



Paranthropology

Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal

Clairvoyance, Class & Convention

- Sophie Louise Drennan

**In Possession of My Senses? Reflections from
Social Science on Engaging with the Otherworldly.**

- Sara Mackian

The Science and Struggle of Psi Research

- Callum E. Cooper

**The Autonomy and Morphology of the
Felix Experimental Group's Ectoplasm**

- Jochen Soederling

The History of Survival Research

- Michael E. Tymn

Towards a Social History of Spiritualism in Bristol

- Jack Hunter

**Candomblé, Umbanda, and Kardecismo
Mediums in Recife, Brazil**

- Stanley Krippner

**Pragmatics and Intention in Automatic Writing
Compositions: the Chico Xavier case**

- Ademir Xavier

And much more...

The Importance of Mediumship Research

Dr. Julie Beischel

Dr. David Luke

Prof. Patric Giesler

Robin P. Foy

Rosemarie Pilkington, PhD.

Yves Marton, PhD.

Michael Roll

Dr. Hannah Gilbert

Prof. Etzel Cardena

Dr. Fiona Bowie

Paul D. Biscop, PhD.

Dr. Carlos Alvarado

Zeljko Jokic, PhD.

Dr. Ciaran O'Keefe

Prof. Charles F. Emmons

Images of a South Indian Theyyam Performance

David Luke

A Trance Mediumship Demonstration in Singapore

Fabian Graham

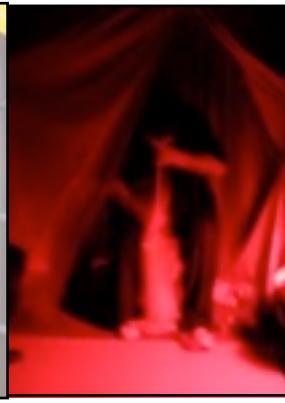
**The Art of the Medium: Encounters with the Past in the
Boundless Unknown**

- Alysa Braceau

**The Disparity of a "Standards of Care" for Spirit
Mediumship as a Permissible Behavioral Health Care
Profession**

- August Goforth

Mediumship & Spirit Possession



Contents

Survival Research Timeline - Michael Tymn

Towards a Social History of Spiritualism in Bristol - Jack Hunter

Learning from the Spirits: Investigating Candomblé, Umbanda, and Kardecismo Mediums in Recife, Brazil - Stanley Krippner

Report of a Physical Mediumship Seance - Jon Mees

A Trance Mediumship Demonstration in Singapore - Fabian Graham

The Importance of Mediumship Research - Various

In Possession of My Senses? Reflections from Social Science on Engaging with the Otherworldly- Sara Mackian

Clairvoyance, Class and Convention - Sophie Louise Drennan

Experiences with Mediumship - Michael Evans

The Science and Struggle of Psi Research - Callum E. Cooper

The Autonomy and Morphology of the Felix Experimental Group's Ectoplasm - Dr. Jochen Soederling

Events

Reviews

Mediumship is a rich and varied social phenomenon that exists in one form or another on every continent. As such it cannot be understood from a single perspective. The aim of this issue of *Paranthropology* is to examine mediumship from a variety of perspectives, academic and experiential. To this end we present anthropological, parapsychological, historical and spiritualistic perspectives alongside each other, which makes for a fairly holistic approach to the subject.

In this issue Michael Tymn gives us an insight into the history of survival research, Stanley Krippner introduces us to Brazilian spiritist practices (Candomble, Umbanda and Kardecismo), Jon Mees describes a recent physical mediumship demonstration at Jenny's Sanctuary, Fabian Graham describes an unusual encounter with mediumship in Singapore, Sara Mackian discusses methods for engaging with the otherworldly, Sophie Louise Drennan explores the sociological aspects of Victorian Spiritualism, Michael Evans gives an insight into his life's experiences with Spiritualism, Callum E. Cooper discusses the "science and struggle of psi research", Dr Jochen Soederling gives a detailed phenomenological account of the ectoplasm purportedly being produced by the Felix Experimental Group in Germany, and Kristen Gallerneaux Brooks introduces us to the mediumship investigation equipment on display at the American Society for Psychical Research.

In addition to all of this we have a fascinating feature with contributions from a wide range of mediumship researchers explaining why they feel the investigation of mediumship is a worthy cause that will benefit our understanding of both ourselves as human beings and the world we live in. And much more besides...

We hope you enjoy.

Jack Hunter

The History of Survival Research

Michael Tymn

The Society for Psychical Research was formed in London in 1882, but survival research of one kind or another had been going on well before then. Below is a timeline of key events and/or turning points in survival research and influences. Although much more could be added in the areas of ESP/PSI research, this list is limited to the events more directly influencing the survival hypothesis.

11th Century A.D. – Catholic Church sets down formal guidelines for the investigation of miracles necessary for sainthood.

1741 – Swedish scientist Emanuel Swedenborg begins personal investigation of afterlife realms by means of clairvoyance and out-of-body travel, writes numerous essays on his explorations.

1778 – Mesmerism is introduced by Franz Anton Mesmer, an Austrian physician. While slow to catch on, it was an important precursor of psychical research and parapsychology.

March 31, 1848 – This day marks the beginning of paranormal phenomena at the home of the Fox family in Hydesville, New York.

This leads to a mediumship "epidemic" in the United States and Europe.

January 1851 – John W. Edmonds, Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court, begins a two-year personal investigation of mediumship. Intending to debunk the phenomena, he instead becomes a dedicated Spiritualist.

1851 – The "New York Circle," an association of prominent men and women, including Judge Edmonds, is formed to observe and report on spiritualistic phenomena. The group's first official meeting takes place on November 14, 1851.

1851 – The Ghost Society is formed at Cambridge in England. One of the founders is Edward White Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury. In 1853, Henry Sidgwick, Benson's cousin and later a founder of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), joins the group. Seven years later, Professor Sidgwick becomes a tutor at Cambridge to Frederic W. H. Myers, a co-founder of the SPR.

1852 – A Harvard University delegation, including poet William Cullen Bryant and Messrs. B.K. Bliss, William Edwards, and David Wells studies the physical mediumship of Daniel Dunglas Home, concluding that he is "a modern wonder."

1853 – Dr. Robert Hare, a retired University of Pennsylvania Chemistry professor and renowned inventor, begins investigating

mediumship intent on showing it is all fraud. He comes to accept it as real and then becomes a medium himself. In 1855, he writes a book, "Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations."

1853 – French author Victor Hugo is exiled to the island of Jersey and begins an informal investigation of mediumship.

1854 – French educator Hippolyte Leon Denizarth Rivail (Allan Kardec) begins an investigation of mediumship. In 1857, he publishes "The Spirits' Book," which sets forth profound messages from the spirit world.

1860 – American editor and statesman Robert Dale Owen writes "Footfalls on the Boundary of Another World," discussing various psychic phenomena. Psychical researchers in the decades following would say that this book significantly influenced them in their decisions to investigate similar phenomena.

1866 – Alfred Russell Wallace, co-originator with Charles Darwin of the natural selection theory of evolution, issues his first writing on Spiritualism, "The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural."

1869 – The Dialectical Society of London appoints a committee, including biologist Alfred Russel Wallace, to investigate mediumship. The committee returns a report that the phenomena exist.



The Fox Sisters

1870 – William Crookes (later, Sir William), a renowned chemist, decides to investigate mediums. On April 21, 1870, he has the first of many sittings with medium Daniel Dunglas Home. In 1872, he begins an investigation of medium Florence Cook. He reports that both Home and Cook are genuine mediums.

April 2, 1872 – Rev. William Stainton Moses, an Anglican minister and English Master at University College, begins investigating mediumship, assuming it to be all trickery and fraud. He soon becomes a medium himself, receiving profound messages from a high spirit calling himself Imperator.

May 9, 1874 – Two Cambridge scholars, Frederic W. H. Myers and Edmund Gurney, visit Rev. William Stainton Moses to observe his mediumship. They are fascinated and are encouraged to further explore the subject.

1875 – Serjeant Cox, a lawyer who often sat with W. Stainton Moses, organizes the Psychological Society of Great Britain. It is dissolved upon his death in 1879.

1876 – William Barrett (later Sir William), professor of physics in the Royal College of Science at Dublin, submits a paper to the British Association for the Advancement of Science on the subject of mental telepathy, then called thought-transference. The Association rejects it. When Alfred Russel Wallace protests the rejection, Barrett is allowed to deliver his paper but not publish it.

1879 – The Cambridge Society for Psychical Research is formed to conduct investigation of mediums. It is a forerunner of the Society for Psychical Research.

1882 – The Society for Psychical Research (SPR) is organized in London by eminent scholars and scientists, including William Barrett, Henry Sidgwick, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Edmund Gurney.

Sidgwick becomes its first president.



1884 – Dr. Richard Hodgson, who had been teaching philosophy at Cambridge and law at University extension, is sent to India by the SPR to investigate Madame H. P. Blavatsky and the Theosophical Society. Hodgson submits a very controversial report that Blavatsky is a charlatan.

1885 – Professor William James of Harvard University begins an investigation of the mediumship of Leonora Piper of Boston, Mass., concluding that she is not a charlatan.

1886 – A 1,300-page book titled "Phantasms of the Living," authored by Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore is published. It strongly supports the telepathy hypothesis. It is Myers who gives the name "telepathy" to what was previously referred to as thought-transference.

1887 – The American branch of the Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) is formed with Richard Hodgson accepting the position as its first executive secretary. William James turns over the investigation of Leonora Piper to Hodgson. Hodgson will dedicate himself to observing and studying her mediumship until his death in 1905.

1889 – The SPR arranges for Leonora Piper to travel to England, where she is studied and tested by Frederic W. H. Myers and Professor

Oliver Lodge. During the sittings with Lodge, Edmund Gurney, co-founder of the SPR who had died in 1888, communicates. Lodge and Myers begin to accept the spirit/survival hypothesis.

1891 – The American Psychical Society of Boston is formed by disgruntled ASPR members who feel that Richard Hodgson is devoting too much time to Leonora Piper and not delegating research projects involving other mediums to qualified researchers. Unitarian minister Minot J. Savage and B. O. Flower, an editor, are the founders, while Professor Amos Dolbear of Tufts University and author Hamlin Garland become the chief investigators.

1892 – George Pellew, an associate of the ASPR, is killed in an accident, and on March 22, 1892 begins to communicate with Richard Hodgson through Leonora Piper. Pellew (given the pseudonym "George Pelham") gradually takes over as Piper's primary control from Phinuit. Hodgson abandons the secondary personality hypothesis as well as teleteropathy (telepathy at a distance) and the cosmic reservoir theories and adopts the spirit hypothesis based on Pellew's very distinct personality coming through at the sittings. Other researchers follow.

1894 – Professor Oliver Lodge, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Dr.



Eusapia Palladino

Charles Richet of France, investigate the mediumship of Eusapia Palladino of Italy, concluding that she is a "mixed" medium, producing some real phenomena but occasionally cheating, although it is pointed out that much, if not all, of the cheating is unconscious "fraud."

1898 – Frederic W. H. Myers has the first of over 150 sittings with British trance medium Rosalie Thompson. Myers becomes fully convinced of the spirit hypothesis.

1901 – Frederic W. H. Myers dies and soon begins communicating with Professor Oliver Lodge through medium Rosalie Thompson. Over the next several years, Myers communicates through other mediums and offers what come to be known as the cross-correspondences.

1903 – "Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death," a 1,426-page book begun but not completely finished by Frederic W. H. Myers before his death, is completed by others and is published. It becomes the seminal work in the field.

1904 – Dr. J.L. Matla and Dr. G. J. Zaalbert van Zelst of Holland begin research into the ability of spirit entities to manipulate devices. In their book, "The Mystery of Death," they state that there is no normal explanation for the consistent results they received and that they are convinced that unseen entities were the cause of the phenomena.

1905 – Richard Hodgson dies and soon begins communicating through Leonora Piper, the medium he had studied for 18 years.

1906 – Because of Richard Hodgson's death, the ASPR is reorganized and becomes the American Institute for Scientific Research under the direction of Dr. James H. Hyslop, formerly a professor of logic and ethics at Columbia University. The ASPR becomes a branch of the Institute. After Hyslop's death in 1920, it becomes the Boston Society for Psychic Research. In 1941, it is

reintegrated into the ASPR with headquarters in New York.

1907 – Dr. James H. Hyslop begins investigating the mediumship of Minerva Soule ("Mrs. Chenoweth")

1909 – "The Survival of Man" by Sir Oliver Lodge is published, creating a stir in the scientific world. .

1911 – Stanford University establishes the first ESP lab under John Edgar Coover.

1914 – The mediumship of Pearl Curran, a St. Louis, Missouri housewife through whom an entity known as Patience Worth communicates volumes of wisdom, begins. She is investigated by numerous scientists and scholars.

1915 – David Wilson, a London amateur wireless operator, reports that he has apparently received messages from the spirit world by means of Morse Code.

1915 – Sir Oliver Lodge begins receiving messages from his son, Raymond, killed on the battlefield in France. Many of the messages come through Gladys Osborne Leonard, a trance medium. In 1916, Sir Oliver's book, "Raymond or Life and Death," is published and becomes a best-seller, influencing many but inviting scorn from various scientists.

1917 – The Rev. Charles Drayton Thomas, a SPR member, begins sitting with Gladys Osborne Leonard, receiving many evidential messages from his deceased father and sister. The book and newspaper tests are developed providing evidence that the information communicated does not come by means of telepathy.

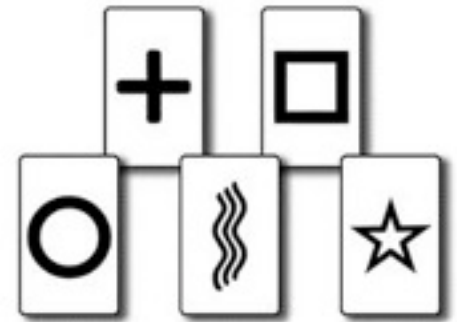
1921 – F. R. Melton of England reports that he has invented a "psychic telephone" in which many paranormal voices are received.

1925 – The "Margery" case, involving medium Mina Crandon, creates conflict and division among psychical researchers and a defection of key researchers from

the ASPR, which never fully recovers.

1925 – Sir William Barrett, last of the SPR founders, dies. His unfinished book, "Death-bed Visions" is published the following year.

1930 – Focus turns from survival research to ESP with Dr. Joseph B. Rhine, one of the dissenters in the "Margery" case, establishing the parapsychology lab at Duke University under Professor William McDougall.



1931 – The Association for Research & Enlightenment is established in Virginia Beach, Virginia to promote the work of psychic/medium Edgar Cayce, called "the father of holistic medicine." This gives much impetus to a belief in reincarnation.

1937 – "New Frontiers of the Mind," by Dr. Joseph B. Rhine brings ESP and PK to the public and popularizes the term parapsychology. The "Journal of Parapsychology" is founded.

1956 – "The Search for Bridey Murphy" authored by Morey Bernstein is a best-seller and further creates interest in reincarnation.

1959 – Raymond Bayless and Attila von Szalay report on their discovery of tape-recorded spirit voices in the January issue of "The Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research." A few months later, Friedrich Jürgenson announces a similar discovery in Sweden

1961 – Based upon a wide collection of mediumistic reports, Dr. Robert Crookall produces the first comprehensive book summarizing the afterlife environment. It is titled "The Supreme Adventure."

1966 – "Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation" authored by Dr. Ian Stevenson is published, popularizing earlier articles by Stevenson on the subject.

1971 – Konstantin Raudive writes a book about EVP, "Breakthrough: An Amazing Experiment in Electronic Communication with the Dead," which popularizes the phenomenon.

1973(?) – The Monroe Institute is established to study and explore consciousness and out-of-body experiences.

1975 – Dr. Raymond Moody gives a name to and popularizes the "near-death experience" with his bestseller, "Life After Life."

1978 – The International Association of Near-Death Studies (IANDS) is founded to encourage further study of the NDE.

1982 – Sarah Estep founds the American Association of Electronic Voice Phenomena.

1993 – The Scole Experiments in mediumship begin in England.

1995 (?) Focus appears to turn from parapsychology to "consciousness studies."

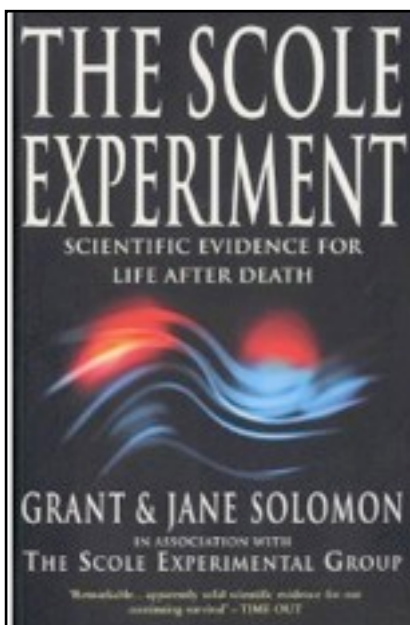
2002 – "The Afterlife Experiments" by Dr. Gary Schwartz, an American researcher, is published, reporting on Schwartz's experiments with a number of clairvoyant mediums. He reports that the phenomena are real.

2005 – In his book, "Induced After Death Communication," Dr. Allan Botkin, an American clinical psychologist, reports on a new therapy in which grieving people are put in touch with deceased loved ones.



A resident of Kailua, Hawaii, USA, Michael Tymn has been a free-lance journalist for nearly five decades. He has contributed to

more than 40 publications and is the author of "The Articulate Dead." He is vice-president of the Academy of Spirituality and Paranormal Studies, Inc. and editor of its quarterly



Towards a Social History of Spiritualism in Bristol

Jack Hunter

As part of my current research, looking at contemporary Spiritualist practice and belief in Bristol, I am attempting to gain a perspective on modern Spiritualism's historical context in the city. Surprisingly no one has yet conducted an historical study of Spiritualism in Bristol. I find this particularly interesting considering the apparent abundance of spiritualist centres within the city. This historical perspective is intended to be used as a backdrop for studying Spiritualism's current ethnological reality, which will form the bulk of my research; the aim being to ascertain to what extent the Spiritualism of today adheres to a continuous tradition dating from the movement's inception in the 19th century, or whether the practices of today owe more to much more recent "new age" tendencies. This short article, then, is intended to present a little of what I have found out so far.

The Development of Modern British Spiritualism

Spiritualism, as we know it today, is predominately the product of the 19th century. Spiritualists give March 31st 1848 as the movement's official start date, and Hydesville, New York as its place of origin (Doyle, 1926, p. ; Pearsall, 2004, pp. 29-33; Melechi, 2008, p. 161; Byrne, 2010, p. 18). Of course mediumship practices have existed, in one form or another, since well before the claims of the Fox sisters, Kate and Margaret, to being able to communicate with the spirit of a murdered peddler in their home. This event came at just the right time to prompt an international flurry of mediumistic activity the likes of which had never been seen before. Indeed, by 1853, only five years later, Spiritualism had spread across the atlantic to make a firm foothold in Britain with the establishment of the first Spiritualist Church in Keighley, Yorkshire.

When Spiritualism arrived in Britain it found a social climate ripe for supernatural interactions, and so quickly took hold of the popular imagination. In these early days Spiritualism flourished. Mediums toured the country giving demonstrations of their exceptional abilities to sold-out concert halls, and thousands began conducting private seances in their homes, or practiced table-tipping.

The Spiritualists National Union (SNU) was formed in 1901 from the remnants of earlier attempts to construct a centralised organisation for Spiritualists - most notably the British National Association of Spiritualists of 1873 and the National Spiritualists Federation of 1890. The aim of the newly formed National Union was to give the Spiritualist movement a body that could protect and promote the interests of both Spiritualists and mediums across the country. The SNU's branch of Spiritualism is constructed around 7 key principles, claimed to have been



communicated by Robert Owen, founder of the Co-Op movement, through the mediumship of Emma Hardinge-Britten. These 7 principles read as follows:

1. The Fatherhood of God
2. The Brotherhood of Man
3. The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels
4. The Continuous Existence of the Soul
5. Personal Responsibility
6. Compensation and Retribution hereafter for all the good and evil deeds done on Earth.
7. Eternal Progress open to every human soul.

These 7 principles remain at the heart of spiritualist belief today, even if individual interpretations differ person-to-person.

Focusing in on Bristol

At this time Bristol was a hive of industrial and commercial activity; famous for its ship building, tobacco and chocolate.

According to records held at the Arthur Findlay College (the headquarters of the Spiritualists National Union), there is evidence to suggest that non-unionised Spiritualist services were being held in

Bristol from 1900, and by 1909 at least three of these groups had become affiliated with the SNU. It is very difficult to judge the extent of private home-circles and seances before 1900, but owing to the popularity of experimental home seances in Britain at this time it is not inconceivable to imagine such private practices taking place in Bristol.

Byrne (2010, 49) notes that in 1916 "Edmund McClure, an honorary Canon of Bristol, despaired that spiritualism was widespread and that professional mediums offered their services in 'all our large towns'"

Interesting Characters

In my quest to find out a little about the history of Spiritualism in Bristol, I have come across a couple of significant and influential Bristolian contributors to the movement.

In 1872 a retired Clifton based photographer by the name of John Beattie decided to conduct experiments with Spirit Photography, after being highly sceptical at the genuineness of spirit photographs he had seen. Arthur Conan Doyle, in his *History of Spiritualism* (1926), describes how Beattie, with his friend Dr. G.S. Thompson of Edinburgh

"...conducted a series of experiments in 1872 and obtained on the plates first patches of light and, later on, entire extra figures. They found that the extra forms and markings showed up on the plate during development much in advance of the sitter a peculiarity often observed by other operators."

So influential were these photographs that, Conan Doyle relates, they were dubbed "valuable and conclusive experiments" by Alfred Russell-Wallace and were commented upon by William Stainton Moses.



Ernest Walter Oaten

Ernest Walter Oaten (1875-1952) was perhaps Bristol's most famous and influential Spiritualist export. Oaten became interested in Spiritualism in 1889 while working as a printer's apprentice. As with many, Oaten's initial response to the idea of communication with spirits was one of scepticism, and so he set out to expose the movement for the fraud he considered it all to be. Much to his surprise, however, Oaten became convinced of the reality of the phenomena he was witnessing during seances and, by 1896, had begun practicing as a medium himself. From this point onwards Oaten's life was devoted to the furthering of Spiritualism. He did this along side Arthur Conan Doyle, acting as his booking agent for lecture tours in the south-west.

Another interesting character I have stumbled across in the early stages of this research is Eva H. Longbottom (1892-?), a blind from birth musician from Redland, Bristol. Although not necessarily associated directly with Spiritualism as an organised movement, Eva Longbottom could be said to be representative of a more personal form of Spiritualism in the city in the early 20th century. In her autobiography she describes in detail her numerous clairvoyant encounters with fairies:

"I have seen many fairies with my mind's eye... They are of various kinds, the ones I see. The music fairies are very beautiful...They speak and sing, bit more in sound than in distinct words -- a language of their own, a fairy tongue. Their music is a thing we cannot translate. It exists in itself...Then there are dancing fairies. Their dancing is dainty and full of grace, a sweet old style of dance, without any tangles in it. I am generally alone when I see them, not necessarily in a woodland, but wherever the atmosphere is poetical. They are quite real. Another kind is the poem fairies. They are more ethereal, and of a violet shade...The colour fairies are also most interesting. If you can imagine each colour transformed into a fairy you may get an idea of what they are like. They are in airy forms and dance and sing in the tone of their colours. I have not seen any brownies, as I do not take so much interest in the domestic side of the fairies' life. "When I was young I had it so much impressed on me that fairies were imaginary beings that I would not believe in them, but when I was about fourteen I began to realize them, and now I love them. Perhaps it was the deeper study of the arts that brought them to me. I have felt a sympathetic vibration for them and they have made me feel that we were friends. I have had a great deal of happiness and good fortune in my life, and perhaps I can attribute some of that to the fairies." (Longbottom, 1933, pp. 169-170)

Controversy

In 1978 Bristol was at the heart of a controversy that ran right to the very top of the SNU. The then SNU president, Gordon Higginson, was accused of fraud following a demonstration of his mediumship at a



Eva Longbottom

Bristol based Spiritualist Church. Members of the Church accused Higginson of using readily available information to embellish his alleged clairvoyance during a public demonstration. It was suggested that Higginson had used names from library lists and healing books stored in the church. The accusation went so far as to end up in court, but Higginson was acquitted as the court was not satisfied that the documents could have provided him with all the names and details he had mentioned.

Spiritualism Today

As stated at the beginning of this article, there is a wealth of Spiritualist activity in Bristol today, indeed there are currently 9 well established Spiritualist centres in the city. This figure does not include non-denominational private seance groups and psychic development circles (for an example of such a group in Bristol see Hunter, 2009), which, by their very nature, are much more difficult to quantify. Of these 9 churches 7 are SNU affiliated (www.snu.org.uk/churches/csw.htm). The question is, to what extent do these groups represent continuations of the earliest spiritualist activity recorded in the city, or are they more recent, so-called "new age" additions to the city?

Cuttings from Bristol's *Evening Post* newspaper dating to between 1977-1980 seem to indicate that certain forms of faith and psychic healing were being practiced at this time in Bristol. There is an interesting article in the *Evening Post* of March 1st 1979 that details the story of "young spiritualists" in Bristol searching for a venue in which to "practise their religion". The 32 year old leader of this drive for a new premises for young spiritualists explained how "[t]he older mediums don't give the youngsters a

chance... There are lots of psychics in Bristol who aren't able to heal because of lack of facilities". The newspaper also followed the story of the "Aquarian United Spiritualist Society" to find a Bristol home for their congregation of "70-plus members" in 1980.

Conclusions

Naturally this can only be considered as a very early component of my research, but already it seems clear that Bristol has a long, fascinating, and hitherto unexplored, relationship with Spiritualism which I look forward to exploring in greater depth over the course of my fieldwork.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Paul Gaunt and Psypioneer, Duncan Gascoyne at the Arthur Findlay College and Dawn Dyer at the Bristol Central Library Local History Team.

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Candomblé, Umbanda, and Kardecismo Mediums in Recife, Brazil

Stanley Krippner

Cultural Background

In Brazil, mediumship is a central component within the ritual practice of what can be termed its "spiritistic religions." Mediumship involves belief in the bodily incorporation of spiritual agents and/or the channeling of information from the "divine world" to the "material world," often for therapeutic purposes. In the United States, "mediums" are conceptualized somewhat differently from "channelers"; the former group focuses on communication with the dead, and the latter with a broader scope of "entities" or purported "sources" of information. Mediums and channelers both claim to be able to receive information that supposedly does not originate from consensual reality (e.g., from living persons, media, or their own memory). Some writers in the United States (e.g., Hastings, 1991; Klimo, 1998) use the term "medium" to refer to a practitioners who allegedly obtains this information from deceased persons, and "channeler" to a practitioner who claims to obtain information from other "spiritual entities" (e.g., deities, "nature spirits," inhabitants of "other dimensions") as well.

Mediumship is typically induced during so-called altered states of consciousness perhaps better described as, "patterns of phenomenological properties," (Rock & Krippner, 2007). These "states" (or "patterns") play an important role in the rituals of spiritistic religions, i.e., those African-Brazilian religions in which "spirits" (most of whom "accompanied" slaves to Brazil during the Diaspora) occupy a central role, e.g., Batuque, Caboclo, Candomblé, Macumba, Tambor de Minas, Umbanda, and Xango. Permeating the mythologies of these religions are stories about a "Sky God" and his intermediaries, the orixás (also spelled orishas), who symbolize the primordial forces of nature. These orixás are believed to be powerful and terrifying, but also similar to humans in that they can be talked to and pleaded with, as well as cajoled through special offerings. The orixás and less powerful entities (e.g., exús and pombajiras, who are "lower" spirits, caboclos or spirits of Brazilians of mixed Indian, European, and African heritage, crianças or spirits of babies or young children, or pretos velhos or spirits of elderly slaves, or even of one's ancestors or former "incarnations") can take hold of the mind and body of a human being through acts of voluntary

"spirit incorporation," which were central features in African ritual practice.

African religious practitioners gained access to the "divine world" in three ways: by making offerings to the orixás; by "divining," or foretelling the future, with the help of an orixá; and by incorporating an orixá, ancestral spirit, or other entity who – when benevolent – would warn the community about possible calamities, diagnose illnesses, and prescribe cures. The "medium" through whom these spirits spoke and moved typically performed this task voluntarily. The "trance," or pattern of phenomenological properties (such as the medium's dissociative capacities and his or her capacity to become absorbed in the task), required for the voluntary gift of the medium's mind and body to the orixá or spirit was brought about by such practices as dancing, singing, and drumming. Allowing the orixá to "inhabit" one's body not only survived the transition from Africa to Brazil, but occasionally incorporated New World indigenous techniques of mind alteration such as the use of strong tobacco or other psychotropic plants (Haviser, 2006; Villoldo & Krippner, 1987).

Of all the Brazilian spiritist movements, Candomblé (or, more accurately, the Candomblés, given the variety of forms it has taken in different parts of the country) is the one that most closely resembles the original religions of Africa, retaining the original names and worship of many West African orixás (Bastide, 1960, 1971). In Candomblé, devotion is typically reserved for only the orixás and exús, which reflects its African heritage. The name "Candomblé" seems to have been derived from candombe or gandombe, a community dance held by the slaves who worked on coffee and sugar cane plantations.

