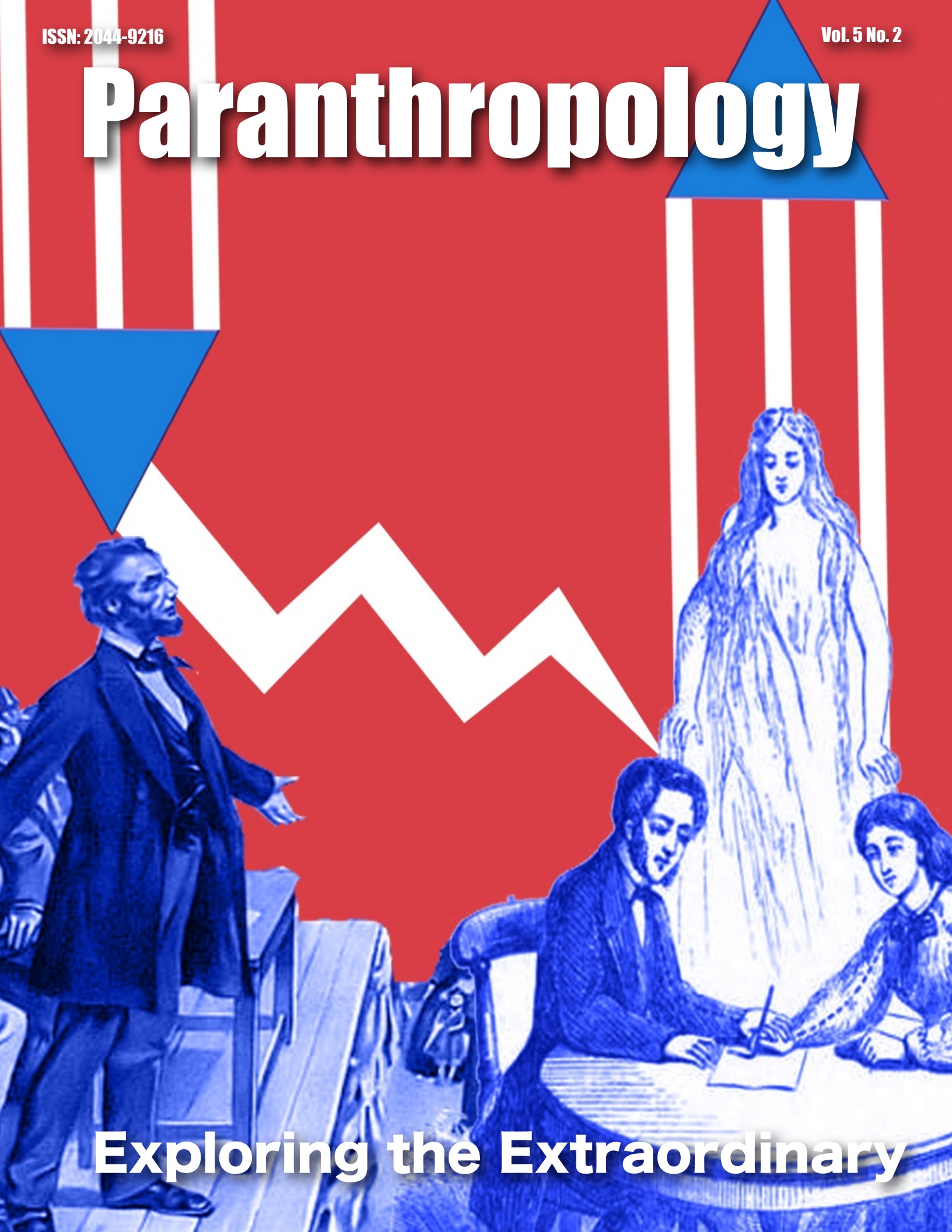


# Paranthropology



Exploring the Extraordinary

# **Paranthropology**

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## Exploring the Extraordinary

Hannah Gilbert



The extraordinary permeates our lives and landscapes. By extraordinary, I refer to that which typically *transcends the mundane*: things that are considered to be supernatural, paranormal, exceptional, anomalous, magical, spiritual, religious, uncanny, transcendent, and so forth. Some of these are occurrences or encounters which happen unexpectedly, experiences that can prove life changing; some form part of specific social beliefs and behaviours, are ongoing, can be invoked; and yet others are more subtle, even delicate. While there is much to be learned from comparing and contrasting, we cannot adequately capture or explain the extraordinary within a universal categorical system: it is wide ranging, cross-cultural, sensuous, a personally and publically lived facet of human existence.

Many academics and thinkers – particularly in the West – have questioned the ontological plausibility associated with the explanations extraordinary experiences and phenomena have given rise to. In Western societies, there has been many a tussle between those who favour explanations of extraordinary realities and forces, and those who adhere to a specific scientific framework that favours explanations of the extraordinary as a by-product of human psychology, perception and desires. A rationalist-materialist scientific framework is often dominant within academic study, and has provided the backbone for many academic studies of the extraordinary. Recent considerations, however, have turned a critical eye towards the means and methods of how science is used (how scientific research is conducted, made sense of, presented both in academic literature and in the public domain etc.), and identified some of the problems inherent in research that fails to take into account its own biases, or is too rigid in its methodology (particularly when we consider the flexibility of human beings). Rising from these observations come suggestions for new, alternative, often more immersive, methods of study. Furthermore, many researchers have considered the possibility that

## Contents

**Profane Illuminations: Machines, Indian Ghosts, and Boundless Flights through Nature at Contemporary Paranormal Gatherings in America**  
– Darryl Catherine (8–24) –

**Magic or Science:  
A Look at Reiki in American Medicine**  
– Joshua Graham (25–32) –

**Hidden Apprenticeships, Hidden Loves:  
Transmission of Enhanced Awareness in Mediumistic and Shamanic Traditions**  
– David Gordon Wilson (33–36) –

**Communication Across the Chasm:  
Experiences With the Deceased**  
– John A. Napora (37–40) –

**Book Hauntings**  
– Mark Valentine (41–43) –

**Orbs, some definitive evidence that they are not paranormal**  
– Steven T. Parsons (44–49) –

**Interview:  
Andy Sharp (English Heretic)**  
– Hannah Gilbert (50–52) –

**Playback Hex  
William Burroughs and the Magical Objectivity of the Tape Recorder**  
– James Riley (53–59) –

**REVIEW:  
Exploring the Extraordinary Conference  
(Gettysburg College, March 21 to 23)**  
– T. Peter Park (60–69) –

**REVIEW:  
'Folie et Paranormal' by Renaud Evrard**  
– Jean-Michel Abrassart (70–71) –

**REVIEW:  
'Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England' by J.S. La Fontaine**  
– Michael J. Rush (71–73) –

the extraordinary is real, and that we should take people who have such experiences or hold such beliefs more seriously. *Paranthropology*, for example, has frequently featured and promoted such approaches. The significance here is not that we should abandon science and scientific methodology – far from it. But critically considering the *means* of research (as well as the findings) has led to a number of methodological, and ethical, questions about how we investigate and then represent the experiences of others, and how we ourselves make sense of the world around us. From those kinds of questions are arising new directions for future research and discussion. There are still so many subjects to explore on our horizons of enquiry.

Exploring the Extraordinary arose within the academic climate of a sociology department in York, UK during the mid 2000s. My colleagues and I were engaged in doctoral and post-doctoral studies of extraordinary experiences within an environment that specialised in discursive analysis. We were interested, principally, in how people talk about such experiences. The people we were studying were, like ourselves, Westerners – some of whom were spiritual practitioners, but many were not – and so, increasingly, we were drawn to reflect upon our own beliefs and experiences as we examined those provided by other members of our own society. We brought with us a range of social scientific backgrounds, namely anthropology, psychology and sociology, and so our conversations increasingly veered towards how reflexive, interdisciplinary perspectives can be beneficial for a more holistic understanding of the extraordinary. Furthermore, while our work was largely discursive in focus, we were extremely interested in a wider range of issues concerning the nature of experience, belief and phenomena, as well as the ethical concerns that arise from looking at experiences that are often not largely validated within our wider social world. Equally, we were concerned with how to portray the lividness and sensuousness of the people we were studying. One thing that particularly struck me as I was researching spirit mediumship in Great Britain, was how many research papers on this topic reduced the medium to a statistic, an A,B,C or a 1,2,3. The medium him/herself was largely unimportant, for they were the test subjects by which a larger interest – do we survive bodily death, can spirits communicate with us – was examined. While these topics are, of course, fascinating and important to study, I wondered about who these mediums were and lamented the absence of their agency, their sensuous lived presence, of their involvement as real people. This is not

a criticism of such research, as these projects were not interested in mediumship identity, and were conducted in according with the requirements of certain disciplines and the structure of laboratorial experiment. But I felt that we needed something more, something that gave medium's a voice, that really looked at who they are, in order to establish a more holistic understanding of mediumship.

Another factor arising from collaboration within an academic institution was that our interests were not largely the same as those of our peers. At this time our supervisor, Prof Robin Wooffitt, developed the Anomalous Experiences Research Unit (AERU), which provided us with a valuable collective hub, but we also looked outward, to other academics who shared our research interests. The seeds of Exploring the Extraordinary were sown here, amid this enthusiasm for knowledge; how best to explore our research topics; and consequently contribute to the wider study of the extraordinary. Looking outward made us realise how vast the study of the extraordinary is, but we found that, like ourselves, many researchers were operating within university departments where such interests were far from the mainstream. This led to the development of an email discussion list, which attracted a wide interdisciplinary range of members from the beginning, and facilitated some fascinating discussions. It was clear there was much enthusiasm for this area of study.

One of the problems with extraordinary experiences, academia, and the dominance of a rational-materialist scientific hierarchy, is that researchers are at risk of being penalised for studying subject matter others deem unworthy, particularly if they are not studying them in the 'right' way. To take a position that does not orientate to a rational-materialist stance on the authenticity of extraordinary experiences can be seen as deviant or misguided. This is not always the case, of course, and scholars of religious experience, for example, are perhaps better established than those who study other kinds of spiritual experiences. Certainly there seem to be matters of intellectual taste regarding particular extraordinary topics. Michael Brown (1999) has written about how his peers were suspicious of his interests in New Age Channeling groups in the USA, with some going so far as to accuse him of having 'gone native' primarily because they were suspicious of such groups. The intentions of the researcher being called into question and subject to such criticism, is generally not faced by those interested in more 'acceptable' topics. More recently, the removal of a talk by Rupert Sheldrake



from the TED website sparked a fierce controversy. Emily McManus, an editor for Ted.com states that “While TED does not vet speakers at independent TEDx events, a TEDx talk can be removed from the TEDx archive if the ideas contained in it are wrong to the point of being unscientific, and that includes misrepresenting the scientific process itself.” (McManus, 2013) The problem here, as has been noted by other critics of TED’s decision to remove the talk, is that Sheldrake is endorsing a position with which members of TED disagree. But does that mean he should be silenced and his work discounted? The issues raised here are both methodological and ethical: for example, how do we decide what is ‘wrong’, how is scientific knowledge constructed and scientific power wielded, and why do certain positions warrant such censorship. Interestingly, support for Sheldrake has come from those who agree with his ideas, and many from the skeptical community who are critical of his work. These two camps are united, however, in their assertion that we should be able to openly discuss and debate these issues.

