

haunted house—his biographical notes on the authors he has included contain numerous sins of omission and commission. The American writer Mary Eleanor Wilkins Freeman is referred to as Mary Eleanor Freeman. Ralph Adams Cram's classic collection of weird tales, *Black Spirits and White* (1895), is dated to 1885. Hugh Walpole's most notable contribution to the weird—*Portrait of a Man with Red Hair* (1925)—is omitted from his biographical note. Ramsey Campbell's *The House on Nazareth Hill* (1996)—in my estimation the best haunted house novel ever written, surpassing even Shirley Jackson's *The Haunting of Hill House*—is mentioned neither in his biographical note nor in the appendix, "Haunted House Novels: A Listing." In most of the notes, no information is supplied on the original publications of the stories in question. Sometimes this information can be clawed out of the acknowledgements for copyrighted works, but for works in the public domain we are left helpless.

But perhaps these are mere cavils. No one expects scholarly rigor from Haining—although, as a matter of fact, *Gothic Tales of Terror* contained much ampler and more accurate biographical notes than are presented here—or from this "Mammoth Book of . . ." series, and we should perhaps be content that an ample supply of entertaining weird work has been resurrected from the books and periodicals of the past century and a half. I again maintain that a certain element of monotony and repetition is inherent in a collection of this kind, so that it is best not to read this volume all in one go; but as a book to dip into from time to time, especially in front of a cozy fireplace when a chill rain is descending, one could hardly ask for more.

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"haunted house" tale; after all, the ghost has to go somewhere, and in many cases a house is the most logical place.

And yet, whether they actually belong in a volume of this kind, many of the tales are good reads. I have mentioned "The Haunted and the Haunters" (although one wishes that Haining had included the important subtitle, "or, The House and the Brain"), a tale that fuses intellectual substance with a clutching horrific atmosphere. Other old specimens are similarly rewarding. Charlotte Riddell's "The Old House in Vauxhall Walk" and Ralph Adams Cram's "No. 252 Rue M. le Prince" offer richly textured prose and that leisured but gradually intensifying narration typical of Victorian writers, both British and American (a much later story, Basil Copper's "The Grey House," offers these same virtues, and shows what a charming throwback to an older tradition its author is). Of stories from the early to mid-twentieth century, L. P. Hartley's "Feet Foremost" may be worth singling out, although Robert Bloch's little-known "House of the Hatchet" offers an aggressively American tough-guy cynicism in sharp contrast to the elegance and refinement offered up by the British writers who predominate in this volume. M. R. James's "Lost Hearts" is, to my mind, not at all a haunted house story, but it one of his more delightfully nasty ventures. In a few cases, however, it appears that Haining has included a tale merely for its illustrious author, as with Virginia Woolf's brief and inconclusive prose-poem "A Haunted House." A later specimen, Fay Weldon's intolerably precious "Watching Me, Watching You," is of this same sort. Weldon has recently made herself a laughing-stock by writing a novel commissioned by Bulgari, the jewelry firm, and this tale emphatically underscores her sour-grapes remark that she wrote the novel because she knew she would never win the Booker Prize anyway. On the basis of this story, she certainly does not deserve to.

The contemporary selections are on the whole well chosen. Far the best of the lot is Ramsey Campbell's magnificently evocative "Napier Court," in which his nightmarish, hallucinatory prose is used both for establishing the horrific scenario and for laying bare the character of the hapless woman who serves as the narrative's focus. Ian Watson's "Happy Hour" is a grim, gratingly modern tale that manages to fuse ancient horror with modern technology. Haining has, however, horned in James Herbert under false pretences, as "The Ghost Hunter" is nothing more than a rather ineptly edited excerpt from Herbert's novel *Haunted* (1988).

Haining has done well to unearth relatively rare specimens as well as authors who are either little-known or not known for their contributions to weird fiction. I would, for example, never have guessed that romance writer Norah Lofts had written any horror tales, and her "Mr. Edward" is an able piece of work. Richard Dehan is, to me, entirely unknown. In fact, this is the pseudonym of a female writer from Ireland, Clotilde Mary Graves, who published several novels in the early twentieth century, described by Haining as "humorous novels and stories of witchcraft and pagan religions." Similarly, Louisa Baldwin (1845-1925) is a Victorian writer who produced at least one collection of weird tales, *The Shadow on the Blind* (1895); and, on the basis of the story from this collection included herein, "The Real and the Counterfeit," the entire volume would appear to be worth reprinting by one of our diligent small-press publishers of "classic" ghost fiction.

In other ways, however, Haining's editorial skills are not quite up to standard. Even if we omit his brief and frivolous introduction—in which we are asked to believe that he himself lives in a

# Hordes of Haunted Houses: A Review of Peter Haining's *The Mammoth Book of Haunted House Stories*

by S. T. Joshi

Haining, Peter, ed. *The Mammoth Book of Haunted House Stories*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2000. xiv, 576 p.

It is difficult to believe that Peter Haining's *The Mammoth Book of Haunted House Stories* is "the first major anthology of the best tales about haunted houses," as is announced on the back cover; but, as a matter of fact, I cannot think of any significant predecessor on this exact theme. There may, however, be a reason for this: it is possible that canny anthologists have realized that a book—especially a book of this size—entirely about haunted houses presents daunting problems of monotony and tedium not easily overcome. Veteran anthologist Peter Haining has stepped in where others have feared to tread. Unfortunately, the job he has done can at most be called adequate.

If a haunted house story is one in which something odd happens in a spooky house or building, then the difficulty of coming up with enough interesting variants of this root conception does indeed seem formidable. Although Haining has divided his volume into six apparently discrete subsections, the distinctions between them seem nebulous at best. Haining has also chosen to spread his net over a wide chronological range, and here his results are more satisfactory: we are treated to tales as early as Bulwer-Lytton's classic "The Haunted and the Haunters" (1859) as well as to stories published only a few years ago. One supposes, however, that Haining could have done even a bit better in this regard. He is certainly well aware that the Gothic novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries focused far more on the "haunted castle" than on any other topos; and it could legitimately be maintained that all three of the early classics of Gothic fiction—Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), and Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820)—are haunted house stories in essence. Possibly Haining decided not to include that potent horrific fragment, "Sir Bertrand" (1773) by Anna Letitia Barbauld, because it was already in his fine *Gothic Tales of Terror* (1972). It would certainly have lent an even greater chronological range to his volume. And did he exclude such Poe masterworks as "Metzengerstein" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" because they are too well known? If so, what about the inclusion of "The Haunted and the Haunters," certainly as hoary an anthology chestnut as anyone can think of? (That story, I should mention, holds up surprisingly well on rereading.)

Haining faces another problem in the assembly of his book: the inclusion of enough stories that can actually be termed "haunted house" stories. In all honesty, a good many of the tales in this book cannot be so classified. Many of them are "ghost stories" (using that term in its narrow sense—a story involving, or suggesting the involvement of, a ghost) and nothing else. The mere fact that a ghost happens to manifest itself in some dwelling or other does not make a story a