doctoral dissertation has been consulted and is cited. This is a shame, because an engagement with that extremely interesting recent scholarly output would have made this impressively well-researched and well-thought-through study even more fascinating. It is, in any case, indispensable reading for anyone interested in British attitudes toward the empire and imperialism.

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SHANE MCCORRISTINE. *Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750–1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 275. \$33.99 (paper).

Spectres of the Self is a welcome addition to the growing body of historical literature focused on the changing experiences and meanings attached to ghosts in English society. Shane McCorristine’s book builds on earlier work by Owen Davies, Peter Marshall, Jean-Claude Schmitt, and Keith Thomas, and it successfully rescues ghostly encounters from the margins of English culture, positioning them instead at the heart of psychological experiences of modernity. McCorristine charts the impact of enlightenment thought, nineteenth-century spiritualism, and the institutionalization of psychical research in shaping the ways that “bourgeois culture” appropriated the ghostly figure to express anxieties linked to the experience of modernity. This included confrontations with death and dissolution: an uncomfortable encounter with which ghost stories have long been associated. McCorristine, however, charts the emergence of a new type of ghost. His specters are rootless and anonymous; they rarely interacted with their percipients and had no discernible didactic message to communicate to those who saw them. The specters that haunt this book are therefore markedly different from the ghosts of medieval and early modern England who were identifiable souls of the dead that engaged with the personal, emotional, and religious concerns of the living. McCorristine’s “spectres of the self” were internalized, psychological phantasms that were shaped by the rationalist-empirical philosophies of European enlightenment figures, by a rapid phase of technological change, and by the rise of psychiatry, psychology, and associated medical discourses. McCorristine’s specters are closely linked to medical explications of

dreams and other interim states of consciousness, which positioned experiences of ghost-seeing as projections of the subjective imagination. As a result, the book tells us as much about the development of philosophies of mind and human perception as it does about the shifting dimensions of the ghost-seeing experience. Indeed, the figure of the ghost is often a mutable presence in the text.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of early modern ghost beliefs and describes the impact of enlightenment medicine and philosophy in challenging the objective reality of ghostly appearances. McCorristine helpfully situates the development of English thought in a broader European context and explores the place of hallucinations and illusions in early French psychiatry and German occult philosophies. Each of these contexts shaped the so-called spectralisation of thinking about the self in which the ghost-seeing experience was increasingly linked to internal phantasms of the mind. The second chapter places the ghost-seeing experience at the center of philosophical developments that distanced ghosts from the tangible sensory faculties and linked them instead to alternate states of consciousness. This point is effectively illustrated through debates about the clothes that ghosts were reported to wear. McCorristine suggests that visual representations of ghosts mirrored the imaginative states of their percipients and that they were steadily aligned with the concept of the waking dream—a notion that was central to natural philosophical explorations of the mind and imagination at the close of the eighteenth century. McCorristine argues persuasively that the association of ghost-seeing with mental states such as hallucinations allowed for the coexistence of realist and skeptical beliefs and emphasized the liminal status of ghost-seeing between the worlds of fact and fiction. Chapter 3 explores ghost-hunting in relation to the Society for Psychical Research, whose members increasingly associated this activity with the phenomena of thought transference and telepathy. Chapter 4 extends this further by outlining the concept of a “community of sensation,” which consisted of an international telepathic community that paints a fascinating picture of the imperial context of ghost-seeing. The significance of geographical variation in shaping the accounts themselves could however be more thoroughly unpacked. The book’s final chapter assesses critiques of ghost-seeing and ghost-hunting within Victorian psychological discourse. McCorristine argues that the Society for Psychical Research devised an alternative sociocultural model of hallucination based on the ghost-seeing experience, which further destabilized the objective reality of spectral phenomena by locating them within interim states of consciousness situated between sleeping and waking.

This book is richly researched, impressive in scope, and genuinely interdisciplinary in its methodology. The author’s dense narrative is at times difficult to master, yet multiple readings of important sections are ultimately rewarding in the conclusions that they reach. The intellectual rationalization of the ghost-seeing experience is clearly central to the book’s narrative, but more detail of the ghostly visions themselves would have added color, depth, and a layer of agency beyond the narrow confines of “bourgeois culture.” Members of the “general public” who contributed the raw material of ghost-seeing experiences remain shadowy figures for the most part. This focus also downplays currents of skepticism in popular cultural understandings of ghosts, although as previous studies have noted, any division of belief drawn primarily along class lines is highly problematic. The ghost of popular culture “with its clanging chains and accusing glare” (2) that McCorristine describes also underestimates the variety and sophistication of beliefs at the community level. Nevertheless, *Spectres of the Self* offers a fresh perspective on how we should read the relationship between ghost stories and modern subjectivities. McCorristine’s book will undoubtedly prove to be a valuable resource for scholars and students with an interest in supernatural beliefs and more broadly in the sociocultural and intellectual history of contemporary Europe.

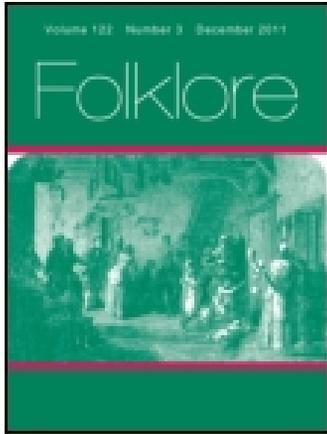
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Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-seeing in England, 1750-1920

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rituals, became a tourist attraction as early as the eighteenth century, which, to our great advantage, has left us with many written accounts of tarantism as observed by these early tourists. Finally, she defines “culture” as “something that is inscribed on and in the body, as well as in the process of the embodiment of the ritual in the past, and the contemporary experiences of playing and dancing *pizzica* today” (pp. 7–8). This turns out to be a crucial and useful definition for her study of tarantism through the angle of performance studies.

The book is subsequently divided into four chapters. The first, “Embodying Pasts and Presence,” describes the methodology based on performance studies, combined with anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies. To begin with, Daboo connects historical methods with ethnographic ones, and uses historical descriptions of tarantism as ethnographical “moments” in the history of the ritual. The second section describes the study of ritual and performance with Daboo’s focus on “the process of embodiment and a sense of presence in tarantism and neo-tarantism which connects past and present” (p. 44). This process of embodiment of those taking part in a ritual or performance is meticulously woven into the known framework of anthropological and sociological methods, and clearly forms one of the innovative aspects of Daboo’s approach towards the study of tarantism.

