

fine detail Martin's observations of three contemporary psychology laboratories situated in affluent universities in the metropolitan United States. The final two chapters widen the book's scope considerably to examine how at the level of practice, social media platforms borrow heavily from a century of experimental design in psychology.

The book's main conclusion about psychology's laboratory life is simple but profound. If one of the major cultural effects of psychological research is the production of hyper-individuation and the isolation of the person into discrete, manipulatable variables, these scientists' own practices remain highly social, and their knowledge is distributed. With relish, Martin unpacks the oddity of the various ingredients found in the psychologist's methodological cookbook. She makes evident the great work that goes into "stabilizing subjects" in space and time so that they provide naturalistic responses or rather good data that is measurable, reliable, and valid.

Martin largely plays nice. Her criticisms of psychology as a discipline come in the form of an outsider's puzzlement about why things are done in the manner they are. For example, her thick description lays out in telling detail psychology's addiction to cheap, low-quality data. The psychology laboratory primarily runs on "convenience samples" of undergraduates (largely compensated with course credit rather than money) with a marked turn in recent years to the below minimum wage of piecework of online platforms like Amazon's Mechanical Turk for the sake of greater diversity. Martin certainly puts the contrast between poverty and the abundance of psychology on display. However, their wider political economy in terms of the unrelenting productivity of the late modern academy and their epistemic consequences for psychology as a universalizing science is largely left to the reader to determine. These concerns largely come to the fore in the final two chapters where Martin explores the similarities between the user interface of social media and the design of psychology experiments. Both involve the ubiquitous manipulation of human conduct for the extraction of desired responses. She concludes, as have others, that modern social science as the handmaiden for knowing capitalism risks transforming the entire lifeworld into one vast experiment beyond the control of its ordinary denizens.

Historians of the social/behavioral/human sciences will appreciate much in Martin's book. She has also been a careful student of our field, gleaning lessons from it, and generously applying them to her analysis. The continual juxtaposition of psychological and anthropological ways of knowing was both amusing and informative. Her study reaffirms the analytic power of studying the micro-practices of science which constitute the human subject as knowable, governable, and perhaps even an agent.

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## Psychic investigators: Anthropology, modern spiritualism, and credible witnessing in the late Victorian age.

Efram Sera-Shriar

University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. 222 pages. \$50 (cloth). ISBN: 978-0-8229-4707-3.

Efram Sera-Shriar's *Psychic Investigators* fits into the growing body of scholarship that examines the impact of 19th-century metaphysical movements on the institutionalization of science. The book is set in the second half of

the century in Victorian Britain when modern anthropology as a respectable academic discipline was being born and spiritualism was experiencing a resurgence. It focuses on four Victorian-era anthropologists, thinkers, and writers who identified with or were involved with the emerging discipline. Each was investigating the spirit hypothesis, the proposition that nonmaterial spirits existed and could communicate with humans. As such, the book is directed towards those interested in the 19th-century history of anthropology as a discipline and then broadens out to include studies of late Victorian's struggle to make sense of spiritualism. That ties this book to the work of the Society for Psychical Research, to William James and to a host of other notables of that generation who explored similar questions. *Psychic Investigators* brings the contributions of early anthropologists to this history.

There has been a shift in the last 20 years regarding views of the 19th-century's metaphysical movements. Whereas before they were cast as marginal "flights from reason" and thus to be devalued, today, there is recognition of their enduring cultural, religious, medical, scientific, and literary cache. Mesmerism, Swedenborgianism, spiritualism, psychical research, theosophy, mind cure, and New Thought fit into this body of work (Albanese, 2007). This newer scholarship questions the older triumphalist narrative so often featured in twentieth century texts describing scientifically sophisticated men ejecting as irrational the beliefs and practices of any number of spiritually minded peoples, psychics, or metaphysicians who did not subscribe to their hard rational facts. Instead, this newer scholarship portrays 19th-century seekers and investigators—on both sides of this debate—as a generation struggling to make sense of a range of human phenomenon linked to the unseen, the metaphysical, and the supernatural. To this is wedded, of course, all the attendant excesses, successes and failures that such an investigation would humanly entail. Yet inside these personal forays and communal struggles—which occurred both within the emerging academy and outside it—important questions about human nature in a modernizing world were being sorted out.