Among the other most prominent spiritistic movements are Umbanda and Kardecismo. Kardecismo, or Kardecism, which is also called Espiritismo or Spiritism, owes more to the teachings of Allen Kardec, a French pedagogue, than to the African traditions. Umbanda, in turn, gives a greater emphasis to Brazil's Christian heritage than to the African orixás. In some parts of Brazil, Santo Daime, a religious movement using a psychoactive tea, ayahuasca, as a sacrament, has added elements of Umbanda to its services, demonstrating the syncretization that has characterized most post-colonization religious movements in Brazil (Giesler, 1985). In fact, the Roman Catholic Church has spawned the Culto aos Santos, the Cult of the Saints, which is suffused with healing rituals reminiscent of African-Brazilian practices. Evangelistic Protestantism, in contrast, has little use for the

African-Brazilian religions, but encourages its adherents to become "seized by the Holy Spirit" as an alternative to African-based spirit incorporation. All of these religious movements, as well as the syncretic religions using ayahuasca as a sacrament (see Krippner & Sulla, 2000), can be classified as "ecstatic religions" (Lewis, 1971), because they deliberately foster shifts in their adepts' patterns of phenomenological properties. As a result, these shifts provide opportunities for direct contact with the divine world, albeit via a cosmology that varies from group to group.

Candomblé, Kardecismo, and Umbanda, as the three major spiritistic groupings (Hess, 1994), can be differentiated along an ethnic/class-oriented continuum of Brazilian Spiritism. Umbanda is situated at the center of this continuum, with cultos de nação (cults of African nations, like Candomblé) at one extreme and the "more European" Kardecism at the other. Umbandistas typically draw from a broad range of beliefs and practices associated with either the "magical" African-Brazilian pole or the "faux scientific" European-Brazilian pole. The ethnic make-ups of these religious groups have historically reflected this continuum, with Candomblé appealing mainly to African-Brazilians from the poorer segments of society, Kardecismo appealing to middle-class European-Brazilians, and Umbanda appealing to a more varied mixture of ethnicities primarily from Brazil's lower socio-economic classes. However, descriptions of ongoing changes in ethnic and class demography in each religious group (Brown, 1994) defy any rigid categorization along these lines and testify to the fluid religious landscape in Brazil. Along a spiritual continuum, however, the three groupings represent a commonality of belief in the spirit realm, the power and efficacy of spirit agents, and the ability of human clients to interact with and embody these agents through ritualized methods of spirit incorporation.

The Pathologizing of Spiritistic Practices

In the late 19th century and well into the 20th century, the practice of mediumship by members of these three groups and several smaller sects was identified with psychopathology by the psychiatric establishment in Brazil. Nina Rodrigues (1896-1935) conducted extensive research on various types of African-Brazilian mediumistic practices. She considered them all the outcome of "hysterical phenomena," allowed by the "extreme neuropathic or hysterical" and "profoundly superstitious" personality of "the Negro." Xavier de Oliveira (1931) claimed that,

in a period of 12 years, 9.4% of a total of 18,281 patients hospitalized in the Psychiatric Clinic of the University of Rio de Janeiro "suffered psychosis caused only and exclusively by Spiritism." Pacheco e Silva (1936) maintained that Spiritism "acts predominantly from proneness, aggravating an already existing psychosis or stimulating latent mental disturbances in an individual of psychopathic constitution."

Two elements played a role in the psychiatrists' viewpoint. First, the intellectuals of Brazil were attempting to create a modern Eurocentric nation, suppressing or pathologizing all "primitive" creeds and practices. Secondly, the psychiatrists were either Roman Catholics or secular materialists; for both groups, Spiritism was an enemy to be overcome (Moreira-Almeida, Silva de Almeida, & Neto, 2005, p. 14).

The seminal work of Roger Bastide (1960, 1971) took a different perspective. Bastide concluded that mental pathology explained some cases, but that "possession trance is sociological before pathological." Psychiatric theory henceforth started integrating cultural sensitivity, also influenced by the development of transcultural psychiatry and ethnopsychiatry (Lewis-Fernandez & Kleinman, 1995). Within this rubric, research data have been collected that support the position that mediumship is a skill, one that can empower its practitioners (especially if they are women in a patriarchal culture) and provide support for members of the community who are suffering from anxiety, depression, and other afflictions (Krippner, 1997).

Possession and Dissociation

The term "incorporation" is used by the spiritistic groups in Brazil to describe situations in which practitioners allow themselves to be "taken over" by a "spirit entity," exemplified by mediums who voluntarily allow the incorporation of an orixá. On the other hand, the term "possession" is used to define the experience of an involuntary takeover, one that is usually distressful, unwelcome, and possibly long-lasting (Negro, Palladino-Negro, & Louza, 2002, p. 65). The latter type typically requires the intervention of a religious specialist who can "exorcise" or "depossess" the offending agency.

However, there have been difficulties in clarifying the relationship of "possession" to concepts like "trance," "altered states," and "dissociation." In their study of the Batuque, an African-Brazilian spiritistic tradition, Leacock and Leacock (1972) conceive of "possession" as "the

presence in the human body of a supernatural being" and trance as "an altered psychological state" (p. 217). Although they also employ the expression "trance-possession," it would be a mistake to assume that the terms are synonymous. Distinctions must be made in regard to "possession" as belief and "possession" as experience. That is, "possession" can refer to belief in the potential for voluntary or spontaneous interaction with or incorporation of a benevolent and malevolent spirit. The culturally or individually construed belief, in turn, can have consequences for individual behavior as well as for social interaction.

Possession can also occur without the patterns of phenomenological properties associated with "dissociative trance." The Ethiopian *zâr* cult, for example, blames the origins of many types of diseases and maladies on possession, but then induces a trance after one is said to have been possessed in order to communicate with the spirit (Walker, 1972). This is also common in Umbanda and contemporary Brazilian Evangelical Protestantism and Pentecostalism. Finally, possession can be understood in terms of "trance-possession" (i.e., "possession trance") in which the incorporation of a spirit is experienced concurrently with psychophysiological changes and modifications in the conscious state that are characteristic of "dissociative trance."

The anthropologist Erika Bourguignon (1976, 1977), an investigator of "spirit possession," has differentiated between "possession" (in which a "spirit" produces changes in someone's behavior, health, or disposition without an accompanying loss of awareness); "possession trance" (in which someone loses conscious awareness, while the invading spirit's own behavior, speech patterns, and body movements "take over" that person, evoking changes that can be observed by outsiders); and "trance" (a so-called "altered state of consciousness" including the loss of conscious awareness but without the presence of a spirit or other outside entity).

"Possession trance" can be voluntary or involuntary, helpful or harmful. In "possession trance," the intrusive spirit may be quite benevolent, bringing new insights to the "possessed" individual by means of "automatic writing," "channeling," or "mediumship." Sometimes the spirit plays the role of a trickster, teaching the individual life lessons through embarrassment, playful activities, or humor. These results are quite different from those cases of "possession" in which an invading entity takes over a victim's body as the result of a

malevolent sorcerer's curse or simply to gratify the spirit entity's "earthbound" impulses and desires. These types of "trance" are extremely dissociative; the client manifests experiences and behaviors that seem to exist apart from, or appear to have been disconnected from, the mainstream (or flow) of his or her conscious awareness, behavioral repertoire, and/or self-identity (Krippner, 1997, p. 8). Krippner (1997) has contrasted "controlled" and "uncontrolled" dissociation, the former often characterizing such spiritual practitioners as shamans, mediums, and diviners.

Psychophysiology and Dissociation

From a psychophysiological perspective, "dissociation" involves the disengaging of the cognitive processes from their executive, higher-order, volitional faculties (Winkelman, 2000). Generalized psychophysiological correlates of what might be described as trance with dissociative aspects involve hemispheric lateralization that favors (in right-handed people) the right hemisphere (more closely associated with intuitive, emotive, non-logical, spatial, imaginative thought and perception) over the ordinarily dominant left hemisphere (more closely associated with linguistic and logical-type processing). This can eventually shift toward cortical synchronization (Schumaker, 1995).

Winkelman (1986) suggested that a wide range of culturally-patterned induction techniques leads to generalized parasympathetic dominance, in which the frontal cortex exhibits high-voltage, slow-wave, synchronous EEG patterns (e.g., theta rhythms) that originate in the limbic system (the hippocampal-septal region and the amygdala) and proceed to frontal regions via limbic-frontal innervations. Some alterations in consciousness, such as some forms of meditation and hypnosis, do exhibit small variances in EEG patterning, and similar differences are also noticed between voluntarily and spontaneously induced states. Winkelman (1986) further indicated that the involvement of the limbic system is an important part of the neural architecture of dissociative trance. For instance, the limbic system has been implicated in the modulation of a variety of functions, including basic survival drives and hypothalamic/pituitary release of neurotransmitter and endogenous opiates. The hypothalamic action, in turn, influences, among other things, dissociation, trance-related hallucinations, analgesia, and amnesia. The hypothalamus also controls the sympathetic (excitatory) and parasympathetic (inhibitory) nervous systems,

the latter being associated with decreased cortical excitation and increased hemispheric synchronization. Evidence also shows that parasympathetic dominance can be induced through excessive sympathetic activation, such as through drumming, dancing, and chanting, all of which are common features of ritual practice and in which the homeostatic reciprocal action of the autonomic nervous system.

Lex (1979) suggested that the "raison d'être for rituals is the readjustment of dysphasic biological and social rhythms by manipulation of neurophysiological action under controlled conditions" (p. 144). Rituals such as those associated with possession and mediumship, therefore, not only provide psychological relief from social and environmental stressors, they are mechanisms that employ driving techniques that "tune" the nervous system through hemispheric lateralization, parasympathetic dominance, and cortical synchronization.

In a field study conducted by Don and Moura (2000), topographic brain mapping at midline scalp locations of people whom they described as "healer-mediums" revealed increased brain activity when the healer-mediums reported being incorporated by a spirit, compared to resting baseline conditions at the same midline scalp locations. These results suggest the presence of a hyper-aroused brain state associated with the possession trance behaviors of the mediums. In contrast, a small sample of patients monitored during possession trance revealed no high frequency brain activity.

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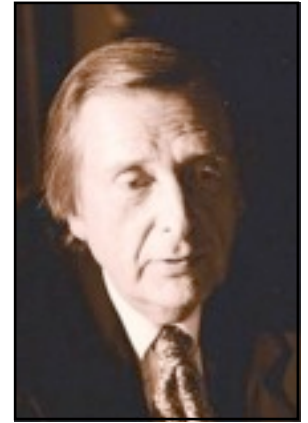
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A Trance Mediumship Demonstration

Fabian Graham

Tonight I went to Cai Cuo Gang Dou Mu Gong / Choa Chu Kang Tao Bu Keng 蔡厝港斗母宮 to see the Tua Ya Pek medium that I saw last week go into trance again. The main purpose of my visit was to ask permission and if granted, to record the chanting that summons Tua Ya Pek (an enforcer in the Underworld – not sure of official title) and his terrifying scream as he enters the body of the medium. I was planning a 30 minute visit, but after I got there, a young couple came who had recently had an abortion, and wanted Tua Ya Pek to perform a ritual to help send the aborted fetus on quickly to it's next reincarnation.

Anyway, a friend there tried to explain that a part of the purpose of the ritual was also to help the parents, who looked utterly miserable, to let go of some of their guilt. In return, I told him that in the West, whether you have had 1 abortion, 2, 3 or 5, there is no such ritual and individuals have to find other ways of dealing with the guilt ... but that is diversifying.

As usual, the chanting commenced and the spirit medium swayed violently back and forth in the dragon chair with so much force that 2 assistants had to steady the chair to keep it from falling. Also, as the previous week, as the deity Tua Ya Pek entered the medium, a piercing scream emanated from the medium, the kind of scream that would give most people goose bumps, especially as, if you believe that Tua Ya Pek has really left Hell to incarnate in this medium's body, then the scream is brought straight from the Hell regions.

Once in trance, after paying respects to higher underworld deities, the special ritual began.

It was performed outside of the temple in an adjoining piece of public land, and a small table was placed there and an altar set up on it. Behind the altar a green chair was placed – I was told that green symbolizes the deceased. If the ritual were for an adult, or even a child, the individual's clothes would have been placed on the chair, but for an aborted fetus, the clothes were replaced with a towel. A plastic bowl was placed in front of the chair, and in front of both was the temporary altar.

I took note that it resembled a Taoist altar with 4 of the 5 common offerings: light, incense, water, and fruit, with only the flowers missing. A helper at the temple explained that they follow Taoist ritual intentionally and consider themselves as Taoist. Also on the table were the following items.

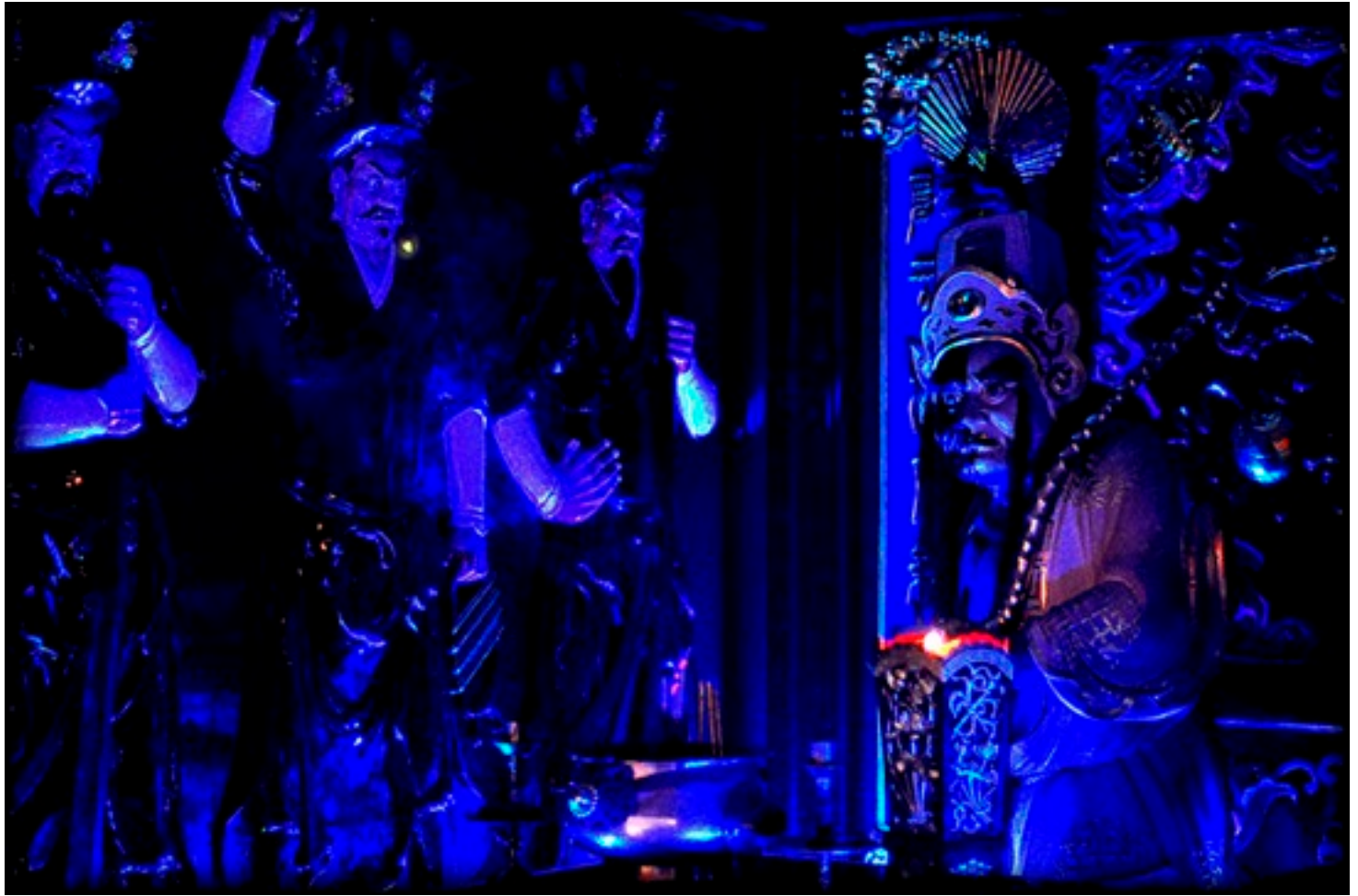
1 A pair of baby shoes placed on top of 2 boxes containing



- 2 Baby clothes. There was also
- 3 A bottle of milk with a pacifier (dummy) in the top that would be used to feed a baby.
4. A lot of candy and small cookies
5. Piles of Hell money (is this the correct expression or Hell Banknotes / Ghost Money ???)
6. Charm papers and pen and black ink for the medium to write on them
7. A bowl of porridge (I assume as baby food)

Also of note, is that throughout the ritual, in place of *bua bue* to check that the underworld was happy with the ceremony, 2 coins were used. The method was Tua Ya Pek allowing them to fall on the ground from his fan as a means of divination.

Both parents were at the altar, and at certain intervals during the ritual, the various items were thrown at the chair by the medium. The shoes were then placed on the chair, and the father also threw the items at the chair as the medium indicated them with his fan accompanied by a shrill scream. When this had been completed, the ritual moved inside, but I did not observe this section as I was absorbed reflecting on what I had just seen. It was then explained to me that the ritual would come back



outside, and conclude by burning all of the ritual objects on the table.

Sure enough, the parents and temple helpers along with the medium returned, and after more praying by the medium and giving instructions to helpers, the coins were once again dropped to find out if the ritual had been successful. It was about 10PM by this time, and a flash light had to be brought out to locate the coins. The answer was yes, and a large metal tray, about the size of a child's cot, was brought out and placed a few meters away from the altar on a grass verge.

First the piles of Hell money with candles in them and what looked like a petition (but will have to check) was placed in the metal tray. The other ritual items including the shoes, baby clothes, porridge, even the bowl containing it, the fruit, actually everything from the altar apart from the table itself was placed in the tray which had sides about 45cm tall. The helpers then undid packets of Hell money, and completely covered the offerings with the paper money. Then the father was given a handful of incense sticks which he placed around the boundary of the tray to create a sacred space that nothing could cross. Lastly, using Hell money as matches, the entire tray was set alight, and burned fiercely. The retinue re-entered the temple, only the parents left to mourn the loss of their intended child. The whole event left me with a cold chill which is returning as I type.

Back inside the temple, consultations continued as per normal.

Fabian Graham is an anthropologist. His area of research is spirit mediumship in popular Chinese religion, in particular spirit mediumship in Taiwan and Singapore.



The Importance of Mediumship Research

A variety of perspectives from contemporary investigators of mediumship, including:

- Prof. Charles F. Emmons - Dr. Julie Beischel
 - Prof. Patric V. Giesler - Dr. David Luke - Dr. Fiona Bowie - Robin P. Foy - Dr. Hannah Gilbert - Dr. Carlos Alvarado - Yves Marton, PhD - Dr. Zeljko Jokic - Paul D. Biscop, PhD - Prof. Etzel Cardena - Robert McLuhan - Dr. Ciaran O'Keefe - Rosemarie Pilkington, PhD



"The study of spirit mediumship can help us investigate important questions on a number of levels, depending on our methodologies. At the very least there is an important social/cultural context, within which people cope with grief, satisfy curiosity about death and survival, and look for advice on managing life. There are also exciting issues in neuroscience and psychology (what happens in the brain of a good medium). Most enticing of all is the possibility that mediumship will provide crucial insights into consciousness and survival. Insisting that such things happen and denying that they happen are equally no good; we need to investigate if we're to be called scientists."

- Prof. Charles F. Emmons, Gettysburg College

"My primary area of psychic research is in physical mediumship and its phenomena. In 1978, a deceased ex Prime Minister - Winston Churchill - spoke to me independently - in his own voice - from mid air. This is the reason he gave for the importance of mankind's need to carefully study mediumship and its growing evidence for post-mortem survival:

'If you had no option but to emigrate from your homeland to a different country; prior to your embarkation, would you not do your utmost beforehand to study the language, customs, geography and prevailing conditions of your new homeland before you left?' 'Therefore, does it not make perfect sense for you to study the same aspects of a place to which we all go eventually. The spirit world?'



This quote sums it up perfectly for me. Good, genuine mediumship is the key to our knowledge of (and preparation for) the spirit world that lies ahead of us. I do not believe in 'life after death'. After 37 years of scientifically based research, I know it exists!"

- Robin P. Foy, The Scole Experimental Group

"Consciousness, as far as we know, is a speciospecific characteristic, but one which is largely culture-bound. Yet anthropological interest in those aspects of consciousness associated with shamanism and spiritism has been largely limited to non-western "exotic" cultures of The Others. There has been a long standing well recognized bias against the possibility of "real" mediumship as practiced by Spiritualists on the part of orthodox religions and materialist scientists. Nonetheless there has also been a long history of scientific study of mediumship and paranormal phenomena that supports both an expanded understanding of consciousness as well as the survival hypothesis. New and current scientific research continues to support the expanded view of consciousness and the survival hypothesis, without any particular partisanship (eg., Spiritualist) being involved. Surely it is time that the cross-discipline wholistic study of the human species – anthropology – expanded to overcome cultural biases and to open doors to new social science studies of consciousness in the context of mediumship in home cultures, where field opportunities are rich and available. The possibility of providing still further support for an expanded view of consciousness in relation to culture is extremely important in it's own right. This opportunity of providing further support for the possibility of survival of bodily death is potentially revolutionary."

- Paul D. Biscop, PhD



"My field of research is only interested in getting hold of materialisation mediums because this is the only type of mediumship that is able to provide the crushing scientific proof of survival after death. This is what a scientific team needs in order to carry out repeatable experiments under laboratory conditions. At one of these experiments all five of our senses are working, people who once lived on Earth are able to materialise. During the time they are on Earth they are just as solid and as natural as we are. We are only going to repeat the scientific experiments that have already been completed and published by Sir William Crookes in England, Professor Charles Richet in France, Professor Schrenck-Notzing in Germany, Dr. Glen Hamilton in Canada and Dr. W.J. Crawford in Ireland. However, this time we will be working with the modern sophisticated recording equipment that these scientific teams lacked. We will be able to capture on film recently deceased internationally famous people being physically reunited with their friends and relations who are still on Earth."

- Michael Roll, Campaign for Philosophical Freedom





"Some individuals claim to possess abilities that allow them to communicate with the 'spirit world'. There are several reasons why studying mediumship is so important. First, mediumistic abilities, if valid, would provide evidence to support survival, and thus have important implications for psychology. It would, for example, present a strong challenge to key assumptions underlying neuropsychology, including the notion that personality, cognition and consciousness is dependent on a living brain. Such evidence would also raise intriguing questions about the sensory mechanisms that might underlie such abilities and, practically, have important implications for aspects of psychology concerned with bereavement and grief. Second, demonstrations of apparent mediumship have a significant impact on public

belief and behaviour. Recent opinion polls have revealed that almost 30% of Americans now believe in the existence of mediumship, approximately 10% of Britons visit mediums to receive messages from the deceased and obtain general life guidance, and television programmes featuring such demonstrations consistently attract millions of viewers. Third, certain individuals working in non-paranormal contexts make claims that are analogous to those made by mediums. E.g., some clinicians claim to be able to gain insights into patients' backgrounds purely from their reactions to certain projective tests, and some individuals operating in a forensic context claim to be able to produce accurate psychological profiles from a very limited amount of behavioural information. Several writers have recently noted that the anecdotal evidence supporting these claims may be the result of the same types of stratagems that can underlie the apparent accuracy of mediumistic readings (i.e. the use of general statements, chance, etc.), and thus the methods developed to examine such claims may benefit from a thorough understanding of the procedures used to test mediumship. "

- Dr. Ciaran O'Keefe

"Mediumship research is an important part of general research on consciousness and the mechanism of linking the human word of the living with the world of the dead ancestors. It also provides a window into the culture and history of a particular people under study. This type of research also provides means of comparison for other related phenomena of consciousness and abnormal psychology giving the similarity between states of consciousness experiences during mediumship and certain psychic states such as dissociation and multiple personality disorder."

-- Zeljko Jokic, PhD.





“The study of spirit mediumship (aka “possession trance”) is the study of a whole gamut of diverse social, cultural, psychological, and biological phenomena and their complex interplay in various contexts. It is also the study of an experience that is socioculturally and individually polysemic, multi-functional, and the basis of one of the most widespread

forms of ecstatic magico-religious practice in the world. Consequently, its study is of fundamental importance to our investigation and understanding of all of these phenomena and related dynamics—from the nature, meanings, and functions of a widespread religious form and its practices (e.g., mediumistic divination, healing, and initiation) to the nature, mechanisms, and role of an oft-institutionalized altered state of consciousness. In that, such studies contribute to the foundational empirical and theoretical questions and problems of such major sub-disciplines as the Anthropology of Religion, Psychological Anthropology, Medical Anthropology, the Anthropology of Consciousness, and, related to the latter, “Paranthropology.” The first of these contributions is, of course, the detailed ethnographic portrayals of the beliefs, rituals, religious experiences, and social organizations of mediumistic religions worldwide. A second contribution, on the basis of thousands of such ethnographies, are the findings of cross-cultural correlational studies of spirit mediumship. Some such studies, for example, have reported a very different relationship between mediumistic and shamanic religions and diverse societal variables and even ecological adaptations. Other comparative studies have tied the trance state itself to particular psychocultural and psychophysiological variables and have identified key factors in its induction. These include fasting, hyperventilation, psychotropics, “context hypnosis,” sensory deprivation (e.g., initiatory isolation), and, what is most typical in non-Western contexts, sensory bombardment (e.g., drumming and prolonged frenetic dancing). Several studies of ritual drumming, for example, suggested (and it was then reproduced in the laboratory) a “sonic driving” effect, where the autonomic nervous system is “driven” or “tuned” by the ritual drumming, causing a shift to right hemisphere dominance, the production of endogenous opiates (i.e., endorphins), trance, and/or various hallucinatory and numinous experiences.

At the same time, there have also been large numbers of in-depth case studies of particular mediums, mediumistic religions, and their practices. They reveal the character, meanings, and functions of spirit mediumship for the mediums, themselves, their individual clients, and their religious communities. Such research is critical to our understanding of psychological and social needs, how magico-religious forms address them, and the interface of the psychological and the cultural, as well as the parapsychological and the cultural. For instance, research on why people join mediumistic religions or become mediums suggests that spirit possession behaviors and beliefs serve as an “idiom of

expression" (or "idiom of distress"). The "idiom" is used either by a class of people (e.g., the socially downtrodden) to express, protest, or functionally counterbalance oppressive social conditions and/or thereby enhance status (as when a possessing god defends the rights and value of his socially downtrodden medium), or by individual mediums to express and resolve their individual psychic distress. Other kinds of case studies and/or field observations of spirit mediums suggest that mediumship may be conducive to "psi-functioning," the anomalous transfers of information or energy. Apart from the systematic observations of such anomalous phenomena surrounding certain Western Spiritualist mediums by turn-of-the-century psychical researchers, several anthropologists (and cross-cultural psychologists) have described a host of inexplicable events they have observed or experienced with non-Western mediums. A few field researchers have also systematically tested such mediums with obtrusive experimental protocols, as in a laboratory experiment, or have investigated the mediums by "unobtrusive measures," such as the "psi-in-process" approach, where the claims of psi-functioning in the mediumistic practices of divination or healing have been examined with the rigor of laboratory controls, though unobtrusively and in the context of the medium's own usual magico-religious conditions. The latter kinds of psi-in-process studies, difficult as they are to carry out, are especially important, because they could well shed light on the nature of these phenomena, the conditions under which they occur, and their role in the development of spirit mediumship in virtually every region of the world."

-- Prof. Patric Giesler

"Continued research with mediums is a tremendously important endeavor if it is done appropriately and with rigor; that is, research which involves trained investigators and modern-day research mediums whose abilities to report accurate and specific information have been demonstrated under appropriately blinded laboratory conditions which control for alternative explanations for accuracy. The social, cultural, and political environments in which these mediums perform readings in addition to their actual phenomenology during ostensible communication with the deceased are quite different than those of the mediums studied in the early days of psychical research. The data collected from these current research participants will aid in reframing concepts such as "consciousness" and its relationship to the brain as well as how information may be transferred non-locally. Additionally, the information reported by mediums may be socially useful in areas such as criminal investigations, wisdom acquisition, and grief counseling and recovery."



-- Julie Beischel, PhD, Director of Research,
The Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential, www.windbridge.org



"The practice of mediumship goes back thousands of years to the dawn of history and almost certainly even further back into prehistory as well. Mediums also span most every culture we care to study. This ancient and universal practice is also fundamental to the origins of many religions and magical or occult doctrines such as shamanism, which has itself been considered as the root of all magico-religious movements. The scientific study of mediumship also gave rise to psychical research and, latterly, parapsychology too, and the ensuing debate around survival (of bodily death) and psi has seldom waned in the last 130 years but has in fact become increasingly refined.

Regarding the current situation it could be said that, as much as mediumship spans the divide between life and death, parapsychology occupies the liminal space between psychology and physics, and much more besides, such as anthropology, psychiatry, neuroscience, and even politics! In some cultures, such as in Madagascar, mediumship actually dominates politics, although, in such cases the only politicians considered to be any good are dead ones, and preferably dead for a long time. In Madagascar, the most important political decisions are made solely by the ancestors. Conveniently this is done through spirit mediums. This must surely be important."