The remaining chapters form a chronological description of both ritual and dance. Chapter Two covers the fourteenth to the twentieth centuries, after a brief section on the connection between music and healing in Antiquity. The first descriptions of tarantism go back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Jesuit Athanasius Kircher (1602–80) included a substantial chapter on tarantism in his work on magnetism and was the first to send a research team to Salento to describe the ritual (pp. 120–30). Chapter Three focuses entirely on De Martino’s research as the 1960s “moment” in the history of tarantism. The first section of the chapter contains a discussion of his ideas, and the second section an attempt by Daboo to reinterpret and reframe some of the experiences of embodiment described by De Martino. His book, which has become part of the history of tarantism in its own right, is studied through the eyes of a practitioner. Unexpectedly, this leads to another dense theoretical section on the stimulating effect on the dancer of music and colour while embodying the ritual. Chapter Four describes the revival of tarantism and *pizzica* from the 1970s onwards, combined with the author’s own experiences as a practising dancer.

Although Daboo is herself aware of her “shifting position between practitioner and researcher (when do I put down the camera at a festival and join in the dance)” (p. 10), to use her own words, the integration of both parts is not as fluid as one might wish. The highly theorised conception of embodiment of a ritual and the constant attempt to fit all the “moments of experience” (whether past or present) into this concept make the book less than easy to read. Nevertheless, the book offers a thorough historical overview of (ethnographical) descriptions of tarantism and allows the reader to experience the dancing of the *pizzica* through lively accounts of the author’s own experiences.

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Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-seeing in England, 1750–1920.

By Shane McCorristine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. 275 + x pp. Illus. \$35.00/£20.99 (pbk). ISBN 978-0-521-74796-7

Is seeing a ghost experienced in the same manner at any time and place in history, or is it a hallucination produced under the influence of specific historical, economic, and cultural

conditions? The second of the three spirits that visits Scrooge in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* provides a clue. It warns:

there are some upon this earth of yours [...] who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passion, pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our name, who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they had never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on themselves, not us.

Dickens is one of the many authors Shane McCorristine draws upon to examine how ghost-seeing was experienced, imagined, and theorised in England from the end of the Enlightenment to the beginning of the modern era. McCorristine's study thus takes a different path from studies of ghosts and the paranormal that focus on stories in relation to specific places, their embedded histories of trauma, their narrative morphology, and the social function of the paranormal in general. Rather, McCorristine focuses on the intersection of modern science and the history of ideas that feed into the notion of ghosts as spectres, or reflections, of the self.

McCorristine is a Government of Ireland CARA Postdoctoral Fellow at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth and at the Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge. *Spectres of the Self* is based on McCorristine's research for his Ph.D. thesis. He has previously published articles on the supernatural in literature and has a book forthcoming on spiritualism, mesmerism, and the occult, which is slated for publication in 2013.

The past decade has seen an increased interest in interdisciplinary studies on haunting and ghostliness in psychology, sociology, anthropology, ethnology, and literary studies. Owen Davies's *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), which contextualises belief in ghosts with political and religious designs, and Andrew Smith's Marxist analysis of the links between ghost stories and economic conditions, *The Ghost Story, 1840–1920* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), are examples of recent studies that investigate the social conditions which make the paranormal a continuing source of popular fear and thrill. In comparison with Davies's and Smith's works, however, *Spectres of the Self* distinguishes itself by looking beyond Anglo-Saxon culture and including influential trends in philosophic development and scientific methodology in France and Germany.

In 1799, a Berlin intellectual, Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, caused a small sensation when he read an account of his experiences with apparitions to the Royal Society of Berlin. McCorristine helpfully includes the entire text of Nicolai's "A Memoir on the Appearance of Spectres or Phantoms occasioned by Disease, with Psychological Remarks" as an appendix. Nicolai explains how he was used to being bled twice a year because he suffered from "violent giddiness" due to work-related stress (p. 232). In spite of a strict diet, his condition worsened. The physician-supervised application of leeches to the anus did not produce the desired calming effect. In 1791, Nicolai "was in a violent perturbation of mind" (p. 233), when he suddenly saw the figure of a deceased person in his room. His wife saw nothing. The physician was called, and over a period of months neither bleeding nor leeches gave Nicolai respite from a growing company of apparitions—some known to him, others not—which crowded his life, whether he was alone or with others. Night and day they surrounded him, speaking to him or to each other, apparently not in order to frighten him nor ask him to act on their behalf. Eventually they faded away, according to Nicolai, as a result of a final bleeding and application of leeches to the anus. Subsequently, he experienced a few times the sort of sensation he had begun to identify with seeing ghosts, when his nerves were in a "disordered state" (p. 236). But the ghosts were gone for good.

Taking this famous case as his starting point for the first part of the book, McCorristine traces how European scholars began to shift their attention from the Enlightenment

perception of ghost-seeing as a symptom of physical illness, to understanding ghost-seeing as the subjective, internal, psychological reaction to social and cultural pressures. The second part of the book is a compelling study of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and the concept of hallucination in Victorian psychology. The analysis of the SPR as a cultural, ideological, and historical phenomenon is the book's strongest, most revelatory section. McCorristine draws on a vast number of primary and secondary sources, which he boldly juxtaposes in novel, often thought-provoking ways. In his analysis, the history and social context of the SPR functions as a case study for the way psychical research became "a profoundly influential cultural constant in late Victorian and Edwardian culture" (p. 104). Despite critics' dismissal of the SPR as a quasi-scientific group of noble-minded amateurs, the SPR worked hard to cast itself as a respectable scientific organisation, whose stated purpose was to record and investigate supernatural phenomena of mesmeric, psychical, and spiritualistic nature. With the earnest determination characteristic of the Victorian *Zeitgeist*, the SPR set up committees that looked into specifics of the supernatural: thought-reading, mesmerism, haunted houses, psychical phenomena, and so on. McCorristine deftly contextualises the specifics of the SPR's methods and internal disagreements with the broader cultural history of Victorian death rituals and perceptions of the afterlife, thus demonstrating a breadth of analytical scope that offers insightful information for both the general and the scholarly reader. *Spectres of the Self* is a valuable addition to the growing canon on the cultural history of ghost-seeing and is highly recommended to anyone interested in the history, literature, and cultural mindset of Europe in the 1750s to 1920s.

