*Dreamt by Ghosts*, Chris McCabe (Tenement Press)

Subtitled *Notes on Dreams, Coincidences, & Weird Culture*, Chris McCabe's hefty book is a compendium of journal entries, concrete typewriter poems, critical observations and dream diary. Gradually, over 346 pages, a web of associative meaning and links evolves (as indeed it would with such a large grouping of anything [that's not a criticism]).

I'm not good at being told other people's dreams, in fact it's one of those situations I hate, *I am just not interested in what anyone's subconscious throws up*. Breakfast with those who insist on telling me about their imaginary nocturnal adventures is my idea of hell. However, I will make an exception for McCabe as this book is as outward looking as inward looking, his dreams as literary and as mediated as his poems and prose.

In a similar way to his dreams being put to purpose, McCabe's discourses are too. He doesn't simply present examples of absences and hauntings, he ponders and contextualises them, discusses them in the light of his reading and listening: Ballard, Poe, Hideo Nakata, Plath, Kafka, Borges, Ginsberg, Stephen King, Barry McSweeney and John Cale are all here, animating otherwise frozen moments and experiences.

Really, this is a book about time and memory, about the slow-motion experiences of lockdown, of acquaintances, friends, relatives, about death and absence, about language and poetry. Although the book is populated by ghosts they are mostly not literal: 'a ghost is a bruise mark waiting to heal'. The bruise is grief and loss, McCabe is fascinated by them: 'I've often wondered what it must be like to face death and come back: the body as transcendent matter, a kind of collop of spirit, pulling itself towards the light.'

Even without this experience, McCabe (and his friend James) are 'alert to the mysteries of this moment of accelerating time'. The opposite, too, of course: moments of stasis and boredom. *Dreamt by Ghosts* is a book of experiential time, of Mark Fisher's Hauntology (which is specifically referenced in a postscript), where the present is infused by the historical past, possible or imagined pasts, and the unknown future, all (mis)informed by the deluge of (mis)information now available to us.

Throw in the likes of Simon Reynold's idea of Retromania with its suggestion of shorter and shorter loops of nostalgic revisiting and appropriation, and the idea of paying attention to the present as a form of cultural resistance, a way of persisting in being alive, and you may arrive at the bricolage of life in a similar manner to McCabe.

Yet even as he re-presents his chosen texts, he is aware that 'There is no getting back to the past, even if the present seeks it out like a reversed telescope', because even as I write the present becomes both what was the future and the past. Thus, we all live in 'the city of imagination' that McCabe writes about, a city inhabited by what and who we once knew and what we hope for, a city produced by 'the rhizomatic nature of our minds', just as *Dreamt by Ghosts* only becomes a coherent book when allowed to be incoherent fragments willed into a temporary whole by both editor and reader.

McCabe's work is new to me and is intriguing in its complexity, its associative impositions and authorial assumptions. It is both playful and rich in meaning, using the confessional and private to evidence the public, perhaps even a communal, subconscious not always evident in our individual, digitised world.

Rupert Loydell

(590 words)