



# Spirits of an Industrial Age: Ghost Impersonation, Spring-heeled Jack, and Victorian Society

*Jacob Middleton*

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Spirits of an Industrial Age tells the story of the ghosts that roamed the cities of Britain throughout the nineteenth century. These were not phantoms in a traditional supernatural sense, but apparently flesh-and-blood ghosts, which periodically took to the streets, harassing those out alone after nightfall. They were rumoured to possess strange abilities, with press reports claiming that these spirits could leap remarkable distances, breathe fire, and even withstand bullets. Stories of these strange apparitions circulated through the newspapers, and left many citizens afraid to leave their homes on dark winter nights, for fear of what they might encounter. Covering the period between 1800 and 1900, this book examines the notable ghosts reputedly active in Britain at the time. These include the Hammersmith Ghost, the Swine-faced Ghost of Hampshire and, most infamous and feared of all, Spring-heeled Jack. Spirits of an Industrial Age explores the social and cultural context of these ghosts, looking at ghost impersonators, supernatural belief, and popular perceptions of the Victorian city. This wide-ranging work reveals the ghost beliefs of the nineteenth century, and explains why wandering spirits held such a grip on the popular imagination.

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