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An Introduction to Early Irish Literature. By Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin. Dublin: Four Courts, 2009. x + 210 pp. Illus. €24.95 (pbk), €50.00 (hbk). ISBN 978-1-846-82177-6 (pbk), 978-1-846-82176-9 (hbk)

This is a tremendously useful book and one that has been needed for some time. Books on medieval Irish literature normally fall into one or another of two opposing categories: serious studies accessible only to a restricted cadre of specialists, or popular collections aimed at a broad general readership. This one is neither. Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin's achievement is the production of a volume for *students*. Granted, students of medieval Celtic Studies may be said to form a rather small pool too, but I certainly wish this book had existed when I was a postgraduate. In keeping with the needs of its target audience, it is thorough and comprehensive, packed with references for further reading, and yet still highly accessible. In places it reads almost like a series of teaching lectures, which is not a bad thing for this kind of project.

There are nine chapters, plus an introduction, an afterward, extensive notes, a few handsome colour plates, and a good bibliography. The chapters cover the major topic areas of medieval Irish literature, starting with a broad background section that sets out the general cultural situation in Ireland at the dawn of the Christian era. After this outline, which introduces druids, oral tradition, the beginnings of writing, and the branches of Irish literature, the contents proceed through "The Mythological Cycle," "The Heroic Cycle," "The Fenian Cycle," "The Cycles of the Kings," "The Otherworld," "Kings, Goddesses, and Sovereignty," "The Hero and Heroic Biography," and "Poets and Poetry." Given the complexity of the corpus, this is as sensible an organisation as any other and provides a manageable way for students to approach material that is both diverse and difficult.

Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750–1920,
by Shane McCorristine (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010; pp. 275. £55;
pb. £19.99).

People have been seeing ghosts for a long time. That, at least, is what they say (which, in the absence of personal experience, is all we have to work with). Faced with such dubious evidence, historians understandably tend to side-step the question which immediately occurs to everyone else: are they real? They do, however, sometimes consider the second question that occurs to people (which is also the first question that occurs to psychologists): why do people believe in them? But, before we can begin to answer either question, we must first consider what is meant by 'real', what it is that people believe in. This is where matters become more complex, and where history is needed in order to understand the relevant meanings and contexts within which people have believed that certain things are one thing or another.

Shane McCorristine adopts a position that neither a parapsychologist nor a sceptical psychologist would take, but one that provides no problem for a cultural historian: ghosts are both real and not real. His thesis is that modern ghosts are both more real and less real than traditional haunting ghosts—more real because they involve all the senses, appear in photographs and on television; less real because most people see them as psychological phenomena, products of a haunted mind, spectres of the self. Or, to put it in language that

psychologists and parapsychologists would understand, ghosts are not real, and most people believe they are not real, but they are interesting cultural phenomena that reflect the way we see things.

The book concerns how ghosts and ghost-seeing have been understood since the Reformation (when the loss of purgatory made spirits a more distant possibility, but fear of scepticism brought them closer to home), by examining their evolution during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (when the problems of observation and testimony that they raised posed a challenge to Enlightenment thinking). The response of many was to view them as hallucinations: real experiences but not real ghosts. On the one hand, these hallucinations were linked to insanity—but there were always too many respectable, and apparently sane, people who reported seeing them for this to be entirely satisfactory. On the other hand, they were seen as examples of how easily any of us, however sane, can be deceived by our senses.

According to spectral illusions theory, common in Britain, ghosts might be the result of the waking dreams of a disordered mind, though the disorder could be temporary and entirely treatable. French psychiatrists debated the differences between hallucination and illusion, and the extent to which they were symptomatic of madness. Meanwhile, as humans sought to explain away the spirits, they avoided the impression that they had any doubts about God. After all, ghosts were one thing, but souls were another.

With the emergence of modern spiritualism, the line between hallucinations and insanity continued to be negotiated, as anthropologists linked them to primitive religious belief, while psychologists showed that they were common enough in the modern world. One of the well-known minor debates at the time, on the matter of how to explain ghosts' clothes, reflected not only a tendency for sarcasm (that was understandably common in such debates) but also more profound philosophical matters. What began as an argument against the (physical) reality of ghosts became an argument for their (psychological) reality, and also fed into the argument for their (psychic) reality.

Hallucination theories were influential and pervasive, to be found in the novels of Hawthorne and Dickens, and in the thoughts of Kant and Schopenhauer, and, as lesser minds struggled to distinguish between fact and fiction, the pioneers of psychical research went in search of evidence. Having already demonstrated (to their own satisfaction, at least) the existence of telepathy, senior figures in the Society for Psychical Research presented a theory of hallucinations that was natural enough, yet psychic nevertheless. For them, ghosts were hallucinations that occurred around the time of death, and were conveyed by telepathic means from the dying (or just dead) source. In an attempt to show that this was not mere coincidence (of waking dreams and concurrent death), reports were collected in their thousands, and the evidence checked so far as it could be. But the ongoing metaphor of waking dreams, the fuzzy boundary between sleep and wakefulness, and the now well-known problems of testimony, made such evidence appear to many to be inherently unreliable, and thus the evidence for ghosts too easy to dismiss as neither supernatural nor psychic.

Ghosts have been seen, and in so many ways. They have been seen as evidence of an afterlife, of insanity, of telepathy. They have been seen as unusual and common illustrations of the unreliability of the normal mind, as the causes of belief and as the product of belief. And what this book shows is that they can

be seen as a useful reminder of the need to address what is meant by real, before considering whether anything is real. It has to be said that, unlike, for example, Owen Davies's more comprehensive (and more readable) *The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts* (2007), it sometimes feels like unnecessarily hard work. At times, it is as if the argument is intended to be ghost-like: initially mysterious, difficult to grasp, leading one to search for a more simple explanation. Nevertheless, as in all good cultural histories, *Spectres of the Self* draws a rich web of connections, provides subtle insights, and reveals the degree of complexity which lies behind the simple questions.

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DISENCHANTMENT AND RE-ENCHANTMENT IN EUROPE, 1250–1920

PETER MARSHALL

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DISENCHANTMENT AND RE-ENCHANTMENT IN EUROPE, 1250–1920

Enchanted Europe: superstition, reason, and religion, 1250–1750. By Euan Cameron. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 473. ISBN 978-0-19-925782-9. £35.00.

