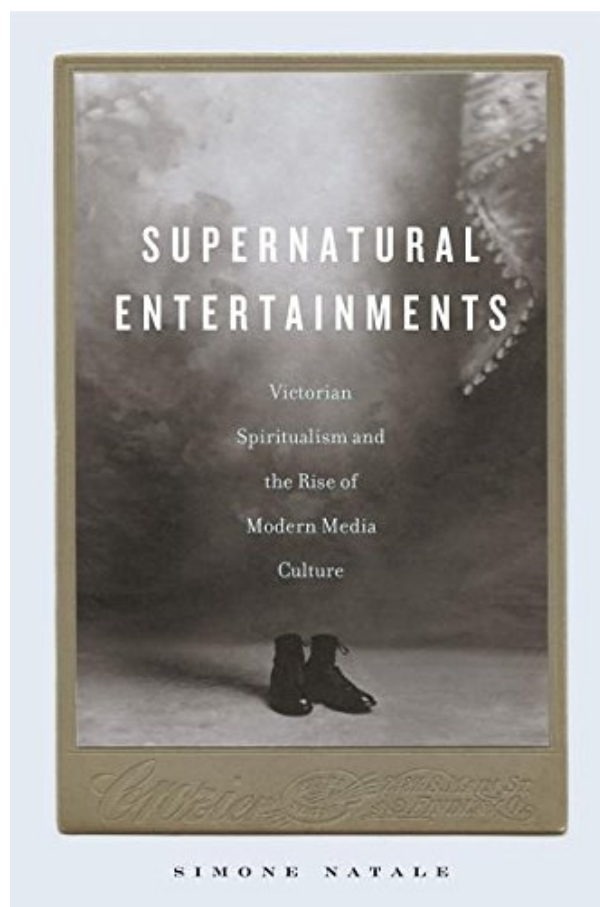
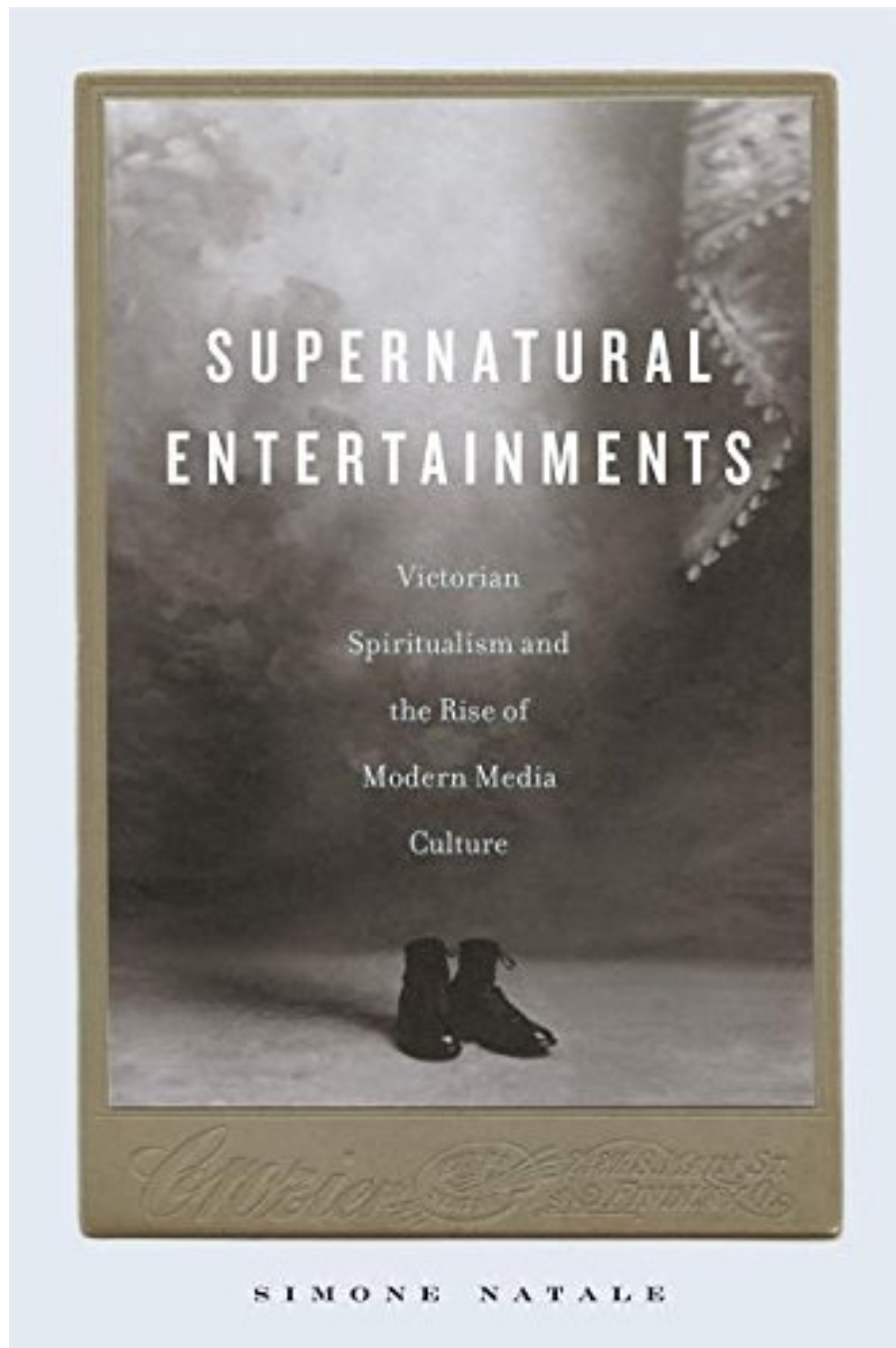


