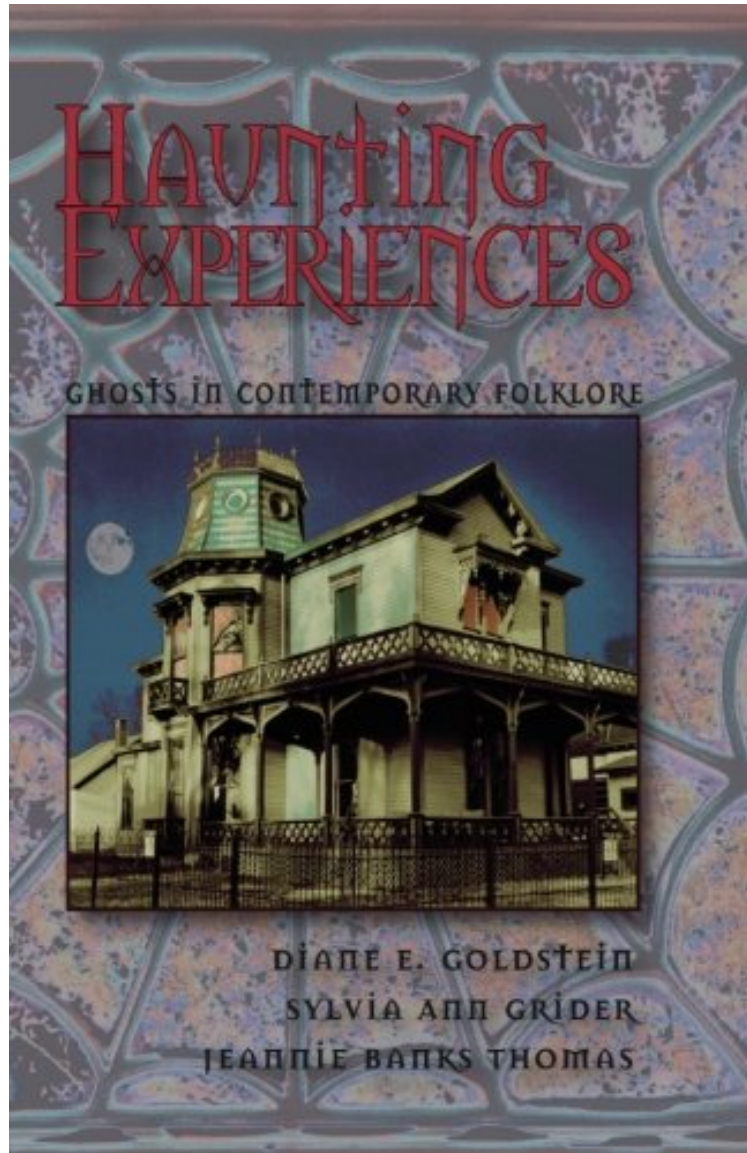


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Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore

Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Grider, Jeannie Banks Thomas
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Diane Goldstein, Sylvia Grider, Jeannie Banks Thomas : Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Haunting Experiences: Ghosts in Contemporary Folklore:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good Textbook! By Genevieve Wronski I ordered this book because it was a required text for my class on Folklore Horror Narratives. I haven't read it in its entirety as of yet, but I really like it so far. It covers the functions of "ghost stories" in a rational manner without discounting people's experiences

and personal beliefs. I can see why my professor chose this book. Thanks!

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars
By Jeneane Sorensen
Good book. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Traditional Ghostlore and Contemporary Culture
By Lance M. Foster
This is an outstanding book which looks at how the popular culture of today (television, cartoons, novels, tourism, movies like Harry Potter and The Shining, cellphones, tales on college campuses, ghost hunters) and the ghost folklore of the past inform and influence each other as a continuum. Books on ghosts are rarely produced by folklorists these days. Most books about ghosts seem to be ghost hunter / paranormal investigator guides or regional ghost story collections. This book provides a different perspective. "Old Spirits in New Bottles" covers the study of ghosts and folklore, and some of the major works, theories, and scholars working in the field. "The Usefulness of Ghost Stories" asserts ghost stories are ways to explore issues of many kinds in contemporary life, not just ghosts per se. "Scientific Rationalism and the Structure of Supernatural Experience Narratives" criticizes the idea of ghostlore as antiquated and silly and that scientific materialism will eventually erase it because individual evaluation of personal experience cannot be so easily dismissed and serves definite functions. "Gender and Ghosts" looks at how ghostlore differs based on gender and perception (including Bloody Mary, and La Llorona). "Children's Ghost Stories" examines ghost stories among children such as at Halloween, and their function in socialization and growing up. "Haunted Houses in Tradition and Popular Culture" focuses on the stories about haunted houses rather than the reality of hauntings; the haunted houses function as both setting and opponent (also spook houses and hell houses in today's Halloween). "The Commodification of Belief" is about the ghost tours, haunted hotels, etc., and how people seek and expect to experience actual ghosts and haunted places through payment. "The `Spectral Turn'" summarizes the various themes, including how modern media, notably some of the paranormal investigation and other supernatural television shows, as well as the Internet and technology, now inform, shape, and dominate people's ideas about the supernatural. There are also supplementary sections on chapter notes, a bibliography, a filmography, and index. The study of the supernatural, including ghosts and folklore, is unfortunately not taken seriously in academics. Whatever you believe about the empirical reality of such things, peoples' -beliefs- about the supernatural and the impacts of those beliefs on contemporary culture -are- irrefutably real, and at that level, if no other, should be taken seriously: "Ghost lore must be taken seriously because it is serious -culturally meaningful, rational, and still very much a part of our modern and technological world" (p. 18). As the author notes: "Intricately woven together, popular culture uses folklore continuously to tap into traditional cultural values and to satisfy audience expectations. But just as popular culture appropriates folklore, folklore too appropriates popular culture. Children's cartoon characters...movies,...and television talk shows...all feed themes, motifs, and descriptive details back into the small-group intimate transmission of traditional ghost narratives, modernizing the details and incorporating contemporary issues, language, and concerns...." (pp. 4-5). This fascinating book should definitely be a part of the collection of any serious student of popular culture, folklore, and the paranormal.

Ghosts and other supernatural phenomena are widely represented throughout modern culture. They can be found in any number of entertainment, commercial, and other contexts, but popular media or commodified representations of ghosts can be quite different from the beliefs people hold about them, based on tradition or direct experience. Personal belief and cultural tradition on the one hand, and popular and commercial representation on the other, nevertheless continually feed each other. They frequently share space in how people think about the supernatural. In *Haunting Experiences*, three well-known folklorists seek to broaden the discussion of ghost lore by examining it from a variety of angles in various modern contexts. Diane E. Goldstein, Sylvia Ann Grider, and Jeannie Banks Thomas take ghosts seriously, as they draw on contemporary scholarship that emphasizes both the basis of belief in experience (rather than mere fantasy) and the usefulness of ghost stories. They look closely at the narrative role of such lore in matters such as socialization and gender. And they unravel the complex mix of mass media, commodification, and popular culture that today puts old spirits into new contexts.