Milton's angels: the early-modern imagination. By Joad Raymond. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xviii + 465. ISBN 978-0-19-956050-9. £30.00.

Spectres of the self: thinking about ghosts and ghost-seeing in England, 1750–1920. By Shane McCorristine. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. x + 275. ISBN 978-0-521-74796-7. £19.99 pbk.

The relationship of reason to religion is a preoccupation of our times. Some contemporary culture-warriors, particularly in Britain and the United States, vehemently maintain their inherent antitheticality, and imagine themselves engaged in a heroic struggle to preserve Enlightenment rationality and hard-won scientific advances in the face of a global upsurge of irrational belief. Behind much of the histrionics is a sense that history itself has gone off course. The long-held presumption of an essentially linear path of development, via such milestones as the Reformation, Scientific Revolution, and Enlightenment, towards a condition of benevolent and universal secular modernity has been thrown into disarray by the evident power of religious faith, not merely to maintain a fading hegemony, but to generate new forms of social identity and inspire cultural and political action across the developing and developed world. Where once the long sweep of the ‘secularization paradigm’ seemed axiomatic and universalizing, sociologists of religion now posit flowing and ebbing tides of ‘Christianization’ as a hallmark of modern European history.¹

In problematizing the relationship between historical progress and the evolution of secular rationality, historians of the long early modern period can congratulate themselves on being ahead of the curve. They have had the advantage of a compelling master-narrative against which to whet their revisionism. The greatest of religious sociologists, Max Weber, famously proposed that the Reformation, particularly in its Calvinistic incarnation, promoted the ‘disenchantment of the world’: a conscious rejection of magical, numinous, and supernatural beliefs in favour of faith in a distant and transcendent deity.² For the better part of two decades, historians have been expressing their

¹ David Martin, *On secularization: towards a revised general theory* (Aldershot, 2005).

² Max Weber, *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, NY, and London, 1930).

doubts about how this worked out in practice. An intensified preoccupation with demonic agency, a highly providentialized universe micro-managed by an interventionist God, and rich Protestant sub-cultures of folk belief and popular magic have all been suggested as more plausible medium-term effects of the religious disruptions of the era than any lurch towards spiritualized abstraction in religious matters.³ Yet the dismantling of the Weberian thesis has raised more questions than it has answered. Should the Reformation now be seen as an intellectual failure, or as a cultural and pastoral success? Was disenchantment defeated, or only deferred? Should we think in terms of broad continuity, or of patterns of re-enchantment in post-Reformation and post-Enlightenment Europe? How marked was the contrast between Catholic and Protestant societies? The three volumes here under review, taking as their collective subject matter popular rituals and incantations, spirits and demons, angels and ghosts, all help to focus – if not necessarily to resolve – such questions. The affordable cover price in each case suggests an optimism, at least on the publishers' part, that these are issues in which general readers as well as scholars retain a stake and an interest.

I

Amid widespread loss of certainty about the modernizing potential of the Reformation, and even about modernity itself, Euan Cameron's impressively researched and lucidly written *Enchanted Europe* seeks to restore a sense of purpose and direction into debates about the disenchantment of Europe. Cameron, a distinguished historian of the European Reformation, admits to impatience with what he calls 'the now conventional postulate that Protestantism was as "enchanted" and devil-ridden as its medieval predecessors' (p. 23). He has in mind here the work of social historians of religion such as Alexandra Walsham and Bob Scribner, whose methodology he suspects of laying insufficient emphasis on the theological writings of the reformers themselves. (It is unfortunate in this context that Cameron, in a gratuitous endnote, feels impelled to suggest Scribner's own Catholic faith and upbringing as an unacknowledged motive for scepticism about the modernizing impact of Protestantism.) Cameron's own perspective on continuity and change is unashamedly elitist and top-down. He surveys an extraordinary breadth of printed sources in Latin and a range of European vernaculars in order to supply a history of superstition, or rather, a history of discourses about superstition: an analysis of the changing 'superstition-critique' of Europe's intellectual elites over the course of five centuries from the mid-thirteenth century

³ Stuart Clark, *Thinking with demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999); Bob Scribner, 'The Reformation, popular magic, and the "disenchantment of the world"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 23 (1993), pp. 475–94.

to the middle of the eighteenth. 'Superstition', as Cameron is well aware, is a problematic and loaded term, forever located in the eye of the beholder. A working definition might paint it as worship of the true God by inappropriate means (as opposed to idolatry, worship of false gods). The early chapters of *Enchanted Europe* describe a long struggle on the part of late medieval theologians to find and describe the dividing line between superstition and acceptable devotion. Intellectuals encountered among the people an expectation of a world filled with imminent, unpredictable, and often amoral spiritual forces, at odds with the cosmic dividing lines between divine and demonic agency that structured their own understanding. Medieval writers might fulminate against ignorance and credulity, but they were often pastorally sensitive enough to recognize that certain forms of popular counter-magic were too ingrained to be usefully eradicated. On this, as on so much else, the church never spoke with a single voice: neo-Thomists, within defined parameters, tended to allow for the inherent sanctity of objects and the automatic efficacy of approved rituals; some nominalists, portentously for the future, ascribed all spiritual effects to the express and immediate action of God, and warned that beneficial results could never securely be relied on from any works of devotion.

The Reformation (and its prelude, the biting superstition-critique of Erasmian humanism) was thus an intensified continuation of a long-running conversation. Protestantism adapted medieval conventions for identifying particular practices and beliefs as demonic in origin, and amplified them in range and scope: Catholicism itself – its core sacraments and rituals – was nothing less than a species of superstition. In the middle ages, Satan was often seen as operating under a 'blanket permission' to tempt humanity and cause harm, but Protestant (particularly Calvinist) orthodoxy saw the immediately controlling, if inscrutable, hand of God behind every Satanic action: recourse to extraordinary or ritual means to head off the judgements of God was thus completely inadmissible. Tridentine Catholicism meanwhile showed continuities with the medieval critique of superstition, but was also deeply concerned to defend the efficacy of traditional rites against the attacks of the Protestants. Here, Cameron makes a powerful and persuasive case against the tendency in recent historiography to view the Protestant and Catholic Reformations as essentially parallel paths of acculturation and social discipline – in fact, the discourse of superstition allowed each side, quite literally, to demonize the other.