*-- Dr. David Luke
President of the Parapsychological Association*

"Mediumship is important as a concept in that it sums up in elegantly clear and simple terms many elements basic to the process of spiritual activity, something which many social scientists and parapsychological researchers are presently investigating. As a concept for explaining processes that are at the root of religion, mediumship is an all-embracing phenomena that makes so much of the world's diverse scriptures and rituals come alive and become easier to understand. In a world that seeks, however imperfectly, unity and, to a certain extent, transparency, mediumship can render much that is obscure and/or mystified, clear and approachable. Whether we discuss shamanism, or the roots of the most widespread world religions, there is much that can be gained from a comparative mediumship based perspective. Where mediumship (and other spiritually or altered states oriented pursuits) can prove to be lacking is in the domain of ethics and in traditionally handed down cautions for dealing with the unknown. This explains part of the stigma that direct experience with the Spirit / Truth carries within religious and other institutions. As long as it is understood to be a description of processes rather than a roadmap to enlightenment – though it seems to have that potential as well – mediumship can eventually enlighten materialistically inclined researchers, scientists and society away from the fear and mystification that is generally directed at concepts of God and Spirit by much of official science and scientism."

-- Yves Marton, PhD.

"Spirit mediumship is apparent in many of the world's societies. Often having a more legitimate position, they are a fascinating example of a practise that seeks to unite the living and the dead. Anthropology has successfully provided a great deal of data and literature on mediumship in non-Western cultures, although few exist - for now - that look at Western spirit mediums. Western spirit mediums have courted both awe and controversy since the Fox sisters' spirit communications provided the catalyst to a wave of new practitioners, and a new religious community. Due to certain social prejudices, spirit mediums have sometimes been poorly, and harshly, represented. As tools of study, they have been examined as though equipment that may be magically sound or easy to debunk. The dynamics of medium identity, experience, biography, etc. seems largely to have been considered irrelevant. While scientific studies of mediumship have contributed some fascinating insights into Western mediumship, they often fall short when it comes to providing the kind of material or insight that can be used to investigate their social life, relevance and influence. Subsequently, there appears to be a lot of ignorance surrounding mediumship, both in public and academic fields. This needs to be addressed. Mediumship, and related practices and beliefs, are an important current in contemporary Western society. Rather than responding with dismissals, exasperation or ridicule, we should take mediums seriously. There is huge scope for further research in this area, and its relevance extends beyond the spirits to a wide range of issues and factors connected to the everyday. Mediumship is an exciting and challenging area of study, and I sincerely hope that the recent expanse in mediumship research will continue to flourish."

-- Dr. Hannah Gilbert,
Anomalous Experience Research Unit, University of York



"Historically few topics have been so important for the study of psychic phenomena as mediumship (both mental and physical). Spiritualism was spread mainly through the performances of early mediums who fostered both belief and skepticism in such phenomena as spirit communications and materializations. In addition, the communications produced by mediums presented teachings about life after death and other topics that provided the philosophical background for the movement. An example of this is the importance of such teachings in French spiritism (e.g., Kardec, 1857).

Similarly, mediumship contributed to psychical research in various ways. The most obvious contribution is that the phenomenon provided a topic of study. Many of the efforts of early psychical researchers were focused on mental and physical mediums to the point that Charles Richet wrote "there is no metapsychics without a medium" (Richet, 1922, p. 38). More than any other phenomena the performances of mediums provided an opportunity to study a recurrent form of psychic phenomena that allowed for repeated observations and, consequently, the imposition of controls such as in

the case of the investigations of medium D.D. Home by William Crookes (1874). These, and many later research efforts—the work of members of the Society for Psychical with medium Leonora E. Piper (Lodge, 1890) being another example—contributed to the development of psychical research as an organized field.

Repeated studies with mediums allowed psychical researchers to develop a variety of methods. In addition to controls put in place to guard against such problems as fraud and sensory cues, mediumship provided the opportunity for the use of verbatim recording of mediumistic mentation, and for the development of statistical techniques to assess for chance, such as those used by Saltmarsh (1929) with Mrs. Warren Elliot. In addition, investigations with physical mediums such as D.D. Home (Crookes, 1874) and Eusapia Palladino (Aksakof et al., 1893) stimulated the development of instrumental studies in psychical research.

But mediumship was also important for the development of conceptual issues, among them the question of survival of bodily death (Alvarado, 2003), and of ideas about the subconscious mind and dissociation, as can be seen in the work of Pierre Janet (1889). He believed that mediumship was similar to hypnotic states and hysteria in that it illustrated the “disaggregation of personal perception and . . . the formation of several personalities that are both successive and simultaneously developed” (p. 413).

Like hysteria, hypnosis, and other phenomena influential in nineteenth-century psychology and psychiatry (Ellenberger, 1970), mediumship was more than a mere curiosity. By focusing research and theoretical interests mediumship was instrumental in advancing psychical research—and to some extent dynamic psychology and psychiatry—both conceptually and methodologically.”

-- Dr. Carlos Alvarado

“Anyone who has witnessed them, or read the many reports from reliable witnesses, understands that what we call “seance phenomena,” (because they have been produced primarily, but not always, during spiritualist seances), do in fact exist and are still being produced today. Whether or not levitations of objects, ectoplasmic apparitions and other manifestations, apports, etc. are produced by spirits or solely by living energies is to me less important than understanding how these phenomena are produced and what their implications are for science, especially for physics and for understanding connections between the human mind and body. They prove that the sciences as we know them are incomplete and the mechanism by which they are produced may have profound implications for healing and for understanding the basic elements of life.”



-- Rosemarie Pilkington, PhD.



“Across lands and throughout history some humans have had the experience that their identity was partially or totally replaced by that of another being, or that at the very least they were in contact with such an entity. Sometimes, as in the cases of some well-researched mediums at the time of the Society for Psychical Research and in contemporary laboratories, a few of these people have produced precise information that cannot easily be explained away as mere metaphysical or psychological gossamer. Serious consideration of these phenomena is central to our understanding of the construction, nature, and range of personal identity.”

-- Prof. Etzel Cardena

Director of the Centre for Research on Consciousness and Anomalous Psychology, Lund University

Images from a South Indian Theyyam Performance

Dr. David Luke







In possession of my senses?

Reflections from Social Science on Engaging with the Otherworldly

Sara Mackian

'In a secularised Protestant society such as Britain, the living and the dead are separated not only physically, but also conceptually, with transgressors across the boundary (ghosts, prayers for the dead, appearances of the dead to the bereaved, spiritualist mediums) treated with suspicion' (Walter, 2004. 472).

My research into the place of the 'otherworldly' in 'this world' began perhaps with some naivety. As someone who grew up with a Spiritualist medium in the family and a resident ghost in the back garden, I knew that encounters, possessions and transgressions were part of the everyday landscape for many people. As a social scientist researching contemporary spirituality-without-religion, I was not surprised therefore to find that the otherworldly played a significant role for many practitioners. However, as I tried to represent this to colleagues as an important part of the contemporary sociological landscape, it was not long before I found myself painfully aware of Walter's invisible 'boundary'.

This piece offers some reflections on transgressing that boundary for sociological research, based on participatory fieldwork with individuals and groups, engaged with spirit guides, angels and divination. I reflect on three stages in particular: crossing to the other side (or broaching the subject with colleagues), boundary transgressions in the field (or the importance of participatory experience), and finally, coming back over the boundary (presenting in an academic context).

Crossing to the other side: 'You don't really believe in it?'

'Social scientists usually have little patience with any theory that takes seriously the reality of beings on the "Other Side"' (Betty, 2006. 39).

In the sociological literature around contemporary Western spirituality you will be hard pushed to find any serious explicit engagement with the role of 'spirit'. The emphasis is instead on dismissing spiritual pursuit as just another shallow and essentially meaningless consumer trend, based on self-interest and ubiquitous consumption:

'Alongside TVs, hi-fi systems, washing machines, IKEA furniture and designer clothes, you can also have your very own spirituality, with or without crystals... all that is required is a desire to consume' (Carrette and King, 2005. 53).

Yet my research suggests that although consumption of crystals or other consumer goods might be one

part of spiritual practice, there is something deeper being overlooked, it is, as one participant said, about 'reaching for the unseen', about developing an intimate relationship with 'spirit'. Spirit's omission from the sociological commentary may be because it is hard to get a handle on precisely what 'spirit' might be in this academic context. It may reflect a fear of the unknown, a worry about being seen to be dabbling in things that are not 'real'. We can see material goods in the marketplace, we can count up price tags and tally entrances of healers in telephone directories. But how can we 'know' the mystery of spirit in the same way?

In order to know this unknowable, we must 'become aware of the unseen' (Harrison, 2000. 497). But I have found a general lack of respect amongst my academic peers for this unseeable intangible unknown, meaning that crossing to the other side for research purposes is met with confusion, disbelief and ridicule. And there is the inevitable question: 'But you don't really *believe* in any of it do you?' or as one person at a conference asked me recently – 'do you find yourself going over to the dark side? Are you taken in by any of it?' I find this attitude curious, because I also do research on gay men's health, and nobody has ever asked me if it has tempted me to become a gay man. So why am I treated with such suspicion in relation to this research topic?

Of course I never could become a gay man – but I can be a transgressor across Walter's boundary, and my colleague's suspicion and mockery did not deter me from doing so.

Boundary transgressions in the field: 'What was that!?''

'I sat transfixed as his face took on a completely different look. Above his cleanly shaven chin I could see a shadow of beard hovering, wrinkles overlaid the smooth skin around his eyes and he seemed to age 30 years in the space of 30 seconds. This was *weird!*'

The quote above is taken from a fieldwork diary following my participation in a trance workshop. In applying for fieldwork funding to participate in this workshop, I had to underplay the 'participant' element and big up the 'observer' role I intended to play. Anthropologists are of course no strangers to the idea that to understand what is actually happening it is more worthwhile to get stuck in than to record what other people are doing. As a geographer-cum-sociologist however, I find my colleagues are less open to accepting actual participatory experience as a legitimate form of research, especially if it involves something a bit 'spooky'.

Yet without fully participating, I would not have got half of what I did in terms of 'data' from that workshop. And that is why I had found myself paired up with another workshop participant, watching him

at close quarters, go into trance – that is he invited his spirit guide to come into his body, the result being that observers might see physical changes in the medium's appearance. I still have no idea what happened when I saw that beard and those wrinkles, I have even less idea of what happened when later I felt my own guide sink into my body. However, such intangible moments are a fundamental part of being 'touched by' spirit, and can play a core part in legitimising spiritual experiences and practices for participants. My partner in the workshop was a stranger to me, and after the trance exercise, he described his guide for the first time – an elderly writer from the 17th century. This guide played a big part in his life, and he was chuffed to pieces that I had 'seen' him. This legitimised his own experiences of working with his guide, because he had independent verification that this was an elderly gentleman with a beard. The whole workshop, with sessions on table tipping, electronic voice phenomena and physical mediumship, provided a this-worldly opportunity to receive verification and acknowledgement – the evidence of a third party – to make something that is 'intangible' and otherworldly, tangible in 'this' world.

When I present such experiences and practices to a sceptical sociological audience, I stress that it is worth remembering:

'experiences do not have to be "explained", but simply "understood" as the way of experiencing the world that is natural and unremarkable, strange only to the outsider' (Knibbe and Versteeg, 2008. 49).

It was quite acceptable that each person would see something of the other person's guide coming through to them, with no prior knowledge of who those guides might be. But without participating in it myself, I would have missed out on experiencing precisely what it is they experience. I could not have observed this from a detached distance, whatever it was or wasn't.

Anthropologist Thomas Ots rejects the idea of 'observation' as a method in fieldwork and makes a plea for 'experiencing participation' instead (Ots, 1994). Back behind my sociological desk however, and speaking to an audience of peers with both feet firmly planted on *one* side of Walter's boundary, I have found it is not only the transgressors who are treated with suspicion, but also myself for choosing to present them as valid research concerns. Sceptical social scientists are seemingly less keen to get stuck in, preferring to laugh about, or question the validity of, the research experiences of those who do.

Coming back over the boundary: Spirit matters and the spirit of ethics

Sara: I'm interviewing people about their experiences with angel healing.

Colleague: Angel healing? What's *that*?

Sara: It's where the healer channels energy from angels.

Colleague: But angels don't *exist* do they, so how can they heal? That's just ridiculous! [*Nervous but self-righteous laughter*]

This was a conversation with a colleague I had over coffee one morning. According to our code of ethics, researchers within The Open University have to: 'Treat all those associated with their research with respect.' So how should I have responded to my colleague? I know how she was expecting me to respond. She wanted me to laugh it off with her, to support her own unease and discomfort, and say of course angels don't exist and it is all nonsense. But how would that be showing my research participants respect?

As social scientists, our obsession with the material and tangible aspects of life, and the forces and relationships that arise out of these, leaves us reluctant and ill-equipped to engage with that which we cannot rationalise. To me, however, it does not matter whether we can rationalise such spiritual beings and encounters, or whether we define them as 'real' or 'not real'. In the experience of people who use angel healing, the *effects* are undoubtedly real and *that* is what is important. As a growing part of our sociological landscape we cannot be arrogant enough to dismiss it with laughter.

I am a geographer by training. My expertise lies in understanding how we live in and create the world around us. And this is something fundamental that appears to be overlooked by those who wish to dismiss as 'ridiculous' the tangibility of spirit in some people's lives. My concern is with exploring the worlds people live in, rather than the theoretical worlds we *think* they should live in. So unlike my colleague, I am willing to accept angels at face value if my research participants tell me they are part of their world. I am not afraid therefore of *not* 'knowing' what we are dealing with. Whatever it may or may not be, spirit is the very essence of what some claim they are seeking a connection with. As such it has to be given explicit recognition by talking about it, locating it within the co-produced relations of social life, and putting it on the research agenda. However, this seems to be presenting the social science community with problems, not just in terms of the methods we might use to research and represent such realities, but also in terms of raising fundamental questions about academic conduct and research ethics.

Conclusion

'[H]owever much we may strive toward a reality based on fundamental truths, there remains the trace of some-thing outside of this... the recognition of other worlds that arise beyond the survey and the map' (Dixon, 2007. 204)

These otherworlds need to be acknowledged as an important part of the world we live in. They are part of the ways in which people make sense of their lives.

Social science needs therefore to find a way to take seriously such claims about the nature of reality, without necessarily having to take a stand on the 'truth' or 'validity' of such realities. For Avery Gordon (2008) sociological research is impoverished if it is unable to represent the unseen and unsayable, as well as the seen and spoken of. Based on my reflections, I would question just how far we are truly willing to capture the intangible, the unseen and unsayable, as a legitimate part of knowing the multi-dimensional realities we live in. Social science would on the whole appear ill-prepared to respond respectfully or adequately to the 'stories of those who cross the borders of what it ordinarily experienced' (Pridmore, 2002. 29). In particular, the habit of scepticism so prevalent amongst academic audiences means that despite my conviction – grounded in the data – that the otherworldly has a fundamental place in this world, it is hard to get the voices of my research participants heard as valid research evidence. However, I am not about to give up trying, for as geographers Dewsbury and Cloke say:

'the spiritual is important because it offers up possibilities for reaching new imaginations of our place in the world, and of how that world works' (2009: 698).

Striving to get such new imaginations recognised is something that as a social scientist – and occasional boundary transgressor – I am not yet ready to give up on!

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The Art of the Medium: Encounters with the past in the boundless unknown

Alysa Braceau

The Sorcerer's Dream is a true story of my initiation into the Native American tradition of sorcery. During my initiation one of the steps was to take magic mushrooms in a dreaming ceremony. The mushroom is the outward appearance of the entity and I was fortunate to meet the entity Mateeë. Mateeë is a cosmic relative and he guided me into the unknown being a signpost into the second reality of *dreaming* and creativity. During the first *dreaming* ceremony I was pleasantly surprised to be invited by my ancestors, who were speaking to me, to be initiated as a medium. My dreaming teacher explained more about the skill of the medium.

First I would like to explain more about sorcery first which of course has nothing to do with Merlin and the Knights of the Round Table or something of the Netherworld.

For a sorcerer, reality, or the world we all seem to know, is only a description. In this tradition we speak about moving the assemblage point in order to shift your perception. It's the assemblage point of totality which people of knowledge shift in order to reach totality.

The assemblage point is the place where all lines of intent come together, it is the ultimate place of perception. Call it a concentrated sense of perception. And it is usually, but not necessarily located at the height of the shoulder blades.

The assemblage point should be flexible. For example children don't perceive the world as fixed as we do. As soon as you start to learn and understand the meaning of words, the assemblage point starts to fixate more and more. The more definitions, the more solid your assemblage point. In the course of years, a child becomes more and more fixated on the definition of this reality, and when you become fixated you lose your totality. People of knowledge and shamans seize every opportunity to shift their own assemblage point or someone else's through words, a gesture, music, love, but in the end you purposefully set it in motion with the arts of totality.

The Art of Dreaming is one of the teachings of Totality I write about. My dreaming teacher Running Deer aka Vidar explained there are four practices that guide the apprentice into the totality: the art of *dreaming*, stalking, hunting and the art of the warrior. He said gradually you will learn to master all of them, but because you are a *dreamer* the art of mastering lucid *dreaming* (dreaming while being aware that you are dreaming) is the most important one for you to reach totality. And if you reach totality you truly experience that you are the creator of this reality.

Almost every can learn how to lucid dream with the techniques I describe in my book. But there is also a step beyond: if you want to enter the boundless unknown, therefore you first have to master your dreams.

During my initiation into the Sorcerer's world one of the steps was to take magic mushrooms in a dreaming ceremony. The mushroom is the outward appearance of the entity and I was fortunate to meet the entity Mateeë. Mateeë is a signpost into the second reality and a cosmic relative.

Running Deer told me somewhere in the beginning of my apprenticeship that Mateeë would guide me to the unknown; he teaches how to shift your assemblage point. His characteristic is cosmic love, humor and beauty. He teaches you that this reality is not the only one.

However, you have to be ready to meet the entity in the dreaming ceremony, to be guided into the unknown. It can be very dangerous if you don't have someone to teach and to guide you because you are challenged and confronted with your fears.

During the first dreaming ceremony I was invited by my ancestors, who in cosmic waves of information were speaking to me, to be initiated as a medium. This event I describe in my book. In this article I would like to explain more about the Art of the Medium with the next excerpt from chapter 10. It starts with a dream a few days after the dreaming ceremony and next my dreaming teacher explains more about the skill of the medium.

Excerpt

"A circle of people are urging to introduce themselves to me. "It's an entire family,"

I declare my amazement out loud.

But it is not an ordinary family, I know, it is my spiritual family consisting of at least two men, two women and a couple of children. The family gives me the warm-heartedness which you could expect from a family. Their love delights me. One particular guy seems to like me very much. When we say goodbye he keeps asking me for a last kiss. "All right, one more kiss, only one more."

"That's me," Vidar teases.

"Are they really related to me?" I ask.

He agrees. "They are immediate family. Soon you will get better acquainted because the coming period I will educate you in the skill of the medium according to the North-American tradition of my family."

Without a shred of irony he adds: "You must realize we are talking about a far advanced training."

I want to jump for joy. My biggest wish is about to come true! I am not sure how to measure my talents, but I feel very honored and once more I tell him this is all I ever wanted even though I never really knew why. Vidar says there is a simple explanation for it: "Your wish derives from your gifts." He draws a circle on paper and says: "For your initiation as a medium, you set up a new medicine circle. That means you no longer work exclusively with the medicine wheel of totality, but also with that of the medium. There are wheels within wheels." On the four wind directions he sketches figures and he draws one figure on the centre spot: "You grandmother is the coordinator of it all. She brings your ancestors in touch with you. Your family members introduce themselves to you and tell you what their knowledge is. After a while, every individual is placed on a fixed spot on the medicine wheel. As a medium, you get your information from the source of knowledge itself. For instance, your ancestors have eternal knowledge on healing, art, architecture, philosophy, to list only a few."

I wonder how it is possible to pick up information which is a hundred or even a thousand years old.

"Look at it this way. The past is like a fingerprint on reality: layer on layer. As a medium, you retrieve the stored memories of your ancestors, interpreted by many as past lives."

"You don't believe in past lives?" I interrupt him.

"Not in passed and not in future lives. Man has created two lines from the source of totality: the hereditary line of the eternal cosmic family and the earthly ancestors. You are an eternal entity and you cannot suddenly jump onto someone else's totality.

Website: <http://www.dreamshield.nl>

Blog: <http://dreamshield.wordpress.com>

To get back to your question, a medium has the gift to tune in on the past and pick up information. You could compare it to a radio mast," and he puts his arms wide up in the air. "Your gifts work like a tuner, you tune in until you reach the frequency which leads you to your grandmother. You convert to other channels through her and tune in on another frequency to get in touch with one of your ancestors. But that's what your grandmother taught you during the encounter. Very quickly you were able to switch to other frequencies. You practiced a nice skill," he grins, "you made use of cosmic energy to pick up information. When you address your physical energy, you'll exhaust yourself."

About the Sorcerer's Dream

The Sorcerer's Dream, A true story of initiation into the Native American sorcerer's tradition by Alysa Braceau, Dreamshield. The author gives us a glimpse into the very real world of lucid dreaming and astral projection. Her direct experiences with a modern day mystic, Running Deer, takes the work of Castaneda one step further. In The Sorcerer's Dream, she reveals unique steps to mastering lucid dreaming and traveling to the unknown.

Bio

Alysa Braceau, Dreamshield lives in the Netherlands (Europe), she is mother of a 7-year old daughter. She studied social legal studies and the passed ten years she is a (freelance) journalist and publisher. Besides that she has a healing practice and gives workshops about the Art of Dreaming.

Alysa Braceau is author of The Sorcerer's Dream. The theme of the passed years have been the sorcerers tradition and mastering lucid dreaming. She carefully recorded her personal experiences which has finally led to this first book.

A short pitch on where to buy The Sorcerer's Dream

The Sorcerer's dream, an initiation into the sorcerer's world and mastering lucid dreaming. Buy it at:

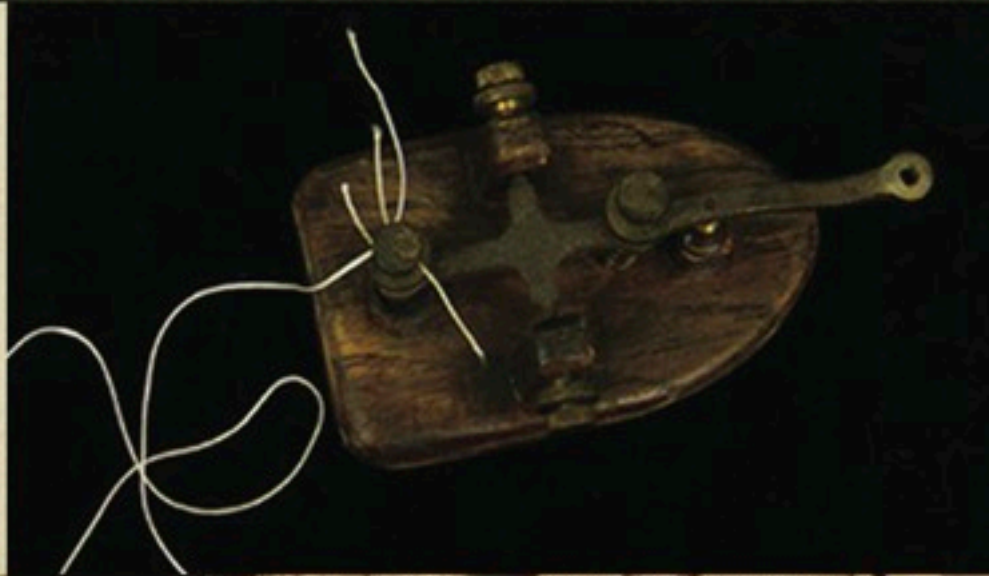
<http://www.booklocker.com/books/4654.html>

The book can be ordered on Amazon - <http://www.amazon.com/Sorcerers-Dream-Dreamshield-Alysa-Braceau/dp/1609101561> and everywhere they sell books

Selections from the Revenant Archives

Kristen Gallerneaux Brooks

1. Tools and Devices of Mediumship



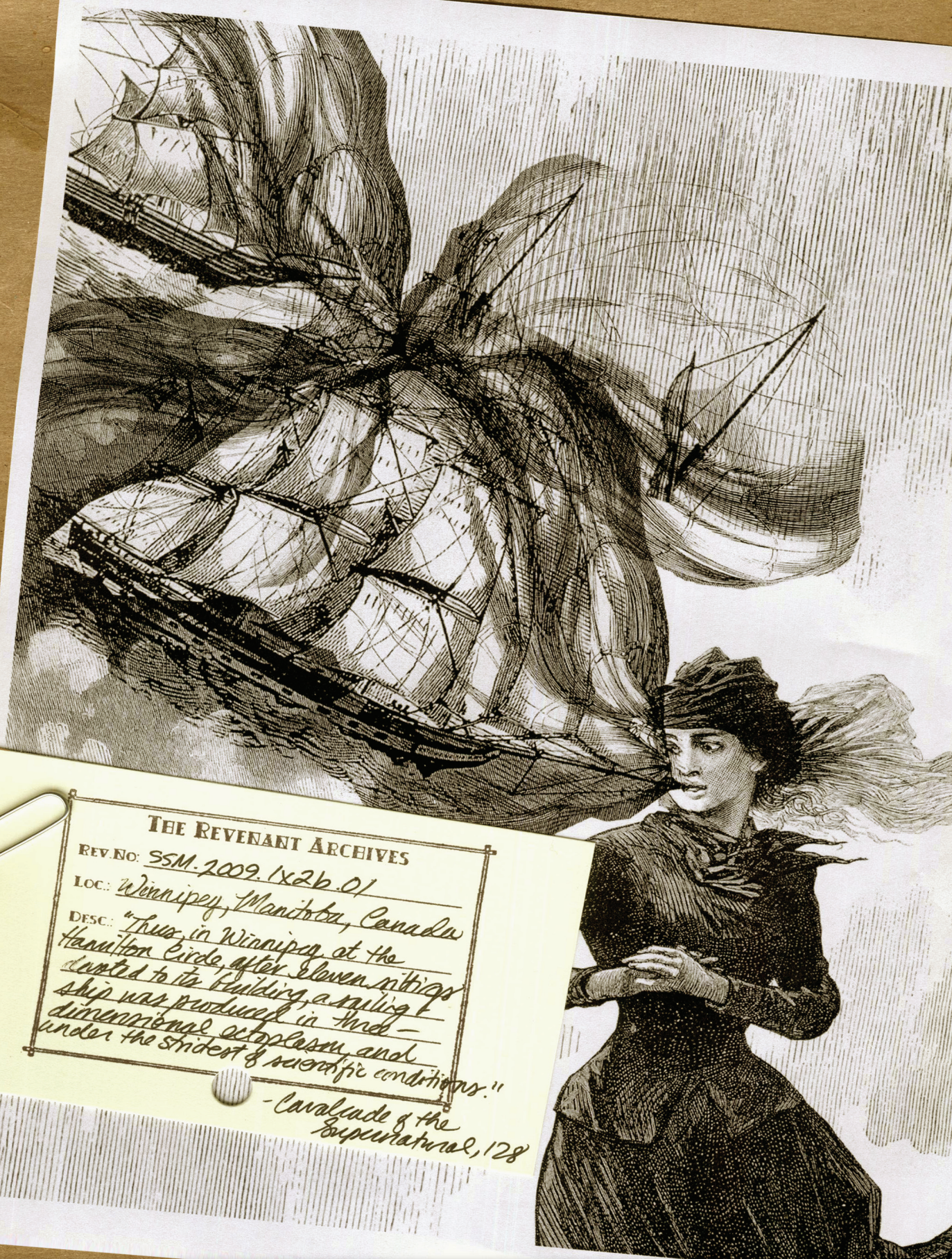
This page, clockwise from top left: Head Telegraph Illustration, Head Telegraph Device, Movement Detection Device, Cross-Stitched Ouija Board.

Next page, clockwise from left: Gambol's Ghost, Houdini's Spirit Bell Box, Psi Testing Device.

For more information: www.revenantarchives.com



These images represent a selection of artwork that was created as an outcome of the time I spent conducting research at the American Society for Psychical Research in New York City. This research trip allowed me to explore the tools and devices used by (and against) the physical mediums of the 19th and early 20th centuries. While researching at the ASPR, I found many written descriptions of machines that no longer existed, and set out to recreate visual facsimiles to fill these gaps, adding my own interpretations along the way.



THE REVENANT ARCHIVES

REV. NO: SSM-2009.1x2b.01

LOC: Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

DESC: "Thus, in Winnipeg at the
Hamilton Circle, after eleven nights
spent in its building, a sailing
ship was produced in three-
dimensional octoplasma, and
under the strictest of scientific conditions."

-Cavalcade of the
Supernatural, 128



II. From the Vernacular Spirit Photograph Collection: Mediums and Anomalous Energies

A visual memorate / legend is a narrative that is supported through the use of material or visual artifacts as a site through which to negotiate belief issues. This sense of visual belief is especially evident when looking at that which could be interpreted as a spirit photograph, whether purposeful -- or not.



The latent power of these images is far deeper than the equipment used to make them, and it seems impossible to separate issues of belief from the actions taken to create them. As Marina Warner explains, "...images themselves [can] become charged with numinous power."¹

1 Warner, Marina. *Phantasmagoria: Spirit Visions, Metaphors, and Media into the Twenty-First Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, 56.

Report of a Physical Mediumship Seance October 8th 2010

Jon Mees

Having met Tom & Kevin earlier this year in MontCabirol, I was looking forward to making the trip up to Jenny's Sanctuary to see them again. This was to be the 3rd séance of their trip to the UK and the 3rd time they had demonstrated away from their home in France.