As the discussions grew, and new researchers became a part of our intellectual community (which became immeasurably richer for this), we wondered practically about the benefits of providing a physical space for individuals to meet, discuss, network, and support each other: somewhere with a specific focus on the extraordinary, but one that was open to a wide range of areas. The more we considered the role of the extraordinary, the more we realised just how far reaching and vast a topic it was and is.

### Why ‘extraordinary’?

The term ‘extraordinary’ was selected because we wanted to examine a wide range of experiences and phenomena, many of which were ill fitted with commonly used terms like ‘paranormal’ and ‘anomalous’. We were conscious of a strong desire to avoid using language that may be tied up too tightly within the rhetoric of particular a discipline(s). We do not seek to overturn the use of such terms, and are aware that they are used by experients and believers themselves. However, we were conscious of the wide debates regarding terminology and the representation of such things, particularly within the social sciences, and we wanted to avoid the use of terms that were thought to be too constrictive, too Western-centric, or potentially imbued with negative connotations due to their use

by other scholars, and within popular culture more generally.

As we looked closer at the range of experiences we were collecting, and reading about, we felt that there was undoubtedly a special quality to these encounters and their resonance within the lives of their experients. The work of David Young and Jean-Guy Goulet was hugely influential, particularly their edited collection (1994) about the extraordinary experiences recalled and examined by anthropologists during their fieldwork. In many of these instances, the anthropologists recalled extraordinary experiences that they shared with their informants, which subsequently had profound effects upon their own worldview.

We do not mean to imply that extraordinary experiences and phenomena are not normal, rather that they generally transcend the mundane and have significant consequences. In many societies, the extraordinary is part of the fabric of everyday life, and not considered ontologically controversial, but instead orientates to something special, something particularly meaningful that reaches beyond the boundaries of the physical world of the living.

### Exploring the Extraordinary Conferences

The first Exploring the Extraordinary conference was held in a seminar room in the Sociology Department, at the University of York, on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2009. It was attended by around 25 people, with six speakers just over half of whom were postgraduate students, with the rest being established academics. The topics were wonderfully mixed: from cyberpsychics and ghosts to laboratorial dream studies and psychopharmacology. The speakers came from folkloric, psychological, philosophical and sociological backgrounds. The talks incited much discussion, and by the end of the day the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with calls for a larger event. Delegates reported to us that a bonus of the event was that the extraordinary was the focal point, and not a minor symposium tucked beneath stifling subject strands considered more worthy of being placed centre stage.

In 2010 we moved to a bigger room, had more delegates and speakers, and the talks ranged over two days. Our number of submissions increased, as did the variety of topics and speakers backgrounds, which has continued to be the case over subsequent years. The development of Exploring the Extraordinary has undoubtedly been nurtured by this continuing diversity, by the introduction of different perspec-

tives and interpretations that many of us were previously unaware. There is no universal perspective that unites those who contribute to the conferences and discussion, save that the extraordinary is important and worthy of study. One dynamic we were anxious to preserve and encourage is one of open-mindedness and respect; this does not mean that *everyone* must agree, and indeed this is generally not the case. But an environment in which people are able to voice their research, opinion, experience, without the risk of unjust ridicule or shame, is surely the only environment in which we can adequately explore these topics. We're keen to provide a place where believers, skeptics, agnostics, and those who take no position, can mix, share and discuss together.

The founders of Exploring the Extraordinary all have their doctorates now, but we remain committed to providing space on our schedules for students. The academic arena can be, at times, a hostile platform for students, particularly those who are seeking to enter academia as profession and must therefore undergo an initiation test of intellect and stamina. There seems to be an absence of discussion about the humanity of research – i.e. the emotional, physical and psychological journey that a researcher takes. Our own experiences of completing PhDs were not simply a matter of study; they involved several years of our lives where we had to balance, for example, our anxieties and hopes. Taking into consideration the reception that extraordinary research can sometimes receive from peers and colleagues, I feel it is important to remember that being able to offer support and respect has significant benefits. The quest to provide a supportive arena for discussion and networking is something worth safe guarding. Equally, as Exploring the Extraordinary has developed, it has increasingly incorporated presentations and feedback from experiencers and practitioners. Again, there is much discussion about how researchers and the researched can work together, as well as the ethics of using people in a research project. We feel that experiencers and practitioners have a huge amount to offer, and several of our regular attendees and contributors are experiencers and/or practitioners. The 'human' side of research and scholarship is often under-considered, and yet these issues are pertinent to enabling a healthy climate by which such research and scholarship can flourish.

### The future of Exploring the Extraordinary

As I write this, we are not long returned from Gettysburg, USA, where we hosted our sixth conference, and the first to take place outside of the UK. It was an incredibly stimulating and rewarding event, with new international friendships formed, and plenty of inspiration seeded from the range of talks. Funding limits how far we can go – we're still a relatively small organisation worked by volunteers – but technological developments of the last thirty years or so have enabled much easier ways to keep in touch and share knowledge. The extraordinary is cross-cultural, and the research it attracts is equally worldwide, so establishing links as far and wide as possible is incredibly beneficial. Over the last few years, we have seen an increase in similar projects and enterprises that have made massive contributions to research into the extraordinary. There seem to be far more conferences that look exclusively at extraordinary subject matter. This journal, for example, provides a wonderful platform for a cross-cultural examination and discussion of various subject matter as well as different methodologies – indeed, while it is principally an anthropological journal, it regularly incorporates work by those working outside of anthropology.

It has been a great privilege to be able to join forces with *Paranthropology*, and showcase some of the papers we've included in our past conference line-ups. As will no doubt be apparent, the papers are varied in topic and writer. From the uncanny lure of the second hand bookshop to the magical transformation of a writer's tape recorder to the profound consequences of experiencing a familial haunting, we hope you will agree that these pieces demonstrate how timely, varied and fascinating the extraordinary is and continues to be. We sincerely hope that Exploring the Extraordinary continues to grow, and continues to offer quality conferences with rich and diverse forums. This is an exciting time to be looking at the extraordinary, and I hope that enthusiasm and richness continues to develop and grow... and we'd love to see you at EtE7!

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## EXPLORING THE EXTRAORDINARY

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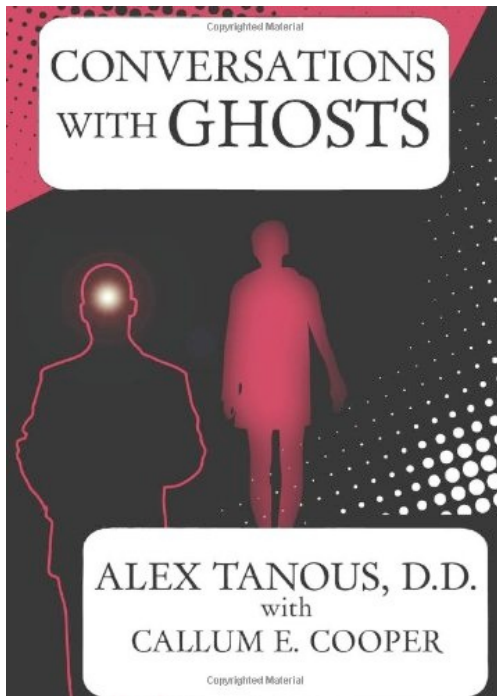
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Exploring-the-Extraordinary/316204538482740>

Facebook Discussion Group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/etenetwork/>

Extraordinarium Interview with Dr Madeleine Castro & Dr Hannah Gilbert:

<http://journal.extra-ordinarium.com/2013-04-23-ete.htm>



[http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/conversations\\_with\\_ghosts/](http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/conversations_with_ghosts/)

Dr Alex Tanous was a prolific scholar and acclaimed psychic of the latter part of the twentieth century. Having created quite a career for himself internationally, and commanding a great deal of respect amongst scholars and the general public, he spent nearly twenty years as an active researcher, and research participant, for the American Society for Psychical Research. He reached an untimely end in 1990, but established the Alex Tanous Foundation for Scientific Research shortly before his death to preserve his memory and share his research and teachings.

*Conversations with Ghosts* was an idea for a fourth book for Dr Tanous, and it was intended to be written by Dr Karlis Osis and himself, outlining their various investigations of ghostly phenomena while working with the [American Society for Psychical Research](#). The existing short manuscript - of no more than a couple of chapters - was archived by the [Alex Tanous Foundation for Scientific Research](#), and left incomplete. Now, thanks to the Foundation's support, the book has finally been completed using additional notes and writings of Dr Tanous, and interviews that were conducted with him on his thoughts and theories into ghosts and conscious survival beyond death. Additionally, this book provides not only a first-hand insight into the Tanous/Osis investigations, but also draws on people's personal experiences with Dr Tanous during his various explorations of ghosts and hauntings. This is a rare insight into the work and mind of a psychic psychical researcher

# Profane Illuminations: Machines, Indian Ghosts, and Boundless Flights through Nature at Contemporary Paranormal Gatherings in America

Darryl Caterine



Beginning with the first public demonstrations of mesmerism in 1836, with their attendant manifestations of clairvoyance and precognition, Americans have been obsessed with the topic of the paranormal.<sup>1</sup> Psi phenomena, spirit communication, psychic healing, and unidentified flying objects are just a few of the better-known phenomena that have come to be associated with this field. As early as the twentieth century, the great connoisseur of anomalies, Charles Fort, was adding reports of bilocations, phantom animals, and frogs falling from the sky – culled largely from professional scientific journals -- to the list of what he called the "damned facts" of the modern age.<sup>2</sup> These are the observed events that both established religious and scientific institutions perennially "damn" or exclude from serious study because they violate their most fundamental conceptions of order. Despite a continued prevalence in popular culture, the subject of the paranormal has also been slow to attract the attention of scholars in religious studies, notwithstanding the keen personal interest many foundational thinkers in the discipline had in Spiritualism.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, historian of religion Jefferey Kripal has returned to the paranormal as a critical category in the academic study of religion, suggesting that it constitutes "the sacred in transit from the religious and scientific registers into a parascientific or 'science mysticism' register."<sup>4</sup> Reported encounters with the paranormal, in other words, offer scholars of religion an opportunity to consider anew Rudolph Otto's classic description of the sacred as the "totally other" -- the mind-blowing person, place, thing or event that elicits fascination and awe from its behold-

ers. Whereas Otto worked backwards, as it were, from extant cosmologies to the various interactions with the *mysterium fascinans et tremendum* posited at their origins, Kripal sees the paranormal as a present-day meeting with the sacred in its unassimilated, wild state. Neither religious nor scientific paradigms have yet offered adequate or authoritative accounts for such phenomena, although science is considered to be the most likely jumping-off place for some eventual explanation (hence the sacred on its way to some "parascientific" account).