Confessional debates were, nonetheless, conducted within a common inherited framework of Christian Aristotelianism, postulating the existence of spirits as incorporeal substances in the material world. The eroding of this intellectual framework in the course of the seventeenth century had profound implications for the treatment of 'superstitious' belief. On the one hand, a handful of radical thinkers, including Thomas Hobbes and Balthasar Bekker, employed familiar Protestant anti-superstition rhetoric while drawing on the new mechanical philosophy in order to deny the very existence of spiritual beings, as they were conceived of in both Catholic and Protestant tradition. In alarmed response,

self-appointed defenders of orthodoxy like the English philosophers Henry More and Joseph Glanvill rushed to validate popular stories of witchcraft, ghosts, and spirits, in the process abandoning the a priori criteria for assessing the possibility of a preternatural event that for centuries had guided their predecessors, Catholic and Protestant. (Why the late seventeenth-century campaign to confound 'atheism' through the evidence of the supernatural should have been so overwhelmingly English an affair is something Cameron does not altogether satisfactorily explain.)

Glanvill and co.'s suggestion that almost anything might be true if empirical evidence seemed to support it invited an inevitable backlash: a wave of ridicule and fashionable satire that fuelled the early Enlightenment's contempt for miracles and 'enthusiasm'. The *philosophes*, suggests Cameron, 'reworked elements of the arguments that Protestantism had devised more than two centuries earlier' (p. 309) in its attacks on popular superstition, though their arguments were now detached from Aristotelian cosmology and the dogmatic authority of scripture. Ironically, as elite disdain for popular credulity increased, actual pastoral pressure to transform such beliefs was likely diminishing: if the people were not really heedlessly flirting with demonic powers, then there was little reason to fear superstition or to push for its obliteration. The way was opened for a further development in the nineteenth century: the Romantic discovery and celebration of national 'folk cultures', superstition as whimsy and cultural ornament.

In amassing a plethora of intractable source material, and harnessing it to a coherent narrative of intellectual change, Cameron has done scholarship a considerable service. Nonetheless, one comes away from the book troubled by some nagging doubts. In the first place, throughout the text, the conceptual status of 'superstition' itself remains rather uneasily suspended. At the outset, Cameron seems to concede its character as a purely intellectual construct, and rightly insists that historians must never presume to identify what 'actually' constitutes superstition as opposed to true religion. Yet increasingly he falls foul of his own stricture, speculating on the methodological and evidential possibilities for writing a history of superstitious belief, and by the end talking about the 'genuine "superstition"' surviving in European cultures into modern times. It is hard here not to feel that the author has been seduced by the perspective of his sources. Another concern is that *Enchanted Europe*, for all its subtlety and sophistication, aims to tell a profoundly teleological story. In seeking to defend a version of the Weber thesis, and other 'ideal-type' approaches to the character of the Protestant Reformation, Cameron argues (p. 22) that 'it is perfectly possible for a religious movement to contain within it the seeds of a later development: but for those seeds not to germinate in the first, second or third generation'. Disenchantment was a ticking time-bomb. Yet to postulate convincingly the necessarily modernizing potential of Protestant thought (in the face of the cultural agency of very significant numbers of actual Protestants) requires rather more elaboration than it is able to receive here. It also assumes a primacy of ideas at the expense of decisive political, social, and cultural factors operating in particular, and contingent, historical contexts.

In this respect, *Enchanted Europe* suggests some of the limitations of internalist intellectual history, even as it exemplifies its elegant and incisive practice.

II

The broad sweep of Cameron's Europe-wide survey is usefully counter-pointed by Joad Raymond's monograph on *Milton's angels*, which focuses on one country, one particular aspect of belief in the supernatural, and, ultimately, on one literary text. Yet Raymond's approach reaches out beyond the confined world of Milton studies and makes his book of very considerable interest to historians of the religion, culture, and politics of late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England. Raymond starts from the premises that *Paradise lost* is, first and foremost, a poem about angels, and that angels were a central component of the literary and religious imagination of post-Reformation England. Although angels had been prominent in both medieval scholastic theology and popular religious practice, the Reformation neither rejected angels nor simply tolerated them as a residuum of earlier devotional culture. Raymond devotes the first half of his book to a rich and rewarding exploration of the place of angels in Protestant thought and religious representation. Although formal angelological treatises were rare, angels penetrated writings of all kinds, and performed a wide range of philosophical and theological functions. English Protestants may have attacked the excessive 'curiosity' of the schoolmen, and some evinced a Calvinist minimalism on such questions as whether humans were assigned an individual guardian angel, or exactly how angels were arranged in ranks and hierarchies, but that did not stop them posing a range of thorny questions about the nature of these celestial beings: what and how do angels know? Do they have bodies, senses, freewill? How can they interact with humans? Are they differentiated by sex, or by names? Such questions played a role in biblical exegesis, in the working out of systematic theology, in the vindication of Protestantism as the true church, and in the offering of pastoral comfort to the laity. Angels functioned as nothing less than 'a means of conceiving of order, and a means, through analogy and differentiation, of conceiving what it is to be human' (p. 87).

The angel beliefs of early modern England were dynamic and creative, rather than static and received. Since angels were a much-utilized means of interpreting and commenting on hierarchy, there was a swell of interest in them in periods when hierarchies were being challenged and tested. The revolutionary decades witnessed a swell in angel commentary, and in direct angel-communication. Raymond supplies an intriguing case-study of the circle around the Pordage family: the father, John, conversed with angels at his Berkshire rectory, while the son, Samuel, composed an epic poem, *Mundorum explicatio*, employing angels to expound a mystical theology. It is another epic poem, of course, which forms the heart of the discussion. Raymond is dismissive of interpretations of Milton which see him as a purely 'literary' figure, pursuing aesthetic and artistic goals in detachment from the burning religious and political questions of the day. At the

same time he is suspicious of historicist readings that seek to interpret the poem in terms of precise contemporary and political allusions. In Raymond's view, Milton's strikingly real angels (who digest food, suffer pain, and make love for pleasure) resist any form of allegorical decoding. They are the creations of a poet who, in consciously prophetic mode, believed himself to be writing revealed truth, or at least 'an inspired truth-telling fiction' (p. 365). The key is the Protestant doctrine of 'accommodation', the notion that throughout history God comes halfway to meet imperfect human understanding and perception. For Milton, and for Protestant culture more generally, accommodation legitimated descriptions of the invisible spiritual world and preserved the integrity of scriptural literalism in the face of mounting philosophical attacks against it. For creative authors, it ensured that there need be no antipathy between theology and poetry, story-telling and doctrine, and it did so 'by offering a mode of description that was neither literal nor figurative' (p. 164).