I arrived a little earlier than most of the other sitters and was able to spend some time chatting to Ron & Jean Gilkes and was asked if I would help out with the body searches – my apologies to anyone who had to suffer my attempts at frisking for concealed items. My only training in this was based purely on watching 70's cop shows!

Once everyone was seated, I was also checked and then shown to my allocated seat. I was very fortunate to be placed in the front row next to Kevin directly in front of the left edge of the cabinet about 4 feet back. On the carpet in front of the cabinet was a sheet of ply-board, approx 8'x4' (1.5m x 2.5m) providing a hard standing for the two small side tables and a tambourine. Inside the cabinet was the trumpet, a slide whistle and 3 ping pong balls in a small basket.

Tom came in and was seated in the heavy oak upholstered chair and his wrists and ankles were secured with 2 inch wide Velcro cuffs over which 5mm heavy duty cable ties were also fastened to make doubly sure that there was no way he could leave the chair until he was physically cut free at the end of the evening. I was asked to double check the bindings were secure, and the lady sitting next to me also went up to the cabinet and made sure everything was firmly in place.

The doors were secured and, the final light bulb was taken out of the wall fixing and we were plunged into darkness as the first song filled the room. Having sat before I was not taken by surprise by the volume (I think they may have even turned it down a bit for the public demonstration – I remember it being even louder in their own séance room).

After the first two tracks had run through to allow time for Tom to go into a deep trance, the music was stopped and we soon heard the familiar voice of John Campbell Sloan inviting questions from all the sitters. Within a few minutes the questions were coming in thick and fast covering all aspects of spirit life and in particular lots of advice and recommendations regarding personal development and home circles. John Sloan answered questions and spoke with the sitters for almost a whole hour before suggesting that the red light be turned on.

With the red light on I was able to see Tom's whole body changing size and shape and his face transfiguring into representations of completely different people. Several of them stabilised for what felt like minutes at a time but which was probably no more than half a minute in reality. Twice the appearance of a different person turned to look

directly towards the front row and we were able to see a completely different individual sitting in the cabinet chair, where only moments earlier had sat the Medium.

After a while the lights were dimmed again and a very well educated and refined voice could just about be heard. Jonathan (who is their main control) asked if anyone had been able to see faces and forms of their loved-ones in spirit. A few people acknowledged what they'd seen, however Jonathan was looking for some more robust evidence so asked Kevin to put on some more music and we were able to witness yet another period of incredible transfiguration – even more distinct and visible than the first time.

After the transfiguration, Yellow Cloud came forward & checked with the sitters, as he seemed concerned that one or two might be feeling a little nauseous. Although no-one admitted to feeling uneasy, at least one person was seen to leave rather promptly as soon as the doors were opened!

Yellow Cloud introduced Irene and before she came through I was asked to go and check Tom's bindings. Tom was sitting in his chair still bound hand and foot and securely fastened to his chair. Although now he was minus his cardigan which was found later tied up into a knot at the back of the room.

Irene was on top form chatting easily to the sitters and answering questions before asking for her favourite songs to be played. She soon found the tambourine and the tables began to spin across the floor. Then Queen's "Don't stop me now" filled the room and she let loose with the drum stick, tambourine and tables. The ping pong balls flew out of the back of the cabinet into the room and then the curtains were opened and we could see the glow-tabs on the trumpet as it started to rise – still inside the cabinet- up to the solid cabinet ceiling. But instead of stopping and floating out into the room as expected, it simply carried on rising vertically as if the cabinet ceiling wasn't there at all.

More music followed and the tables span across the floor as a pair, separated and then shot across to either side of the room (about 12 feet apart) and then flew into the air, spinning and turning independently and then in perfect synchronisation, at one point coming together right in front of me and then shooting up and over my head nearly causing me to dislocate my neck as I tried to follow their line of flight. I was asked again to check the medium and as I drew the curtain back and looked in I was able to see that Tom's shirt had vanished although his wrists and ankles were still bound exactly where they were before.

More music followed and Irene started to experiment with the slide whistle, playing along to the music. In between the tracks Irene continued to joke and laugh with the sitters and answered a few more questions. I asked if I could ask a quick question before she left and I was called forward to the cabinet and then before I could sit down again, Irene asked me to check the medium again.



As I pulled the curtain back, she continued to talk and tease me – even cheekily asking me to give her a quick kiss whilst I was there!

Music was started again and we were joined by Phil Starr sang along to Gloria Gaynor's "I will survive" briefly & offered encouragement to anyone who felt that they would like to explore their own true personality.

John Sloan came back to close the proceedings and the closing music was played, although even then Spirit had not yet finished as at least 3 sitters to my knowledge were privileged to feel the hands of the spirit people on the arms, legs and faces. Powerful spirit breezes blew across my face and I felt someone tugging at my sleeve at least twice as the tambourine was rattled again in front of me and hand claps could be heard in time to the music.

Then finally John Lennon's song "Imagine" was played and as I sat there I suddenly realised there was a voice singing along to the track – except this voice was coming from a place no more than 18 inches in front of me. I listened again there was no mistaking the fact that a male voice that (to me) sounded exactly the same as the voice on the track was singing along. If it wasn't John Lennon's own voice, it was certainly a very good impression. If you listen closely to the recording of the séance you can hear it for yourself.

After the closing prayer the lights were turned back on and we found Tom – still bound hand and foot- seated in his chair a good 2 feet in front of the cabinet. Once Tom was back with us and had left the room to recover his wits, everyone

slowly moved out and gathered in groups to chat and discuss the amazing event of the evening whilst enjoying the Tea, Coffee Cakes and Sandwiches kindly provided by Ron & Jean.

A fantastic evening of powerful evidence and incredible spirit energy phenomena. In many ways very different to Ectoplasm based mediumship yet in some ways even more significant for that. And the emphasis given by all the Spirit Team in respect to providing support and guidance with individual development I think put everyone at ease and gave many the courage to ask personal questions that they may not have otherwise felt comfortable asking.

A special thanks again to Ron and Jean for hosting the evening and of course to Tom & Kevin, without whose dedication and commitment to Spirit, we'd all be the poorer.

Clairvoyance, Class and Convention

Sophie Louise Drennan

The Victorian age in Britain was renowned for being a period of intense and rapid development in industry, culture and the sciences. Under the sustained and unflinching rule of Queen Victoria it was at the forefront of progress, revelling in the status of such leading figures as Brunel, Bell, Dickens and Darwin. It was a world of contradictions, with individuals being

constantly monitored under the strict standards of society, but simultaneously, having factions actively seeking to breach those same established boundaries. Indeed, the social classes were not only divided by economics but by attributed behaviours, with Queen Victoria perceived not only as ruler, but a mother figure over the empire. It was into this confusing mix of extremes that Spiritualism, initially emergent in America in the 1850's, became introduced, (Owen, 2004). Defiantly, its proponents sought to gain credibility by becoming not only tolerated, but accepted by such a conventional establishment.

The most salient characteristics of the Spiritualist movement were to be found within the séance environment and the crucial figure of the medium. It was through their physical body whilst in a trance state that the 'spirits' were able to communicate directly, and it was imperative that the mediums ensured that paying sitters were convinced of their plausibility. As the majority of séances occurred in the homes of wealthy sitters, especially in London, (Inglis, 1992), standards were imposed by the mediums by which sitters had to conform (apparently in order for the phenomena to manifest), (Noakes, 2002), meaning potential sitters were thoroughly checked before being allowed to attend exclusive circles, (Owen, 1989). In addition, the rooms in which they performed were kept dimmed, and mediums including Eva Fay and Rosina Showers, began to make use of a 'spirit cabinet' - usually erected by pulling curtains across a segment of the room - out of which their fantastic 'spirit guides' would emerge, (Podmore, 1963).

The apparent loss of volition by the medium to these 'spirit guides' was partly a skilful way to avoid responsibility for their actions, and was perhaps especially significant in regards to what was seen as being a repressed culture. The séance environment was known to have a very sexually charged atmosphere where the normal social boundaries between males and females were blurred. From the 1870's onwards, the spirits were being regarded as sentient entities, (Owen, 1989). However, this created apprehension in whether an individual should ever be willingly dominated by another's consciousness (Barrow, 1986), especially as the displaced personality exhibited baser, more primal tendencies than was generally acceptable within Victorian culture, (Hayward, 2004). With the most reliable scientific tool direct observation (Pels, 2003), female apparitions were released from normal constraints, including corsets and other layers of clothing, (Tromp, 2003; Owen, 1989), and using the obvious distractions of a scantily clad, nubile young female, served to titillate male sitters and suppress their scientific curiosity.

Furthermore, the séance also created a situation that enabled the different classes to mingle. Many mediums, especially the females, were of the lower

classes, and the setting generated a significant power shift – the young uneducated females were able to dominate the older, learned men, (Owen, 2004). Cultivating these relationships was of paramount importance, as it was via these patrons that mediums were able to promote their talents and garner publicity. However, these benefactors appeared to be somewhat fickle in their support when the women they patronised grew older and their alleged clairvoyant powers abated. After exhibiting almost total control financially and emotionally, patrons were quite content to have these females return to a position in society that was often far worse, before moving on to the next amusement, (McGarry, 2000)

Furthermore, there is the undeniable control that alleged mediums had over their own physical bodies, as they began to bind themselves to furniture in an attempt to prove their authenticity. The Davenport Brothers were known to manipulate their muscles and joints to a remarkable extent in order to escape from bondage and to create desired effects (Inglis, 1992), moving objects with their hands and feet whilst ostensibly still tied to chairs or tables. In addition, phenomena could be witnessed purely from the strong suggestion of the medium, harking back to Spiritualism's origins in mesmerism, (Parssinen, 1977).

Initially, the clairvoyance exhibited by the mediums was defined as the ability to 'see' without using their eyes and to channel the voices and writings of spirits, (Podmore, 1963). In addition, the renowned medium D. D. Home was believed to have gained mastery over the very laws of physics, with one of his most notorious incidents involving him allegedly levitating out of a window and returning through another window – all observed by reputable witnesses, (Conan Doyle, 1926). However, such flaunted ability only served to provoke the scientific community.

Conversely, certain mediums (including Eusapia Palladino), actively perpetrated fraud and trickery whenever they could, fearful of not producing apparitions on cue and so creating false situations to avoid disappointing audiences (Inglis, 1992). Therefore, the investigators were never entirely sure if true phenomena were occurring and found it extremely difficult to replicate results as mediums claimed that they had no control over their own abilities (Crookes, 1871; Romanes, 1881; Noakes, 2002). This was something that sceptics and scientists viewed with suspicion, resulting in reports of ill-mannered behaviour during séances where mediums were 'man-handled', (Inglis, 1992). When experiments were conducted in laboratory environments, scientists were left vindicated, yet disappointed, that previously observed phenomena did not manifest (Inglis, 1984). The medical profession went one step further and attempted to regain control by simply accusing Spiritualism as being the root of mental illnesses (Palfreman, 1979).

Furthermore, there was a noticeable division between mediums and professional stage conjurors, (Stashower, 1999). Although conjurors such as Maskelyne were asked by the establishment to investigate phenomena, they offered explanations that were just as convoluted. They believed that apparatus and mechanical expertise were the basis of manifestations and provided demonstrations to audiences during stage performances, (Frost, 1876). In exposing the medium's tricks conjurors were attempting to preserve their own employment prospects, as with swiftly changing fashions in Victorian entertainment, it was necessary for them to debunk mediums to ensure support. Luckily, audiences proved to be just as fascinated by mechanical explanations as they were with séance phenomena (Lamont, 2004). Alternatively, it was as necessary mediums to defend their own positions, as there had no other means to advance socially, especially if they were lower class. Although, as mediums grew in number, by the beginning of the 1900's a mediums union was created in Lancashire, which afforded some control over employment prospects (Oppenheim, 1988).

In summary, during the Victorian Age, as great leaps were made within science, there also emerged a corresponding yearning for knowledge that did not dwell on the materialistic. The séance environment allowed for freedom to explore the possibility of an afterlife via inexplicable mediumistic phenomena, consequently beginning a struggle between the discipline of science and the Spiritualist movement which was never going to be fully resolved. And yet, the role of the medium within the Spiritualist movement had helped to plant the seeds for altogether greater cultural changes in both class structure and the role of women in society. Furthermore, the Victorian interest in studying séance phenomena scientifically has been the precursor for the progression of contemporary parapsychology as an academic discipline into the 21st century.

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Experiences with Mediumship

Michael Evans

The belief that that people go to another world after death and that some gifted people called mediums can still contact them there, appears to be very ancient. It was a belief I totally rejected when I was young for to me death meant oblivion - the death of the brain meant conscious life was over for good.

It was a personal experience that first persuaded me that there were more things in heaven and earth than were contained in my philosophy. As a 23 year old, sceptical, RAF officer I wandered into Salisbury Cathedral to pass the time before my train departed. As I approached the altar I was suddenly struck blind. All was black except that high above my head there was a circle of golden light surrounded by deep blue and in the light was a face. I felt a very strong impulse to throw myself on the ground with my arms outspread in the form of a cross but I resisted it and stayed upright. I then heard a great voice say two word: 'LOVE THEM!'.

My sight eventually returned and I found myself surrounded by a group of concerned looking people who, to my amazement, were shining with an internal light. I wondered who had spoken to me and for the next three decades I studied all the major religions.

Aged 57 I injured my spine and faced early retirement from my work as Head of Department in a large Comprehensive School. As my G.P and the hospital could not help me my wife persuaded me, much against my will, to go to the Exeter Spiritualist Church where healing was available after the service. During the service a medium began to pass messages to people. I was incredulous! I thought these people cannot be so gullible as to believe this nonsense. When you're dead you're dead!

A lady on my left had a detailed message from her deceased three year old daughter. I questioned her after the service and she confirmed to me the complete accuracy of the message, she had just moved to Exeter, and had never been to a Spiritualist Church before. I could find no way of explaining it by trickery. After the service I was completely healed of my injury which has never returned and I was able to return to work.

This occurred in October 1977. My wife and I began to attend the church regularly, and soon a series of convincing messages were given to us from relatives and close friends we had thought 'dead'. My father, a Cambridge University mathematician, said, 'I would not have had this in the house, but I find it to be true.'

By 'chance', at this time, I was asked to take charge of religious education for six hundred of the older pupils at the school where I taught, and I was

able to introduce a course on "Life after Death" which became the most popular subject I had ever taught in school. Pupils would ask in other lessons, "Can't we talk about Life after Death? That's interesting!"

On the twelfth of March 1978, a visiting medium to the church told us that we should be joining a meditation circle. On the fourteenth of September 1979, our circle gathered for the first time for meditation. At this stage, we felt the need of an experienced teacher of meditation. We were fortunate in that a well-known medium, George Pratt, and his wife Louise, joined us and we made steady progress under his teachings.

It was on the twelfth of September 1980 that, to our surprise, George Pratt in meditation, was transfigured by another face appearing over his, while an august and noble voice spoke through him saying, "We have long sought you. It is very difficult for man's finite mind to appreciate the infinite. Truth enlarges as man progresses ... My brothers call me White Ray. I will come again."

When we told George what had happened to him, he explained that many years before, the White Brotherhood, especially one called The Tibetan, had regularly taught through him, and he was delighted to think that he would be used again for this purpose. The circle then began to have regular visitations from members of the White Brotherhood, speaking through George, and we recorded, and transcribed, hundreds of pages of guidance and instruction.

In the early days, the Tibetan mentioned our having come together through Spiritualism, he said: "You have, through a number of schools of thought, entered that which is known among you as Spiritualism, and this has contributed greatly to a furtherance of your knowledge; yet it is not intended that this 'ism', as such, shall contain your entirety, for there is much to be disclosed, much yet to be understood." After three years George moved away but during this period we were spoken to by several notables including Winston Churchill, Alfred Russell Wallace and Rameses II of ancient Egypt who overshadowed George in full regalia as a Pharaoh. My wife found a photo of Rameses' death mask and the likeness was remarkable.

I was now asked to act as secretary to the Spiritualist Church Committee which I did for the next seventeen years, staying on the committee for 25 years and regularly assessing mediums. The best were like concert pianists, brilliant and totally convincing. Their arrival filled the church and their private readings were booked up long before they arrived. The other mediums varied enormously in their gifts and their training as the congregation quickly realized. I felt that the advent of television had changed the time budding mediums were prepared to devote to training. Before radio and television people often trained for twenty years before venturing on to a public platform. I only met one dishonest medium in 25 years and it was because I exposed him to the committee that I was asked to join and serve as secretary. I found a few mediums trying hard but getting confused, reading the client

rather than a spirit visitor. Most mediums serving the churches are not in it for the money as churches can only pay token expenses in many cases. They have a gift and feel they should use it. Mediums who have appeared on television can become rich from public appearances.

In 1986 my wife invited mediumistic friends to a home circle in our house and the circle would move from house to house over the years. In 1991 a guide asked us to do Rescue Work to help servicemen dying in the First Gulf War who needed guidance after death. Before the war ended we had helped over thirty lost or confused souls to find their proper place in the Spirit World. We were then asked to continue rescue work and at times had seven brilliant trance mediums working in the group. None of them worked publicly or for money but were drawn to this work as a form of service. It usually fell to me to talk to the spirits who spoke through the entranced medium and I tape recorded 789 conversations with spirits of whom 287 needed help and were classified as Rescues. We had a smaller team who answered appeals from distressed members of the public and we were able to bring peace to 31 shops and households in Devon, from two of which the occupants had fled in terror.

Rescue Work taught us that all people survive death but some do not move on to their proper place because they do not believe there is a life after death; others fear Hell Fire and some feel they must lie in their grave until the end of the world - we have helped several of these. We have rescued a Muslim suicide bomber who could not find Paradise.

My wife of 45 years passed in 1989. Would she be able to communicate? She returned before and at her funeral with clear instructions and advice. Later she advised me to remarry and when I did she confirmed that I had made the right choice. My new wife, a Spiritualist, had lost her husband in 1989 and he had advised her to marry me. We have heard from them both many, many times and they usually come together.

When on a speaking tour in Portugal we met a trance medium called Eileen Davey. We all were invited to a delightful restaurant in the mountains where the young lady proprietress had recently lost her husband and hoped to contact him. Through Eileen this was achieved to her great joy. We were then asked by Eileen's guide if we would like to see some physical phenomena to which we agreed. The heavy oak table around which we were seated then began to vibrate, lift off the ground and sway from side to side. I invited Mr. and Mrs. Davey to the Exeter Church for a similar demonstration and an invited audience saw a heavy church table travel at speed, lift off the ground and tip the flowers on it on to the lap of our Vice President. 'Words of Wisdom' is an excellent book of Eileen's teachings.

Members of our circle have published five spiritual books:

'Soul Trek' by Julie Gale

'In Touch with Raynor C. Johnson', by Sheila Gwillam

'Dead Rescue - the Techniques of Guiding Lost Souls' by Michael Evans

'Billy Grows Up in Spirit' by Michael Evans

'Through Bereavement to Happiness' by Lily and Michael Evans.

The Science and Struggle of Psi Research

Callum E. Cooper

It can often be a heated debate in many areas of psychology as to whether field studies or laboratory studies are the best method for investigating human behaviour, experiences and psychological processes. When we consider research carried out in parapsychology at present, the vast majority of research appears to be based in the laboratory for many good reasons including experimental control. It seems that since the beginning of academic research into the anomalous over a century ago, the table has turned from one extreme of field studies, concerning mediumship and hauntings, to laboratory studies of psi phenomena. Whatever experimental approach we take to exploring parapsychology, how can we achieve evidence good for anomalous experiences? Surely this has been achieved already...

Luke (2009, p.22) stated in a lecture report on Dr. Serena Roney-Dougal's work into meditation and precognition that "few parapsychologists seem to be conducting field research these days and even fewer are conducting experimental psi research in the field". Roney-Dougal's work for the past six years has concentrated on psi research in the field in various countries, which is a positive step forward for alternative experimentation in parapsychology. Suitable methods of study will differ depending on what exactly is being explored and what conditions are required for the participant and experimenter. However, for spontaneous anomalous experiences that are frequently reported in the real world setting such as the *sense of being stared at* (Sheldrake, 2003), field studies with observational designs seem to be a very plausible and a promising idea that could be of great benefit to parapsychology if they are explored further. From conducting some initial field studies addressing 'the sense of being stared at' this form of experimental approach has already produced some interesting findings in terms of the behaviour of those who are stared at from behind in the natural world setting (Cooper, 2010a). By attempting to observe psi where it is initially reported, as a

possibility this could help begin to answer 'what is extrasensory perception for?' rather than diving straight in to the matter and trying to find evidence of it (as Broughton (1988; 2010) has discussed).

In a guest-talk presented by Rex Stanford to the Texas Society for Psychical Research and guests, Stanford (1977) stated that "reports of traditional ESP cases are like the tip of an iceberg in that we are not given the whole picture of actual psi in everyday life" (p.32), this is also the same for events of spontaneous cases. We are also missing pieces of this 'psi event jigsaw' with laboratory studies, which deprive the research of ecological validity, and it appears ecological validity may be needed in some cases for reliable results. This point is also shared by Rogo (1972) in that purely statistical 'evidence' for psi alone is not good enough and is still faced by criticism and doubt from other scientific disciplines. However, for those researchers still engaged in the investigation of spontaneous cases they might become fortuitous in witnessing or recording events suggestive of poltergeist type activity (as an example). However scepticism over the so-called 'evidence' recorded will always remain, but only with good intentions. This leaves many parapsychologists with the question of where to take research matters next (Cooper, 2010b). It also disappointingly leaves parapsychology at present in a catch twenty-two situation. For example, the main question we are faced with is what indeed would constitute hard evidence for psi phenomena? Being in a haunted location and having an experience there is often a subjective thing requiring our senses to see, hear, touch or smell things out of the ordinary. And this can quite obviously leave those who are retold these experiences by the percipient in doubt or constantly reverting to natural psychological or environmental explanations for such experiences, and this should be so. Therefore, the next step would involve an attempt to film a psi event and therefore have video evidence. This again leaves doubt over the video footage when seeing (for example) a glass fly off a table as if by unseen hands. Video footage can only tell us so much and it certainly does not prove that no trickery was involved no matter what respectable researcher filmed such an occurrence. If this is the case we need to make a drastic change in defining what would be required to satisfy science of evidence for psi phenomena. Hearing these problems of research evidence and their acceptance I'm sure would make many conducting research in this area at least briefly think 'why bother?' To this point I can think of no better reference than Maher (1992), who argued that if we were to give up researching parapsychological phenomena and push it to one side along with the sheer volume of experimental research we have in the field, this would be one of the greatest defeats for science to date. For many, this is a perfect motivation to keep facing the challenges that parapsychology has to throw at those involved in the controversial science.

There are countless texts that suggest we have already achieved suitable and compelling evidence for psychic abilities and life beyond bodily death. But, if this is so, why has this not produced a greater impact on the sciences and society? Parapsychology is reaching the point where it needs to shout out from the crowd to stand out and present this evidence in the proper manner to a wider audience than its own field, even though parapsychology is faced with criticism of the science being extinct after supposedly failing in its objective (Hyman, 2010). However, the way in which we see research today may be rapidly changing with more students particularly in the UK taking part in parapsychological studies in their education as part of basic psychology before they reach university level. Along side this potentially larger parapsychological community in the near future, is evidence to suggest that the field is presenting some of the most rigorous research methods compared to the other sciences (Roe, 2010). If this is the case, the only thing that is hypothetically crippling parapsychology and psi research is simply personal criticisms and therefore reluctance to accept the research as part of contemporary science (sticks and stones...).

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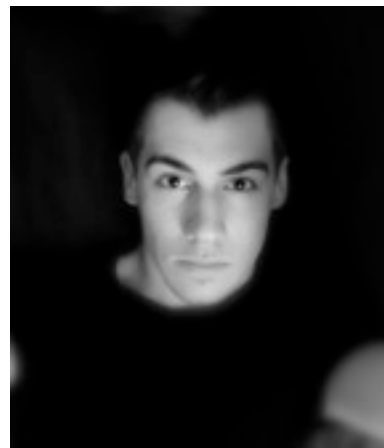
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Mediumship, spirit possession and our understanding of reality

Kim McCaul

The variety of cross-cultural mediumistic phenomena is substantial. On the surface there seems only a limited relationship between phenomena such as: mass possessions observed during various religious festivals; a spirit medium who takes on the characteristics and mannerisms of a particular divinity while advising people of their fortune; and the contemporary platform medium who, with apparent ease, converses with the deceased relatives of their audience. Structurally, however, they all share common traits. Ardent skeptics, or in my view cynics, claim that they share the trait that the person experiencing the possession or mediumistic phenomena is either delusional, suffering a mental illness, or deliberately exploiting the gullibility of others (Devereux 1939, Lewis 1971).

Because these authors are utterly certain that consciousness cannot exist beyond physical matter, they are comfortable in stating categorically that mediumship, wherever it may occur in the world, is merely a social and psychological phenomena and cannot be what it purports to be. In the previous issue of this journal I have argued for an alternative paradigm that is based on an acceptance of the existence of consciousness beyond the physical body (McCaul 2010).

The adoption of this "consciential paradigm", i.e. a paradigm that centers on consciousness rather than on physical matter (Vieira 1994), does not imply that we accept all reports of mediumship uncritically. For example, within cultures which embrace non-physical realities, social power and prestige can be conferred to those who demonstrate mediumistic abilities. Where status and privilege arises on the basis of perceptions that others cannot verify, there is significant room and incentive for deceit and manipulation.

While we as anthropologists must maintain our critical thinking, this does not mean we must confine our thinking to the parameters imposed by our society. Instead of being limited to looking at the social manifestation of mediumship, we can embrace its experiential dimension. This does not mean we must necessarily be practicing mediums, but some degree of personal experience with mediumistic phenomena is essential for a full understanding of the phenomenon. On the basis of such direct understanding, we can treat the experience as what it purports to be, and embark on a serious study of the cross-cultural differences of inter-dimensional communication. In other words, by widening our focus we will be able to pursue research into the

different ways extraphysical consciousnesses (i.e. spirits) engage and interact with intraphysical consciousnesses (i.e. humans and other animals) across cultures.

In doing so we can increase our understanding, not only of the variety of social structures that surround mediumship, but of the variety of inter-dimensional dynamics of consciousness around the world. Such an inquiry would be groundbreaking, as multidimensional experiences have historically largely been ignored by a science that has considered them *a priori* unscientific. Bringing genuine open-minded scientific rigour to them, however, is arguably essential to developing a real understanding of a multiplicity of experiences that is all too easily dismissed as illogical (Turner 1992).

Like the conventional paradigm, the consciential paradigm also highlights a certain commonality between the different possession and mediumistic phenomena found across the world. Instead of this commonality being delusion or deceit, however, it is that mediums are potentially intermediaries between dimensions; they are channels allowing non-physical consciousness a "voice" in this physical dimension. In some cases this voice is confined to physical action, such as when the entranced person dances and expresses the physical features of the possessing extraphysical consciousness. In others there is speech and personal communication, but in a way uncontrolled by the medium. Finally, the medium maintains independent control, basically engaging in a three-way dialogue with the extraphysical consciousness and the physical recipient of the messages it conveys. No doubt there are numerous other varieties and hybrid forms of mediumship. But before we can engage in a serious exercise of classification and analysis we will need to decide on our paradigm.

In my view, once we accept the challenge to approach mediumistic and possession phenomena through the consciential paradigm we will open up entirely new avenues of exploration that have the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of the life of consciousness across cultures and dimensions.

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Pragmatics and intention in automatic writing compositions: the Chico Xavier case.

Ademir Xavier

My first intention here is to present *Chico Xavier* mediumship in automatic writing of recently deceased persons. As a physicist I should explain the mechanism involved in mediumship, how the medium's mind can get in contact with the hidden information that is so abundant in his automatic writings, what are the laws governing the conditions and requirements of the phenomenon, how information could be delivered in this way and so on. This is a very hard task, and I had initially invoked communication theory, assuming that the information is somewhere and that many details of the process are well understood. My initial attempt, however, showed that such approach is far from satisfactory. Besides being a human phenomenon, each mediumship case is unique and has its own peculiarities requesting thorough study. Such feature does not allow to fit mediumship into well defined categories, which seems to be important in the prescientific phase of a discipline aiming to scientifically describe new events.

But I hope also that such unpretentious narrative can motivate further anthropological studies around C. Xavier figure and his work that is scarcely acquainted outside Brazil. Since the skeptical position is widely known, I will not make any attempt to theorize around it because my intention is to describe the phenomenon as it manifested itself, together with some information about the context in which the phenomenon occurred.

Modern information theory (Shannon, 1949; Griffin, 1987) aims to provide a model for the communication process between two entities – sender and receiver – in which influences of noise and other interferences in transferring messages are taken into account. To be viable, the process requires a source of information (the sender or issuer), a message (properly codified using a protocol known by both sender and receiver: the language) and a target (or receiver). Moreover, the message is transferred from source to target through a medium. Both linguistics and semiology (Cobley, 2001; Wales, 2009) also aims to study communication, providing more comprehensive theories for understanding signs and other aspects related to the communication process beyond those that are mechanically explored by Shannon's or other mechanistic approaches (Bosco, 2006; Rigotti, 2006).

