



Resisting History: Religious Transcendence and the Invention of the Unconscious (Encounters MUP)

Rhodri Hayward is Senior Lecturer in the History of Medicine at Queen Mary University of London

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How can historians make sense of visions, hauntings and demonic possession? Do miraculous events have any place in a world governed by cause and effect? In *Resisting history*, Rhodri Hayward examines the cumulative attempts of theologians, historians and psychologists to create a consistent and rational narrative capable of containing the inexplicable. This lucid and provocative account argues that the psychological theories we routinely use to make sense of supernatural experience were born out of struggles between popular mystics and conservative authorities. Hayward's lively analysis of the Victorian disciplines of Christology, psychology and psychical research reveals how our modern concept of the subconscious was developed as a tool for policing religious inspiration. He concludes his argument with a vivid study of the Welsh Revival of 1904-5, in which the attempt of thousands of converts to cast off their everyday identity was diffused and defeated using the language of the new psychology. By revealing the politics inherent in such language, Hayward raises questions about its deployment in the work of today's historians. Written in a clear and accessible style, *Resisting history* provides a fresh and entertaining perspective for anyone interested in questioning the concepts that underlie historical writing and psychological thought today.

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