Literary scholars will doubtless debate Raymond's bold interpretations of *Paradise lost*; historians will instinctively welcome an approach that is richly and deeply contextualized, but resists any straightforwardly reductionist readings. Raymond's demonstration that angels – late into the seventeenth century – gripped the poetic and theological imagination of Protestant England clearly has implications for the debates over 'disenchantment'. Raymond's own view on this is a robustly revisionist one: angels were neither killed off by the Scientific Revolution nor were they an undue embarrassment to mechanical philosophers. They remained to the end of the century and beyond a vibrant part of a variegated world-view. But there is nonetheless something climactic about Milton's poetic triumph, and about the period it embodies. Raymond's own sensitive account of Dryden's 1674 reworking of *Paradise lost* as opera reveals the emergence of a profoundly different sensibility, a more self-consciously fictive awareness, and a willingness to leave theology to the theologians. Angels (the efforts of Hobbes and Bekker notwithstanding) had certainly not been banished from the intellectual firmament, but neither, as the eighteenth century dawned, did they any longer provide the flexible and cohesive system of meaning they had once represented.

III

For the purposes of Protestant dogmatic and pastoral theology, one of the distinct advantages of angels was that they were not ghosts. Reformation orthodoxy held that the souls of the dead never returned to confront the living in this world; certainly not from a purgatory which, according to Protestant theology, did not exist. If people saw what they thought were the spirits of the dead, these could only be good or evil angels (probably the latter). Yet, in what must be accounted one of the great catechetical failures of Reformed teaching, popular belief in ghosts continued unabated, in England as elsewhere in Protestant Europe. Picking up at the point where Cameron's *Enchanted Europe* comes to an end,

Shane McCorristine's *Spectres of the self* examines some aspects of the culture of ghost-seeing in England through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and into the twentieth. In the process, it provides a fresh and interesting perspective on the complex relationship between 'modernity' and supernatural belief.

The account here suggests that we might pause before accepting Cameron's intuition that by the dawn of the Romantic era educated writers had more or less given up on eradicating popular superstition. In England at least, a considerable body of literature from the early and middle decades of the nineteenth century pursued an avowed and urgent 'anti-superstition agenda' with regard to spirits and spectral visitations. Some of it was aimed specifically at children, such as Mary Weightman's 1791 *Dialogues for youth against the fear of ghosts and other irrational apprehensions*. Such authors regarded belief in ghosts as laughably archaic. As part of the demystification strategy, some even included chiaroscuro illustrations, by staring at which, and then redirecting their gaze at a blank surface, readers could induce their own spectral visions (though, as McCorristine notes, home-entertainment of this kind itself represented a form of re-enchantment in thinking about the supernatural). But far from allowing themselves to be snuffed out in this fashion, the embers of belief in the possibility of genuine contact with the dead showed a remarkable capacity to reignite and blaze forth in new areas of thought and culture. The extraordinary rise of the spiritualist movement is a case in point, though it is not a principal theme of McCorristine's book. Nor is he much concerned with the resilience and evolution of folklore, popular culture, and local traditions regarding ghosts, a theme that has been ably tackled by other scholars in the last few years.⁴ Rather, McCorristine wants to foreground a distinctively 'modern' conception of the ghost, arising out of the psychological and psychiatric preoccupations of the nineteenth century. The main focus is on the efforts of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) (founded 1882) to place appearances of ghosts on a firm 'scientific' footing. The SPR was a voluntary association of enthusiastic amateurs, whose full membership roll encompassed the great and the good of late Victorian society (Gladstone, Tennyson, Conan Doyle, R. L. Stevenson, Freud, and Jung were all on the books). While its professed approach was sceptical and experimental, its active membership overlapped with that of spiritualism, and several of those involved in its investigations of spectral phenomena were predisposed to believe what they were setting out to test; McCorristine speaks about its activities representing a 'surrogate faith' for those suspended by the ebbing tide of belief in late Victorian England. Its outlook, in fact, in some ways recalls that of Joseph Glanvill and his fellow supernatural-enthusiasts of the seventeenth century, striving to blend the empiricist principles of the Royal Society and Baconian science with the demons and witches of traditionalist religiosity.

McCorristine is not without a sneaking regard for the aficionados of the SPR and other Victorian ghost-seers. They were, he suggests, seeking to circumvent

⁴ See in particular Owen Davies, *The haunted: a social history of ghosts* (Basingstoke, 2007); Sasha Handley, *Visions of an unseen world: ghost beliefs and ghost stories in eighteenth-century England* (London, 2007).

what Foucault famously described as the authoritarian blackmail of the Enlightenment: ‘you either accept the Enlightenment and remain within the tradition of its rationalism ... or else you criticize the Enlightenment and then try to escape from its principles of rationality’.⁵ The SPR was in fact strongly committed to principles of rationalism and scientific investigation. Having gathered and assessed reports from a mass polling of correspondents, three of its leading members published in 1886 a report concluding that ghostly apparitions were ‘phantasms of the living’, telepathic impressions produced by a dying person and received as an impression in the mind of a percipient connected to them. The phenomena in question were typically banal, and far removed from the hauntings and revenge ghosts of popular folklore. Yet it was the latter that were destined to survive, and even to undergo a kitsch revival in modern media culture, while the findings of the SPR, rechristened the Society for Spookical Research, were relentlessly mocked by the scientific establishment of the day. Through the course of the period, McCorristine identifies a growing concern on the part of sceptics and believers alike with the phenomenological status of the ghost-percipient, with the ‘hallucinatory’ nature of ghost-seeing. Ghosts were no longer part of the objectively ‘real’ world, but were still of great cultural and psychological significance. In fact, suggests McCorristine, they offer vital clues to the nature of modern subjectivity, via the notion of a haunted or ‘spectral self’. This is an intriguing and suggestive proposition (though an early modern historian is likely to reflect that a propensity to see spirits had long been linked – as in the case of Hamlet – to introspection and melancholia).