Given a message, we may be particularly interested in the key elements that lead to the identification of the true nature of the information source. It is known (Chaski, 2000; Kopka, 2004) that, depending on the medium used for transmission, the message may contain sufficient elements for identifying the sender, a subject of a recently created field of study known as forensic linguistics (Chaski, 2000; Olsson, 2008). Take, for example, the task of identifying the authorship of a handwritten letter that

I receive from a friend who has recently moved to Australia. In it I find graphical signals, morphological, syntactical, semantic and other pragmatic structures (Akmajian, 2001) that allow me to promptly recognize my friend as the author.

At the highest level or pragmatics (Cutting, 2002; Koyama, 2006), beyond the apparent meaning, the message is conveyed in such a way that only the target is fully entitled with the ability to understand the message. For example, my friend, knowing my little interest in visiting Australia, tries to describe with vivid colors the beautiful landscapes of that continent so as to update my previous impression and change my opinion about visiting Australia. If someone else read his descriptions, they will probably not catch the meaning behind the appearance of the phrases. Although morphology, syntax and semantics are the same for everyone, i. e., they are publicly available, pragmatics is a private aspect of the communication protocol. In every communication process of this type, pragmatic competence (author ability to convey private information to the target) is an important factor for the identification of the message source (Borg, 2006).

Although psychic phenomena are interpreted as anomalies for the contemporary scientific thought and explained as frauds by skeptical groups (here we distinguished between science and skepticism), they have manifested themselves *prima facie* as communication processes (Rock, 2008a; Beischel, 2007). Repeatedly this facet has been overlooked by psychical researchers (Beischel, 2009) who do not subscribe to the idea of psychic information being generated outside the medium's mind (Braude, 2003a; Wales, 2009). It seems then reasonable to use semiology and linguistics (Wales, 2009) in the search for the authorship of many psychic information of quality in an attempt to attest the nature of the source.

Among the varieties of psychic intelligent processes (as opposed to physical manifestations), automatic writing or '*psychography*' (Oxon, 1848; Braude, 2003b) stands as an evolution of primitive and mechanical forms of communication such as typtology and the use of *planchets* (Kardec, 2000b). Compositions produced through automatic writing (including poetry) are known in English speaking countries (see the Patience Worth case in Braude, 2003b; Casper, 1916) and, though less conspicuous than its counterpart '*psychophony*' (ability to speak messages of a paranormal content), they have been produced around the world.

In Brazil, the practice of automatic writing is very popular in the local spiritualist movement known as *Espiritismo* that was founded by H. L. D. Rivail, a French pedagogue also known as Allan Kardec (Kardec, 1985). Kardec wrote a treatise about mediumship (Kardec, 2000a) in the heyday of psychic research in Europe and launched the principles of *Spiritisme* in 'The Spirit's Book' (Kardec, 1996). In its religious aspect, Kardecist Spiritism, besides the emphasis on mediumship which became a regular *spiritist* practice, has also incorporated the belief in



reincarnation as a way for the soul's evolution (Chibeni, 1994). Such environment of open acceptance of the reality of spirit communication and reincarnation constitutes a fertile field for the development of active mediumship, in particular automatic writings.

In this context, the most important figure of the Brazilian spiritualist movement was Francisco Cândido Xavier (1910-2002), also known as Chico Xavier, who, having an unprivileged childhood (he attended formal education until the age of 10), published more than 400 books between 1932 and 2001, in addition to thousands letters of paranormal nature. Among his books, poetic and literary works of Brazilian and Portuguese authors of the end of the 19 century must be highlighted (Xavier, 1935; Xavier, 1983), adding another dimension for the analysis of mediumship phenomena, that of aesthetics (Rocha, 2001). Due to space limitations, we will not address here the question of poetry in C. Xavier works. His life was recently theme of movies in Brazil (Filho, 2010; Grumbach, 1910).

Here we present an unpublished English translation of an automatic writing by C. Xavier attributed to a recently deceased person (Arantes, 2008a). The aim of such letters was to provide spiritual solace to parents and other relatives seeking information of their recently departed children and friends. Some considerations about the context and environment in which these messages were obtained are as follows:

1. According to the conduct rules accepted in the spiritist movement under Kardec orientation, we highlight the voluntary nature of the work produced, that is, absence of whatever fees for the realization of the séances. Author copyrights for all his books were donated to social assistance works.
2. C. Xavier mediumship is similar in degree and ostensibility to Mrs. Pipers mediumship (Piper, 1929; Braude, 2003c). He was capable of producing various manifestations both of intelligent and physical character with a preference for automatic writing.
3. His mediumship can be divided in several phases. The one that concern us here lasted from 1960 to 1985 and was characterized by the visit of family parents seeking for information of recently departed relatives. A small fraction of these letters were published (Arantes, 1981; 1982a; 1982b; 1984a; 1984b; 1986; 1988; 1990; 1998; 2008a).
4. The environment that surrounded C. Xavier during this phase was mostly made up of people from a variety of social classes and religious beliefs, mostly unaware of the mechanisms involved in the psychic process. Due to the exceptional character of this work, a huge amount of people sought for (free) information about their relatives with no or scarce previous contact with the medium.
5. Most of the letters were obtained in Portuguese, which is the medium's native language. But communication in other languages (ex. Italian (Perandrea, 1991) and English) were also obtained.
6. The issuer signature was often reproduced in the end of each letter. This fact allowed a comparative study (Perandrea, 1991) using handwritten analysis.
7. Letters were not instantaneously obtained. In some cases, letters were obtained in a first visit, in others, an interval from some weeks to several months were observed.
8. In many cases, more than one letter was obtained.
9. Having never met before, parents confirmed that they were called by their proper names by the medium in a first visit. Names of deceased relatives were cited, some of them not acknowledged by the family in a first instance (they had to be confirmed by a family search).

It is recognizably difficult to record and subsequently verify the information in communications of psychic nature (Braude, 2003c). However, C. Xavier letters present a new situation, once they were addressed to relatives who could themselves provide many identification elements. For example, letters were signed. In the case below, the issuer (deceased at age 20) signed with a letter that, according to this mother, was the same as he was 8 years old.

However, for all interviewed parents, authorship evidence came from the pragmatic competence exposed in the letters that revealed information that was known by few relatives only. In many occasions the letters revealed a tacit knowledge of the situation

that was difficult to be obtained by normal ways. Of particular importance is the citation of other deceased personalities whose names required consultation of additional records to verify their existence (in many cases, non Brazilian names). Most amazingly, senders reveal knowledge of private moods experienced by their parents and relatives prior to the letter issuing.

The letter below is an example of psychographic communication by C. Xavier obtained in Uberaba/MG, at January 1st 1979 signed as G. Patrick Castelnaud (1/24/1958-3/11/1978) who died in a car accident. His mother received this message in a second visit to Uberaba, located 800 km far from the crash site and family residence.

Mommy Christine (1), your blessings.

All right. I got here in peace. Do you know what happened? Actually I did not get back from Itaipava (2). I got back from a war (3). Fortunately.

Tell daddy, our Chantal (4), and our Ninon (5) that I keep on going. Everything goes on. I am still alive here, even though my physical cover was smashed in an accident. Yesterday, it was resistance and struggling. Today, it is regained peace.

Tell gramma 'chéri gand-mère' Fernanda (6) and grampa Mogliocco (7) that I am doing well. From one beautiful place like ours, I was transferred to another. And I thank God that for me the war is over.

Mom, all that happened was a readaptation for me. Please don't blame anybody. (8) My other gramma Margueritte (9) is teaching me how to understand everything. It has been difficult to comprehend all lessons though. But the important is that I am still in the school.

Mommy, forgot all our past memories (10). Daddy Gerard (11) is right, we are all brothers and sisters. There are no enemies. We are all children of God and all belongs to each other.

Comfort our Chantal. We need to understand life and reject any hostility against Chantal (12).

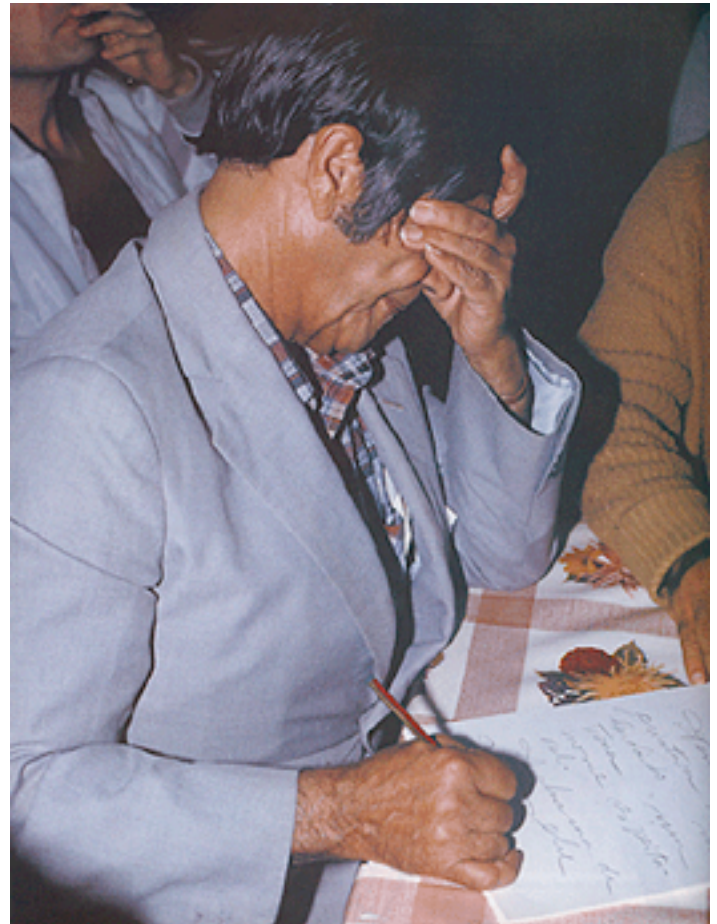
God's work is beautiful (13). The day and the night, the happiness and the suffering, the boat and the star; even badness exists for our own good, if we see this as a positive force that can transform our difficulties in blessings.

Mommy, this letter is just to say hi. And my hello goes to you full of kisses. If possible, also send some of them to Chantal and Ninon, and take my heart to you and daddy Gerard,

From my heart, your son.

Gerard Patrick Castelnaud .

Once one assumes a simple communication model, any preliminary analysis of the message will fail to consider many details that should be accounted for in a conceivably more sophisticated model (Akmajian, 2010; Bach, 1979). Information seen as a flow from emitter to receiver can only account for certain morphological and syntactical aspects, that is, signals that can be easily 'copied and pasted', implying that the medium in fact copied such



information somewhere else. However, even such morphological, syntactical and semantic aspects become a challenge in face of messages written in foreign languages.

It would be far easy to explain the paranormal ability above in a communication theoretical framework that do not consider pragmatical problems such as: linguistically ambiguous expressions, messages containing information about particular things being referred to (that is, things that only the receiver has the knowledge to complete the reference), transmission of an intention, the so called 'underdetermination of communicative intention' problem (Bach, 1979), presence of content that is semantically ill defined (non literal communication) and, finally, the problem of 'noncommunicative acts' (the aim of the message is not only to communicate, but to produce an effect in the target). In face of these details, the following remarks are valid for the letter in analysis:

1. Reference to the name Patrick called his mother in private (the mother's name is Christiane Mogliocco Castelnaud, and not Christine);
2. Reference to the city where Patrick should have returned. The accident was 500 meters from the family cottage in Itaipava/RJ, the family itself lived in Rio de Janeiro/RJ. The mother told the medium that the accident was in Rio de Janeiro (state name);
3. Non literal reference. The sender had not in fact got back from a war, but was referring to his previous situation in life;

4. Chantal: reference to Patrick's sister at the time resident in France;
5. Ninon: reference to Patrick's girlfriend;
6. Reference to maternal grandmother living in France;
7. Reference to paternal grandfather living in France;
8. The issuer addresses his mother frequent concerns about somebody being guilty of his death;
9. Reference to maternal great-grandmother (Margeritte Yvetot), died in France in 1974;
10. Reference to the mother's attachment to Patrick childhood objects;
11. Reference to Patrick's father;
12. The issuer asks her mother to forgive her sister after having quarreled with her by phone after Patrick's death. The fact was only known to Patrick's mother;
13. Patrick was very sensitive to nature and loved animals.

Such observation were made by Patrick's parents after receiving the letter and clearly show a 'decodification' due to the existence of intention, purposes, beliefs and desires on the part of the sender. It is known that any satisfactory model for communication must take account of context and inference (Bach, 1979), simply because it is very difficult to characterize or access some elements that are recognizably private in the human communication process. First it is necessary to recognize that, for the issuer strategy has any chance of success, a set of beliefs must be shared between emitter and receiver (Capone, 2006) and that such set must be available to the medium at the moment of writing the letter. It is, therefore, not only a matter of transmitting and receiving linguistic symbols that is involved in the process of automatic writing. Given the amount and frequency of such pragmatic occurrences in the material produced by C. Xavier and the complexities of the communication process, it is difficult to explain such phenomena using 'common sense' or 'naturalistic' approaches. Moreover, the situation is further complicated with the letters written in other languages since lexical, syntactical and semantical elements add a considerable amount of linguistic information that is recognizably not available to the medium. Therefore it is plausible to assume that linguistic theories and analysis will play a relevant role in supporting survivalist explanations in many automatic writing compositions (Beischel, 2009; Rock, 2008b). For example, an interesting aspect that is often seen in C. Xavier's messages of recently departed ones is the enlargement of handwriting, as if the mediums hand was assisted to reproduce the issuer's signature or even the entire text.

We believe that a new field of study is open with the analysis of 'anomalous' compositions of C. Xavier. This is also facilitated by the fact that many families may still be contacted to confirm or provide additional details about the missives. The quantity and quality of the material produced by C. Xavier is little known outside Brazil because it is mostly available in

Portuguese and, therefore, translations become necessary. We hope to fill this gap in the future.

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A. Xavier Jr received his MSc in physics in 1992, Phd in Physics in 1997 at [Campinas State University](#), Campinas, SP, working with semiclassical approximations to one and two dimensional quantum mechanical systems. After a short stage at Freiburg Universität, Freiburg in Breisgau, Germany, he published works in accelerator physics with special attention to optimization of high-energy electron rings (at a [Brazilian Synchrotron](#) facility). Presently he is senior scientist of a private research center in Campinas, SP, Brazil, working with operational research, design of RF devices (antennas and electromagnetic simulation), and leading a machine vision group.

The Autonomy and Morphology of the Felix Experimental Group's Ectoplasm

Dr. Jochen Soederling

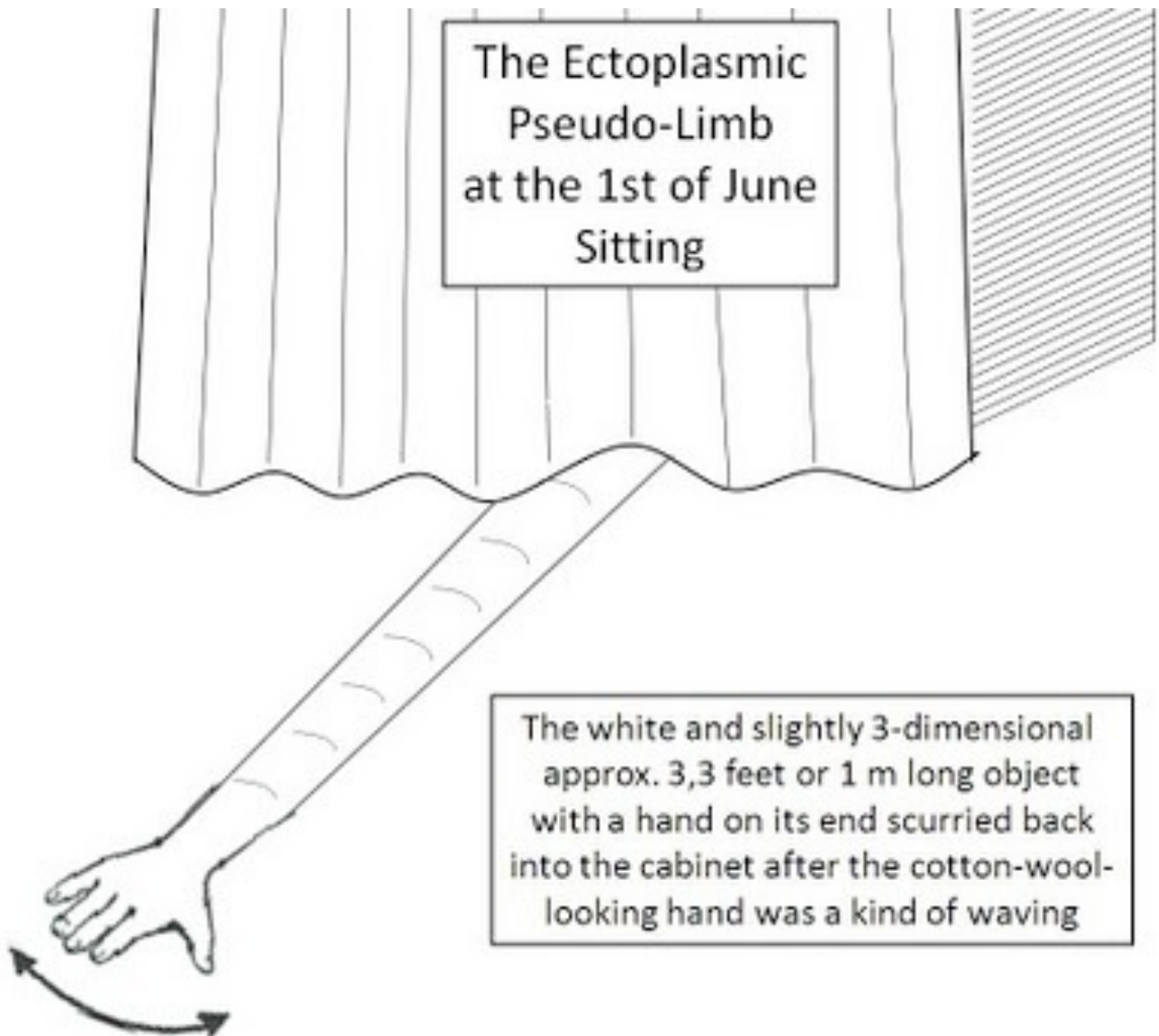
My name is Dr. J. S. I am a physician and working as a clinician. I received a doctor's degree in the field of experimental and molecular medicine. Beside my clinical work I am organizing basic and clinical research. Due to the mystical experiences of my patients, as well as in my family, I had developed a growing interest in the occult. After reading historical reports and getting taught by some professionals in the field of parapsychology, I became convinced of the reality of physical phenomena and of the high quality of research that was performed a century ago. I decided to learn more about it and looked for active groups in order to have personal experiences. For this reason I was introduced to the FEG and became its circle leader after a year.

Ectoplasm is a vaporous or solid mass, which is considered to be released from the medium's body during a deep trance state, though it has been witnessed under other circumstances. The mediums Stanislaw P., Marthe Beraud, Mary Marshal, Einer Nielsen and others, who were tested by many famous researchers nearly a century ago were able to emanate this white mass from their bodies, usually from their mouths. Two phases, as a kind

of Genesis, were usually reported; a "rough draft" followed by a "cloudy" phase.

I have also seen these two phases, which were first described by Charles Richet, during my work with the Felix Experimental Group. Although it was not possible for me to film this process until now, I tried to document some parts of these stages by taking photographs with a high resolution digital camera. Obviously with a camera I could hardly document dynamic processes, however I think the pictures I have taken over a period of 18 months have a high value for documentation and are supporting the evidence for the reality of this outstanding psychic process, because no one has been allowed to do this since the decline of the major investigations in the field of occultism 70 years ago.

In the following article I will be reporting on the ectoplasmic transformation that I have witnessed in my circle. Readers who are familiar with the major reports and investigations of A. v. Schrenck-Notzing, C. Richet, G. Geley, W.J. Crawford and T. G. Hamilton will immediately see that I have witnessed similar phenomena. My findings are strengthening those of the historical reports.



A lot of historical photographs look suspicious and some researchers have duplicated these pictures, with non-supernatural materials, by using fabricated tissue. For this reason ectoplasm is controversial and is often regarded as a hoax. But the transformational process is always dismissed or neglected in skeptical reports and hence is of high evidential value. I will try to underline the dynamic process of ectoplasmic evolution and transformation in my description, a phenomenon which I have seen several times at close range.

At the first stage I have often seen the appearance of a mobile substance, which was attached in some way with the body of the medium. In most instances a white stream of ectoplasm was released from the medium's mouth, which was grasped by the medium self in order to descend it to the floor (Fig. 1). The medium pulled, on most occasions, such a large

mass of ectoplasm from his mouth that it could often be seen on his whole body as well as around his feet on the floor. This stage looked like a phase of emanation. The substance appeared in a heterogenic morphology, its consistency was always different.

Although the morphology of structures I have seen was never identical with those of a fabricated tissue, the released white mass appeared to be comparable with towels, draperies, cotton wool or spider fibers. Although these structures looked on first sight similar to those of draperies, the ectoplasmic veils never have shown the characteristic square thread-work of real veils.

In all ectoplasmic formations there was always something inconstant and irregular and sometimes the morphological structure was different in the centre than at the rims. On other occasions I could see a more perforated,



membranous mass with local thickenings and vacant spaces. In the next step the structure often underwent a process of transformation and evolution.

In most cases perfectly white modeled hands became visible - normally I was able to witness the evolution and movement of a single hand. These hands were always different sizes and were not comparable with those of the medium, sometimes even bigger, but often smaller. In most instances the medium's limbs were totally visible while I could see the movement of an additional materialized hand.

The hands were normally seen from their palm side and gave an impression of a normal living agent who liked to interact with the group. I could often see waving gestures or just moving fingers. For example on one occasion I witnessed a dense band of white substance with a breadth of approximately four fingers, which was normally released from the medium's mouth. This creation moved approx. 1,5 meters out of the cabinet. At its end was a hand was positioned and all sitters including me could see this formed hand performing scrambling gestures (Fig. 2).

In another séance I have seen a stream of white semitransparent ribbon (different to the one I have described before), which was vertically ascending with waving motion in front

of the cabinet. At its end a human hand was slowly moving with the fingers.

On other occasions I could see different aspects of transformation and evolution. In two instances nearly the whole body of the medium including the head was bagged into veil-like ectoplasmic forms, comparable with a cocoon of a caterpillar. In one case two moving materialized hands were visible within this cocoon, while both medium's hand as well both feet could clearly been seen. Here follow two pics showing this condition (Figs. 3 and 4).

Once I observed a white mass emerge from the medium's body, which wreathed itself around the feet (Figs. 5 and 6). Then a vertical column directly in front of the medium was formed. This column was semitransparent so that the medium was perfectly visible during the whole time, and a kind of umbilical cord connected him with the nebulous form. On further condensation a finger-like moving structure came out of this column at the upper end, which dissolved within a period of two minutes. On another occasion I had the chance to touch this white substance with my hands in red light. I totally agree with the sensational descriptions of historical reports. The ectoplasm felt cold, clammy, and as if endowed with a motion of its own. The sensation may be compared with that produced on the skin by a living reptile.



Events

11th-13th March

Spooksfest, York -

For more information visit:

www.spooksfest.co.uk

19th March

Weird Equinox

Athenaeum Theatre, Warminster -

for more information visit:

www.weirdevents.co.uk

2nd-3rd April

**Breaking Convention: A
Multidisciplinary Conference on
Psychedelic Consciousness**

University of Kent, Canterbury -

For more information visit:

<http://ukcpsychedelics.co.uk/...>

11th-13th April

**Religion and Social Theory:
Developing a New Agenda for the
Sociology of Religion**

Woodbridge Conference Centre,
Birmingham

www.socrel.org.uk

6th-7th May

**Daimonic Imagination: Uncanny
Intelligence**

An interdisciplinary conference
addressing the question of inspired
creativity -

University of Kent, Canterbury - for
more information visit:

[www.kent.ac.uk/secl/researchcentres/
myth/events/daimonic_imagination.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/secl/researchcentres/myth/events/daimonic_imagination.html)

August

Weird 11

for more information visit:

www.weirdevents.co.uk

18th-21st August

**54th Annual Parapsychological
Association Convention**

Curitiba, Brazil

www.parapsych.org/breaking-news.html

September

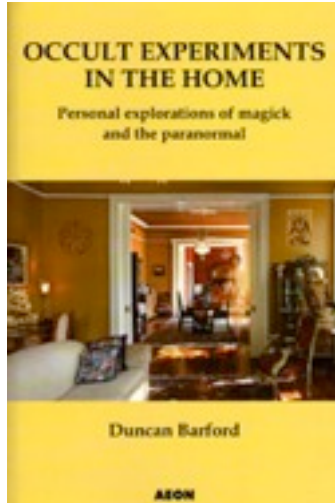
ASSAP 30th Anniversary Conference

for more information visit:

www.assap.org

Reviews

Books & Events



"Occult Experiments in the Home: Personal Explorations of Magick and the Paranormal"

Author: Duncan Barford

Pub: Aeon Books Ltd

ISBN: 9781904658368

Price: £12.99

Duncan Barford's short book "Occult Experiments in the Home" gives the reader a very personal and distinctly experiential insight into the paranormal through the lens of magickal practice. This book starts with the experience of the paranormal and from that point attempts to construct theories about its nature, something that many theorists of the paranormal have not adequately attempted. The overall view that comes out of this experiential exploration is one of blurred distinctions (for instance between subjective and objective), trickster characteristics, and a perspective that places an emphasis on the role of consciousness in the manifestation of the paranormal. The book itself is constructed around 5 essays covering different aspects of Barford's encounters with the paranormal: the first chapter examines his early childhood and teen experiences, the second details an investigation into an apparent after-death communication experienced by a friend, the third explores psychogeography and modern urban shamanic practice, the fourth is concerned with the attaining of enlightenment through meditative practices and the fifth presents an overview of the lucid dreaming phenomenon. Throughout these chapters Barford uses weird and wonderful stories from his own experience to highlight key aspects of paranormal and spiritual phenomena, which, in addition to proving certain points about the nature of the paranormal, are highly entertaining. All in all this is a book that I found very hard to put down.

Jack Hunter



Title: Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850-1939

Author: Georgina Byrne

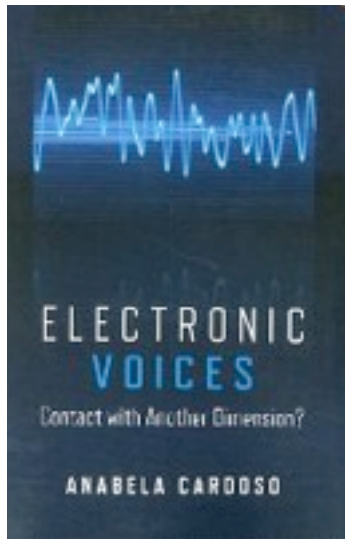
Pub: Boydell Press

ISBN: 9781843835899

Price: £55.00

In "*Modern Spiritualism and the Church of England, 1850-1939*", historian Georgina Byrne aims to provide a new perspective on the history of spiritualism through and examination of the beliefs and ideas that developed from the movement. In doing so she demonstrates a surprising consistency in the fundamentals of spiritualist belief right through the period under discussion. An interesting issue explored in the book is the extent to which spiritualist ideas, particularly regarding the nature of the afterlife, percolated into the consciousness not only of the lay public, but also into the Anglican church. Byrne directs our attention to the gradual development of Spiritualist themes in Anglican sermons towards describing the afterlife in distinctly Spiritualist terms such as, for example, "the summerlands". Byrne's book is an extremely valuable addition to the academic study of spiritualism in that it treats spiritualist belief seriously without recourse to overly simplistic interpretations and without the narrow-minded scepticism that so often accompanies discourse on the matter.

Jack Hunter



**"Electronic Voices:
Contact with Another
Dimension?"**

Author: Anabela Cardoso

Pub: O Books

ISBN: 9781846943638

Price: £14.99/\$24.95

Anabela Cardoso, a high-ranking Portuguese diplomat, has written a remarkable book about Instrumental Transcommunication (ITC), *Electronic Voices: Contact with Another Dimension?* ITC refers to electronically received forms of apparent communication of unexplained origin. Although ITC phenomena include voices, images, and texts, Cardoso has focused primarily on voices. The voices state that they are deceased, and their speech often seems to come in direct response to experimenters' questions and comments. They range in length from one or two words to several sentences. Voices vary in strength and seeming gender. Some seem to lack characteristics of a human voice and some seem robotic.

Cardoso describes her three goals for the book: 1) to help readers try to receive the voices themselves; 2) to contribute to a better understanding of processes which seem to encourage reception of voices; and 3) to encourage the scientific community to study and analyze these phenomena, using sophisticated technical methods of voice analysis she says are now available. She very effectively achieved her first goal: she describes conditions and equipment she's used over the years as she's received a tremendous number of voices. An entire chapter is devoted to details of how to prepare an environment conducive to the reception of voices. A CD and descriptive booklet accompany the book. The CD contains a large number of voices, most in Portuguese, along with the Portuguese and English translations Cardoso has assigned to each. The 30-page booklet is extremely interesting. It includes very detailed descriptions of the setting in which the voices occurred, such as the content of researchers' conversations before reception, and content of voices received before and after the featured excerpts. The author comments on the similarity between voices she's received, and those received by others around the world.