Each of *Psychic Investigator's* four chapters studies one elite British intellectual's views on the spirit hypothesis. Alfred Russel Wallace, cofounder with Darwin of the theory of natural selection, was the "believer." Edward Burnett Tylor—cofounder of anthropology and creator of the theory of religion that placed animism as primitive—was the "skeptic." Andrew Lang, a wide-ranging writer and intellectual was the "revisionist." And Edward Clodd was the "disbeliever," recognizable here as a debunker, trashing as irrational the beliefs of any person who dared to advance spiritualist sensibilities.

If Tylor was right in his theory of primitive religions vis a vis spiritualism, the presence of spiritualist phenomena in 19th-century Britain represented a very un-modern regression to a more primitive, child-like relationship to the supernatural. But if the spirit hypothesis was correct, then Tylor and Clodd were wrong and spiritualism represented a new day in the spiritual life of humanity and telepathy was an important new mind power. Interestingly, each investigator found evidence that confirmed their predilections, a result that Sera-Shriar could have explored in detail but did not.

Related scholarship examining the era's explorations of the spirit hypothesis have yielded a better understanding of the way the struggle for scientific certainty and academic respectability underlay these investigations. Another name for this struggle is the "the limits of human knowledge" debate. The spirit hypothesis was not only about whether spirits existed and had agency, but whether science was a worthy means of studying these phenomena. Sera-Shriar's focus on early anthropology's particular piece of this science-meets-the-supernatural puzzle addresses the qualifications necessary to be a credible witness to spirit phenomena. Sera-Shriar rightly brings in Daston and Galison's *Objectivity* (2007) to help historically frame this debate. He also mentions Peter Lamont's *Exceptional Beliefs* (2013). Although Karpenko and Clagget's *Strange Science* (2017), which addresses related science forays deserves to be highlighted in this work, but is not.

The book is clearly written, well-organized and brief, which are among its strengths. At 168 pages (25 pages of notes), Sera-Shriar has done a laudable job carving this material into such a form. And the four investigators framework feels natural and not forced in its delivery and structure. Maybe his work as a museum director led him to present this as a concise debate between four spokesmen. (His other employment administering to and periodic teaching in 19th-century academic studies likely served these ends as well).

What the book accomplishes by chopping this topic down into four chapters, however, compromises its breadth and utility. For example, scholarship shows how important learned societies are for the formation and dissemination of new knowledge. Sera-Shriar places his investigators in London's Anthropological Society and the Folklore Society but does not reflect much on how these learned groups shaped their work.

With so much great feminist history and criticism available for this era, and given that many of the actors described in these pages were women, the silence of the book on these matters stands out as definitive, as well. Just as significant, the absence of cross cultural and postcolonial scholarship—given that Tylor's *Primitive Cultures* (1871) implied a universalist framework that was cognizant of the behavior of non-western peoples—is also telling. As is the absence of even a cursory look at the racism inherent in these men's views. Instead, Sera-Shriar hews close to the discourse created by his four investigators around the spirit hypothesis and avoids analysis beyond pulling out material relevant to the credible witness issue. This focus likely explains why the spiritualist practitioners featured in the book are reduced to actors playing parts in the investigative quests of these four elite Victorian men. They are rarely if ever portrayed as people haunted by spiritualist phenomena and struggling to answer ultimate questions, nor even as flesh and blood showmen and women out to entertain ticket buying audiences. Because of these absences, Sera-Shriar's book should be seen as an internalist history of anthropology with conceptual connections to the late 19th-century investigations of the spirit hypothesis and by extension, to the limits of human knowledge debate. For a concise treatment of early anthropology's efforts to establish the credible witness and the British elite's dalliance with spiritualism as investigated by four Victorian gentlemen, *Psychic Investigators* fills in a missing piece of the field's disciplinary history.

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## Schizophrenia: An unfinished history

Orna Ophir

Polity, 2022. 224 pp. \$42 (cloth). ISBN: 9781509536474

With *Schizophrenia: An Unfinished History*, Orna Ophir has offered a synthetic history of the diagnosis of schizophrenia and the sensations and behaviors associated with it from antiquity to the present day. Ophir's

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