

some of which are included in Playfair (1975/2011). The latter, a police officer attached to São Paulo's Flying Squad, made it clear that he had no time for spiritism, yet had no doubts about the many phenomena he had witnessed in the family home:

"The facts really were true", he declared. "Fraud was impossible, bearing in mind the locations — even out in the street in broad daylight when there was no chance of previous preparation. The phenomena were often produced just for us, the family. Now, if there had been any intention to mystify people, this should have been done to others, but why us?" He went on to describe several incidents suggesting that life with father was like sharing a house with a poltergeist.

Credible as his testimony was, there was one incident in which allegations of fraud are supported by evidence, in the form of a photograph now in the SPR archive in Cambridge. It was evidently signed and given to SPR member Theodore Besterman on his visit to Brazil in 1934, and shows Mirabelli apparently levitating in his easily recognisable home. Examination of this original print under a magnifying glass reveals marks suggesting that it was retouched to disguise the fact that he was standing on a ladder, though the editor points out that Mirabelli had no need for such amateurish fakery, if that is what it was, since more than thirty witnesses testified to having seen him levitate on other occasions.

There are three possible verdicts on this colourful and enigmatic medium. Either he was "purely and simply fraudulent", as Besterman assured me shortly before his death in 1973, he was one of the greatest mediums ever, as many of his supporters believed, or a mixture of both. We should be grateful to the editor and publisher of these two volumes (a third volume is promised) for making available more than enough material for a definitive biography, deserving a place beside those of two of Brazil's best known mediums of the past, Chico Xavier (1913–2003) (Souto Maior, 2003) and Anna Prado (1883–1923) (Magalhães, (2012).

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SHAKESPEARE'S GHOSTS LIVE: FROM SHAKESPEARE'S GHOSTS TO PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, by
Annekatriin Puhle and Adrian Parker-Reed. Cambridge Scholars
Publishing, 2017. 344 pp. ISBN 978-1-4438-4449-9

Annekatriin Puhle and Adrian Parker-Reed are well-known in parapsychological and psychical research circles. They are frequent visitors / lecturers at SPR events and Adrian chaired the SPR Conference in 2016. They have both published other books within their specialist fields and, indeed, the German version of this book *Mit Shakespeare durch die Welt der Geister* was originally published in 2009. David Fontana's foreword to that

book is re-printed in this current version. The book is well illustrated with numerous somewhat grainy black and white pictures and photographs and there are extensive references, bibliographies and an index.

The 'mission' of the book is to access the literature mainly, but not exclusively, of William Shakespeare; to provide details of numerous individuals' personal putatively paranormal experiences; and to apply scientific scrutiny to these areas of research. The experiences are centred on individuals' accounts of information conveyed to them about unknown wills, "justice cases", warnings, and crime-solving cases, from allegedly paranormal sources. In a few cases comparisons are made with examples from Shakespeare's works.

In order to achieve these ends the book is split into three parts: 'psychic experiences', 'case collections' and 'laboratory-based research'. There is an extremely useful list of ghost 'seers' and authors that include well-known writers such as John Dee and Reginald Scott, as well as the more obscure Philipus Melancthon and Xiphilinus. Considerable space is devoted to presenting the history of the SPR via its 'Cambridge scholars'. The second part of the book introduces thirty historical case reports, including several from Joseph Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus*, as well as other lesser-known sources such as Daniel Defoe's reports, writing under the pseudonym of 'Andrew Moreton'. A few historical poltergeist cases are also presented, namely the 'Tedworth Drummer', 'Epworth Rectory' and the 'Cock Lane Ghost'. Modern cases are defined as being published after 1900 and these include the 'Chaffin Will' case, the 'R101 disaster', the 'Jackie Poole' case and the fascinating 'Runki's Missing Leg' case. The two modern poltergeist cases explored are both well-known, namely 'Rosenheim' and 'Enfield'. The final part of the book is devoted to an attempt to interpret the phenomena that have been presented in the preceding text.

The language used is comfortable for both an academic and non-academic reader. However, there are times when I would take issue with the choice of words and sentence construction used. For instance, expressions are used such as "a bit more stupid than we are today" (p. 22) and at another place (p. 245) faulty construction implies that Prospero used Dee as a model rather than Shakespeare used Dee as a model for Prospero. The authors favour the use of the word "zombie" presumably indicative of mindless people, but I would argue that the word has an entirely different connotation with most readers identifying it with the living dead, possibly caused by various popular films devoted to the subject. There are a few typos such as "caudisng" for "causing" (p. 233) and my own name appearing as "Willis" in the index, but these do not undermine the meaning of the text. It is a pity that William Drury's "drum" becomes "drums" (p. 166) and *Macbeth's* date of writing is quoted as "around 1608" and then correctly as "1606" (p. 82).

The referencing for statements is generally very good, but there are a few places where I think a reference would have been useful. Quotes from Ingmar Bergman (p. xv) concerning contact with his dead wife in a dream and a Richard Wiseman statement about the acceptability of research (p. 251) would have benefited from this. I would like to have known who said that Shakespeare was "the first author to place psychic phenomena in a psychological and social context rather than a scary one" (p. 15) and I wonder

which “university parapsychologist once said, it is approved that Jesus should heal people and perform miracles but no one else is allowed to” (p. 15). Perhaps more importantly, the authors state that (p. 219):

Other European countries like Greece, Italy, France, Holland, and Spain offer classical works from the antiquities onwards about the topic [poltergeists]. Only a few modest attempts have been made to collate this vast literature and even integrate it with the reports in cultural anthropology

It would be very beneficial to know what these attempts are and where they can be found.

The substance of the text is intelligently presented and highly factual in its detail without any obvious unscientific bias. The authors’ unsupported opinions are expressed occasionally, which some people might argue with. For instance, “research into psychic phenomena was started by Cambridge academics back in 1882 with the founding of the Society for Psychical Research” (p. 17). This does not take into account the London Dialectical Society which investigated Spiritualism before the founding of the SPR. Also, “the existence of ghosts has become crucial for the Christian belief in afterlife” (p. 217) makes a declaration that many Christians I am acquainted with would refute. One is in the realm of belief here rather than hard scientific rigour.

Readers should be aware that although Shakespeare’s name appears in the book’s title and his face is partially represented on the annoyingly ill-fitting dust jacket, the ghosts that are referred to in his plays do not receive an in-depth study or interpretation. It is a little surprising that Louis William Rogers’ (1925/2013) *The Ghosts in Shakespeare* does not receive a mention since it draws attention to ghosts, premonitions and other occult matters. Puhle and Parker-Reed’s remit is nevertheless certainly broad and they present researches from numerous other fields of study. It is distinctive in bringing together both historical and modern research of apparitions and related subjects with more than a nod in Shakespeare’s direction. With a few reservations I would recommend this book.

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CORRECTION

In a review of *Damned Facts* (Jack Hunter, Ed.) in this Journal for January 2017) I describe (p. 39) Robert Kirk (of faery fame) as being “minister of Aberfoyle, near Perth”. It has been pointed out to me that Aberfoyle is in fact some 40 miles from Perth, and is a good deal nearer to Stirling.

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