Beginning in the summer of 2007, I set out on a three-year exploration of a number of paranormal gatherings, to better understand how contemporary Americans make sense of awe-inspiring events and/or beings that do not yet have a clear place in the extant order of things.<sup>5</sup> The first of these gatherings was at a Spiritualist camp called Lily Dale, in Upstate New York, founded in 1879 as a place set apart for the open practice and exploration of mediumship, or communication with the dead.<sup>6</sup> The second was the annual convention of the American Society of Dowsters in Vermont, founded in 1961 as a meeting place for practitioners of "water witching" and related methods of divining.<sup>7</sup> The third was the Roswell UFO Festival in New Mexico, founded in 1996 during a nationwide resurgence of interest in all aspects of ufology – speculations revolving around encounters with seemingly non-terrestrial crafts and/or beings that emerged after the first wave of UFO sightings in 1947.<sup>8</sup>

Attempting to conduct ethnography on such damned facts initially led to intellectual vertigo: quite simply, it was impossible to conclude from



interviews, from participant-observation, or from thick description *what*, exactly, people were talking about at the various gatherings of my travels. It was not the case that the spirits and the like were too mind-blowing for words. On the contrary, the nature of spirits, earth energies, and UFOs elicited *too many* words; they were underdetermined. At the dowsing conventions, for example, participants offered a plethora of explanations along the religion-science spectrum to explain the purported ability of dowsers to locate the depth, flow rate, and drinkability of underground water by simply "asking" a forked branch, pendulum or pair of metal rods for the information. Here are a few of the most common interpretations: there is a non-physical connection between the dowser and the Earth (a metaphysical explanation); dowsing is a spiritual gift for which biblical precedents can be found (a Christian theological explanation), dowsing is a form of remote viewing (a parapsychological explanation); claims of dowsing are tall tales (both a skeptical and a sociological explanation); and there is a physical but unconscious connection between the dowser and the source (a naturalistic explanation).<sup>9</sup>

To make matters even more complicated, dowsers may opt for a combination of these explanations, or change opinions over time. Hence the title of the 2008 ASD convention: "What the Bleep is Dowsing?" There is no consensus. All we can say, in echoes of the Bob Dylan song, "Ballad of a Thin Man," is that *something is happening here but we don't know what it is*. As for identifying "spirits," the problem is the same. Consider the following summary of another traveler's visit to Lily Dale, recorded in 1899: "[A]ll around us are spirit forms with whom we may hold immediate converse, solace ourselves with their company, find guidance in their counsels, and courage in the thought of their victory. In everything else concerning the nature of these spirits, their origin, their destiny, their manner of manifesting themselves, all is chaos."<sup>10</sup> Or consider the impossible task of being asked to identify a UFO at Roswell. Take "flying" out of the acronym, and we are left with an unidentified object. The ques-

tion: "what is an unidentified object?" has all the ring of a modern American koan.

As my ethnographic and historical research deepened, however, I began to discern another tale that consistently framed Americans' forays into the unexplained. It was a decidedly dream-like narrative, in which modern machines, Indian ghosts, and reported flights across the boundless expanses of nature – sometimes in trance – danced alongside the spirits and UFOs and dowsing rods. Unlike the attempted metaphysical or scientific explanations of different paranormal phenomena, which shifted and changed, this narrative was surprisingly stable. It recurred from one site to the next, sometimes in people's reflections on the mysteries at hand, and at other times in the material culture or artwork of the gatherings. Furthermore, as I delved into the history of Spiritualism, dowsing, and ufology, I began to notice its recurrence throughout the history of the paranormal: in 1854, John Murray Spears, a Spiritualist, making love to a machine on a New England hilltop<sup>11</sup>; the twentieth-century, uncanny echo of the American Indian Captivity Narrative in alien abduction reports; and the 1960s travelogues of dowsers imaginatively journeying through the ruins of "ancient civilizations." These are just a few, isolated examples of the machines, ghostly Indians, and fantastic travel stories that have been swirling around discussions of paranormal phenomena ever since their emergence in the mid-nineteenth century.

In its form, this larger tale constitutes what folklorist Ilana Harlow has termed a complex narrative.<sup>12</sup> In the context of Harlow's research, a complex narrative is a set of two or more inter-related legends about incompletely understood events, each one of which sheds partial light on the other by providing a new frame of reference. Harlow develops this model from her study of modern Irish ghost story/local tragedy diptychs, in which a paranormal legend renders a non-paranormal catastrophe meaningful, if not entirely fathomable. On a Tuesday night, for example, a ghost appears to a Mrs. O'Brien; the next morning her husband is hit and killed by a bus. In this complex narrative, the events are

woven together to suggest that the tragedy was not a random, meaningless occurrence: Mrs. O'Brien realizes minutes after receiving news about the fatality that the specter had come to warn her of the impending death.

But here the interpretative clarity ends. The story does not explain the nature of ghosts or why one appeared only to Mrs. O'Brien and not to others. Even more troublingly, it fails to provide an explicit framework in which to make sense of the human trauma. In the complex narrative, the unexpected revelation is not that a ghost (or a UFO, or the art of dowsing) is ineffable – if we admit that the paranormal is, by definition, a multivalent and highly unstable category, then we already know that. Rather, the surprise is that the occurrences of everyday life – in this case, an unexpected death – are just as incommunicable and unintelligible as that special class of events and beings our society has cordoned off as comprising the paranormal. The complex narrative records a moment of what Walter Benjamin, in his own reflections on the occult, called "profane illumination," a flash of insight into the unspeakable dimension of the quotidian. "Any serious exploration of occult, surrealistic, phantasmagoric gifts and phenomena presupposes a dialectical intertwinement to which a romantic turn of mind is impervious," he writes, "For histrionic or fanatical stress on the mysterious side of the mysterious takes us no further; we penetrate the mystery only to the degree that we recognize it in the everyday world."<sup>13</sup>

I would like to pretend that I am *not* one of the 75 percent of Americans who, according to a 2005 Gallup Poll, "believes in" some aspect of the paranormal. I would like to assume the familiar pose taken by scholars in our field in relation to the subject matter of religion: namely, to perform the obligatory narrative act of *epoche* – "I neither believe nor disbelieve; I simply seek to understand." But in light of what my own research on the paranormal revealed to me, I am no longer sure if this is an authentic, or even possible, stance to assume. In drawing near to the paranormal, I saw my own ethnographic project weirdly reflected back to me, as if in a funhouse mirror. What kind of madness was I

engaged in, anyway, driving thousands of miles around the United States to write my own travelogue, one that might convince professional colleagues and myself that there really is a stable order in our day-to-day lives? Was I really trying to "make the strange familiar" through my ethnography, as the well-known saying goes? Or was I not also, like the "subjects" of my research, chasing down ghosts, trying to identify unidentifiable objects, and hoping to divine some solid ground underneath my feet? Was there not something strange in this familiar scholarly pursuit?

In the wake of my travels, I have become convinced that the paranormal is, as sociologist Andrew Greeley once put it, the normal in America.<sup>14</sup> For Greeley, "normal" simply meant widespread. He was fascinated to find such a high percentage of his respondents reporting experiences of *déjà vu*, extrasensory perception, clairvoyance, contact with the dead, and mysticism in the mid-1970s. What I will be attempting to demonstrate, however, is something more cultural than quantitative. Limiting my conclusions to the United States context, I want to suggest that discussions about the paranormal, regardless of the particular events or entities under discussion, unfolds within a larger narrative about modern identity and origins. More specifically, the widespread fascination with phenomena that have no clear place in the order of things, is as much of a reflection on our *own* cosmological rootlessness, as it is a discussion about the things or the beings in themselves. And as a scholar whose job it is to articulate identity and order in the modern context, I confess at the outset that I am deeply implicated in this larger paranormal tale.

## II.

My own profane illumination began at a booth hosted by staff members from *Fate* Magazine, in the Roswell Convention Center. It was during the 2007 UFO Festival, in the midst of my first cross-country round through the paranormal

gatherings of contemporary America. Spread out before me on the table were several issues of the magazine, founded by *Amazing Stories* editor Ray Palmer in the wake of the UFO sightings by pilot Kenneth Arnold in 1947. I picked up the seminal issue, dated Spring 1948, and opened up to the table of contents. There, on the right-hand page, were the featured stories of paranormal phenomena: "I Did See the Flying Disks!" by Kenneth Arnold himself; an essay on radio signals allegedly received from Mars; the correlation between Mark Twain's birthday and date of death with the passing of Halley's Comet; the phenomenon of automatic writing; and Wyoming's own legends of a ghost ship. But against the preternatural backdrop of the Roswell UFO Festival, none of these were particularly out of the ordinary. It was, rather, an advertisement opposite the table of contents for a book entitled *I Remember Lemuria* that caught my eye.

The advertisement takes up an entire page. At the top, the words "Atlantis" and "Lemuria" flow in cursive against a background of blue. "MAGIC WORDS!" the ad declares. "Are you interested in the almost forgotten past of the Earth?" it begins, "If you are, here is the wonder book of all time concerning the great catastrophe which destroyed the civilization of 24,000 years ago!" It was not the topic of the book that was particularly unusual. Revelations about the world before the Flood are as old as the Bible, and have been a stock-in-trade topic in American popular culture ever since the publication in 1882 of *Atlantis: the Antediluvian World*, by American lawyer Ignatius Donnelly. What grabbed my attention – and what sets apart *I Remember Lemuria* from others of its kind – are the details of its authorship. A cartoon profile of a Caucasian man is featured prominently in the center of the page. He wears what appears to be a towel over his head, and a smoldering cigarette dangles from between his lips. This is a graphic of Richard Sharpe Shaver, the author. As the ad elaborates, this book on antediluvian civilizations "is an incredible story of a Pennsylvanian welder who began to receive strange thoughts from his electric welder. At first he thought he was going

mad, but then, when the astounding story of Lemuria came to him, he realized that here was something more than mere madness." Shaver, then, is portrayed as a kind of hybrid, something between a generic Asiatic sage (the towel, perhaps meant to signify a Middle Eastern *kufiya*) and an iconic American working man (the smoldering cigarette).

