

HERBERT G. JACKSON, JR., *The Spirit Rappers*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972. Pp. 226. Bibliography. \$6.95.

GEORGESS MCHARGUE, *Facts, Frauds, and Phantasms: A Survey of the Spiritualist Movement*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1972. Pp. viii + 296. Glossary of Terms. Bibliography. Index. \$4.95.

Our understanding of hypnotic phenomena evolved from spurious beginnings. Subsequent to Mesmer's heyday in the late 1700's, and following a decline of interest in the phenomena after that period, a slow rise in interest occurred in England and America. During that period, around the 1840's for example, Americans became increasingly receptive to new ideas. Thus, when mesmerism, health reforms, religious revivalism, and spiritualism appeared, they were enthusiastically received. The stage for spiritualism's acceptance was prepared early in the 1840's by Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), the 'Poughkeepsie Seer' who began his career as a 'clairvoyant' at the mesmeric demonstrations of J. Stanley Grimes in 1843. Later, in 1848, events occurred that came to be considered the beginning of what was termed 'modern spiritualism.' These were the 'Rochester rappings,' the mysterious noises which occurred in the presence of Margaret and Katherine Fox (of Hydesville, N. Y. near Rochester) which were explained as communications from the 'other side,' i.e., from the 'spirit world.' From that year (1848) onward, the interest in clairvoyance, clairaudience, and other 'psychic' phenomena increased steadily. Unfortunately, spiritualism and psychical research were counter-productive in regard to the legitimate development of our understanding of hypnotic phenomena. Boring has commented on the effect that spiritualism had on the scientific study of hypnotism. He pointed out, for example, that the 'status' of mesmerism at the time was deleteriously affected by the rise of modern spiritualism, that due to the

. . . striking similarity between some of the phenomena of spiritualism and those of clairvoyance, and especially between the nature of the spiritualistic sitting and the séances of Mesmer about the *baquet* . . . the revival of mesmerism suffered . . . in repute (*A History of Experimental Psychology*, 2nd ed., 1950, 122-123).

In any event, the legitimate study of hypnotism progressed during the latter half of the 19th century despite the fact that it proceeded hand-in-hand (temporally speaking) with the histrionics of spiritualism. Therefore, in the same way that 'scientific psychology [has been said to have been] . . . born of phrenology, out of wedlock with science' (Boring, *Ibid.*, 1st ed., 1929, 55), one might also metaphorically suggest that the scientific investigation of hypnotic phenomena was born of mesmer-

ism, out of wedlock with science, in a family which also produced the illegitimate offspring called spiritualism. H. G. Jackson, Jr. and G. McHargue focus their attention on spiritualism, mesmerism's less often heard of, although more infamous progeny. *The Spirit Rappers* is concerned specifically with the life and experiences of Margaret and Katherine Fox whom the author refers to as the 'founders of the American spiritualist movement.' McHargue's 'survey,' *Facts, Frauds, and Phantasms*, on the other hand, after a superficial review of some early Egyptian beliefs regarding the 'after life,' a brief discussion of shamans, and a brief account of Biblical references to related phenomena, touches base with the events involving the Fox sisters and proceeds to 'survey' the remaining years of the spiritualist movement ending with an account of the recent so-called 'spirit communications' of the Episcopalian Bishop, James A. Pike.

Written in an informal style, these volumes have been prepared for a popular as opposed to academic audience. Thus, although the historian will find valuable information contained in them, he will not find the opportunity of rechecking interesting or provocative statements or quotes since the authors do not document their work in the usual scholarly manner. Both contain bibliographies—120 entries in Jackson and 49 in McHargue—, but only McHargue includes an index (unfortunately she also includes a 'Glossary of Terms' which is somewhat superfluous and pretentious including definitions of, e.g., 'ghost- popular term for the appearance of a deceased person . . .' and 'ventriloquism- the art of speaking with little or no lip movement and of throwing the voice so that the sound does not appear to come from the actual speaker . . .'). Of the two, McHargue's volume is the more readable. However, although McHargue's volume has the most breadth of the two, and Jackson's the most depth, neither volume is by any means definitive. Jackson's work, although having the potential for definiteness in terms of the information upon which he based his writing, includes too many lengthy quotes which detract from the text's usefulness and readability. A more judicious use of the information available to him—and perhaps more time spent sifting through it—could have resulted in a more important contribution. Furthermore, neither author is as critical of their subject matter as they could be, although McHargue makes a more conscious effort to be so.

The utility of a published work is not determined solely by its mode of presentation, its subject matter, or the audience at which it is directed. To be 'popularly' written can mean to be useful in an academic sense; and, by the same token, a work described as 'scholarly' may find little acceptance and be non-utilitarian. The books under consideration here might be considered to have three strikes against them as far as the academician is concerned: (1) they were written in a popular style; (2) their authors were not leading theorists presenting fanciful applications of their views in a popular way (as is the case, e.g., with Skinner's *Walden Two*); and (3) they chose for their subject matter the history of an area of inquiry which has received little attention by contemporary psychologists due to the fact that its history has smacked of the occult, charlatanism, and fraud. In the mind of the 'presentist,' the sins of the fathers may be forgiven only if those sins were enlightened and portents of things to come. Sins which led to naught, are not forgivable—they are seen simply as the misguided activities of those who were in the unfortunate position of not knowing then what we know today. The 'historicist,' on the other hand, is more sympathetic toward the errors of the past, i.e., he is less prone to evaluate past

events in terms of current knowledge. McHargue's and Jackson's volumes will appeal more to him. These works may, however, also find some applicability in survey courses, not as handbooks to turn to for definitive coverage of the events of the time, but as the sources by means of which an overview of the spiritualist movement may be obtained.

Both authors describe themselves as 'freelance writers.' McHargue further describes herself as a 'former book editor.' Jackson is a former 'reporter and city editor for *The Times-Union*' of Rochester, N. Y.

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