

Magic, Witchcraft, and Ghosts in the Greek and Roman Worlds by Daniel Ogden. Oxford University Press, 2002. 368 pp. \$65.00 (cloth). ISBN 019513575X; \$24.95 (paper). ISBN 0195151232.

This is a marvelous book, in every sense of the word. For one thing, it is full of marvels—marvelous stories of ghostly and magical happenings, many dating from before the Common Era. And for another, it is marvelously assembled, making it a reference source that everyone researching this field will be delighted to possess.

It is not a history: it is not intended to replace chronicles and commentaries, but to complement them by providing convenient access to the original materials. It is a source book, made up of 300 texts from classical literature, translated into English. But this is much more than an anthology: the book is a model of organisation and accessibility, arranged under subjects but with abundant cross-references to ensure that you don't miss out on a magical happening just because it's included under ghosts or werewolves.

Each excerpt is introduced and commented on, placing the text and its author in context. Significant figures—Apollonius of Tyana, Simon Magus, Jesus of Nazareth—receive individual treatment; categories of sorcerers—shamans, Persian mages, witches—are presented collectively. Otherwise the classification is by subject—ghosts, necromancy, curses and so on. The scope is comprehensive: here are spells, and amulets to ward them off; here is magic to procure birth, to prevent it or to deal with the unwanted consequences; here are ghosts, and instructions how to lay them or exorcise them.

What this collection does supremely is bring these 2000-year-old narratives to life, to remind us that these distant ancestors of ours were as bewildered by the practicalities of the paranormal as we are today. Whatever their nature, these phenomena challenged them: something, they felt, must be done about them. Civilised people should not be at the mercy of ghosts, or at the beck and call of witches and sorcerers. So writers counsel us on the way to lay a ghost—but they don't all give the same advice: they, like us, were feeling their way, doing their best to cope. The account (here presented in its earliest version) of how Arignotus the Pythagorean copes with a haunted house is an archetypal story in its genre, and the philosopher handles it as competently as though he had been trained by the Society for Psychical Research.

We, today, have drawn a sharp line between 'science' and 'magic', the practitioners of each tending to be dismissive of the other. But in the world evoked in this collection, things were not so clear-cut. Of course then as now skeptics poured scorn on the gullible, and writers like Apuleius had a lot of fun sending up the charlatans. But could the oracles be so easily set aside, could the practitioners of the occult arts be impostors and nothing more? Today's skeptics are apt to say of something that lies outside the known, it can't

be so, so it isn't so. Our ancestors were less inclined to think they knew the limits of the possible. So they took matters as they found them, proposed hands-on remedies. Thus we find Marcellus Sidetes, in or around the first century, taking a thoroughly pragmatic approach to the problem, what should we do about werewolves?

Men afflicted with the disease of so-called lycanthropy go out by night in imitation of wolves or dogs in all respects, and they tend to hang about tombs until day-break. These are the symptoms that will allow you to recognise sufferers from this disease: they are pallid, their gaze is listless, their eyes are dry, and they cannot produce tears. You will observe that their eyes are sunken and their tongue is dry, and they are completely unable to put on weight. They feel thirsty, and their shins are covered in lacerations which cannot heal because they are continually falling down and being bitten by dogs. Such are their symptoms. One must recognise that lycanthropy is a form of melancholia. You will treat it by opening a vein at the time of its manifestation and draining the blood until the point of fainting. Then feed the patient with food conducive to good humors. He is to be given sweet baths. After that, using the whey of the milk, cleanse him over three days. After the purification use the antidote to viper bites. As evening arrives and the disease manifests itself, apply to the head the lotions that usually induce sleep and anoint the nostrils with scents of this sort and opium.

Compare such measures with those taken in, say, 16th-century France, when werewolves, like witches and sorcerers, were judged in the light of the Church's teachings, and where death at the stake was prescribed instead of sweet baths and whey. Such insights into the thinking of our Greek and Roman forerunners remind us that progress is by no means a continuous process.

The compiler of this collection has done us all a favour by providing us with this excellent resource book. There is an extensive bibliography, a good index, cross-references galore. It is all that a reference book should be: accessible, navigable, convenient. What's more, it is both instructive and entertaining to read.

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Science or Pseudoscience: Magnetic Healing, Psychic Phenomena, and Other Heterodoxies by Henry Bauer. University of Illinois Press, 2001. 296 pp. \$29.95 (cloth). ISBN 0-252-02601-2.

Paranormal and other unexplained phenomena are inherently fascinating because of their mystery and challenge. From the general public's view, scientists are disappointingly uninterested in exploring such things as the existence of the Yeti and the workings of extrasensory perception. (The Loch