What these three very interesting volumes collectively suggest is that while there has evidently been no clear linear progression from enchantment to disenchantment, neither is it particularly helpful to conceive of patterns of dis- and re-enchantment as a see-saw, an ebbing and flowing tide, or any such cyclical metaphor. If we think of it in these terms, we are likely to be signing up, consciously or not, to some essentialized version of the categories themselves, or perhaps surrendering to Foucault’s Enlightenment blackmail. What is remarkable, however, is the capacity, over several centuries, of both ‘rationality’ and ‘irrationality’ to inhabit new forms and reinvent themselves in new guises. The engagement, dialectical and polemical, of a self-defining ‘rationality’ with a range of putatively irrational others is not a unique condition of secular modernity, but a cultural phenomenon of very long standing. We should not expect it to come to an end anytime soon.

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⁵ Michel Foucault, *The politics of truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer (Los Angeles, CA, 2007), p. 110.

tuals debated whether Fascism was an illness to which Italy had succumbed or something that was neither foreign nor strange to her culture and her character.

The debates carried on into post-war Italy, and continue today. Professor Patriarca takes the films of the comedian Alberto Sordi, whose currency is *mammismo* and *familismo*, as manifesting the current defects of the Italian character, which fits with what Italians themselves seem to like to think — but would we be convinced that the films of Jerry Lewis or Norman Wisdom are true embodiments of vital American or British characteristics? Or, is it that Italians are indeed easier to characterise in this way — in which case maybe there is something in the stereotypes?

As Professor Patriarca moves along time's arrow, several things strike the reader. One, is how often the same "vices" are identified as central components of the Italian character. Another, is how readily contemporaries drew quite opposite conclusions from the same phenomena. Thus, Fascism could be linked to all the old defects of character and politics and Mussolini depicted as the sum of them, or, alternatively, Italy could be portrayed as his "victim." Professor Patriarca's clear and cogent anatomy of the philosophers, critics, journalists and historians who have interpreted the Italian character over the past two centuries is comprehensive and rewarding — she seems to have read more or less everything. However, her chosen method necessarily leaves some basic questions unanswered. Hers is a history of polemics, mostly written with a very evident feel of *de haut en bas* about them. Who had the better arguments? To whom were they directed — apart from other intellectuals — and how were they received? What influence did they have? As far as the latter question at least goes, it is possible to draw some concrete conclusions. The archives I know best, dealing with military matters from the Liberal era to the close of the Fascist period, contain unambiguous evidence that the authorities believed many of the negative characteristics of their people to be true and that policy issues were influenced and even occasionally determined by them. As for stereotypes and their veracity — if you have ever stood in one of their banks or post offices, you will probably be ready to believe that there is still plenty of life left in Italians' individualism.

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Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920, by Shane McCorristine. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2010. 275 pp. \$95.00 US (cloth), \$33.99 US (paper).

It is an opportune moment to write about ghosts, as fictional representations of the supernatural currently dominate global popular culture. Yet, it is rare to find serious social and historical scholarship on these popular topics. Shane McCorristine's

work offers a rigorous historical analysis of communities and discourses organized around experience of ghost-seeing in nineteenth-century England. The book goes beyond discussions of the figure of ghost as a metaphor and provides an account of how ghost (and various other supernatural experiences) existed within dialectics of fact and fiction as well as science and spiritualism. In this respect, the book will interest the contemporary reader, not only because of its popular subject matter, but also due to its historical account of a particular moment in which tension between science and religion — a tension still relevant in contemporary experience — reveals itself in discourses formed around ghosts.

McCorristine's is an interdisciplinary study that blends various writings on ghosts including Kant, Schopenhauer, Dickens, and Coleridge, among others. However, it is by no means a survey of the writing on ghosts in the modern period. While the first part of the book focuses on the conceptualization of ghost-seeing in relation to mental processes in the period from the Enlightenment to mid-nineteenth century, the second part focuses on the work of the Society of Psychical Research (SPR), which was founded in 1882 in England by a group of intellectuals. McCorristine studies the attempts to develop a scientific discourse on ghosts, hallucinations, telepathy, etc. within a specific period and a specific locale for a concrete reason. The period in question, the Victorian age, witnessed the growth of new communication technologies, such as the telegram, as well as the what McCorristine defines as "disciplinary overlapping" of questions and problems (p. 8).

Indeed, the debates on ghosts and ghost-seeing reveal much about the formation and development of disciplines such as psychiatry, psychology, and parapsychology as well as their contested and shared objects of study. More generally, the scientific exploration of ghost-seeing experiences reveals the development of a modern sense of scientificity, which progresses from a subjective, affect-based framework into a technoscientific one favouring hard facts and laboratory experiments. The attempted scientific research of ghost-seeing underlines the fluidity between science and science-fiction, oral testimony and textual communication, and public and private — all of which are discussed extensively in the book. Within the historical and social conditions of the seemingly disenchanting modern society, the scientific investigations of ghosts endeavored to reconcile secular thinking with that of the supernatural. Yet, despite their best efforts to establish a scientific method to collect and interpret psychical phenomena, the SPR failed to convince critics of the validity of their research precisely because of the changing epistemological framework, which could not accommodate the emotional "community of sensation" idea that was the basis of their scientific investigations.

For McCorristine, the understanding of the mind is at stake in discussions of ghosts and in attempts to validate ghost-seeing experiences as scientific. At the outset, he presents his thesis that ghosts should be considered as "spectres of the self" that are generated in response to death and mind as an entity haunted by bereavement, the past, and fixed ideas (p. 3). His claim about mind and the self is supported by some keen observations. For example, purposeless modern ghosts that are separated from everyday experiences are distinguished from traditional

restless ones that come back with a purpose and have a clear place in the cosmological hierarchy of life and death. Moreover, the establishment of new communication technologies and the possibility of instantaneous notification of death through telegrams render modern society as uncanny. Hence, McCorristine argues that the telegram, through which the percipient learns of the death of the person seen in the vision, becomes a “central constituent of the psychical ghost story” (p. 148).