Cardoso states that one challenge in this field is that listeners may have a tendency to think they've identified a meaningful phrase out of meaningless sounds. A great many of the voices featured in the CD are quite strong and seem clearly to be saying the words ascribed to them. In most examples, the author's interpretation of a phrase is featured first, followed by the sounds as received. I thought that perhaps it might be helpful to first play a series of sounds as they were received, maybe repeating it two or three times, before there is any suggested interpretation given, of the words it might represent. That would give the reader/listener the opportunity to listen without any suggestion, to possible content. However, I learned that the author carefully considered that option, and decided against it as she felt that most prospective listeners would be English-speaking, unlikely to understand Portuguese. Thus, she felt that if voices were initially presented without any interpretation, they would be just meaningless sounds to the listeners.

In addressing her second goal, she has presented several compelling ideas as to processes associated with voice reception. She has made a strong contribution to the research conversation about possible sources of the voices. She has discussed the possible importance of synergy between experimenter, equipment used, and the source of the voices. She has found that voices are easier to receive and of better quality when background noise is used. She prefers a radio's "white noise" which plays during the tape recording. She suggests that the background noise may provide an acoustic carrier from which communicators might modulate or construct their own voices. She believes that the voices captured on tape, consist of electromagnetic frequencies sent into the ether by some kind of power source.

She disagrees with the so-called "psychokinesis explanation," which posits that the communications are "created" solely through the psychokinetic action of the experimenter's mind on the electronic equipment. However, she speculates that the experimenters' keen interest in listening to the voices may somehow "transfer" the "wave" so that the signal (information) it carries becomes available and audible.

Cardoso has observed that many of the voices sound as if they're being produced with great effort. She posits that the communicators seemingly behind the voices, experience difficulties in providing the sounds in an understandable form. Several voices say that "this is difficult." Further, Cardoso feels that the voices, based on the

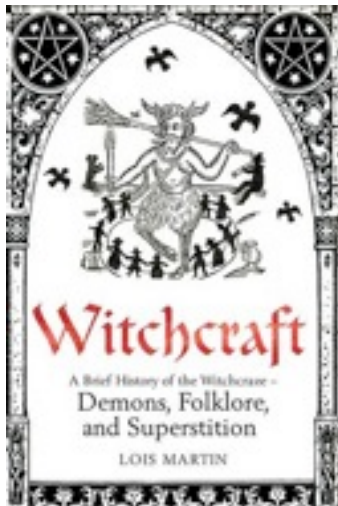
content of many, seem to have a purpose, - namely to convey that life doesn't end at death and that the world can be healed by love.

But her personal theories aside, Cardoso's overriding passion is to see an unbiased investigation undertaken by scientists with the highest credentials and expertise in acoustics, electronics, and related fields. They would examine the evidence, rule out any conceivable normal explanation for their production, and supervise further reception at the origin of the voices. She emphasizes that although the phenomena can't be received on demand, they are repeated frequently around the world. Results are objective and can be subjected to scientific scrutiny. She asserts that sophisticated tools already exist for such rigorous study, including electro-acoustic processing software to determine whether a voice is really there, and decoding techniques that she feels will help interpret what was said.

I certainly hope that Cardoso's overriding goal will be realized, - that the scientific community will begin to take a serious look at ITC. I certainly applaud her work and highly recommend this most unique book and CD.

Cardoso's life has been dramatically affected by her years of experimenting with the voices. She says that she feels "immensely proud...to be involved in an enterprise of unparalleled significance."

Elizabeth E. McAdams, PhD.
President International Foundation for Survival Research



"Witchcraft: A Brief History of Demons, Folklore and Superstition"

Author: Lois Martin

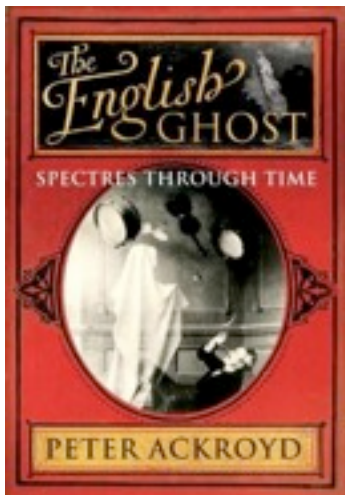
Pub: Constable & Robinson

ISBN: 978084901383

Price: £7.99

This is both an entertaining and interesting book that provides a fascinating history of European witchcraft traditions from the Medieval period onwards. In her own words this book examines "the origins of some of the ideological, cultural and legal developments that led to the formation of Continental European witch beliefs" (p. 8). Each chapter treats a different aspect of medieval witchcraft traditions, for instance examining beliefs about the devil and his pacts, the witches sabbat and night flight, and so on. It is clear that this book deals not only with witchcraft as understood by those who allegedly practiced it, but also with popular beliefs *about* witchcraft. To achieve this historical overview Martin relies on a variety of sources including biblical references and significant texts such as the famed witch finder's handbook the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of the Witches). Martin also draws from classic occult texts such as Agrippa's *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* demonstrating the influence of Neo-Platonic philosophy on the development of witchcraft beliefs. Martin highlights interesting parallels and deviances in ideas about witchcraft on continental Europe and in Britain, and provides a commentary on the spread of such beliefs to the New World. The book concludes with an overview of the different theories of witchcraft, paying particular attention to theories that suggest that the imagery and beliefs associated with European witchcraft have their roots in pre-Christian pagan traditions. An interesting addition to the end of the book is the inclusion of a selection of passages from some of Martin's key sources including extracts from witchcraft trials and confessions, as well as significant texts such as the *Bible*, the *Goetia*, the *Canon Episcopi*, *Malleus Maleficarum*, and *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* amongst others. For a relatively short book, this has a lot to offer the interested reader.

Jack Hunter



Published just in time for Halloween 2010, Peter Ackroyd's *The English Ghost* documents a selection of chilling ghostly encounter stories from throughout British history. Ackroyd argues that "the English see more ghosts than anyone else" owing to a peculiar mixture of cultural influences: the Germanic, Nordic and native British traditions merging in an almost syncretistic manner. It is suggested that ghosts provide a tangible link to the past, a sort of method for demonstrating ancestral links to the land, and in a country as much fought over as Britain it is quite understandable that ghosts have played such a large part in our traditional heritage. This book is ideal for keeping on your bedside table, the stories are short enough to enable the reader to dip in at random and choose a spooky take to read before sleep.

**"The English Ghost:
Spectres Through Time"**

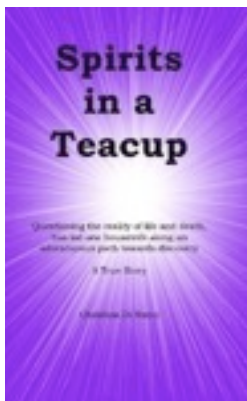
Author: Peter Ackroyd

Pub: Random House

ISBN: 9780701169893

Price: £12.99/\$24.95

Jack Hunter



"Spirits in a Teacup"

Author: Christine Di Nucci

Pub: lulu.com

ISBN: 9781409267171

Price: £9.00

Back in the early days of exploring my Spirituality, as it pertains to mediumship, I was like most average Americans in that my only exposure to mediumship of any kind was from TV celebrities, with which came the baggage of sensationalism, sketchy mixed reviews, and a mish-mash of money that really turned me off. On the other side of that coin was hobbyist and professional so-called "ghost hunters" who sought out the big bad spook. To a guy like me that was trying to figure out a life time of spiritual and paranormal experiences this only fueled the fear that something was wrong with me. That was until I ran across Christine Di Nucci's website and books.

'Spirits in a Teacup' is the story of the founding and development of the Bristol Spirit Lodge Circle. Finally here was something from regular everyday people that offered a non sensational experience that I could find solace in. In 'Spirits in a Teacup' I read about how an ordinary lady in an ordinary town approached and investigated her spiritual and paranormal experiences. It offered a template in which I could emulate some of her approaches to experiences that were non sensational and devoid of fear. It offered ways to approach spirit communication I'd never heard about, and introduced me to the idea that the Spirit world could interact with me without the religious dogma that is so typical in American life. It offered me a way to approach my own friends about mediumistic experiences and spirituality. And what was even more exciting is that the people in this book embraced both skepticism and spirituality at the same time.



**"Charlie: Trance
Communications and
Spirit Teachings"**

**Author: Christine Di Nucci
& Jack Hunter**

Pub: lulu.com

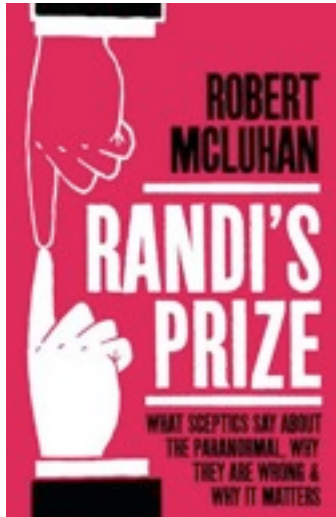
ISBN: 9781409297260

Price: £8.98

The next book, 'Charlie', provides an overview of the communications and teachings received from a spirit called Charlie. For me Charlie took this whole new mediumship thing further and introduced me to a broader world-view and spiritual system, and further delved into the details of what physical mediumship was all about in modern society. Before these books I'd never heard of physical phenomena or transfiguration. It gave me a peek into just what might have been going on in my life for the past 30 years. I think one of the most amazing things Charlie introduced me to was the continuance of personality beyond the grave. That spirits retained personality and humor, which in the end would directly relate to my own spirit experiences. I was also introduced to the concept of a Spirit team that would work with you on personal and spiritual development as well as providing proof for others about the continuance of life beyond death. A novel concept for me at the time.

Through these books, and a letter from Christine, I was thrust out of the scary Hollywood-Religious "Woo-hoo, oogy-boogy Spooky" world of Spirits and into one of daily communication with my own guides and angels and a broader community working for personal development and helping others spread the word that life after death is a fact and the world of Spirit can have meaningful interaction in our everyday lives without all the historical baggage society puts on it.

Jason Ladd



In this book Robert McLuhan uses stage magician and sceptic James Randi's \$1,000,000 prize, for anyone who can prove scientifically the existence of any paranormal phenomenon, as a spring-board for a wide ranging discussion of the evidence for, and against, the paranormal. McLuhan introduces the reader to the history of psychical research (later termed parapsychology) and its key researchers, with an emphasis on the debates and academic sparring that such research, which by its very nature, necessarily spawned. Although the author is particularly keen to emphasise the evidence for paranormal phenomena, he does not neglect the sceptical arguments. This is one of those boooks that I personally find very hard to put down. Despite its in depth analysis, the tone of the writing remains clear and concise and so provides both a useful introduction to the topic, for those who are new to the parapsychological debate, and an entertaining read for those who are well versed in the discourse.

"Randi's Prize: What Sceptics Say About the Paranormal, Why They are Wrong & Why it Matters"

Author: Robert McLuhan

Pub: Matador

ISBN: 9781848764941

Price: £8.99

Jack Hunter



Join In the Company of Ghosts and Visit York, March 11th, 12th and 13th, 2011, for a festival celebrating all things spooky, and what better place to hold such a festival than in the "Most Haunted City in Europe", York.

Over this terrifyingly enjoyable weekend we will be bringing you a range of exciting events catering for the serious ghost hunter, to families and friends just looking for a fun and alternative weekend.

We have a range of events planned across York, giving you the opportunity to not only take a step into the mysterious world of all things spooky, but to also enjoy many of the local businesses, activities and treasures of this ancient city.

Whatever your age, interests, gender or ghost, you can be sure to find something at Spooksfest 2011 to keep you quivering in your boots

www.spooksfest.co.uk

Seriously Strange Afternoon

Swindon Ghostfest (Main Event) 30th October 2010

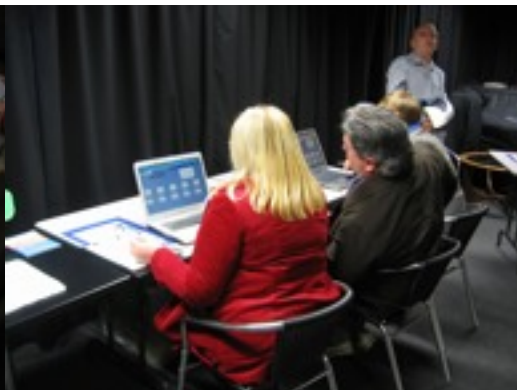
How could I resist an afternoon of live parapsychological experiments and talks from the likes of Peter Underwood, Lionel Fanthorpe and Chris French, and all in Swindon? This event, organised by PSI (www.p-s-i.org.uk) and ASSAP (www.assap.org) members Dave Wood and Nicky Sewell as part of their weeklong Swindon Ghostfest, was a real treat (especially considering the fact that entry was completely free of charge). The main event took place at Swindon Arts Centre in an atmospheric theatre complete with moody lighting and eerie droning soundtrack. A make-shift parapsychological laboratory was set up downstairs for public experiments between talks.

Our host for the day was the Rev. Lionel Fanthorpe, a famed paranormal investigator and fully ordained Anglican priest. After some welcoming remarks, Lionel introduced our first speaker to the stage: the legendary Peter Underwood. For well over 60 years Underwood has been investigating ghostly phenomena across the width and breadth of the UK, and over the course of these meandering inquiries has exposed himself to an extraordinary variety of anomalous experiences. It was accounts of these experiences, interspersed with ghost stories related by interviewees, that formed the bulk of Underwood's talk. Interestingly, despite his years of experience, Underwood only considers himself to have witnessed three undeniable ghosts.

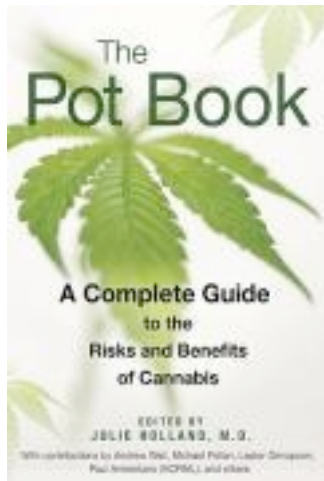
The second talk was given by Lionel Fanthorpe himself, who described a couple of his most interesting investigations. The first story, of the so-called Croglin Grange Vampire, served as a means to highlight the importance of thorough field-research in paranormal investigation. Fanthorpe discovered that the legend of the Croglin Grange Vampire in fact dated as far back as the 17th century, and was not Victorian as had previously been thought. The main bulk of Fanthorpe's talk concerned his investigation for a BBC documentary on the 'Creeping Coffins of Barbados': a real Jonathan Creek-esque mystery in which heavy lead lined coffins were seemingly inexplicably moved around in a sealed Barbados tomb. Despite thorough investigation no adequate explanation has been suggested to account for this phenomenon, and the case yet remains a complete mystery.

Chris French is well known in the field as a vocal sceptic of the paranormal, indeed he described himself as the day's "pantomime villain". His talk was concerned with the "Psychology of Ghosts and Hauntings" and examined a number of non-paranormal explanations for seeming anomalous events. French covered issues such as hoaxes, sincere misinterpretations, seeing things that are not there, not seeing things that are there, the fallibility of human memory and the questionable role of EMF and infrasound in the production of anomalous experiences. The talk was well informed, as we would expect from a leading academic in the field, and was complete with sufficient interesting looking references for further inquiry. French was far from a villain here, and did not deny the possibility of genuine paranormal phenomena, but rather offered what he termed "plausible non-paranormal alternative explanations".

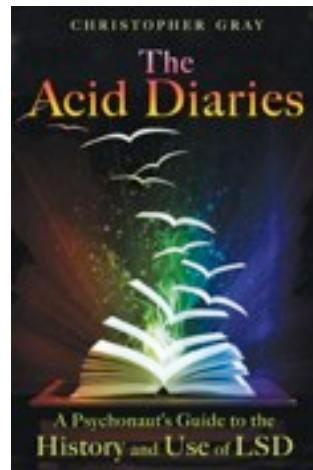
Jack Hunter



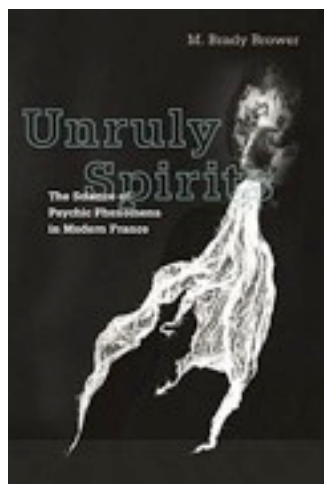
Other Titles Received



Title: The Pot Book: A Complete Guide to Cannabis, Its Role in Medicine, Politics, Science, and Culture
Author: Julie Holland (ed.)
Pub: Park Street Press
ISBN: 9781594773686
Price: £16.99



Title: The Acid Diaries: A Psychonaut's Guide to the History and Use of LSD
Author: Christopher Gray
Pub: Park Street Press
ISBN: 9781594773839
Price: £14.99



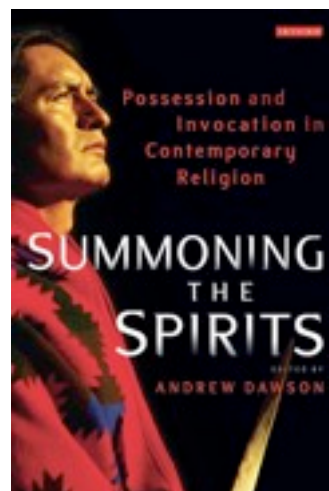
Title: Unruly Spirits: The Science of Psychic Phenomena in Modern France
Author: M. Brady Brower
Pub: University of Illinois Press
ISBN: 9780252077517
Price: £20.99



Title: Witnessing the Impossible
Author: Robin P. Foy
Pub: Torcal Publications
ISBN: 9780956065100
Price: £20.00



Title: Where Science and Magic Meet
Author: Serena Roney-Dougal
Pub: Green Magic
ISBN: 9780956188618
Price: £12.99

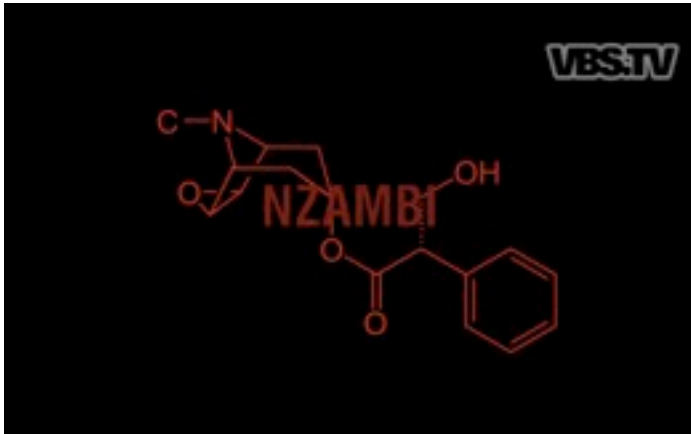


Title: Summoning the Spirits: Possession and Invocation in Contemporary Religion
Editor: Andrew Dawson
Pub: I.B. Tauris
ISBN: 9781848851627
Price: £54.50

If you would like to submit a book for review, or would like to publish a review in Paranthropology, don't hesitate to get in touch via discarnates@googlemail.com

Other Things of Interest

Hamilton's Pharmacopeia: Nzambi



<http://www.vbs.tv/en-gb/watch/hamilton-s-pharmacopeia/nzambi-part-1-clean>

This feature length documentary explores the Haitian Zombie phenomenon from the perspectives of anthropology, ethnobotany and neurochemistry. Our host, Hamilton Morris, takes us on a trip to Haiti to procure samples of Vodou's legendary zombie creating concoctions for laboratory analysis. Before embarking on his voyage into the unknown, Morris meets with the anthropologist Wade Davis to discuss the work he did there in the 1980s tracking down the substance believed to create zombies. Davis' research revealed a number of surprising constituents within the Zombie powder that shed new light on interpretations of the Zombie phenomenon - moving it from the realms of "superstition" towards a more "plausible" status. Morris follows in Davis' footsteps and tries to track down these elusive ingredients, and in so doing finds himself in some very peculiar situations and in the company of some very mysterious individuals. This is definitely worth watching.



Mysterious Universe Podcast

<http://mysteriousuniverse.org>

If you haven't come across this podcast before, I recommend you check it out. Mysterious Universe is a weekly podcast hosted by Aaron Wright and Benjamin Grundy concerned specifically with the paranormal, in all of its varied guises. Paranormal topics are explored from a wide variety of perspectives - from insider to academic - and with a good sense of humour (which is, of course, a necessity).

Special Feature

The Disparity of a “Standards of Care” for Spirit Mediumship as a Permissible Behavioral Health Care Profession

August Goforth

The Disparity of a “Standards of Care” for Spirit Mediumship as a Permissible Behavioral Health Care Profession¹

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ABSTRACT: Currently there are significant disparities of practice for behavioral health care professionals who might also be spirit mediums. The intention of this paper is to provide an initial platform for the idea of a “Standards of Care” (SOC) regarding the practice of those individuals who describe themselves and/or their method(s) of working (or modality) as “a medium” or “mediumship,” contingent with providing some kind of mental health support and/or treatment, and other related behavioral health care services. Within certain systems of behavioral health care, the SOC facilitates and enables mental health, medical, and other providers to be on the same page for specified stages for most of the duration of treatment and aftercare. Such systemic interrelationships are considered with a focus on the following questions: 1) *If mediums become recognized and accepted as valid and licensed professionals, (or not) should their profession (and possibly other interrelated modalities) be part of a multidisciplinary Standards of Care system?* 2) *Would a SOC help promote the acceptance of mediumship into mainstream healthcare as has been done with some “alternative care” options?* A preliminary example of a possible SOC for this interrelationship is offered. Brief commentary about the author’s methods of psychospiritual practice is discussed; illustrative, objective examples are provided to identify parallels and stimulate thought for future exploration and discussion.

Keywords: behavioral health, mediumship, psychotherapy, standards of care, spirituality, psychospiritual, therapy.

PREFACE

“We must assume our existence as broadly as we in any way can; everything, even the unheard-of, must be possible in it. That is at bottom the only courage that is demanded of us: to have courage for the most strange, the most singular and the most inexplicable that we may encounter. That mankind has in this sense been cowardly has done life endless harm; the experiences that are called ‘visions,’ the whole so-called ‘spirit-world,’ death, all those things that are so closely akin to us, have by daily parrying been so crowded out of life that the senses with which we could have grasped them are atrophied. To say nothing of God.” ~ *Rainer Maria Rilke*

Although this paper has been written in the APA (American Psychological Association) style, it will not be submitted to any APA-approved journals, which would otherwise increase its exposure. They would initially reject it for several reasons, not least because it claims to have been initiated by “spirit people,” as well as that the subject itself continues to be marginalized, ignored, or even ridiculed within the current Western behavioral health communities. This departure from convention has enabled the composing of this paper to feel both risky and exhilarating; the resulting sense of freedom will likely be evident in some of the liberties taken with its style. It is hoped these choices will be seen as inevitabilities because of the extraordinarily wide range of material to be dealt with on a scale that extends from the author’s own personal history to that of global cultures. Its simplest intent is meant as a base platform for others from which to launch ideas; at its most challenging, it will rear up as a many-headed hydra. There is no defense offered here for an overall result that may give the impression of a hodgepodge of history, mystery, and even eccentricity. *Somebody* has to light the torch.

¹ The author can be contacted at AugustGoforth@therisenbooks.com. For their generous and kind assistance, guidance, and support, heart-felt thanks is extended to Dianne Arcangel, Julie Beischel, Ph.D., Tom Butler, Aliceann Carlton, LCPC, Amantino Ramos de Freitas, Geri De Stefano-Webre, Ph.D., Timothy Gray et al., Bruce Greyson, M.D., Melvin Morse, M.D., Marlene Nobre, M.D., Susan Shane, Minister Steven Upton, and Evelyn Weise, M.D.

The author, a licensed and credentialed clinical social worker within the state of New York, (“LCSW-R”) is also a spirit medium, and is submitting this article under a pseudonym and not his actual legal birth name. The reason for this is a professional and personal one, and principally concerns his therapy patients who are not seeking psychospiritual care or treatment via mediumship, and secondly for the sake of his personal privacy; other salient reasons for this decision will emerge further on. This use of a pseudonym should not be misinterpreted as any kind of avoidance or subterfuge, but recognized as the appropriate ethical response for which it is intended. The author does not professionally utilize his mediumistic abilities for therapy sessions, nor does he work as a professional medium to give readings for others. This is his professional bias as well as a personal choice, which may serve as an example for other therapists—licensed or not—who might be misguided to inappropriately use mediumistic abilities in their professional work. Although this perspective is one of the underlying themes of this article, the author is aligned with those who advocate the spiritual evolution of humanity, whereby the various human therapies will successfully and appropriately be able to legitimately utilize mediumistic abilities for healing purposes. The author does not, and indeed, cannot rationally exclude his own professional practice from the presentation of this paper. To clarify and strengthen this paper’s motivation, brief commentary about the author’s psychospiritual methods of clinical practice is offered. Illustrative, objective examples are provided to identify parallels and stimulate thought for future discussion. The overall intention of the following exploration is meant to be one of curious and nonjudgmental yet stimulating observation. The author’s personal views regarding professional accountability are offered as neither endorsement nor disparagement regarding legitimate and non-legitimate professionals in their respective areas of service.

INTRODUCTION

Haraldsson (2009) reports that personal encounters with the dead (or the “disembodied”) have been reported by 25% of Western Europeans and 30% of Americans. It can be anticipated with some fair degree of certainty that such encounters are underreported, due to fear of being labeled as mentally ill or deranged, which may lead to medication, institutionalization, or even denial of services. To some extent, shock and trauma resulting from such encounters may also cause some to withdraw or isolate, unable or unwilling to seek supportive help and guidance, as well as fear of ostracism. Worden (2001) suggests that a common theme across diverse cultures is the survivor’s wish to somehow regain the lost person, buoyed by the belief that the deceased still exists in some form, and will be met again in some kind of afterlife. Such beliefs, as well as the suffering and uncertainty that arise from related anxiety, stress, and depression, may motivate those left behind to seek solace and healing from alternative healers, including spirit mediums, while avoiding traditional, western behavioral health services.

Spirit mediums—meaning those who are able to communicate in any number of ways with people who have transitioned from a physical, terrestrial existence to some other-dimensional, non-earthly reality—have been reported in global human culture for inestimable ages.² It has been in the mid to later 20th and early 21st centuries that the circumstance of mediumship has been increasingly experienced, researched, acknowledged, and accepted by a certain proportion of mainstream Western society. However, there have been no apparent organized attempts to bring mediumship services into line with standardized and legitimized modern mental and

² See Appendix for more about the terms *medium* and *channeler*.

medical health services. In spite of this disparity, there is indication that mediums have long been interacting within certain allopathic, naturalistic, and other related “alternative medicine” systems.^{3 4}

This paper strives to present the most preliminary of explorations into the idea of a Standards of Care (sometimes indicated as “Standard of Care”) regarding the practice of those individuals who describe themselves and/or their method of working (or modality) as “a medium” or “mediumship,” contingent with providing some kind of mental health support and/or treatment, and other related services. Certain abilities, methods, and skills might be utilized under particular nomenclature that may include *spirit medium, channeler, psychic, past life therapist or regressionist, metaphysician, medical intuitive, trance healer, remote or distance healer, spiritual advisor, spirit counselor, spiritual coach*, and the like—as directly associated in some outward way with the professions of *psychotherapist, psychoanalyst, psychologist, psychiatrist, social worker, clinician, counselor*, and other such related behavioral health field clinicians. It should be kept in mind that this introductory investigation into the practicality of a Standards of Care rests on a foundation of two inherent and interdependent tenets of care: 1) client self-informed decision making, and 2) client self-determination.

Because of the complexities involved with so many different health care systems across the world, this exploration will touch on only a few current North American examples, while acknowledging other global care entities for comparison and contrast. In no way should this beginning foray into the many unknowns involved be seen as comprehensive or even definitive. For discussion purposes, the designations “psychospiritual behavioral care and/or treatment” are offered as umbrella terms under which to initially define the systems of assistance such professionals may offer, primarily mediumship services with psychotherapeutic treatment and goals—or “psychotherapeutic mediumship.” This includes therapists who utilize mediumship skills with the same or a similar agenda.

Webster’s Online Dictionary defines a standard of care as “*a medical or psychological treatment guideline, and can be general or specific. It specifies appropriate treatment based on scientific evidence and collaboration between medical and/or psychological professionals involved in the treatment of a given condition*” (“Extended Definition: Standards,” 2010). In an article about lung cancer treatment, *The New England Journal of Medicine* (Blum, 2004) describes “Standards of Care” as “*a diagnostic and treatment process that a clinician should follow for a certain type of patient, illness, or clinical circumstance. Adjuvant chemotherapy for lung cancer is “a new standard of care, but not necessarily the only standard of care.”*” So in terms of behavioral health treatment, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, for example, may be viewed and utilized as a new “standard of care process” but not necessarily the only one for a particular population, for there are as many theories of process from which such standards of mental health care modalities may emerge as stars that appear in the night sky.

A Standards of Care (SOC) allows for interaction between multidisciplinary practitioners as a system of checks-and-balances to ensure appropriate, timely, and presumably ethical care for the patient/client. Because some disciplines are invariably medical and mental health systems, issues of diagnosis, treatment, and aftercare may be a necessary part of the process. Within these systems, the SOC facilitates and enables medical, mental health, and other providers to be aware

³ Keeping in line with current non-pathologizing language regarding mediumship, the terms *transition*, *transitioned*, and *transitioning* will be used in the place of “death,” “dead,” and “dying,” respectively.

