

similar, but more sharply defined, situation to hauntings. There remain a greater number of poltergeist cases very carefully investigated in relatively recent times that, pure and simple, defy explanation by any combination of physical fields or psychological processes. At the same time, calling them RSPK is only renaming the observations, not explaining them. For me they remain anomalies in search of an explanation, and pretending we have explained *all* poltergeist phenomena now only delays our eventual understanding.

Despite some misgivings here and there, let me reiterate that this is an important book for anyone seriously interested in the topic. Like me, you probably will not agree with all the contributors, but where you don't agree you will certainly learn the state of the art for the counterarguments to your position.

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The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits (Revised Ed.), by Rosemary Ellen Guiley. New Haven, CT: Facts on File, 2000, 413 pp., \$55.00, ISBN 0-300-05588-9

Some reference books are boring creations, while others effortlessly invoke fascination in the subject matter. When I was nine years old my parents bought me *The Golden Book of the Mysterious* (Watson & Chaneles, 1978)—this book captured my interest in anomalous phenomena. The most memorable section of that book for me concerned apparitions and poltergeists. In particular, on page 52 was a striking illustration of a ghost standing in a cemetery. That image, to which I was first exposed twenty-three years ago, remains just as vivid in my mind today. The desire to pursue my own research on haunts and poltergeists was sparked to a large degree by that book.

Nowadays, there is a wealth of books on the subject of ghosts and spirits by amateur historians, folklorists, and “ghost-hunters.” These works vary tremendously in quality, as there is disparity in the expertise and credibility of the respective authors. Moreover, these types of books do not seem to attempt to convey what science and scholars have come to understand about haunt and poltergeist experiences. Instead, most general books promote sensationalism

of the subject. Guiley's book, by contrast, stands out a bit from this genre. I bought the original edition of her book some time ago, because I was generally impressed with the scope and relevance of the entries. Furthermore, Guiley nicely documents her sources for each entry, and most of her sources are appropriate scholarly works. Now she has revised her original version to encompass new and updated entries.

Unfortunately, some of these revisions significantly detract from the book. The experienced researcher or scholar will feel the punch upon opening the book. Individuals with no academic standing or recognition in parapsychology give introductory remarks and are virtually touted by Guiley as noted "experts." Perhaps Guiley did not know that this is not the case, but this seems unlikely given that she must have conducted some solid research to properly prepare the entries. If she had done her homework then it should have been obvious that the inclusion of such personalities would undermine the credibility of the entire book to the academic community or to a lay audience well read on the topic. Thus, my suspicion is that Guiley is catering to the "ghost groupies" market. That is a shame, because these groups and their leadership arguably take away from genuine parapsychological research and diminish its portrayal in the popular media. I made this point recently (Houran, 2001) and others have voiced similar concerns, but it should be reiterated again—there is a disturbing trend that is harmful to the field. Adrian Parker and I have discussed this at some length, and he referred to this trend as an "amateurization of the field." His is an insightful term in my opinion.

This is not to say that amateur "ghost hunter" organizations should not be acknowledged in a book like Guiley's. Indeed, these groups are a fascinating *sociological* phenomenon associated with the subject matter. Any good reference on ghosts and spirits would do well to address this fact. It makes an appropriate entry—but that is all. Lay readers and young academics (i.e., our future scientists, who could develop an interest in pursuing parapsychology, with the proper motivation and guidance) who read *The Encyclopedia of Ghosts and Spirits* could be misguided into thinking that certain organizations and individuals are reliable sources of information on the topic and are on the same par as such organizations as the Society for Psychical Research (UK) or the Parapsychology Foundation, Inc. (New York).

Guiley did not start the dangerous trend of giving credence to "ghost hunter" types, but she seems to follow it. If she treated these organizations as entries and not as authorities, then I could easily recommend her book as a major and welcome reference work suitable for any public or private research library. The real authorities in the field that are profiled in the book (like Michaelen Maher and William Roll) are downplayed, as are their theories. It is also a disservice that Guiley did not include entries about the conventional theories for haunt and poltergeist experiences, and those individuals who proposed or actively research them. I think it is accurate to say that never before in this field has there been more excellent research conducted into the sociocultural, phys-

ical, and psychological variables that attend these experiences (for a review see Houran & Lange, 2001). It could be said that, in this respect, the study of haunts and poltergeists tells us more about the living than the dead. Reviews of such studies of imagination, cognition, and emotion are absent from this book. This is a severe weakness that should be corrected in future editions.

The touted features and genuine flaws unfortunately make Guiley's book fall short of a great reference work. I am disappointed to report this. The book is beautifully produced and contains a multitude of outstanding illustrations—images that can easily capture and hold the interest of aspiring academics, just like *The Golden Book of the Mysterious* (Watson & Chaneles, 1978) did for me years ago. The price is a good deal for the serious researcher who wants well-prepared summaries of some classic and modern cases, explanations of the various terms and phenomena associated with psychical research, and information on obscure and well-known personalities in psychical research from the past and present. Rosemary Ellen Guiley is a gifted writer who is in the enviable position of being able to produce a really outstanding reference book that is accessible to nearly all lay people. I hope there will be a third edition of this book. Guiley can easily rectify the weaknesses and expand on the strengths of the book. Doing so might hurt sales to the “ghost groupies,” but she would gain and educate more important audiences. In return, the field and lay audiences would have a general book that could well be the gold standard in its genre.

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The Siren Call of Hungry Ghosts: A Riveting Investigation into Channeling and Spirit Guides, by Joe Fisher (New York: Paraview Press, 2001), 313 pp. Paper. \$16.95. ISBN: 1-931044-02-3

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