Later I would read that Richard Shaver was in fact a welder for the Ford Motor Company plant in Wisconsin, who claimed until the end of his life to have actually received intelligent messages from and through his welding gun. In 1943, he sought out *Amazing Stories* editor Ray Palmer to pass along his tale. I was further intrigued to learn that Palmer was so convinced of the story's veracity that he went on to co-author with Shaver a number of stories closely based on Shaver's visionary experiences.<sup>15</sup> In brief, these told a truly amazing tale of a technologically advanced civilization of morally depraved survivors of the antediluvian continent of Lemuria, which had continued to flourish underneath the Earth since the time of the Flood, calculated to have occurred 24,000 years ago. The subterranean "deros" (a shortened form of "detrimental robots") were now intent on destroying modern civilization so that they could relocate their society to the Earth's surface. Occasionally one of their high-altitude rockets could be seen shooting through the skies, a sign that the battle with the human race was underway.

In 1945, Palmer featured these Lemurian tales as an ongoing series in *Amazing Stories*, advertising them as embellishments of *non-fictional* truths. Not only were readers fascinated by the stories, but some of them even began to write letters to Palmer confessing that they, too, had encountered the deros. A more skeptical management pressured Palmer to withdraw his claims of the stories' basis in fact. But holding fast to his faith in Shaver, he refused. The act of defiance cost Palmer his position with *Amazing Stories*, but even then he persisted in his conviction. Palmer featured *I Remember Lemuria*, the complete collection of his and Shaver's stories, on the first page of his new paranormal maga-

zine *Fate*, characterizing the work as "one of the most significant esoteric books ever published."

My introduction to Richard-Shaver-as-cigarette-smoking-sheik in *Fate Magazine* galvanized my already-growing suspicion that the paranormal is not simply about events and entities that have no place in the religious or scientific order of things. I was captivated, for starters, by the role of the sentient welding gun as a key component of *I Remember Lemuria*. I had already begun to notice that wondrous machines featured prominently throughout all three of the paranormal gatherings of my travels. At Lily Dale, for example, mediums spoke of themselves as "downloading information from the Universe," likening themselves to human computers. This image of the Spiritualist cyborg dates back, in fact, to the very origins of the movement; as early as 1850, observers were comparing mediums to human telegraph machines.<sup>16</sup> Later in the twentieth century, uncanny demonstrations of mind-to-mind communication such a mediumship would be likened to demonstrations of "mental radio."<sup>17</sup> Lily Dale mediums thus continued a longstanding discourse that conceived of paranormal connections between minds (both those of the living and those of the dead) in terms of extant communications technology. Further illustrations of this comparison could be found in the camp's museum, which showcased a number of the "precipitated spirit paintings" that were so popular among Lily Dale's visitors in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. These were likenesses of departed loved ones that spontaneously materialized on canvases, just like film developing in emulsion, supposedly due to the presence of accomplished mediums.

Dowsers, too, imagined themselves as human-machine hybrids in their searches for underground water or hidden objects. They spoke of themselves as resonating with unseen waves that emanated from the objects of their divining.<sup>18</sup> As was true for Spiritualist mediums, dowsers typically supplemented this materialist explanation with theoretical models borrowed from quantum physics, pointing to the non-local (and in fact wave-less) interactions between subatomic particles at a distance. As for their own

romance with machines, the sprawling ASD convention bookstore featured several booths selling both the more conventional tools of the dowsing trade (metal or plastic rods, and pendulums), as well as more complicated machinery. For example, a Polish-born dowser versed in the art of "radiesthesia" (literally, the perception of radiation through the senses) sold over forty kinds of pendulums, each one sensitive to the particular vibrations allegedly emanated by natural objects. She peddled as well an array of special gadgets designed to manipulate subtle energies: the Nikram, "a device for generating energy and sending it long distances to a living body"; the Radiation Neutralizer MA 1506 that "disperses harmful radiation within an area of 150 sq.m., 25m above and 3.5m below itself"; and the H40 Colour Energy Generator "used to supply the body with energy of a specific wavelength as determined by colour according to the reading of the [color] chart."

Finally, the ufological discussions at Roswell pointed to a variation on the paranormal's fascination with machines. Here transportation eclipsed telecommunications as the central technological fixation. An obvious question raised by the hypothesis of extraterrestrial visitation is how the aliens overcome the vast expanses of interstellar space to get here in the first place. Nuclear physicist and ufologist Stanton Friedman lectured on "Star Travel? YES!" during both the 2007 and 2009 Roswell UFO Festivals (the essential points of the talk also appear as a chapter in his book *Flying Saucers and Science*).<sup>19</sup> This was essentially a *tour de force* through the history of aviation, starting with the Wright Brothers' glider, and ending with present-day research on plasma technology. His main point was that engineering in general, and aviation in particular, records a history of unexpected quantum leaps in the history of transportation technology. To illustrate the point, he cited the story of astronomer John William Campbell "proving" the impossibility of sending a rocket to the moon in the 1940s, simply because nobody had yet conceived of using gravity to aid its flight. For Friedman and other advocates of the "extraterrestrial hypothesis," the real significance of alien

visitation lay primarily in the perspective it shed on the breathtaking modern advances in hurtling human bodies across expansive stretches of space.

In both the metaphysical and the parapsychological literature on such phenomena as mediumship, dowsing, and Close Encounters, technology typically plays second fiddle to science. These events are usually described as visible signs of an interconnected universe, where some kind of energy (or, in the case of quantum-physics-inspired explanations, non-local "entanglement") binds particular beings into a unified whole.<sup>20</sup> If this is indeed an adequate account of the topics at hand, then the various machines are at best metaphors for this interconnectedness, instruments to make visible the underlying energetic oneness. And yet these explanations consistently fail to contextualize the rise of science as a socially embedded phenomenon, one that historians of science typically study as a complex interplay of political, material *and* epistemological concerns. Once the social context of American science is given its due consideration, the machines have their own, distinctive story to tell.

Let us begin with the observation that, in the United States, the discourse of the paranormal dates back no further than the early years of national consolidation and modernization: 1836 marks the year when Frenchman Charles Poyen Saint Sauveur first began his first public demonstrations of mesmerism in the United States, which catalyzed widespread interest in what is now known as psi phenomena and altered states of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Twelve years later, in 1848, Spiritualist mediumship, itself in large part an outgrowth of experiments with mesmerism, burst onto the American scene. It was during this time the United States was developing its national infrastructure thanks to new communication and transportation technologies, including telegraph machines, canals, and railroads, which connected and coordinated its multiple communities into a single national whole.<sup>22</sup> In and through this process, Americans were challenged not simply to think of themselves as citizens who dwelled within the same trans-regional nation, but also to identify affectively with strangers,

separated from each other over great distances, as fellow compatriots.<sup>23</sup>

Lit by the strange glow cast from paranormal phenomena, the machines under question are far more important, and problematic, than they appear in metaphysical literature. Communications and transportation technologies in particular are not simply the proverbial tendrils that bind together the members of modern communities. They are also the instruments through which a new kind of society, unprecedented in both its scale and its power, is brought into being. As for scale, Robert S. Cox has discussed at length how the lived anxieties of social fragmentation during the period of rapid industrialization fueled Americans' interest in the somnambulistic states evoked by mesmerism, with all of their manifestations of clairvoyance and precognition, and the wondrous trance states of Spiritualist mediums. In a word, both mesmerism and mediumship seemed to embody the reality of "sympathy," that overarching trope in Enlightenment political philosophy used to describe the invisible chords that bound members of the nation together, precisely at a time when rapidly changing social conditions seemingly threatened these bonds.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the praise that Spiritualists have historically heaped upon electromagnetism tells only half of the story of Americans' relationship with their machines. It is true enough that telegraph machines and radios and, today, the Internet, allow us to feel connected to one another and to imagine the cosmos, in metaphysical terms, as a field of underlying oneness. But it is equally true that the "new motive power" unleashed by the industrial revolution, liquefied community as it had thus far been experienced, into something quite ephemeral and mercurial. In its aftermath, we live amongst our fellow citizens as "strangers unto ourselves," as both acquaintances and aliens, intimates and outsiders. In addition to serving as liaisons between the living and the dead, Spiritualist mediums in this context model the uncanny identity of modern citizenship: at times they may know our most intimate secrets; at others they are perfect outcasts. The public turns to them for consolation in times of crisis, but has not yet agreed on exactly



what they are: counselors, religious experts, entertainers, opportunists – or cyborgs?

As for the sheer power unleashed by the new machines, this too has been experienced by modern Americans as double-sided. While the machines undoubtedly liberate us from the confines of time and space, they also bring trauma. Indeed, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch has documented, the first recorded accounts of what is now called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is found in nineteenth-century accounts of railway accidents, where victims suffering minor bumps and bruises found themselves emotionally incapacitated days after the event.<sup>25</sup> In my own travels through a paranormal America, it was certainly the ufological preoccupations at Roswell that grappled most directly with the double-edged valence of technology. As I have already mentioned, the obsession with alien machines is expressed hand-in-hand with awe of our own super-power/hyper-power technology. According to the extraterrestrial hypothesis of UFO origins, popularized during the 1950s, aliens arrived in American airspace in order to monitor our developments in nuclear warfare -- either to defend themselves, or to help protect us from ourselves.

And here we return at last to Richard Shaver's welding gun. We might ask ourselves which power is more fantastic, and fearsome: the alleged race of deros living underneath the earth, or the nuclear-armed American superpower that corporations like the Ford Motor Company help to sustain? This question is not to insinuate that UFOs can be reduced to anxieties about technology, it is rather to highlight that the weird dimensions of the former phenomenon brings to consciousness the uncanny dimensions of the latter. Modern technology is revealed as a this-worldly analog to the *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the spirit world, a power wrapped up at one and the same time with both "progress" and species-extinction.

But if UFO hunters seem alone in their wariness of a machine-driven world, participants at all three of the gatherings I visited are stirred by *some other presence* making itself known in and through these technological networks. There are ghosts inside of our machines, just as there were

voices coming through Richard Shaver's welding gun. Significantly, these Others are not the beings of paranormal entity encounters: we are not talking here about the spirits of the dearly beloved departed, or extraterrestrials, or ultraterrestrials, or spirits of place. The specters in question appear in the guise of non-European Others (in the American context, typically as Native American) whose memory is invoked, as it were, by the presence of these other-worldly beings. We can begin our foray into this second dimension of the complex narrative shaping the American discourse about the paranormal, with a consideration, once again, of the American Spiritualist movement and its ever-present Native American spirit guides. These latter beings only became a regular feature of séances after the Civil War, as the United States waged the last of its Indian Wars west of the Mississippi. Oftentimes they appeared in order to forgive white Americans for displacing their civilizations, or even to thank them for making available the opportunity of Christian salvation.<sup>26</sup>

At Lily Dale today, Native American ghosts continue to appear as spirit guides for many mediums, and the camp's museum showcases their ongoing presence down through the decades. There are precipitated spirit paintings of Native guides, carved wooden busts of fierce looking warriors, and even an entire display dedicated to Oskonen, a Kahnawake Mohawk man who taught healing arts at Lily Dale from 1916 to 1955. Both his attire – including an eagle-feather headdress – and the tipi in which he lived during the summer months were not Mohawk, but Lakota, an adjustment he made presumably to conform to the European-American caricatures of Native cultures that came into vogue following the final defeat of the Great Plains tribes.