⁴ The controversial term *alternative medicine* refers to any healing practice that does not fall within the realm of conventional westernized medicine, such as homeopathic, ayurvedic, and other such treatment systems.

of and interactive with one another—or on the same page—for most of the duration of treatment, as well as aftercare. Without necessarily providing any definitive solutions, this paper explores such systemic involvement with a focus on the following questions:

1. *If mediums become recognized and accepted as valid and licensed professionals, (or not) should their profession (and possibly other interrelated modalities) be part of a multidisciplinary Standards of Care system?*
2. *Would a SOC help promote the acceptance of mediumship into mainstream healthcare as has been done with some “alternative care options”?⁵*

LITERATURE/RESOURCE REVIEW

As might be expected, there is a considerable deficiency in the domain of academic literature about standardization of care for mediums in the field of health care; indeed, this paper may be among the first of attempts. There are a few periodicals and books that could be cited as subject-relevant. On the other hand, there are seemingly unlimited resources for spiritually-based, alternative approaches to healing, as well as a robust industry for such services. The referencing to a certain few in this paper should not be taken as signifying authority or as endorsement.

In a recent issue of *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, the article “Spiritually Conscious Psychological Care” suggests an increasing recognition that identifying and even incorporating the spiritual and religious beliefs and practices (SRBP) into psychological services of patients may be an important factor (Bright et al., 2010). At the core of the issue is the overall reluctance of psychologists to enable such integrations, because they are unsure how to do so without violating ethical standards. Such concerns can be observed to be on a continuum, at which one end is “spiritually avoidant care,” which involves the provider’s attempt to avoid conversations with patients about their SRBP. At the other end is “spiritually directive psychotherapy,” which is an explicit attempt to maintain or change the SRBP of patients. Bright et al. (2010) suggest that psychologists should at minimum engage in “spiritually conscious care,” characterized as “the explicit assessment of the general importance of SRBP to the patient, its influence on the presenting problem, and the potential of SRBP as a resource to help recovery.” Predictably, the article concludes with calling for the need for better training in both basic and specific competencies needed to address patients’ SRBP.

In his paper, “Furthering the Spiritual Dimension of Psychiatry in the United Kingdom,” U.K. psychiatrist Andrew Powell focuses on examining where spirituality seems to be moving regarding psychiatry (Powell, 2007). He discusses the treatment of “spiritual emergencies,” such as intense grief, and the interface of spirituality and psychiatry concerning trance and spirit communications in terms of their current classifications in the ICD-10 (Powell, 2007). These classifications will be looked at in a bit more detail further on.

Over the past forty years, unresolved grief has been primarily and systemically treated as pathology by psychotherapists and as “something to be worked through” via a series of steps or stages, to somehow end the sense of loss—i.e., to eliminate the experience of grief. Mosher, Beischel, & Boccuzzi (2010) note that a recent meta-analysis of conventional psychotherapeutic grief treatment outcomes revealed that such interventions fell disappointingly short in their

⁵Chiropractic, massage therapy, and acupuncture are the three therapies covered most by health insurance panels, followed by naturopathic medicine. Other therapies that are increasingly being included are herbal remedies, homeopathy, mind-body stress management, and meditation.

expected beneficial contributions to resolution and quality of life after the loss over time. Conversely, interventions using alternative, non-pathologizing modalities that view the bereavement experience as part of a positive aspect of holistic health, such as spontaneous or, in some cases, induced after death communications (ADCs) have been significantly successful in lessening grief (Mosher et al., 2010).

For example, the book *After Death Communication: A New Therapy for Healing Grief and Trauma*, by psychologist Allan Botkin (with R. Craig Hogan) presents a purported “revolutionary therapy” based on “significant changes to standard EMDR techniques” typically used for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Botkin & Hogan, 2005). In this modality, after-life communications are induced between a patient and the disembodied, and this approach is branded as “Induced After-Death Communication” or IADC®.⁶ Dr. Botkin does not indicate that he is a medium, nor does he present an apparent Code of Ethics or Standards of Care regarding his treatment, but he indicates what he calls the “IADC Procedure,” which “must be followed to successfully perform IADCs with a high degree of reliability” (p. 188). His website also advises, “Dr. Botkin uses the therapy method because it heals grief, but does not suggest or endorse spiritual implications” (Botkin, 2010). His website’s list of trained IADC practitioners includes a variety of trained professionals, in Canada, and Europe, including, in the U.S., Licensed Clinical Social Workers, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Psychologists, and Ph.D.’s. There is no indication that any have or use mediumistic abilities. Most of these particular professions actually have some form of ethical code within their respective fields, but not necessarily united by any standards of care. The web site also advises, “Inclusion on the list is not intended by Dr. Allan Botkin and The Center for Grief and Traumatic Loss, LLC, as an endorsement of professional or ethical competence” (Botkin, 2010). The focus here is not on the legitimacy or efficacy of IADC, but rather on if and how various types of alternative health care modalities, which might be accommodating mediumistic approaches, may or may not be SOC-ready.

In a recent issue of *The Searchlight*, the newsletter journal of The Academy of Spirituality and Parnormal Studies, Dr. Stafford Betty, Professor of Religion at California State University, Bakersfield, writes about “a new breed of therapist.” His article “‘Spirit Release’: A Different Kind of Exorcism” presents some initial remarks about alternative healing without talk or drug therapy that utilizes “spirit release techniques” (Betty, 2010). Dr. Betty cites the dissertation of psychologist Dr. William Baldwin (1939-2004) as “the first ever to take seriously spirit release as a legitimate therapy,” as well as Dr. Baldwin’s book *Spirit Releasement Therapy: A Technique Manual* (1995). Dr. Betty also cites the work of West Virginia psychiatrist Dr. Shakuntala Modi, and how she utilizes prayer with patients to help release malevolent spirits that might be at the bottom of a number of mental health pathologies. According to Kerry Pobanz’s article, “Depossession Healing: A Comparison of William Baldwin’s ‘Spirit Releasement Therapy’ and Dae Mo Nim’s Ancestor Liberation” in the *Journal of Unification Studies*, Dr. Modi’s theory sees spirit possession as pathology. Her “depossession technique” utilizes hypnotherapy, as did Baldwin’s. Pobanz also cites Modi’s work as having “striking similarities” to Dae Mo Nim’s shamanistic healing (Pobanz, 2008). These approaches assume that there is psychopathology caused by some kind of spirit possession, and the clinical approach utilizing hypnotherapy and mediumship (i.e., altered states of consciousness in both provider and patient) is seen as “therapeutic treatment.” Indeed, Baldwin (1995) refers to his modality as “Spirit Releasement

⁶ The term “branded” is applied here because Dr. Botkin notes that “IADC” is a registered trademark owned by him, for a business he has developed based on providing patient treatment as well as certified provider trainings.

Therapy” or “SRT”. According to Pobanz (2009), Dae Mo Nim’s work also treats the released spirit by being “sent to their own unique workshop in the spiritual world, where they can repent for their wrongdoings and generally become cleansed, educated, and resurrected.”⁷

Carl A. Wickland (1861–1945) was a psychiatrist at the National Psychopathic Institutes of Chicago in the early 1900s, and also a proponent of the psychopathology of certain “spiritual emergencies.” He held that the doctrine of reincarnation was incorrect, and that such beliefs—and others—held by the mentally ill indicated psychopathology caused by spirit possession, a diagnosis he treated with “spirit release” using the help of his wife, a medium. His book *Thirty Years Among The Dead* discusses his work in helping patients through his clinical work, and provides session examples (Wickland, 1924). There are no clear indications in his book regarding his wife’s mediumistic approaches in terms of her standards of care or ethics. This is not surprising, as historically mediums have been seen more as objective ways and means and less as persons within their own right, and so their own personal and psychological processes have often been overlooked.

A recent internet search collectively using the terms *psychotherapist*, *spirit*, and *medium* turned up a small number of North American websites of individuals self-labeling and self-promoting as some kind of provider of therapeutic counseling services. One, for example, presents as a “Psychic, Medium and Psychotherapist,” while another self-promotes as a “Shamanic Therapist”; neither indicates any professional licensing in behavioral health. Another similar U.K. site provides a list under the heading of “Spiritual Counselling and Psychotherapy,” where one can find, among a large variety of services, “Past Life Therapy & Psychotherapy.” There is a “Spiritcounsellor” who is listed as a therapist and “is also a trained spirit medium,” but with no licensed credentials displayed (“Hampshire spirit guide,” 2010). Yet another individual self-labels as a “Psychic Psychotherapist Prophet,” but with no suggestion of any professional licensing in behavioral health. One U.S. person shares about the goal to become a “Spiritual Psychotherapist” and “Spiritual Director” with the Transformational Arts College in Toronto, Ontario Canada. Amongst the large faculty of the TAC there is a veritable cornucopia of occupational designations, such as a “Psychospiritual Facilitator” and a “Spiritual Psychotherapist” with a private practice and the designation “R.I.H.R” (a membership designation granted by the Canadian Examining Board of Health Care Practitioners.) There is also a Relationship Counselor, a Reiki Master, a Mukti Yoga Instructor and a Holodynamics Consultant, as well as social workers and Certified Natural Health Professionals, the latter which includes aromatherapists and certified reflexologists (Counselling, 2010). Although there does not appear to be any mediumistic services listed, it would not be surprising to find those with these skills within such a large and varied assemblage.

“The Body Mind Spirit Directory,” also on the web, presents as a well-organized, searchable but overwhelming “mega-list”—a veritable global clearing-house for thousands of providers from within hundreds of categories (Body Mind Spirit, 2010). A query on its internal search engine for “psychotherapist” resulted in nine individuals; only one showed a licensed designation (LCSW). Others presented with a vast range of “new age” and “holistic” diplomas and other certification labels, including Reiki Masters, CHT for hypnotherapy, and even RMT (registered medical transcriptionist.) One self-labeled as a “psychologist” but with no credentials to validate it, while another presented as a “psychotherapist turned spiritual healer,” also with no listed professional license credentials, while mentioning mediumship as “(offering a) spirit medium session.”

⁷ This appears to be a fascinating inference to the possibility of psychopathology in spirit existence.

The name of this writer, August Goforth, also came up on the original search, referenced at the website of Coast To Coast AM radio, and noted there as a “psychotherapist in private practice in New York City and . . . an intuitive-mental and psychophysical spirit medium” (Noory, 2010). The author’s book website further clarifies that he is a licensed psychotherapist (The Risen Authorship, 2010).

To date, in the U.S. individuals can be certified as mediums, but not therapists. Julie Beischel, PhD, has conducted survival and mediumship research as well as medium certification at The Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential, which she co-founded with Mark Boccuzzi. Formerly the VERITAS Research Program, in 2008 it was expanded into a broader, more comprehensive spiritual communication project. Named the SOPHIA Research Program, it is under the direction of Gary E. Schwartz, Ph.D. at the Laboratory for Advances in Consciousness and Health (Beischel & Schwartz, 2007). Mediums that are laboratory screened and tested using telephone readings are referred to as “Windbridge Certified Research Mediums (WCRMs)”; their names as well as the intensive 8-step screening and training procedure are available at the Windbridge website. Each medium is asked “to uphold a code of spiritual ethics, to embrace a strong commitment to the values of scientific mediumship research, and to abide by specific Windbridge standards of conduct” (Beischel, Boccuzzi, Rock, Mosher, & Biuso, 2010).

Mediums can also be certified in the U.S. by the Forever Family Foundation, which has devised a program of methods which includes a study of basic ethics and practices. Their website notes:

“Although mediums are careful to point out the fact that they are not therapists, the fact remains that knowledge of a world beyond is perhaps the most effective form of grief therapy. Current research conducted by physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and clinicians supports this premise” (Ginsberg, 2010).

The Arthur Findlay College in the U.K. is one of the most respected of training institutes for mediumship, and is under the auspices of the Spiritualists’ National Union. Acting as the parent body, the SNU issues certificates to successful graduates, who are strictly held to a well-organized “Code of Conduct for Holders of SNU Appointments and Awards.” Referring to Sections 3.1–3.3 “Advertising and Promotion,” this code states:

Award-holders must not use any title or description which is calculated to give the impression that he is a medical practitioner, an ordained Minister or a university graduate or holds any other professional qualification unless he holds such qualification from a bona-fide and generally recognised institution; Award-holders should endeavour to ensure that the award which they have is promoted/announced precisely. Certificate-holders and Diploma-holders must also endeavour to make it clear in what category their award was granted, i.e. speaking, demonstrating, healing or administration (“Bye-laws g appointments,” 2010).

Referring to the “legality of trance mediumship,” this Code also advises:

“Award-holders should be aware that trance mediumship is not recognised in law. The law does not recognise the third party working: the responsibility and liability rest with the medium. However, it is recognised that some mediums work in the altered state of consciousness (trance) and where this is practised it is mandatory that all trance mediums obtain the permission of a Church or organising body before conducting an address or demonstration in trance. It is strongly recommended that a third party be present at all times during private trance sittings” (“Bye-laws g appointments,” 2010).

Many spiritual helpers and healers in Western, Eurocentric societies who utilize mediumship abilities also appear to have found recognition, validation, and support primarily from spiritual organizations, such as churches and “psychic-spiritual” groups, which often provide trainings and award successful graduates with various certifications and accreditations, similar to the Windbridge Institute and the Findlay College.

Outreach by this writer in the form of confidential email inquiries about similar licensing and/or accreditation to individuals who tagged themselves as some kind of psychic or psychospiritual therapist or counselor—but with no evident references to their official education—resulted in a few but forthright responses. They revealed an impressive array of primarily “alternative” trainings (i.e., outside the realms of licensed behavioral health,) including a notable cross-section of healing methods, spiritual and religious trainings, certifying but non-licensing post-graduate programs ranging from psychotherapeutic and psychoanalytic to various hypnotherapy models, as well as channeling and past-life work—to name just a few. All expressed that the subject was an important issue that has never been realistically approached.

The few who shared that they are licensed clinicians stressed that their personal ethics have guided them to avoid using their mediumship/channeling skills directly in conjunction with any kind of mental health treatment. There was a general shared experience that clients often tend to first seek out a psychic or medium for help with bereavement, because of the stigma often attached to psychotherapy. Most would likely agree with the comment of Geri De Stefano-Webre, Ph.D.—a Canadian transpersonal therapist who also gives intuitive psychic readings—that trying to create some kind of all-encompassing professional guideline like a Standards of Care for such a vast range of providers would be “like herding cats” (personal communication, G. De Stefano-Webre, November 23, 2010).

Others shared a similarly disheartened outlook. Tom Butler is an ordained Minister of the National Spiritualist Association of Churches, and co-author of *There is No Death and There are No Dead* (2003). He and his wife, Lisa, act as the Directors of the Association TransCommunication. In an email to this writer Tom shared, “As a person certified in a number of healing modalities, I know that the biggest obstacle to anything approaching a standard of care or ethics is the reluctance of the academic community to consider (the field of) biofield therapies as anything other than wistful thinking” (T. Butler, personal communication, December 6, 2010).

Omitting the term *medium* from the original search, while retaining *psychotherapist* and *spirit*, revealed a few individuals with actual professional designations—primarily Ph.D.—and a few other official accreditations. Some had only the prefix “Dr.” or “Reverend” attached to their names. None of those with a Ph.D. revealed the nature of their doctoral degrees, which could be in almost any field—from psychology and education to business or theatre history. All presented from a wide range of how they promote themselves—from books that allege treatment utilizing what may be called “psychic modalities,” to philosophical and spiritual schools intended to attract adherents who will have to invest money to become students.

“Thanatologist” is an example of a type of grief counseling that came up in other searches related to death and spirituality. It lends itself well as a component of an interdisciplinary approach for providing palliative care to patients and their families. Although thanatology tends to avoid questions of life and death, it does explore how those questions effect the quality of life of patients and significant others. One can receive a “Pastoral Thanatology Certification” from The American Academy of Grief Counseling in the U.S. The Academy has its own Code of Ethics, and its clarification about what *certification* means and does not mean is useful to consider here:

“Certification as a grief counselor does **not** in any way qualify one to practice higher levels of grief therapies. The **practice of therapy**, as related to grief, is reserved for those who are educated and licensed in the practice of behavioral therapies. Certification as a grief counselor in no way infers that the person is qualified or legally licensed to conduct any type of **therapies**. Certification as a grief counselor does help ensure that the counselor can identify major symptoms of more complicated grief and refer clients to a qualified and legally licensed therapist.” (AIHPa, 2010). (*Bolding The Academy’s.*)

The Academy further states:

Registrants must meet at least one of the following; 1) a registered nurse currently licensed to practice nursing, 2) a licensed social worker, 3) a health care licensed professional, 4) a professional counselor, 5) a licensed psychologist, 6) an ordained minister, 7) a licensed funeral director, 8) a pastoral counselor in active ministry, 9) a graduate degree in educational counseling, 10) a licensed physician, 11) a college degree in human services, psychology, or human behavior, 12) a school counselor, (and) 13) other college degrees may be applicable if they are in a related area (AIHPb, 2010).

This is an example of an ostensibly well-regulated professional association for already-licensed professionals to enhance their skills as well as their marketability. The Association’s Board is able to suspend or revoke certification of an individual for various reasons, including a felony conviction or a suspension of their professional licensure. The entrance and coursework requirements are rigorous and disciplined; continuing education is encouraged. There is undoubtedly little or no awareness of those Academy members who may also be mediums and who may be adding the letters “GC-C” after their names to signify they are a Certified Grief Counselor, and using the certification to lend credibility to the use of their mediumship.

Hypnotherapy is a Board-regulated certification in the U.S. Not licensure, it is a diploma from a licensed training institution. The California Institute of the Healing Arts & Sciences notes:

“In virtually every State and Federal Government agency, they do not legally recognize these certifying organizations or clubs (sic). You may want to call them and ask if there is any legal recognition regarding their certifying body organization written in the law. In most states, hypnotherapy is an open practice not requiring any governmental license or regulation” (CIHAS, 2010).

It further advises:

“In virtually all states in the United States, hypnotherapy is a free and open practice, not governed by state or federal regulations. The highest legal document for practicing hypnotherapy is a Diploma issued by an approved State Licensed School or Institute. These are legally granted state by state, according to each state’s requirements.

“The ABC and XYZ’s, the alphabet soup of certification has little or no meaning to consumers whom are more interested in the effectiveness of the training the Hypnotherapist received in school. Consumers can be misled into thinking that the Hypnotherapist’s certification is a state license, when in reality this is not the case” (CIHAS, 2010).

As acknowledged at the beginning, this article is not meant to endorse, diminish or invalidate any profession’s good worth and works, but to provide a few examples of current public information that help illustrate the challenges in finding appropriate, adequate, and safe psychospiritual behavioral care, and more specifically, those providers who wish to do so utilizing their mediumistic abilities and services. It is, however, worth noting any apparent gaps

and omissions as possible weaknesses in systems where, in the absence of a rigorously regulated licensing system, at the very least some kind of SOC could be useful.

From the original web search results using *psychotherapist*, *spirit*, and *medium*, emerged other thought-provoking items. For example, there is FECRIS, (Fédération Européenne des Centres de Recherche et d'Information sur le Sectarisme) a non-profit organization association that serves as an umbrella organization for groups which investigate the activities of cults or cult-like organizations in Europe. They have been recently reproached for having endorsed an “alleged psychic medium psychotherapist” who is “one of many who use their training and skills to manipulate, mislead and brainwash others.” (Shepherd, 2009). The accusation appears to come from the advocate/promoters of certain spiritual leaders who have taken offense in some way, and who cite FECRIS’s own article, “Psychotherapeutic Deviation: The Use Psychotherapy (sic) in the Case of Cult Influence as Proof of Their Hypocrisy” (Armogath & Pachoud, 2004). Such disputes, which often add up to little more than pseudo-academic ankle biting, are mentioned here to give some idea of the complexity and even unbridled chaos that can exist in the realm of self-styled professional psychospiritual healers.

Although the original search results are by no mean comprehensive, what primarily stands out among the majority of individuals describing their mediumship service as provided by a “therapist” or “psychotherapist” or describing their work as “therapy” or “psychotherapy”—at least in the U.S.—is a suggestive significant lack of professionally-recognized licensing and credentialing. In conjunction with the troubling kinds of legal issues and defamation claims noted in such cases as that of FECRIS, it raises certain questions about such individuals. What is their professional training in the field of behavioral health? Are they licensed to practice therapy? Are they supervised by licensed professionals? How are they held accountable for safe and ethical practice?

This writer is licensed and certified as a practicing psychotherapist on several different levels to provide mental health services to adults and adolescents, and is also able to participate in patient insurance plans. In his particular profession of clinical social work, there are very tight reigns regarding licensing, requiring many years of training and supervised practice which must all be officially accounted for to the very last of many thousands of hours. There is a strict Code of Ethics which must be adhered to, to protect not only clients but providers. All licensees are charged with the responsibility to contribute to the profession’s knowledge base through scholarly research, writing, and advocacy of positive change. Local, state, peer, and other professional associations exist to further delineate and ensure the boundaries of safe and effective services. This kind of approach to an industry standard is well-established across current mental health professions around the world, although reciprocity between states and countries is not consistent or even necessarily existent.

It is illegal to practice any kind of psychotherapy in any U.S. state without a license. The author’s state of New York was one of the last to develop an official, governmental licensure in the field of clinical social work. This meant that up until around 2001, anybody—from a drama coach to a dance or yoga instructor—could advertise that they were a “therapist” and/or practiced some kind of “psychotherapy,” regardless of their educational or certification background.⁸ They were not eligible for third-party reimbursement from client insurance, but because there was no state licensure, there were no guidelines about financial issues. Because there were no guidelines, there was no public awareness of the potential dangers at hand. If one said one was a therapist,

⁸ Excluding licensed clinical psychologists and certified psychiatrists.

few ever questioned it, and unknowingly may have entered into questionable and possibly unhealthy alliances with less-than-qualified providers.

Interestingly, when the author has mentioned this piece of history to those who had received therapy a decade or more ago, they are usually astonished to discover that their therapist was unlicensed, and, in not a few instances, had no relevant higher education in the field. Most admitted that their naivety led them to assume that the person was a therapist simply because they said so. To avoid commitment to extensive time and finances, a fair number of those then “legally unlicensed providers” circumvented the higher education and certification that was available for a more feasible workaround. They chose instead to become certified at one of the post-graduate institutes that teach various therapy modalities. Such institutes provide advanced training to those individuals who have finished graduate school programs in behavioral health, and/or been tested and certified by the state—such as Social Workers, Psychologists, M.D.’s, Nurses, Educators and other qualified health and healing professionals. Not all institutes necessarily require that their candidates have these particular backgrounds, so may compensate by offering, for example, a “Certificate of Completion to licensed mental health professionals and a Letter of Attendance to other qualified professionals” (“The gestalt center,” 2010). However, neither document is a license to legally practice therapy.

Thus a dilemma may arise when somebody promotes themselves as a “past life *therapist*” or “spirit medium *counselor*.” Because there is no official licensure, much less a Standards of Care, it is the consumer’s responsibility to become informed about the services they are receiving, as well as about the service provider. This reflects back to the foundational principles of good health care mentioned earlier: 1) client self-informed decision making, and 2) client self-determination. Yet if the consumer is ignorant of any possible liabilities, there will be no awareness that one should be taking precautionary actions to ensure the best quality of care.

In the U.S. there have been advances to network the growing number of helping professionals to quickly facilitate ways to locate providers, determine their professional education and trainings, and confirm their current status in the profession. One such system is the governmental National Plan and Provider Enumeration System (NPPES), which was created to “improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the electronic transmission of health information,” and for which health care providers receive a National Provider Identifier, or NPI (NPPES, 2010). There is also the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare, which states it exists to “... promote quality interactions between plans, providers and other stakeholders; reduce costs and frustrations associated with healthcare administration; facilitate administrative healthcare information exchange and encourage administrative and clinical data integration” (CAQH, 2010). This writer has both CAQH and NPI numbers, which require ongoing updating of any changes in licensure or other related information.

Although such systems may not seem very relevant in the discussion of a spirit medium’s profession, they are suggestive of how differences between actual and no professional accountability may exist. With such systems in mind, it can be envisioned that one might be able to find not only a licensed, practicing therapist who is certified to provide certain mediumship services, such as “intuitive,” “mental,” “physical,” and so on, but those who may specialize from within certain cultural and spiritual/religious modalities.

For example—this writer was contacted by a colleague in one of the southern U.S. states who had been asked for help by a local individual, whose wife had suddenly begun having some kind of “non-medical seizure.” Exploration revealed that the couple had immigrated from an African village some years ago. The husband had trouble finding the English words to explain that his

wife's family was prone to what sounded as if it could be called "spirit possession."

Using psychospiritual skills, but without disclosing the fact of his mediumship, this writer was able to connect and communicate with this individual in a non-pathologizing way. It then transpired that in Africa they had utilized a shaman—which could also be termed a specialized psychospiritual practitioner—who had taught the husband some rudimentary techniques to help one of his sisters with the same condition. The husband was fraught with worry that his wife's condition would only worsen, and that they would have to return to Africa for the help she needed. He had already arranged to have his wife seen by their primary care physician, who could also refer for psychiatric help, as her symptoms were not unlike those indicating the onset of schizophrenia seen in women of her age. Indeed, Sannella (1989) has pointed out that what Western psychiatry would call "schizophrenia" is actually a prerequisite for initiation into the priesthood in certain South African tribes. It made perfect sense that the husband also wanted to find someone who could provide shamanistic aid, or at the very least, some kind of psychospiritual help based on nonjudgmental acceptance that the symptoms were not necessarily psychopathology. The writer connected him with a local licensed psychotherapist who had a supportive understanding of the cultural implications, and who could research for any appropriate local resources that might exist. If some sort of NPPEs system had been in existence which included mediumistic providers, the client may have been better assisted more quickly. This example also illustrates one way in which a licensed provider can appropriately but covertly use mediumistic skills in a clinical manner.

DISCUSSION

Professional and Clinical Illustration

For purposes of context this paper now moves to the first person point of view. It was over a decade ago that I first considered the possibility of realistically utilizing my mediumistic abilities as a way of enhancing my psychotherapy practice. I reached out to another Licensed Clinical Social Worker who practiced in a western U.S. state, had a book published about his mediumistic experiences and abilities, and openly used his name for promoting it. He was not hesitant to self-promote his mediumistic talents as part of his therapy practice and continues to do so, using his legal name—although it is not clear if and how his approach is related to any particular clinical modality or theory. He also continues to give in-person and telephone mediumistic readings for fairly high fees. I asked him at that time if he had any ethical concerns about blending the two very different disciplines. Was he worried that his state's regulatory department and the profession's overseers might have negative and even disciplinary responses to his openly using mediumship with paying psychotherapy patients, and in ways that associated the two very dissimilar occupations by inferring that his profession endorsed such an association?

I felt discomfort that he thought my questions were inconsequential, as he responded that he doubted that in such a big state as his, nobody would ever notice or even care. This attitude impressed me as ethically problematic, and has stayed with me every since. It has influenced my own approach to utilizing my psychospiritual skills in ways that seem—to me—to call for caution and restraint, to name just a few ethical considerations. And yet, years later, his response still begs the question, "*Would* the official organizations care about such open but non-sanctioned provider/patient interactions?" The experience also brought an increased tendency toward skepticism on my part whenever I come across alleged therapists who include psychic and mediumistic/channeling services as part of their "treatment."

The reader is reminded of this article's early directive to be alert for inherent similarities between standards of an established profession and newly-emerging professions—if mediumship and its related alliances may be considered professions for the sake of exploratory discussion. The following disclosure about this writer's personal clinical practice may evidence the emergence of certain similarities and parallels regarding the subject at hand.

I had already been a licensed therapist with a private practice for some years when my mediumship abilities became fully apparent and effusively expressive—they “blossomed” after having been sporadically active since I was a child. It was around the same time that my spouse, Tim, who had transitioned over a decade earlier (or became *Risen*, in our personal spiritual language,) asked if I would agree to partake in several experiments about after-life consciousness and spirit manifestation. This undertaking would be guided by a large collective of Risen people with a wide range of specializations, including psychology, science, and the healing arts. I was also asked if I would help this same group with writing and producing a book for eventual publication; I agreed to both.⁹ The experiments were productive, and the book was published seven years later (Goforth & Gray, 2009).

The book eventually emerged into the public eye, which led to requests for public interaction. While agreeing to radio and journalistic interviews, I have avoided public appearances, my primary motivation centered on the ethical concern that my current therapy patients might be impacted in detrimental ways upon learning that their psychotherapist “sees dead people.” Thus the use of a pseudonym and the declining of requests for public appearances have been deemed obligatory. There is also a feeling of responsibility to align with the approach taken by notable mediums of the early and mid-20th century, who shirked fame while assuming a different name for purposes of anonymity, and refused payment for any mediumship services.

From my experiences with Tim and other Risen persons, I have attained a particular set of sensitivity skills which have become integrated with the expertise gained from many years of psychotherapy training and practice. The results or affects may appear to others to indicate “psychic” abilities. However, to me this is indicative of my conscious awareness of subtly existent but powerful and active—yet *normal*—spiritual senses that are useful tools for working with certain patients. Van Lommel (2010) labels such spiritual sensing as “enhanced intuitive sensitivity” and attributes their emergence as a result of “nonlocal information exchanges,” such as near-death, perimortem, and postmortem (or mediumistic) experiences.¹⁰

While my conscious awareness of my mediumship abilities continuously plays a part in my role as a psychotherapist, I might work toward helping certain patients recognize and enhance their own latent spiritual self-sensing. Yet I would never in any way discuss the fact that I might be aware of a disembodied influence within the therapy space—which has happened on occasion. At such times it was clear that someone in spirit, out of concern for a loved one on the earth, had influenced or “orchestrated” events to guide that person to me for support and help.

