Young, Simon. *The Boggart: Folklore, History, Place-names and Dialect*. U of Exeter P, 2022.

https://www.exeterpress.co.uk/products/the-boggart

Simon Young's *The Boggart: Folklore, History, Place-names and Dialect* is an immensely comprehensive examination of boggart-lore in a specific part of Northern England he calls "Boggartdom" throughout Victorian times and beyond. The author includes several maps of Boggartdom in each chapter, and most of these are visually effective and informative, such as one that shows where the authors were writing about boggarts (41), where landmarks include boggart in the name (54), what counties used boggart (58), a map locating parents who would use boggartsto scare their children into behaving (63), related boggart names (72), and one that tracks and quantifies boggart memories (180). However, there are a few instances where the figures are not clear. In Chapter Four, the author refers to the "account . . . drawn up here" (82), but there is no reference to a figure, and no figure on that page, only the opposing page. Then Figure 19 is referenced on page 83 but not shown until page 86, four figures later. Nevertheless, what stands out throughout the book is how extremely thorough Young is in his definitions and his research and how he treats people who believe in the supernatural with respect.

Section I mostly examines the dialect of those who use the word boggart, where they were located, what they mean, and when they use other related words. Chapter One provides exhaustive sources for all mentions of boggarts (4), which most often means "ghost," though the author ends with what he believes is the best definition, "a generic name for an apparition," a definition that comes from Elizabeth Wright (7). The author further demonstrates the general nature of the term with a diagram showing how several other supernatural names stem from boggart, including demons, devils, ghosts, shape-shifters, and household spirits (9). Young ends with the idea that to study boggarts is to study a supernatural "ecosystem" of a given time (25), an interesting phrase

that really captures how he is writing about the boggart specifically to point toward something greater about the supernatural in general. Chapter Two examines boggart origins, including the etymology of the word. While Young is again extremely thorough in his listing of sources and scholarship on boggarts, this section makes for dense reading (28). The last chapter in Section I looks at the use of boggart in the time period and explains he is the first to do so. The author has four ways to decide where the term boggart was used: landmarks and places named after boggarts, when people referenced and named specific boggarts, boggart in Wright's *Dialect Dictionary*, and boggart in the Survey of English Dialects. He effectively wraps up Section I by reexamining the common theme of dialect in the first three chapters and points toward what is coming in Section II.

Section II focuses on boggart folklore, and Chapter Four begins by investigating boggart landscapes. Boggarts were usually found on the outskirts of communities and "are sometimes found at strategic points–junctions, boundaries, bridges, and rivers" (84). The idea was that they would hide and wait to come out at night (84). Some places are then named after boggarts if they were associated with boggart sightings, like Boggart Houses, Boggart Lanes (90), or Boggart Holes (98). Chapter Five looks at the problem of figuring out how many people believed in boggarts and examines tales told within families and communities to verify belief. The author also lists examples of poetry, plays, prose, newspaper writings to demonstrate belief within a given area. Lastly in Section II, Chapter Six examines how experiencing or believing in a boggart was often a social phenomenon. Sometimes this resulted in what the author calls "boggart crowds," people coming together specifically to experience boggarts (147-48), but Young also discusses boggart hunts, which were attempts to capture boggarts (149). There were even several accounts of people pretending to be boggarts, which the author includes as part of social boggatry (151-55).

Young does not provide full closure for Section II in the same way he does for Section I; he actually ends with commentary about the last part of Chapter Six without giving a Section II conclusion or pointing toward Section III.

Lastly, Section III concerns the end and rebirth of the boggart. In Chapter Seven, Young describes a "Boggart Census" he conducted to collect memories of people who remembered parents and grandparents mentioning boggarts, and he also asked if they had never heard the term. He divides the results into three categories: boggart talkers, boggart knowers, and boggartless. Eventually, Young believes the term boggart became unnecessary as these stories lacked credibility, but the idea of a boggart has not since been replaced by a different term (189). Chapter Eight deals with the change in meaning of boggart from the nineteenth to twenty-first century. Because this is a main chapter and not an epilogue, it does seem to get away from the point of the book. Young wrote in the Preface, "I want . . . to reconstitute beliefs for one place (Boggartdom) and for one period (1838-1914) using contemporary or near-contemporary documents" (xvi), but he goes into a lot of detail beyond 1914. In this last chapter, Young compares the nineteenth-century boggart, which was more of a blanket term for supernatural creatures, to the "new boggart," which is more "goblin-like" and "far removed from the nightmare creatures of Victorian mill towns" (193). The author notes this shift in meaning occurs because of four events: the popular boggart story by Thomas Crofton Croker about a house goblin in 1828, a children's boggart story called "The Brownies" by Juliana Horatia Ewing in 1865, a lack of boggart tale transition from being a local to a national or international phenomenon, and lastly, the modern usage of boggart, including its use in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999) and continued references within the series and movie adaptations. Similar to Section II, Young does not provide a summation of Section III, only a closing of Chapter Eight.

Young ends his monograph with a Conclusion chapter that includes a fascinating call for a further examination of the supernatural in the nineteenth century. One of the most interesting aspects of Young's research is how he obtains these accounts of boggatry; he mentions archives, newspapers, dictionaries, published literature from this time, but he also asks people on Facebook and other less conventional means to arrive at family tales of boggarts or usages of the term. The encouraging way in which Young ends his book opens the door for others to take advantage of his same methods in order to increase overall knowledge of the supernatural during the nineteenth century. Overall, Young achieved his goal laid out in the Preface and then some; he goes a bit further than he even sets out. This book should appeal to anyone interested in nineteenth-century supernatural subjects in general or the boggart in particular.

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