Just one state over from New York in Vermont, many of the dowsers are also riveted by the Native American Other, continuing a particular practice and theory of dowsing that comes out of the so-called "Earth Mysteries" tradition of ecospirituality.<sup>27</sup> This discourse is, in part, a legacy of twentieth-century dowsing in Europe. It grew out of the thesis of Sir Alfred Watkins, published in a 1925 book entitled *The Old*

*Straight Track*, which claimed that prehistoric ruins strewn about contemporary landscapes can be read as so many texts, to glean information about the culture of the "ancient civilizations" that built them. European dowsers subsequently embellished Watkins' ideas by positing the existence of energetic "ley lines" in and around these sites, which members of ancient civilizations allegedly manipulated as part of their own technology.<sup>28</sup> Modern-day dowsers, in turn, claim to be able to sense the ley lines with the help of their own tools, an inflection of dowsing popularized in the United States by the American Society beginning in the early 1980s.<sup>29</sup> During my own visits to ASD conventions between 2007 and 2009, I participated in both conversations and dowsing workshops that attempted to uncover the lost secrets of the pre-Columbian Native past in New England. One summer, I participated in the construction of a Great-Plains-inspired medicine wheel, reinterpreted by our teacher as both a species of ancient technology and an advanced application of dowsing. Another summer, I accompanied a group of dowsers to divine for the now-forgotten origins and meaning of a number of the anomalous stone sites that dot the New England countryside. For 2012, the American Society of Dowers has planned to devote the entire convention to "Ancient Mysteries...Dowsing...Pathways to the Future."

The non-European Others appeared at Roswell, too, this time in the guise of the extra-terrestrials. Ufologists depict aliens in the same way that the European colonial imagination once cast Native Americans: either as noble descendants from an advanced (meaning technologically advanced) civilization on another planet that had come to an end a long time ago, or as savage creatures, bent on destroying our modern order.<sup>30</sup> As is the case for Spiritualism, here too there are precedents dating back to the origins of the movement. Long before 1947, the year that national waves of UFO sightings began in America, the authors of science fiction, who in many cases were contributors to pulp journals like *Amazing Stories*, were already scripting ETs in such colonialist terms. One can cite H.G. Wells'

1899 classic *War of the Worlds* as an important example; Wells drew his inspiration for the Martian attack on Earthlings from the "war of extermination waged by European immigrants" on the indigenous Tasmanian population.<sup>31</sup>

Another example is the more recent alien abduction narrative, which grew in popularity during the 1980s. During 2007 and 2009, alien abductees were an especially vocal presence at Roswell. Some were self-identified Christian abductees, who identified the entities of their abduction experiences with the *nephilim* of Genesis. Others held to a more secular interpretation of the aliens as visitors from other planets or from parallel universes. Either way, their stories are uncanny replications of the Indian Captivity Narratives first published in seventeenth-century Anglo-American colonial societies, in which savages from the deep wilderness areas breach the boundaries of civilization to kidnap torture, and sexually violate their victims, who in turn grow closer to God in and through the process.

While it is clear enough that the depictions of non-European Others that circulate in these paranormal contexts have deep roots in the colonialist imaginary, what is not so clear is why these caricatured non-Europeans should so regularly appear as specters alongside, or in place of, paranormal Others. Following historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith, I would like to suggest that there is an elegant homology between these two classes of beings, the aliens and the Indians, that sheds a strange light on the modern myth of cultural origins as an evolutionary progression from savagery to civilization. In his essay, "Close Encounters of Diverse Kinds," Smith has taken up an analysis of alien abduction reports to discuss the unresolved problem in the modern west, of encountering and translating cultural otherness.<sup>32</sup> What fascinates Smith about abduction narratives is the total lack of a two-way, reciprocally transformative communication between the alien abductor and the human abductee. Typically their meetings transpire aboard a spaceship, in an operating room, where the alien subjects its victim to examinations of a physical kind -- probing skin and orifices, removing sperm or ova. But the alien is either unable or unwilling

to impart its own understanding of the cosmos; the close encounter remains, quite literally, skin deep. "The aliens betray no interest in human culture, and impart nothing of their own," Smith writes.<sup>33</sup>

As Smith reminds us, the non-paranormal precedent for such an encounter with "radical alterity" is recorded in the first accounts of the so-called New World by European voyagers, that paradigm-shifting convergence that laid the foundations in the west for envisioning an entirely new cosmological orientation. In short, no solution was ever found to account for our relationship with Native American otherness, once it became clear that the monogenetic account given in the Bible for the diversity of human communities was not adequate to explain their presence. In the wake of its eclipse, a polygenetic model inherited from the Greeks emerged for a time, with its modern theories of race, but this explanation too waned in the wake of Darwin. And yet, the evolutionary model concerns itself with *natural*, not cultural, difference. Thus, Smith concludes that the original bewilderment recorded in the earliest European accounts of "discovery" remains unaddressed.<sup>34</sup> Hence his interest in the "silence that remains" between the alien and the human, and their mutual failure to engage in anything beyond gazing at the different surfaces of each other's bodies. The abduction experience, whatever else it may be, is a perfect encapsulation of modernity's estrangement from the rest of the world, at least insofar as the West denies its material, social, and cultural enmeshment with the very peoples it claims to have "discovered."

In the paranormal context, non-European ghosts appear at the boundaries or limits of civilization's fold. Sometimes this limit is imagined in spatial terms as *beneath* American territory, in which case the non-European ghosts haunt the very ground on which we walk. This is the case in Spiritualism, where Indian ghosts dwell ambiguously in our midst as well as in the afterlife – quite unlike European ghosts, who are squarely "on the other side" of death. A graphic illustration of Spiritualists literally digging the earth to uncover the Native dead, is preserved in the his-

tory of John Murray Spear's Harmonia community in Kiantone, New York. The camp went bankrupt in 1863 after Spear approved allocating thousands of dollars to unearth the remains of a long-lost tribe of Celtic, web-footed Indians who, according to the spirits, had lived there centuries earlier.<sup>35</sup> The Harmonia story foreshadows the modern-day dowsers' preoccupation with the "ancient mysteries" discussed above: the psychic search to uncover the secrets of pre-Columbian civilizations.

At other times the ghosts of the non-European Others come from *beyond* the pale of civilization, as in the noble and savage aliens of ufology who emerge from the primordial depths of intergalactic space, appearing in our airspaces as unwelcome hostiles. Whether these ghosts come from above, beneath, or beyond the national fold, their appearance is a reminder that a modern identity fashioned in opposition to the non-European Other is an ephemeral one indeed, as impossible to pin down as the strange phenomena that figure as the more explicit foci of paranormal gatherings. Their spectral status implicates the modern world as ghostlike. We go out to find these Others, but they disappear, and in the process we lose our ground as well, setting the stage for ever-new quests for phantasms.

### III.

I would like to conclude my remarks on the complex narrative of the paranormal by considering the recurrence of fantastic travelogues set within the panoramic vistas of nature. Once again, this theme dates back to the earliest American forays into the realm of unsolved mysteries. The paradigmatic "paranormal travelogue" in the American context is Andrew Jackson Davis' *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*. Davis, the *de facto* theologian of Spiritualism, began his career as a student and practitioner of mesmerism. Starting in 1845, he volunteered to become the subject of S.S. Lyon, who succeeded in mesmerizing Davis into the fourth and deepest state of trance. It was in this state that Davis dictated *Principles*, which

covered subjects as vast as the origins of the universe, the history of humankind, and the topography of the afterworld. Just a year after its publication, Spiritualists looked back to Davis' tome to lift out their core metaphysical principles. These included his conflation of God with Nature (eventually codified in the National Association of Spiritualists declaration of principles as their second dogma, "We believe that the phenomena of Nature, both physical and spiritual, are the expression of Infinite Intelligence") and his discussion of spirit communication.

But Davis' work was as much a literary work as it was a metaphysical treatise. It was in fact a cosmic travelogue, narrated by a disembodied author who had completely transcended the limits of space and time. *Principles* recounted the origins of a sentient cosmos, the "univercoelum," from a primordial burst of mind-matter into a series of six concentric worlds with the "Sensorium" at its core. It told of the transformations of terrestrial minerals, plants, and animal life into their current configurations. And it reconstructed the emergence and metamorphoses of human civilizations — Asia, Africa, Europe, and pre-Columbian America — all by way of explaining why the modern, industrializing United States stood at the zenith of world history. Davis took care to explain at the outset of *Principles* that his experience of flight was an optical illusion; he was but the passive receptor, perfectly still, who absorbed information communicated through an all-pervading cosmic ether. Nevertheless, Davis addressed his readers and spoke of himself in the language of exploration and adventure. Before elaborating on the technicalities of mesmerism, for example, he explained: "A man intending a journey to some foreign country, would, if a judicious traveler, familiarize himself with the geography of it, and acquaint himself with the maps and charts of the various ways by following which he might reach the place of his destination."<sup>36</sup> And as the mesmerized mind entered its deepest, most receptive regions, it was "launched from its nidulated [i.e. nested] state... pass[ing] into a new sphere of existence."<sup>37</sup>

Davis' implicit understanding of Nature as the macro-framework encompassing all of space

and time is a quintessentially modern conception, one that came to replace the Christian notion of "Creation" to describe the physical world in which we dwell. In *Principles of Nature* there is no privileged center, no *axis mundi* to which Davis travels, and from which he returns. Like his contemporary Ralph Waldo Emerson, he is drawn to the image of circles and spheres as a representation of totality. He frequently explains that any and every point of the universe is a center of a new world. At times the idea seems almost to overwhelm him: "No possible combination of figures would be adequate to present to the human mind the number of spheres contained in the broad ocean of the stellar system. If each particle of matter composing this sphere could be numbered, the whole world would not even convey an idea of the number of worlds contained in infinite space!"<sup>38</sup> And yet, undaunted, Davis ventures on, clearly exhilarated by the thrill, or the illusion, of movement through the vastness. Andrew Jackson Davis, not to mention his readership, is lost in space, as well as in time, traveling endlessly in order to find some bearing "in nature."

