

Lorna Gibb's *A Ghost Story* (2015): An Assemblage of Matter and Spirit

Much has been written on Victorian Spiritualism and the spiritualist medium, who was, in general terms, female with some notable exceptions like Daniel D Home, for example. Since the 1980s feminist historians like Alex Owen, Janet Oppenheim, and more recently, Christine Ferguson, Pamela Thurschwell, Richard Noakes, and Claudie Massicotte, have unearthed the relevant role played by women in nineteenth-century Spiritualism. This movement evolved from disembodiment (the connection between the medium and the spirits from the afterlife was first proved to be successful through sound) to embodiment with materialisation mediums as with the notorious case of Florence Cook who materialised the spirit Katie King, the enigmatic spirit celebrity of the 1880s. In this paper I will discuss Lorna Gibb's *A Ghost Story* (2015), which offers a different take on the story of the spirit celebrity, Katie (and John) King. Interestingly, the narrator is the disembodied voice of the ghost, a first-person narrative voice that moves in and out of time and space, but it intervenes in people's lives, and possesses the body of several mediums and spiritualist believers in their seances and theatrical acts, like those of the Davenport brothers. The novel shows a clear rejection of binaries such as human/nonhuman, matter/spirit, embodiment/disembodiment, and in so doing it underlines the fluidity of the multiple elements (bodies, parts, terms) involved in Spiritualism, and in seances particularly. My aim will be to examine the shifting relations between those elements, as well as the tension between human-nonhuman, matter-spirit through an assemblage lens, drawing on social theorists such as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as well as Bruno Latour.

Bionote

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