⁹ This paper was also instigated by certain affiliates of the same “Risen Collective.”

¹⁰ *Nonlocality* is one of several important principles of quantum physics, and has given rise to the concept of nonlocal space, explained by van Lommel (2010) as “... a multidimensional space, with nothing but possibilities ... and without certainties, without matter, and without a role for time and distance ... (and) represents a hidden reality that, at the quantum level, exerts a continuous influence on our physical world, which is the *complement* of nonlocal space (pp. 227-28). While interpenetrating the local consciousness of the physical brain, nonlocal consciousness expands unbounded beyond it, and is believed by many to support perceptual reality. This concept underlies theories about after-life survival, remote viewing, and other out-of-body experiences.

It appears that these spirit interventionists may be operating from their own code of ethics, (or perhaps even *their* own SOC,) for they consistently insist that in no way am I to ever draw attention to them, or even suggest to my client that such possibilities exist. Their role is to be as supportive but silent advocates.¹¹ Once it is clear that the patient is in a safe place, the majority of these spirit advocates do not return beyond the first or second session. On rare occasions a patient might gain enough spiritual sensitivity to realize that their loved one in spirit is sometimes close by, or has had a hand in their care. Only if the patient first introduces the subject would I acknowledge and welcome it into our shared and supportive safe space for exploration, while continuing to remain adamant about my policy of silence regarding my mediumship.

It could be argued that I am withholding important information from the patient, but it has always been clear that such information is meant solely for me—meaning I am not there to mediumistically relay messages. Patients who are there as a result of spirit intervention generally do not have belief systems that acknowledge or accept such possibilities—many are psychologically fragile and susceptible to chronic anxiety and fear. To suggest that invisible people were there with us and talking to me about them could not have any predictably positive clinical influence. It is my professional obligation to keep clear and firm ethical boundaries in place to avoid unnecessary clinical risks. This approach does not prohibit me from making use of information that comes to me by way of the client's spirit advocates, or from my own spirit guides, but then only in ways I determine to be clinically and professionally appropriate.

The fact that I was already established as a psychotherapist without anyone knowing that I was also a medium further helped shape my ethical resolution. If I had been an established working medium who then decided to become a therapist, the temptation to capitalize on one for the sake of the other might have come up. I then would have to deal with individuals contacting me for readings under the guise of wanting therapy, and I do not give readings as a source of revenue or even pro bono. A great deal of misperception and confusion about expectations would result in trying to assist suitable patients, as well as a considerable amount of time misspent in assessing. It *would* be appropriate if a medium suggested to a client that they seek a licensed clinician who specializes in grief and bereavement issues, as advised by organizations like the American Institute of Health Care Professionals (AIHPa, 2010). There is considerable vagueness about the appropriateness of a licensed therapist referring a patient to a medium—although who can say what the future holds? In the older, indigenous societies, those in need were referred to the shaman who was, in a way, both the medium and the therapist. Those of us in the Eurocentric provinces have much to learn from such long-established working modalities.

How One SOC Developed

Within my psychotherapy practice I also have a specialized focus on a very small population with highly complex biopsychosocial issues. This group is relatively newly-emergent in terms of being identified as one with special needs, and is rare enough amongst the general world population that as of yet there is no professional accreditation in the U.S. which would officially designate me as such a particular specialist. In this certain field, my colleagues and I have each come to this specialized focus from many diverse professional and personal avenues. It's as if we just "emerged" in a very organic way as a response to the circumstances and needs of the patients that came our way—not unlike some of the ways in which spirit mediums end up assisting those in need. As little as fifteen years ago, there was next to no viable clinical theory,

¹¹ This kind of activity of "spirit interventionists" raises many questions; principally, should *they* be included as part of an earthly SOC?

research, or professional writing regarding the etiology, health, pathology, and treatment of this population. Rather than waste time sitting around theorizing about what “it” was and what to do about it, we rolled up our sleeves and did the work—again, not unlike mediums.

It was after we developed our own experiential, informed clinical responses of assessment and treatment that the major clinical and academic research emerged, producing theories and treatment models, which sometimes tended to obfuscate and even interfere with the practical and timely treatment of the individuals needing help, and often ignored the subject of professional accreditation to ensure appropriate and accountable treatment. (In related ways, bureaucratic overshadowing could also create issues of delay with mediumship services for behavioral health needs.) However, out of the seemingly unconnected activity, a global organization emerged from the collective efforts of certain key professionals with advanced degrees, experience, and licensing. Today, potential members of this organization must present applications that demonstrate clear and concrete contributions made to the field in some way, which may include clinical practice, scholarly contributions to journals, participation and completion in clinical workshops and trainings that resulted in some kind of certification, medical contributions, sociopolitical advocacy, and so on.

This organization also evolved a Standards of Care. While non-adherence to them is not a legal violation, they help connect, guide, and support various treatment approaches across many disciplines. This approach has demonstrated a significant rate of success when supported by such a structure that ensures consistent and high quality of care and after-care treatment. Some providers use the SOC very loosely, others too zealously—known in the profession as “gatekeeping.” Others may not use them at all. The SOC is revised every few years, and referenced as an important consideration by the industry’s official diagnostic manuals, the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition, Text Revision*, (DSM-IV-TR) in the U.S. and the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision* (ICD-10). This SOC has also paved the way for addressing in tangible ways the need for developing professional accreditations in this particular field of practice.

One of the most important clinical achievements to emerge was a dramatic shift from decades of initially pathologizing clients to a perspective that now supports and embraces difference or variance as a positive aspect of holistic well-being. This type of support would be one of many worthwhile goals to pursue regarding the acceptance of certain aspects of mediumship as beneficial to specified mental health interventions.

Mosher et al. (2010) offered some initial discussion about anecdotal positive effects of mediumship readings as psychospiritual interventions for mental health issues of grief and bereavement. Although there appears to have been no published systematic studies about this, some preliminary thoughts have been put forth regarding why mediumship readings may promote positive mental and emotional health. Primarily, the regulated and controlled structure of a mediumship reading, along with the presence of the medium as a nonjudgmental participant who is also an advocate in a non-pathologizing way, may reduce fear and thus promote understanding, strengthened by supportive and informed guidance. This reflects back to the earlier observation of several psychospiritual practitioners that clients often tend to first seek out a psychic or medium for help, and avoid the stigma attached to psychotherapy.

Unwell, or Just Different? Some Clinical Considerations

While a person suffering from bereavement may not have a personality disorder, some of the facets of an intense grief experience—such as seeing and hearing the transitioned person—could

be misinterpreted as symptomatic of some kind of mental illness. The same conclusion could be arrived at about the *medium*, who may also be seeing and hearing the same transitioned person.

Although it is far beyond the scope of this paper, it is still crucial to draw attention for the moment to the elephant in the room here. Namely, *how the mental health of mediums* might come into question. According to currently-held Western, professional views about mental health, would a practicing medium be accepted as a mental health provider without also being pathologized in some way as abnormal or even possibly unwell?

Medical and behavioral health professions currently rely on official diagnostic manuals (the American Psychiatric Association's DSM-IV-TR in the U.S. and the World Health Organization's ICD-10,) both which primarily approach issues with a presumption of pathology, rather than of health. Dissociate trance disorder is listed in the DSM-IV under "Dissociative Disorder Not Otherwise Specified". It is described as a "... state of consciousness ... indigenous to particular locations and cultures." It goes on to further categorize such states as "not a normal part of a broadly accepted collective cultural or religious practice." It is then listed in Appendix B of the DSM: "Criteria Sets and Axes for Further Study" (American Psychiatric Association [DSM-IV-TR], 2000). The current work panel for the new DSM-V is proposing that part of this disorder (the pathological possession trance component) "be moved from the Appendix and subsumed into an existing disorder, Dissociative Identity Disorder" ("Dissociative trance disorder:," 2010). In case it got lost in the details, note the use of the phrase, "*not a normal part.*"

Following the DSM-IV's line of thought about normalcy, it could be inferred that mediums may be symptomatic for a kind of mental disorder like "Dissociative Identity Disorder"—once commonly known as "Multiple Personality Disorder"—which is a pathological diagnosis and classified as a mental illness. In true cases of DID, an individual manifests a seemingly separate personality or sometimes several personalities. From this perspective a channeler or a trance medium wouldn't actually be seen as contacting some separate disembodied entity, but instead as contacting another personality of their own.

Stephen E. Braude, an American professor of philosophy and a past president of the Parapsychological Association, has done extensive scholarly research and writing on parapsychology, notably addressing the questions of survival and reincarnation and how DID might be involved. He has suggested that in some cases mediums might be displaying "non-pathological forms" of dissociation, or "other forms" related to DID (Braude, 2003). This seems to be suggesting that although mediums are not disabled from their "condition" they still might be delusional. This illustrates how challenging it might be for some academics, who are often already less accepting of the fact of transition, to commit themselves to viewing mediumship as a manifestation of health.

Because of the way current theories of disorder currently describe, analyze, and treat presenting symptoms, a disconnective approach has resulted, which breaks the whole person down into parts, a dehumanizing process which creates blinders to other aspects that may already be in place and contributing to health. Horwitz (2007) notes that while distress can be seen as a normal response to stressful social arrangements, the DSM-IV treats "both the natural results of the stress process and individual pathology as mental disorders in nondisordered people, resulting in an overestimation of pathology in the general culture." For example, when a bereaved person is unable to achieve a valued goal, i.e., failing to contact a loved one via a medium, their resultant stress is determined to be a psychopathological symptom, concomitant with their belief that they can contact a deceased or disembodied person. Another example would be the case presented

earlier, regarding a client's mentally healthy endeavor to locate a provider who would not assume pathology about the belief that a spouse's predicament is due to spirit possession.

Near-death experiences are often currently categorized and treated as "dissociative events" because of the out-of-body component and feelings of detachment from the physical body. The DSM-IV-TR states that dissociative states of consciousness should not be considered inherently pathological, but offers no diagnostic category for non-pathological dissociation (Morse, in press). Morse suggests that dissociation "is best understood as a spectrum state of consciousness" and that in such cases "... only persons already skilled and licensed to practice psychology and medicine should attempt to integrate interactions with the all knowledge domain or mediumship into their clinical practice" (in press). Appropriate psychospiritual providers could benefit from some kind of Standards of Care that promotes this viewpoint of health and treatment.

Regarding the subject of the psychiatric issues where trance states and spirit communication are involved, Powell (2007) asserts that *mediums should be seen as nondisordered*, while noting that the ICD-10's classification of "Trance and Possession Disorders" concedes that cultural issues are often at hand and need to be acknowledged. Yet, like the DSM-IV, and as Powell (2007) refers to a particular extract from the ICD-10 (F44.3), the general mindset of allopathic medicine tends to peer through a lens of pathology. The ICD-10 speaks of disorders in which:

"... there is a temporary loss of both the sense of personal identity and full awareness of the surroundings; in some instances the individual acts as if taken over by another personality, spirit, deity or 'force'. Attention and awareness may be limited to, or concentrated upon only one or two aspects of the immediate environment, and there is often a limited but repeated set of movements, postures and utterances" (p. 9).

Powell (2007) suggests most of the real problem for those patients who believe in "the actuality of spirit" lies in the words, "as if" and notes that "... Western science does not countenance the possibility of the survival of human consciousness that can communicate across the bounds of space-time. The good news is that Mediums can be reassured that they will not be diagnosed with a mental disorder unless, of course, they happen also to have fallen ill" (p. 9). Paradoxically, we find ourselves circumnavigated back to continuing debates about what defines health and illness in a medium.

The fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (to be released in 2013 as the DSM-5) will introduce major changes in the way certain pathologies and their diagnosis are psychiatrically approximated. The new method of "dimensional approach" is intended to supersede the current prototype, conceivably resulting in a more personalized depiction of a patient, rather than "pigeon-holing" them into the same slot as others who may have similar but different presentations of health and illness (Zanor, 2010). The DSM-5 is not coming without dissonance; one of its most ardent detractors is the lead editor of the DSM-IV, Allen Frances. He recently shared that because of "serious mistakes," the DSM-IV inadvertently "skyrocketed" an epidemic of diagnosing autism, ADHD, and bipolar disorder, simultaneously causing over-treatment with drugs (Greenberg, 2011). His concern is that the current DSM-5 panel process is in disarray and will not have addressed these and other errors.

The recently created *Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual* (Alliance of Psychoanalytic Organizations, 2006) has emerged as an alternative to such pathologizing systems as the DSM-IV-TR. Unlike the DSM and ICD, the PDM includes descriptions of *healthy* functional patterns and *healthy* personality. Based on current neuroscience and treatment outcome studies, the PDM asserts that symptoms cannot be assessed or treated in the absence of *first* understanding healthy

mental processes of the whole person presenting the symptoms; the client's personality is of primary evaluative concern, while symptoms are secondary. As current research suggests, providers (particularly from the psychodynamic psychoanalytical perspective) should seek to adapt their methods to the phenomena rather than beginning with the assumption that the patient should adjust to *their* method. (Jiménez, 2008).

An example would be to clinically approach a person's dissociation as a "healing tool," as seen in Dr. Melvin Morse's systematic approach (in press) to the spectrum of dissociation, where someone "enjoys excellent mental health and is using dissociation to interact with spirits, (and) other realities to help others." Relatedly, an experienced therapist would guide the patient through protocols which involve dissociation, utilizing "non-local" perceptions as therapeutic tools (Morse, in press).

As part of this exploration about initial assumptions of health vs. pathology, it is relevant to note that the book *The Risen: Dialogues of Love, Grief, & Survival Beyond Death*, co-authored by this writer, presents a "spirit inspired" non-pathologizing approach to behavioral health. Rather than recommend that a medium should be sought as a primary grief treatment provider, it suggests ways in which an individual can enable oneself to become self-empowered and proactive in self-healing by activating inherent but latent mediumship abilities to achieve contact with transitioned loved ones. The approach also draws upon theories of ego-psychology and other psychodynamic and analytic models. It supports and encourages integrating psychotherapy and psychiatry as additional support for grief and the trauma arising from it, when appropriate, by engaging with psychospiritually-minded, licensed providers (Goforth & Gray, 2009).

It is evident that there are some mediumistic individuals who are officially licensed in their professionally acknowledged fields, who may have written books or papers relating mediumship to their field, and have publicized and promoted themselves in certain ways to incorporate "psychic" or "psychospiritualized" clinical theories and techniques. Some are more concerned with research and writing while others are more active from within a clinical practice. There are those who seek to combine aspects from other fields, such as the arts—many of which lend themselves well to various mental and physical therapies. Still others utilize lesser-known and possibly less valid—if not perhaps risky or even dangerous—approaches, including non-accredited hypnotherapy and trauma-inducing techniques that have not been clinically proven. The latter comes at a cost in both human and financial terms, and such clinical approaches will unlikely be considered as valid and reimbursable determinants by insurance companies.

The Code of Ethics

While it can be seen that certain professions have evolved a Code of Ethics—primarily those that offer some kind of regulated and renewable certification—their process should not be conflated with a Standards of Care. This can be clarified by looking at a definition of a Code of Ethics:

A code of ethics is a set of principles of conduct within an organization that guide decision making and behavior. The purpose of the code is to provide members and other interested persons with guidelines for making ethical choices in the conduct of their work. ... Members of an organization adopt a code of ethics to share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the organization's principles and standards of practice (US Legal, 2010).

A professional may have a Code of Ethics (COE) but may not follow a Standards of Care (SOC) and so a COE and a SOC can be mutually exclusive of one another. While they might also be interrelated, a difference is the idea that a SOC is borrowed from a concept that refers to a

professional who is in some way deemed an official diagnostician and treatment provider. A COE emerges from many various philosophical and humanistic beliefs and spiritual factors, but is not solely meant for a diagnostician. While all legal diagnosticians can be practitioners, not all practitioners can be legal diagnosticians; neither a COE nor a SOC is legally binding. Violators of their COE may be held accountable for misuse or neglect and subject to disciplinary action by their organization. The SOC are there to follow stringently, moderately, loosely, or not at all, but without as strict accountability by the organization—although there may be significant consequences for deliberate non-use, misinterpretation, or even abuse.

The “global web clearing-house” Body Mind Spirit is a particular example of a system organically evolving on the Internet, consisting of variant and multifaceted disciplines, and presenting an ever-growing continuum that ranges from recognized, allopathic modalities to completely unknown and newly-invented non-allopathic approaches. Some of the providers may be part of a system with a clear COE, and perhaps a scant few work with a SOC, but it is unlikely that such a large and loose-knit global community would ever be enabled to all be on the same page as intended by a professional SOC. However, it might be feasible for a professional medium to utilize an appropriate SOC developed with psychotherapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and other legal behavioral health clinicians—any of which might also be mediums—and which would unite them in a professional manner.

A POSSIBLE MODEL

Before and during the development of this Standards of Care, there will also need to be some method of defining psychospiritual mediumship and its offshoots—yet another endeavor beyond the vision of this paper. Elements of the well-regulated structure and approach of such establishments as the American Academy of Grief Counseling, mentioned earlier, could serve toward modeling policy and procedure. It is truly challenging to imagine such accomplishments easily happening within the health paradigms of current Eurocentric, westernized societies. It could conceivably be less problematic and more abundantly encompassing if the outlining took its inspiration from well-defined and skillful systems such as the millennia-old spiritual shamanic traditions found in Tibet, Africa, South America, and Australia.

It is this writer’s clinical bias that any approach must begin from a holistic perspective of positive health, and not an assumption of psychopathology. It could also begin to take form by keeping some of the above preliminary considerations of the *Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual* in mind, along with related health initiatives as significant essentials needed to develop a strong foundation for a Standards of Care. Such initiatives might include the following:

- 1) Psychospiritual health of providers. How is health determined in a person who uses mediumistic skills, i.e., how are the ways in which they use their skills indicative of their own good health?
- 2) Societal assimilation. How might mediums utilize their abilities in integrative ways that make them accepted and useful in their roles to society as health care providers?
- 3) Multilevel integration. What are the mediumistic modalities that indicate a good fit with other health care systems that support holistic opportunities for health and healing?
- 4) Quality of care. What are the parameters that help determine appropriate referrals to a medium? How do non-mediumistic care professionals make such decisions? In what ways do mediumship interventions provide appropriate care and aftercare?

Another important requirement would be careful testing for appropriate mediumship providers, based upon the criteria for integration with behavioral health care, and perhaps academically associated with a related field, such as consciousness studies. A SOC could be informed in part by the protocols established for various experimental programs designed to treat psychopathology with alternative healing methods. An example of such a program would be similar to the one developed to study the effects of long-distance healing on people diagnosed with major depression, and was scientifically organized for control, measurement, and clinical safety (Greyson, 1996). Another comparable setting was designed to test for possible psychological benefits of past-life regression, which some spirit mediums claim as a significant part of their therapeutic approach (Barušs & Woods, 2004). The code of behavior and required ethical guidelines set by such programs as that of The Windbridge Institute for certifying mediums could also be useful for certain elements of a SOC for mediumship health care services (Beischel, Boccuzzi et al., 2010).

The following suggested outline is a *very* preliminary approach toward structuring a possible Standards of Care for Psychospiritual Behavioral Health Professionals.

Standards Of Care For Psychospiritual Behavioral Health Professionals

I. Introductory Concepts.

The Purpose of the Standards of Care. [Describes the major purpose of the SOC; identifies intended populations for treatment; acknowledges limitations.]

Treatment Goals. [Describes general goals for achieving overall psychological well-being and self-fulfillment.]

Clinical Guidelines. [Discusses the SOC's intentions; how meant to be followed, modified, delayed, or departed from by individual practitioners and groups; expectations regarding documentation for research, legal concerns, and other purposes; clinical process of explaining any modifications or departures to clients for clinical and legal purposes.]

Clinical Thresholds. [Discusses when a clinical "threshold" is passed: if and when a client's normal state of wellness may be disrupted in ways that indicate "spiritual emergencies" and require appropriate psychospiritual treatment of some kind, and how such determinations of non-wellness may be made; establishes criteria indicating treatment needs and goals; discusses the designated formal measurements of the criteria. i.e., DSM-4-TR, ICD-10, PDM.]

II. Epidemiological Considerations.

[Discusses patterns of health and illness and associated factors at the population level.]

History. [Discusses psychospiritual health issues in terms of historical indications of traditional assessment, diagnosis, and treatment in relation to modern advances.]

Etiology. [Discusses causation of possible psychospiritual behavioral health issues.]

Prevalence. [Discusses, with statistical references, population occurrences in such terms as predominance, tendencies, frequency, pervasiveness, and so on.]

Natural History. [Discusses, from a non-pathological perspective, prospective data about the history of those who have struggled with certain psychospiritual emergencies and how this has

informed and/or should inform treatment decisions.]

Cultural Variance. [Discusses how cultural differences may alter behavioral expressions; how different cultures view, for example, “spirit possession” as normal or otherwise on some kind of continuum of positive health.]

III. Nomenclature.

[Presents and discusses terminology and classifications, including diagnostic and treatment language and terms currently in use; may suggest alternative language that better reflects holistic approaches to health, while advocating the limiting and even decreasing use of pathologizing terminology. For example, Grof (2010) eschews the terms “altered or non-ordinary states of consciousness” used by mainstream Western clinicians because of the insinuation that a person is having a distorted, abnormal, or incorrect way of experiencing the world. Instead, as a clearer way of distinguishing numinous experiences from phenomenal states of mental illness, Grof prefers “holotropic”—literally, “oriented or moving toward wholeness.”]

[May further differentiate in terms of developmental behavior, i.e., adults, adolescents, and children.]

[May further elucidate in terms of comorbidity, i.e., in medical classification, the presence of one or more “disorders” in addition to a primary one, or the effect of such additional disorders. In mental health counseling, comorbidity refers to the presence of more than one diagnosis occurring in an individual at the same time; psychiatric classification may not necessarily refer to multiple disorders, and instead are reflecting that a single diagnosis cannot be found to account for all symptoms.] *

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[* Note here the crucial need for non-pathologizing language that may better fit the model of a psychospiritual crisis/emergency. Lilienfeld et al. (1994), advises that usage of the term *comorbidity* should probably be avoided because “the use of imprecise language may lead to correspondingly imprecise thinking.” For a stimulating read on the shortcomings of this term within the context of the need for different classification strategies for the various areas of psychopathology, see the editorial, “‘Psychiatric Comorbidity’: An Artefact of Current Diagnostic Systems?” (Maj, 2005).]

IV. The Psychospiritual Behavioral Health Professional (PBHP).

[Identifies legitimate PBHPs; lists, clarifies, and discusses the tasks and responsibilities of PBHPs; introduces specifications for adult vs. child treatment; discusses eligibility and treatment-readiness; discusses the PBHP’s relationship to other providers.]

V. Psychospiritual Psychotherapy with Adults.

[Differentiates assessment, treatment, and follow up, according to appropriate, known developmental and behavioral aspects of psychospiritual crises as they manifest in adults; identifies and addresses needs of significant others from a systems approach.]

VI. Psychospiritual Psychotherapy with Adolescents and Children.

[Differentiates assessment, treatment, and follow-up, according to appropriate, known

developmental and behavioral aspects of psychospiritual crises as they manifest in adolescents and children; identifies and addresses needs of significant others from a systems approach.]

VII. Follow-up and Aftercare.

[Defines and expands on the roles of various providers, including the PBHP, in a patient's follow-up and aftercare; discusses current research and future research implications as the knowledge base evolves and expands accordingly.]

CONCLUSION

Realistically, there are no firm conclusions at this point—only more questions. If “psychotherapeutic mediumship” is deemed as valid behavioral health care, and mediums become professionally licensed as providers, how would they be received by their peers? Could professional and peer-regulated guidelines accommodate their modalities? How would malpractice be defined and dealt with? These are but a few of the formidable faces of the hydra.

Over two decades ago, Stanislav and Christina Grof noted that the disrupted ability to perceive the world in “normal” terms—resulting in mental “disorders”—presented an enigmatic challenge for Western psychology and psychiatry. The Grofs sought to resolve the puzzle by seeking non-pathologizing connections between spiritual emergency and spiritual evolution; to arrive at a holistic balance that is stable but active; fulfilling, yet unblocked and flowing. Their book *Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis*, remains a definitive collection of essays by some of the most remarkable pioneers supporting alternative methodologies regarding alternative reality experiences (Grof & Grof, 1989). Many of these approaches continue to be subjects of ongoing exploration and research, including that of near-death and afterlife experiences, both of which continue to evoke confused ideas about discerning possession from mental illness by western allopaths.

SN Chiu, a psychiatrist in Hong Kong, has noted a growing trend in the 20th century to attribute “possession phenomenon” to mental disorder—although controversial opinions continue to be held—and yet feels that the profession *should* be able to develop a holistic view of paranormal experiences and give competent, professional guidance to patients beset by psychospiritual issues (Chiu, 2000). With marked similarity to the noted observation of Bright et al. (2010) about the reluctance of psychologists to integrate mental health and spirituality, Powell's professional experience also reflects that “psychiatrists (are) not encouraged or trained to explore religious/spiritual concerns and consequently reluctant to engage with (the) topic in clinical practice” (2007, pp. 9-10). He further cites the need for correct diagnoses to distinguish mental illness from spiritual crisis, “... especially when archetypal spiritual/religious themes are central” (p.9).

To help psychiatrists learn to distinguish between normal and pathological human experiences in the field of mental health regarding spiritual crises, Andrew Powell developed a “Spirituality and Psychiatry Special Interest Group,” or SIG. The SIG serves as a forum for psychiatrists to “explore the influence of the major religions, which shape the cultural values and aspirations of psychiatrist and patient alike,” as well as the relationship between health, illness, and spirituality (“Spirituality and psychiatry,” 1999). The SIG Group publishes a newsletter at the website of The Royal College of Psychiatrists, and its archive contains intriguing papers on mental health, death and near-death, mystical and trance states, varieties of religious experience, and spirituality. Although not a SOC, the SIG is clearly several steps taken in such a direction, as seen in its attempts to begin to codify recommendations for clinical approaches.

U.S. West Coast Psychotherapist Arnold Mindell, known for his development of the concepts “dreambody” and “process work” and founder of Process Oriented Psychology, has been working with alternative approaches to behavioral health for many years. His book *The Quantum Mind and Healing* introduced the idea of “Rainbow Medicine” as a contrast to “Classical or One Color Medicine” (Mindell, 2004). His vision integrates physics, psychology, and biology with wisdom from the earliest religions of humankind (Mindell, p. 20). The idea is that health providers could all become “awareness specialists,” as based on the theory of quantum mechanics which theorizes multiple consensus-reality paradigms. In more down-to-earth language, a medium’s awareness of other-dimensional realities would be seen as valid as that of a pediatrician’s specialized, sensitive awareness of the inner emotional and outer physical world-views of children and adolescents. Both specialists would also have a distinct awareness of and respect for one another’s expertise in ways that would allow them to work together. From there, it then might be possible to develop a relevant SOC from within such a systemic sphere of psychospiritual behavioral health care.

Increasing numbers of doctors (and patients) of the Western realms—especially scientists of the quantum mechanics assembly—are openly acknowledging and encouraging the exploration and use of non-visible energies that may contribute to and maintain mental, physical, and spiritual health. This seems to be happening as if time is also speeding up, fueled by the swiftness with which humanity has moved through the portentous gates of the 21st century. Due to remarkable achievements of science, medicine, and technology—notably quantum mechanics, neuroscience, and neuroimaging, respectively—major changes are rapidly occurring in the ways in which health issues are perceived and addressed, while transforming interdisciplinary attitudes. Although still a radical notion, it is not unimaginable that some of these emerging realizations may help mediumistic services become recognized and legitimized, as well as eventually facilitate and promote an appropriate standards of care for psychospiritual behavioral health.

APPENDIX

Clarification of Terms

The following descriptive material about *channeling* and *mediumship* is taken from *The Risen: Dialogues of Love, Grief, & Survival After Death* (Goforth & Gray, 2009).

“Most of us in the twenty-first century are familiar in some way with the phenomenon of channeling, and, to an increasing extent, that of mediumship. They seem to be compared rather than contrasted to one another these days. Channelers are individuals who, for various and often unapparent reasons, are utilized by other consciousnesses usually outside three-dimensional awareness, primarily for teaching and inspirational purposes. The channeling entities are usually from higher levels of evolved intelligence and compassion. Because they’re without material bodies, they’re primarily interested in temporarily utilizing someone else’s body, by borrowing their brain and voice, thus enabling them to speak to embodied beings. The channeling entity is almost always seeking to impart spiritual information, and often has never been human, in the sense of having lived on Planet Earth. Of course nothing is written in stone about this and any and all possibilities are endless. While in an altered state of consciousness—or trance—channelers may be completely unaware of the experience as it’s happening, while others are more or less aware of what’s going on through their physical and spiritual senses.

“These conditions of awareness are similar for those individuals who are often called mediums. Some mediums are completely unaware of what’s happening around them when in contact with non-bodied persons, and have little or no memory of the event afterwards. There are also mediums that can maintain total conscious awareness of what’s going on.

“. . . The discarnate beings utilizing a medium are almost always humans who once lived on earth. They’re usually friends and family and sometimes strangers seeking to send a message to a loved one. Often the strangers turn out to actually have some sort of connection, however distant and unexpected. These spirit people, or newly Risen Ones, are interested in maintaining contact with us since their recent transition, primarily to reassure us that they’re alive and ok, and are closer to us now than we might be capable of believing (Goforth & Gray, 2009, pp. 45-46).

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