The result of Davis' two-year initiatory tour of the univercoelum was a Byzantine, highly ordered, cosmology. At the same time, these pioneering forays left the door wide open for future cosmonauts to connect the dots, that infinite set of all spherical centers, in new and unending ways.<sup>39</sup> And in fact, there has been a steady stream of paranormal travelogues since the publication of *Principles*. From the Spiritualist tradition comes that favorite automatic writer of the Surrealists, Hélène Smith (née Catherine-Elise Muller) who traveled to Mars and back again, retrieving the Martian alphabet in the process.<sup>40</sup> From the Earth Mysteries lineage that lives on today in dowsing circles, the metaphysical classic, John Michell's *The View Above Atlantis*. First published in 1969, this volume surveys the entire prehistoric world, revealing, in what should no longer come as a surprise, a panoply of ancient civilizations distinguished by their advanced (and psychic) technologies.<sup>41</sup> And from the world of ufology, there emerges a veritable subgenre of science fiction recording various flights through

the universe, sometimes penned by authors, and at other times channeled through "contactees" allegedly in telepathic communication with aliens.

This conception of Nature as an empty, boundless domain consummates our previous discussions of machines and ghostly non-European Others. In spatial terms, Nature is shorthand for translocality. To say that we "live in Nature" is to say that we live nowhere in particular, and anywhere in general. The machines have helped us to cut ourselves loose from the confines of place and community; they have created and sustain the precondition for our modern sense of "freedom." In temporal terms, Nature is shorthand for that which came before history. It is the realm in which the imaginary non-European Others dwell as the "children of Nature," before there was meaningful time, which is to say, before we "discovered them." Nature is indeed the backdrop for all explorations of the paranormal. In my own travels, it is the physical setting or backdrop of the paranormal gatherings: at Lily Dale and at the ASD convention, in the pristine, rural surroundings of the American countryside; at the Roswell UFO Festival, in the intergalactic expanses of outer space. In metaphysical and parapsychological literature, it is the alleged context in which the various unexplained enigmas unfold.

The profane illumination that the paranormal affords here is nothing less than a Close Encounter with the form and structure of our own cultural mythology. Quite apart from the mind-blowing details of spirits and Earth Mysteries and aliens, the complex narrative of the paranormal is a variation on the master narratives of modernity, constituting a fictive dimension of history, archeology, and anthropology. No less than these latter genres, the paranormal discourse attempts to explain where we, as the wielders of marvelous machines, fit in the greater story of humanity and the Earth, and how we, as the people of history, suddenly came to be. In both conventional and paranormal versions, we appear *ex nihilo*, in Nature, like Athena springing fully grown from Zeus's head.

What is laid bare for all of us to ponder in the complex narrative of the paranormal are the *gaps* in our mythology: the places in the conventional accounts of modernity that gloss over the *aporia* of not knowing precisely whence, where, or what we are in relation to the "others" of *this world*. As we have discussed, these gaps include, first, the paradox of living in what Benedict Anderson famously termed the "imagined community" of the modern nation, where certain kinds of technology sustain the illusion of close proximity to others, even as we dwell apart as strangers. The second gap relates to the "event horizon" of national history, where knowledge of the prehistoric Others – the "primitives" living outside the fold of the modern nation, is forever precluded by the genre of history itself.<sup>42</sup> The third gap, which stems from the first two, pertains to the modern notion that we live somewhere "in nature," meaning precisely that translocal space made possible by certain kinds of technology, and that ahistorical realm that depends upon a denial of the human Others written out of the modern narrative of history. In the final analysis, there is a parallelism between the unexplained nature of paranormal phenomena, and the ineffable dimensions of ordinary modern life.

Once you have noticed the odd triptych of machinery, non-European Others, and panoramic accounts of nature/history framing paranormal accounts of the "totally Other," you begin to see it cropping up again and again. Turn over the seminal issue of *Fate Magazine*, and you will find an ad for a text with exactly the same combination of themes featured in *I Remember Lemuria*. It is entitled *Oahspe: A New Bible*, and was published in 1882 by American Spiritualist named John Ballou Newbrough. In this case, the information came not through a welding gun but through a manual typewriter. Newbrough reported his personal experience, in 1880, of seeing a strange light envelop his hands as he held them over the machine; the next thing he knew, a manuscript began to write itself. The result was a small tome recounting in the words of its subtitle, "The History of the Human Races...[and The] History of Every Major Religion." In other



words, *Oahspe* gave an account of modern origins – as well as an account of the creation of the universe, the celestial hierarchy, and humankind. As for the non-European Others lurking in the text, they can be inferred through the proliferation of hand-drawn (and channeled) hieroglyphs that Newbrough included in the text.<sup>43</sup>

The paranormal is indeed the normal state of affairs in modern America, pointing to a crisis in how we moderns imagine ourselves as inhabiting the cosmos. I would like to claim this insight as my own, but it was telepathically communicated to abductee Betty Hill, decades ago, by an alien. Aboard its mother ship, the alien held up a map of the stars. Hill asked it to show her its homeport. The consummation of their exchange would have been the ufological discovery of the Holy Grail – *we would have finally known where to place Them*. But the alien refused, asking Hill to point to *her* home star first. But she could not. "If you don't know where you are," the alien explained, "then there isn't any point of my telling [you] where I am from."<sup>44</sup> The same religious and scientific maps that fail to account for paranormal beings like aliens (or spirits, or Earth Mysteries) have also failed thus far to orient us, the alienated and rootless community of modern American Earthlings.

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<sup>1</sup> The word "paranormal" itself does not come into usage until the early twentieth-century, when it is defined – in the 1920 edition of *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* -- as "phenomena analogous to physical phenomena but with no known physical cause." The earliest examples of such phenomena, however, date back to the healing practices of the eighteenth-century, Austrian physician, Franz Anton Mesmer. Mesmer's demonstrated ability to heal patients of physical and mental maladies without the aid of medicine, set in motion a highly contested debate over its causes -- including a (skeptical) scientific review of one of his students by a royal commission appointed by France's King Louis XVI in 1784. The "paranormal" status of Mesmerism stems not from the healing practices themselves, but from the fact that the multiple communities seeking to fix its meaning -- metaphysical, Christian theological, and modern scientific -- thwarted any kind of epistemological closure.

<sup>2</sup> In *The Book of the Damned*, Fort wrote: "In this book I assemble some of the data that I think are of the falsely and arbitrarily excluded. The data of the damned." Charles Fort, *The Complete Books of Charles Fort: The Book of the Damned / Lo! / Wild Talents / New Lands* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1974), 11.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Authors of the Impossible: the Paranormal and the Sacred* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 9-17.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Darryl Catherine, *Haunted Ground: Journeys through a Paranormal America*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC-CLIO, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Mediumship first emerged as a cultural craze in America in 1848, when two young girls --- Margaret and Kate Fox -- apparently demonstrated their ability to communicate with a poltergeist haunting their family home in Hydesville, New York. Throughout the nineteenth century, Spiritualism flourished in America in both non-institutional and institutional contexts, including lectures delivered by public trance mediums in the antebellum period, public displays of mediumship, and private experimentations with communing with the dead. In the 1870s, mediumship was institutionalized in dozens of Spiritualist summer camps like Lily Dale.

<sup>7</sup> In its most basic form, dowsing (also known as divining, or sometimes rhabdomancy) is a method for finding lost or hidden objects, or determining answers to questions, using such simple tools as metal rods or pendulums. The earliest text discussing the practice at length is Georgius Agricola's 1556 *De Re Metallica (On the Nature of Metals)*, which discusses the use of "divining rods" among German miners in their search for underground ore. In 1960, a small group of Vermonters and out-of-staters founded the American Society of Dowsters to promote, publicize and explore the art of dowsing. Their activities included the publication of a newsletter, and the organization of a yearly convention.

<sup>8</sup> The modern era of ufology began with the highly publicized reports of private pilot Kenneth Arnold's sightings of unidentified craft on June 24, 1947. Within a month of Arnold's sighting, reports of "flying saucers" were pouring into police stations, media outlets, and military airbases across the nation. The first wave of UFO activity lasted from 1947 until 1951. Three other waves followed: from 1958 to 1960; from 1970 to 1972; and from 1979 to 1981. In 1972, astronomer J. Allen Hynek, a scientific consultant to Air Force studies of UFOs, classified reports according to three different kinds of "Close Encounters": the First Kind, sightings of craft; the Second Kind, sightings of craft with physical traces left behind; and the Third Kind, sightings of craft with animate beings aboard or nearby. Later, reports of alien abduction were added as a Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind, and alleged telepathic communication with alien beings as a Close Encounter of the Fifth Kind.

The 1980 publication of Charles Berlitz's and William Moore's *The Roswell Incident* spawned a new era of interest in ufology that lasted through the 1990s. Based on interviews with residents of Roswell, New Mexico, the book claimed that the United States Army had sequestered a crashed flying saucer on the outskirts of Roswell in July, 1947. Capitalizing on the popularity of this book and its aftermath, the town of Roswell held its first UFO Festival in 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Two questions have framed scientific research on dowsing. The first, and more prosaic involves the reasons for the movement of the rod. Most researchers from the time of Agricola on have posited a somatic cause, rather than a property of the dowsing tools themselves. In more recent studies the theory of unconscious muscular action prevails. The second and more central question concerns how, or if, the dowser obtains information about the target. Answers include the "normal inference" theory (i.e. dowsers are acute observers of their environment); physical causes, including sensitivity to electromagnetic fields; and parapsychological causes, particularly in the cases of off-site "informational dowsing" where a dowser locates water using only a map of the terrain. Distinct from these studies is a sociological theory that dowsing emerged and continues as a method of allaying anxiety in areas where water is scarce, or access to water limited by economic restraints. Despite hundreds of studies on each one of these areas, the scientific literature on dowsing remains inconclusive. See George P. Hansen, "Dowsing: A Review of Experimental Research," *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, no. 792 (October, 1982): 343-67.

<sup>10</sup> E. Lyell Earle, "Lily Dale, the Haunt of Spiritualists," *Catholic World* 68 (January, 1899): 506-7.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent discussion of Spears' "new motive power," see John Lardas Modern, *Secularism in Antebellum America* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 294-300

<sup>12</sup> Ilana Harlow, "Unravelling Stories: Exploring the Junction of Ghost Story and Local Tragedy," *Journal of Folklore Research*, vol 30, no 2/3 (May-Dec., 1993), 177-200.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia," in Lawrence Rainey, ed., *Modernism: An Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 1094.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Greeley, *The Sociology of the Paranormal: A Reconnaissance* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1975), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 115-17.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Weisberg, *Talking to the Dead: Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 102.

<sup>17</sup> Upton Sinclair, *Mental Radio* (Pasadena, CA: Upton Sinclair, 1930).