SUPERNATURAL ENTERTAINMENTS: VICTORIAN SPIRITUALISM AND THE RISE OF MODERN MEDIA CULTURE BY SIMONE NATALE



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Review

“Approaching Victorian supernaturalism as popular spectacle, Natale makes a compelling argument that nineteenth-century spiritualism made a significant contribution to what would become the dominant religion of the twentieth century: the entertainment industry. Rather than seeing the spiritualists and their energetic followers as gullible or deluded, Natale explores the more fascinating possibility that medium, circle, and audience helped redefine the possibilities of domestic leisure and public performance.”

—Jeffrey Sconce, Northwestern University

“We all know that the supernatural is entertaining. Just turn on your television set or go to the movies. But this entertaining? Supernatural Entertainments is one of the most original books I have read in a long time. Simone Natale’s embrace of the history of technology, celebrity studies, material culture, popular culture, photography, and film studies to plumb the immediate historical background of the modern supernatural also makes it astonishingly capacious and interdisciplinary. Get ready for a ride. Or a show.”

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—D. B. Wilmeth, Choice

About the Author

Simone Natale is Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at Loughborough University, UK.

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In *Supernatural Entertainments*, Simone Natale vividly depicts spiritualism's rise as a religious and cultural phenomenon and explores its strong connection to the growth of the media entertainment industry in the nineteenth century. He frames the spiritualist movement as part of a new commodity culture that changed how public entertainments were produced and consumed.

Starting with the story of the Fox sisters, considered the first spiritualist mediums in history, Natale follows the trajectory of spiritualism in Great Britain and the United States from its foundation in 1848 to the beginning of the twentieth century. He demonstrates that spiritualist mediums and leaders adopted many of the promotional strategies and spectacular techniques that were being developed for the broader entertainment industry. Spiritualist mediums were indistinguishable from other professional performers, as they had managers and agents, advertised in the press, and used spectacularism to draw audiences.

Addressing the overlap between spiritualism's explosion and nineteenth-century show business, Natale provides an archaeology of how the supernatural became a powerful force in the media and popular culture of today.

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