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

Shane McCorristine

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Spectres of the Self is a fascinating study of the rich cultures surrounding the experience of seeing ghosts in England from the Reformation to the twentieth century. Shane McCorristine examines a vast range of primary and secondary sources, showing how ghosts, apparitions, and hallucinations were imagined, experienced, and debated from the pages of fiction to the case reports of the Society for Psychical Research. By analysing a broad range of themes from telepathy and ghost-hunting to the notion of dreaming while awake and the question of why ghosts wore clothes, Dr McCorristine reveals the sheer variety of ideas of ghost seeing in English society and culture. He shows how the issue of ghosts remained dynamic despite the advance of science and secularism and argues that the ghost ultimately represented a spectre of the self, a symbol of the psychological hauntedness of modern experience.

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