<sup>18</sup> According to Vermont dowsers Terry Ross and Richard Wright, dowsing is the art of synchronizing one's own brain-mind waves with the frequencies of the desired object-mind-wave. The dowser *resonates* with his target, and the motion of his tools, be they rods or pendulums, indicates a successful merging of subject and object. See T. Edward Ross and Richard D. Wright, *The Divining Mind: A Guide to Dowsing and Self-Awareness* (Rochester, VT: Destiny Books, 1990), 66.

<sup>19</sup> See Chapter 2, "You Can Get Here from There" in Stanton Friedman, *Flying Saucers and Science: A Scientist Investigates the Mysteries of UFOs* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2008), 59-92.

<sup>20</sup> Historian of religion Catherine L. Albanese has delineated a fourfold set of concepts that constitute the basic metaphysical worldview underlying Spiritualism, dowsing, and ufology – particularly in its explanations of human-alien interactions in Close Encounters of the Fourth and Fifth kinds (among abductees and contactees, respectively). First, the metaphysical *weltanschauung* posits the universe as a unified field of consciousness; second, it describes the cosmos primarily in terms of energy and transformation; third, it teaches that any and all discrete particulars embody the structure and patterns of the whole; fourth, it prioritizes gnosis —a direct awareness of one's own mind as contiguous with the One Mind — as the central purpose of the religious life. Catherine L. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit: : A Cultural History of American Metaphysical Religion*, Catherine Albanese (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 13-15. A similar understanding of the cosmos emerges in parapsychological explanations of the ultimate significance of psi phenomena. Dean Radin, lead parapsychological researcher for the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, California, has summarized the case as follows: "Underlying the isolated world of ordinary objects and human experience is another reality, an interconnected world of intermingling relationships and possibilities. This underlying reality is more fundamental – in the sense of being the ground state from which everything originates – than the transient forms and dynamic relationships of familiar experience." Dean Radin, *A Conscious Universe: The Scientific Truth of Psychic Phenomena* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 299.

<sup>21</sup> Chapter 2, "The Unconscious Discovered: The Mesmerists' Legacy" in Robert C. Fuller, *Americans and the Unconscious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 29-50.

<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 6, "Overthrowing the Tyranny of Distance" in Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 203-42.

<sup>23</sup> Benedict Anderson has famously discussed the new conception of "empty and homogenous time," made possible by print-capitalism, which enabled citizens of modern nation-states to imagine themselves as existing together simultaneously as members of a single "imagined community." The print revolution represented a revolution in the social imagination; the industrial revolution reflected a sea change in the lived experience of national citizenries. Chapter 2, "Cultural Roots" in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 2006), 9-36.

<sup>24</sup> Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2003). For a classic discussion of the dread of social dissolution during the early decades of industrialization, see Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).

<sup>25</sup> Chapter 9, "Railroad Accident, 'Railway Spine' and Traumatic Neurosis" in Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), 134-49.

<sup>26</sup> Even earlier, Native Americans had played a pivotal role in the foundational texts of Spiritualism, those dictated over a two-year period by the mesmerized Andrew Jackson Davis, and published in 1847 as *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind*. In Davis' trance-induced accounts of the world's different "races," American Indians held a special place for embracing the belief and practice of spirit communication centuries before Davis, and soon after, his Spiritualist heirs introduced them to the allegedly more civilized, Anglo-Protestant-American world. Albanese, *A Republic of Mind and Spirit*, 233-53.

<sup>27</sup> The Earth Mysteries is an umbrella term covering a wide range of speculation on alleged, anomalous geophysical energies and their relationship with prehistoric architecture. In its present-day formulation, this discourse can be dated back to American and British metaphysical writings published in the mid-1960s. In Britain, a number of Earth Mysteries metaphysicists – including Paul Devereux, John Michell, Nigel Pennick and Anthony Roberts – joined together to found *The Ley Hunter* magazine in 1965. The journal became a forum for developing and popularizing the interrelated ideas of ley lines, geomancy and Earth energies. Devereux served for a time as *The Ley Hunter's* chief editor. See "Ley Lines, Earth Energies, and Other Mysteries" in Adrian J. Ivakhiv, *Claiming Sacred Ground: Pilgrims and Politics at Glastonbury and Sedona* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 2001), 22-43.

<sup>28</sup> Ivakhiv, 23-4.

<sup>29</sup> The Earth Mysteries appeared as the feature topic of the first ASD quarterly in 1980. Editor Tom Graves included the letter from Paul Devereux to American dowser Sig Lonegren in its entirety. Devereux recollected his trip to Vermont the previous year: "I cannot let this opportunity pass without recording my delight at meeting you and your family, and the other marvelous members of the ASD and NEARA...I have a memory of New England that can be conjured up vividly by thoughts of brilliantly coloured foliage, wonderful, friendly, and hospitable people and mysterious, tree-shrouded stone artifacts." *The American Dowser Quarterly Digest*, 20, no. 1 (February, 1980): 22.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher F. Roth, "Ufology as Anthropology: Race, Extraterrestrials, and the Occult," in Debora Battaglia, ed., *E.T. Culture: Anthropology in Outerspaces* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005), 38-93.

<sup>31</sup> H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (Clayton, DE: Prestwick House, 2006), 13.

<sup>32</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, "Close Encounters of Diverse Kinds" in *Religion and Cultural Studies*, ed. Susan L. Mizruchi (Princeton and Oxfordshire: Princeton University Press, 2001), 3-21.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>34</sup> Smith writes, "The novelty of the Americas gave the West its first compelling language of difference, shattering, thereby, the older synthetic theory of essence and accident. We have yet to set forth a set of equally compelling cultural and comparative theories adequate to this new language. This remains, today, the unfulfilled challenge to the human sciences." Mizruchi, 21.



<sup>35</sup> See see John Benedict Buescher, *The Remarkable Life of John Murray Spear: Agitator for the Spirit Land* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 196-97.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Principles of Nature, Her Divine Revelations, and a Voice to Mankind* (New York: S.S. Lyon and Wm. Fishbough, 1847), 36-37.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>39</sup> Semiotician Umberto Eco sees reflected in the texts of the metaphysical tradition a certain method of interpretation, one that traces perceived identities among seemingly disparate data to formulate a gestalt vision of an underlying unity binding them all together. He calls this hermeneutic "hermetic drift." It is an entirely different kind of reasoning than "knowing by means of the cause," preferring to draw out similarities between one datum and the next, rather than looking for causal chains. Hermetic drift wanders. It is non-linear. It posits riddles to be solved – what do all of these things have in common? – rather than posing explicit truths. See Chapter 2, "Unlimited Semiosis and Drift" in Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 23-43.

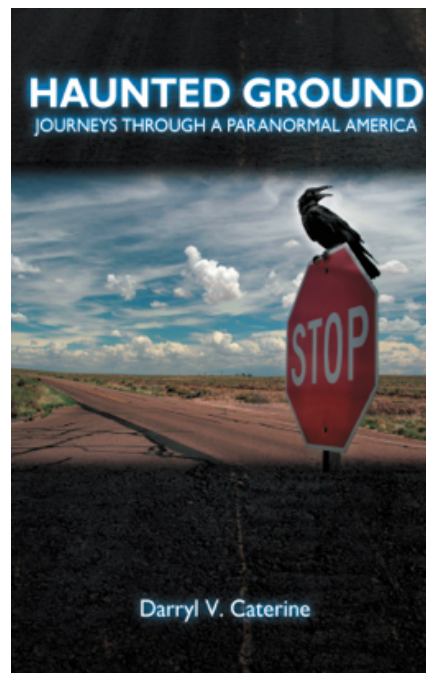
<sup>40</sup> Théodore Flournoy, *From India to the Planet Mars: A Case of Multiple Personality with Imaginary Languages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>41</sup> Michell developed the idea of a prehistoric, global society of "sacred engineers" who built and maintained a planetary network of ley lines, which in turn sustained local human settlements. His chapter on "Sacred Engineering" begins an overview of these ancient scientists: "From what we have seen of the scientific methods practiced by the adepts of the ancient world it is possible to draw two conclusions. First, they recognized the existence of some force or current, of whose potential we are now ignorant, and discovered the form of natural science by which it could be manipulated. Secondly, they gained, apparently by means connected with their use of this current, certain direct insight into the fundamental questions of philosophy, the nature of God and the universe and the relationship between life and death." John Michell, *The View Over Atlantis* (New York: Ballantine Books, Inc., 1969), 166.

<sup>42</sup> Chapter 1, "Native Americans and the Problem of History, Part I," in Steven Conn, *History's Shadow: Native Americans and Historical Consciousness in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004), 1-34.

<sup>43</sup> John Ballou Newbrough, *Oahspe, A New Bible in the Words of Jehovih and His Angel Embassadors. A Sacred History of the Dominions of the Higher and Lower Heavens on the Earth for the Past Twenty-Four Thousand Years*. (New York, London: Oahspe Publishing Association, 1882).

<sup>44</sup> John G. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey* (New York: Berkley Publishing Corporation, 1966), 209.



According to a 2005 Gallup poll, 75 percent of Americans believe in some form of paranormal activity. The United States has had a collective fascination with the paranormal since the mid-1800s, and it remains an integral part of our culture. Haunted Ground: Journeys through a Paranormal America examines three of the most vibrant paranormal

gatherings in the United States—Lily Dale, a Spiritualist summer camp; the Roswell UFO Festival; and the American Society of Dowsters' annual convention of "water witches"—to explore and explain the reasons for our obsession with the paranormal.

Both academically informed and thoroughly entertaining, this book takes readers on a "road trip" through our nation, guided by professor of American religion Darryl V. Catherine, PhD. The author interprets seemingly unrelated case studies of phantasmagoria collectively as an integral part of the modern discourse about "nature" as ultimate reality. Along the way, Dr. Catherine reveals how Americans' interest in the paranormal is rooted in their anxieties about cultural, political, and economic instability—and in a historic sense of alienation and homelessness.

[www.darrylcatherine.com](http://www.darrylcatherine.com)

# Magic or Science: A Look at Reiki in American Medicine

Joshua Graham



A merry heart doeth good like medicine.

- Proverbs 17:22

## Introduction

In a sterile environment, a surgeon, already scrubbed and prepared to begin the procedure approaches a nervous patient lying on the hospital gurney staring into a blindingly bright light. After the doctor offers a quiet mummer of assurance to the patient, the physician systematically moves his hands in a complex, arcane pattern over the patient's body and through his or her aura to adjust the biofield of the patient before giving a quick nod to the Anesthesiologist acknowledging that it is time to begin the operation...