The historical research presented in the book details the works, debates, and criticisms of the SPR and will not only interest the informed readership, but also a more general one. This is due, in part, to what these micro-debates reveal about the macro-level of society and modern life, and in part to the fascinating nature of the discussions themselves. Debates on why ghosts appear clothed, whether their testimony can be considered valid, the scientific problems of haunted houses, and the differences between phantasms of the living and the dead will all surely intrigue the reader. *Spectres of the Self* presents enthralling and laborious scholarship. But more importantly, it will inspire future researchers to work on this previously un-mapped terrain of the supernatural.

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Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast, by Jay M. Smith. Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 2011. 378 pp. \$35.00 US (cloth).

People living in the Gévaudan region of France during the 1760s found themselves confronted with a horrible beast which ravaged the countryside. This animal — alternately described as a wolf, lynx, hyena, or wolf-dog hybrid, among many other classifications — attacked women and children who worked as shepherds; in the end, at least sixty people died. Scholars have offered numerous versions of this story in a futile attempt to determine the exact nature of the animal responsible. In *Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast*, Jay M. Smith shifts the focus away from identifying the beast and instead uses this event to grapple with an intricate cross-section of issues. Not content to simply engage in a binary discussion of elite versus popular or centre versus periphery, Smith provides a highly contextualized reading of this story in which he places the chief actors into a richly developed political, religious, and cultural milieu.

In the first two substantive chapters, Smith lays out a broad framework. He begins, in the first chapter, by outlining the nature of the problem. While herding sheep and cattle, alone and far from others, was always a risky business, the death of fourteen-year-old Jeanne Boulet in June of 1764 acted as a harbinger of doom.

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Spectres of the Self: Thinking about Ghosts and Ghost-Seeing in England, 1750-1920, by Shane McCorristine; pp. x + 275. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, 55.00 [pounds sterling], 19.99 [pounds sterling] paper, \$95.00, \$33.99 paper.

A new and exciting field of Victorian studies has emerged over the course of the past decade: the Victorian supernatural. Of course, Victorianists have had an interest in the ghostly for a long while, as too many canonical writers had penned supernatural tales for the fact to go altogether unnoticed: Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Henry James, Thomas Hardy--virtually anybody one can think of has a couple (if not dozens) of ghost stories to his or her name. But it was not until recently that we could count on a steady annual supply of books and articles exploring Victorian supernaturalist culture. What we have discovered is that this culture was not an aberrant offshoot divergent from dominant attitudes; on the contrary, talk of ghosts was as common as talk of weather or the health of the Empire. That talk often turned to the questionable reality of apparitions. Can there ever be enough evidence to decide the matter one way or the other? Who gets to decide the validity, the conclusiveness or inconclusiveness, of evidence? And why, if ghosts are truly among us, are they so skittish, so loath to show up, speak up, and lay the matter to rest? Only ghosts can tell.

Shane McCorristine's *Spectres of the Self* tells the story of scientific and quasi-scientific endeavors in the nineteenth century to prove or disprove the reality of ghosts. The book is a welcome and necessary contribution to the field--necessary because, while it covers some trodden ground, it does so with a thoroughness lacking in much other scholarship. We are reminded (rather than surprised to hear, I think) that "the dialectic of the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Western Europe radically altered interpretations of ghost-seeing by relocating the ghost from the external, objective and theologically structured world to the internal, subjective and psychologically haunted world of personal experience" (31). This is more or less accepted doctrine among scholars of the supernatural, but McCorristine takes a more in-depth look at this development than have others. Texts that in other studies often get little more than a footnote--John Ferriar's pioneering *An Essay Towards a Theory of Apparitions* (1813), for instance, or Samuel Hibbert's *Sketches of a Philosophy of Apparitions* (1824)--are here shown to have been as instrumental to the "psychologisation of the ghostly" as works by more illustrious contemporaries such as Immanuel Kant, David Brewster, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and Arthur Schopenhauer (32). McCorristine shows the ways in which the internalization of ghostliness hinged on advances in psychology and psychiatry, in particular on the changing definitions of hallucination. His treatment of the subject is the most thorough and nuanced I have yet seen.

Also useful is McCorristine's discussion of one of the most celebrated and influential cases of hallucinatory ghost-seeing in recorded history, that of Christoph Friedrich Nicolai, a Berlin bookseller whose testimony, published in England in 1803, became a touchstone in every ghost-debunking work from then on. (The entire text is conveniently reproduced in the book's appendix.) But the highlight of the first portion is undoubtedly the chapter on ghost wardrobes. Why would a ghost need a suit of clothes? In order not to catch a cold? So as not to morally outrage (or sexually arouse) the ghost-seer? And are these clothes, then, spectral in the same way as the apparition wearing them? Ghosts of trousers?

Part two is narrower in focus and chiefly concerned with the Society for Psychical Research (SPR). As McCorristine tells it, the history of the Society is the story of great expectations and just as great failures. A good example is the publication of the ambitious *Phantasms of the Living* (1886), authored by Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore. The authors proposed a telepathic theory of ghost-seeing that, it was hoped, would foster the reconciliation of science and spiritualism by offering an alternative to crude materialism. If ghosts, as the Society proposed, were manifestations of thought-transference--the dying projecting telepathic images of themselves to their friends and loved ones--then it should follow that "ghost-seeing was a natural and verifiable occurrence in the physical world" (146), encompassed by the dominant paradigm of scientific naturalism. But the scientific community was unimpressed by the Society's empirical research and findings; Phantasms became an instant occasion for skeptics to poke holes in spiritualist claims, and the whole enterprise stood on shakier ground than it did before. The Society's "Report on the Census of Hallucinations" (1894) and Myers's posthumously published *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) had comparable aims: to persuade the public that apparitions were telepathic images--veridical hallucinations is the technical term--as well as to prove that telepathy was real, simply another, albeit little understood, facet of our mental lives. Neither *Human Personality* nor the Report came close to achieving these goals. The problem, as McCorristine (channeling Thomas Kuhn) explains, is "that for radical new theories to stand a chance of success in a scientific field, then that field must be in a state of crisis. Yet there was no general crisis threatening the materialistic framework of scientific naturalism. On the contrary, it was the SPR which was in a state of crisis" (170). The Society fizzled out, leaving behind a dubious legacy: parapsychology, with its fetish of laboratory science, documentation, and gathering of so-called hard facts (facts which never seem to convince anyone who does not already believe).

Although, as I say, much in this will not be new to scholars in the field, McCorristine's book, for its wealth of information and strength of research, should be required reading in any course on the Victorian supernatural, especially if the course has anything to do with ghosts.

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