While the above fictive illustration may seem odd to the modern, Western reader, magic and modern medical bioscience have not evolved away from each other as completely as may be believed. The question of what is magical and what is biomedical is not completely black and white, and to illustrate this seeming impossibility, I plan to turn the reader's attention to the modern use of Reiki, an energy healing modality, in major medical institutions in the United States of America. From Boston Children's Hospital's use of Reiki as a part of the standard treatments offered to all patients by the Integrative Therapies Team (Centers Services), to Yale New Haven Hospital's adoption of the Reiki Volunteer Program (Complementary Services Program) and even John Hopkins's Integrative Medicine & Digestive Center growing use of Reiki (Reiki), reputable American medical centers are adding Reiki to their list of services. I propose that by using Reiki, Western medical science blurs the barriers between magic and modern bioscience and makes the distinction irrelevant when contextualized by the treatment of the patient. Furthermore, through the lens of anthropology, this can be seen as an embodied phenomenological event and

due to the limitations of studying ideas and value judgments such as quality of life, a rational analytical mode of study should be abandoned and an Epoché approach of suspension of judgment as suggested by Edmund Husserl should be attempted.

## Methodology

As this paper is concerned with a phenomenological understanding of Reiki's place in a biomedical setting, questions of its statistical effectiveness will not be considered. Rather, this will allow for a more nuanced understanding of the complex web of meaning that is created when considering notions of biomedical and 'magical' in the Western prospective vis-à-vis Reiki in America. Reiki's nebulous position as a healing modality offers an interesting lens by which to consider the place of magic in the hospital. Reiki has taken on Christian narratives over its historical use and importation into America, placing it in the realm of faith healing and thereby mitigating the stigma of the magical (Klassen 2005, Petter 1997, Nield-Anderson 2000). However, research by Reiki practitioners have rejected this myth and instead emphasized Reiki's roots in Buddhist cosmologies (Lübeck et al 2002). Furthermore, while authors such as Amy Rowland stress how Reiki as a modality is not a magical practice but rather that it engages with Science, others such as Katalin Koda, Christopher Penczak, and Diane Stein argue for the opposite (Rowland 2010, 121, Koda 2008, Penczak 2004, Stein 1995). When regarding manuals produced for the dissemination of Reiki to a broad public, the tension between its use as a magical system and or a science can be seen. However, the means of understanding the issues surrounding magic and Reiki through its growth from Japan to American and beyond, a subject and knowledge difficult to track between practitioners and patients, will not be examined here. Rather, a more personal, subjective approach is needed in order to understand tension be-

tween the biomedical and magic from the view of recipients and practitioners. In order to develop such a methodology, I will briefly introduce the concept of phenomenology and Husserl's epoché as a means of doing just this. After such, Reiki's use in the biomedical sphere may be more thoroughly understood.

Reason and phenomenology have had an interesting relationship since the philosophy's inception in the early twentieth century by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. While "Husserl proposed a transcendental phenomenology to restore reason to its historical role in determining the meaning of human existence" (Kultgen 1975, 372), phenomenology is not necessarily in keeping with the Western tradition of rational empiricism. "The radicality of the phenomenological method is both continuous and discontinuous with philosophy's general effort to subject experience to fundamental, critical scrutiny: to take nothing for granted and to show the warranty for what we claim to know" (Natanson 1973, 63).

Phenomenology challenges the a priori conception of Western empiricism that the personal experiences of the researchers and subjects are barriers to the actuality of data and calls participants in intellectual discourse to

I (here the first person is essential) must "reduce" my lived experience. First, I must suspend the "natural attitude," setting aside ("bracketing") my habitual belief in the existence of objects, common sense and scientific ideas of their nature, and the logic by which I arrive at these. Then I can describe precisely how objects appear, purely as phenomena, with intuitive certainty as data for all higher forms of cognition. I must also practice "eidetic reduction," imaginatively varying my experience to uncover constant or essential structures, to gain apodictic intuitions of transcendental forms of both phenomena and the processes by which I experience them. [Kultgen 1975, 372]

Only by the acceptance of the personal experiences of both the researcher and the subject can one truly arrive at any actual knowledge of the object they are interacting with or the event they perceive without any reductionism. Phenomenology also allows for a wider, non-Western dialogue when discussing events pertaining to the discussion of non-measurable phenomena such as magic, health, happiness, etc., due to its resemblance to eastern philosophies – the most notable being Buddhism, which expresses that "unlike many other religious philosophies, [Buddhism] regards personal experience as the only valid source of knowledge" (Lesser 1979, 55).

A new application of phenomenological theory in anthropology, and especially medical anthropology, can lead toward an innovative conceptualization of the fundamental questions and methods of research and discourse raised by the discipline. Born out of basic Enlightenment theory, "A singular premise guiding Western science and clinical medicine (and one we hasten to add, that is responsible for its awesome efficacy) is its commitment to a fundamental opposition between spirit and matter, mind and body, and (underlying this) real and unreal" (Scheper-Hughes 1987, 8). Only by commitment to this principle of dichotomy can concepts like medicine and magic be relegated to separate categories. Magic is pigeonholed into the realm of the ethereal, and as nonmaterial is innately Orientalized, as compared to the materially focused modern Western biomedicine. This reliance upon rationality concocts a potentially antagonistic situation that forces patients to rely on diagnostic science over their own experience in order to receive treatment. Likewise, when diagnosticians invested in the idea of the patient's own self-efficacy, and the "physicians, psychiatrists, and clinical social workers 'knew' that pain was 'real' whether or not the source of it could be verified by diagnostic tests," the medical staff seemed uneasy with the results, and "could not help but express evident relief when a 'true' (i.e., single, generally organic) cause could be discovered" (Scheper-Hughes 1987, 10).

Furthermore, the binary dichotomy is carried over into the very definitions of Western healthcare itself with the distinction drawn between disease, the more officious biomedical term, and illness, the more subjective term that encompasses the patient's subjective experience. However, by being the party that controls the definitions, "one unanticipated effect has been that physicians are claiming both aspects of the sickness experience for the medical domain," (Scheper-Hughes 1987, 10) which in turn, further disenfranchises the patient.

Yet, if this imbalance is methodological in nature and key to the systems that support Western empirical thought, how does one overcome the obstacles inherent within the system, and how might one "re-thinks [the] idea of evidence" (Ecks 2008, s92) and renew the system? The answer is to change the system; instead of submitting to traditional empirical thought that supports a dualistic model, one could perhaps explore Husserl's theory of Epoché - the essence of which revolves around the idea that "consciousness suspended without its own sanctions for objectivity, [is] purified and thereby certain" (Kuspit

1964, 30). I speak of the essence of the idea here because, perhaps fittingly, no definitive explanation of epoché can be found, and even “Husserl only gives us some indirect hints about what the epoché really is. It is even an open question if Husserl himself had a positive understanding of the epoché” (Lübcke 1999, 2). Nevertheless, it is easier to be clear about what epoché is not. Epoché is not about conceptualizing notions only relegated to the realm of the mind nor is it wholly about being skeptical of empirical thought (Husserl 1962, 99-100). Epoché can be practiced as a holistic form of experiential learning that removes the need to separate the illness and disease aspects of sickness. Husserl points out that the Cartesian ideal of doubt serves “only as a device of method,” (1962, 107) and thus should not be a sole method for dealing with the world. Not to say that doubt has no place in the social sciences, but “the epoché gives a ‘direction’ to doubt” (Kuspit 1964, 32) with that direction being grounded in the exploration of the experiences, but objective and subjective, of the researchers and subject leading to a state of “transcendental subjectivism” (Husserl 1962, 7).

In the above I briefly introduce the concept of the epoché and argue that through its implementation, subjective and objective forms of data and their analysis may be more thoroughly integrated. Through this integration, studies of modalities which move beyond the confines of the rational, such as Reiki or other healing modalities which could be classified as magical, can integrate the personal knowledge and experiences of subjects in a rigorous fashion. Having discussed this methodological approach, Reiki’s position in magical or biomedical settings will now be discussed in greater detail.

#### Hands on Healing

Reiki is a biofield healing modality based around the concept that trained, initiated practitioners have the ability to manipulate and direct a universal life force energy, often referred to as that translated phrase or spoken of as the Japanese term *qi*, in a manner that allows the recipient relief from pain and a general increase in healing quality and time. Reiki itself is a Japanese word meaning universal (*rei*) life force energy (*qi*) (Honervogt 1998). This manipulation is achieved by the practitioner placing his or her hands on the fully clothed Reiki recipient in a specific pattern often involving specific mudras, or placing the hands gently over, but not touching, the patient and performing the same process of positions and mudras; likewise, the Reiki energy can be stored by the practitioner in an inanimate object for the recipient’s

later use, or the practitioner sending the Reiki energy through time and over great distances to heal patients in need. Reiki is a multi-initiatory, referred in Reiki as an attunement, healing modality where only at the final level is the initiate allowed to pass on the knowledge of how to perform Reiki sessions (i.e. attune others) with any authenticity (Garrett 2001, Jain 2010, LaTorre 2005, Natale 2010).

Once an individual has been initiated into even the most basic levels of Reiki they have not only the capability to channel the universal life force energy to heal other, but also it should be noted that “unlike many other healing methods, self-healing is the empowering core of the practice of Reiki” (LaTorre 2005, 185).

As a Japanese practice, Reiki’s conception is removed and exempt from the Westernized dualism that I wrote of earlier. Reiki’s focus lies in the experiences of the recipient. Both for the Reiki practitioner and recipient the experience is described as “soothing, nurturing, and restoring,” (Brathovde, 2006, p. 95) with a focus on the modality’s noninvasive quality and pleasantness. The impact of Reiki is experiential – focusing on quality of life issues such as pain reduction and ease of recovery.

But while these descriptions may describe how Reiki exists, the core issue of what Reiki is has not been addressed. To determine if the practice of Reiki is magical one may turn to the traditional definitions offered by Frazier, Durkheim, Mauss, or Malinowski. However, these treatments of magic seem to not be an appropriate gauge for a practice such as Reiki. One of the most glaring reasons for the lack of validity lies in the fact that these grand theories try to define magic in terms of religion, and as a practice with roots in Shinto and Buddhism this can be increasingly difficult with a Reiki practice that is more often than not practiced in a secular environment especially in regards to Western medicine.

As an alternative to the attempts at grand theory and universal definition, “academics in many disciplines now focus on historically and culturally specific understandings of magic” (Bailey 2006, 5). However, what historical tradition is most fitting to judge Reiki by? The Japanese tradition may have been where the practice was created, but it is in the Western medical field where Reiki is being utilized and questioned. With that in mind does Reiki meet a Western definition, and more specifically, a Western medical definition, of magic? Still, this question is more complicated than it first may seem. While “there is and probably can be no simple methodological solution to

the definition or study of magic,” (Bailey 2006, 22) that does not preclude a discussion on the subject. Bailey notes that “terminology for and concepts of magic are almost universally vague, mutable, and “occult” in the literal sense of hidden or obscured” (Bailey 2006, 23). However, Reiki’s definition as a biofield healing modality acknowledges a lack of empirical measurement. More so, Reiki is practiced through secret, initiatory skills taught in an effort to channel a universal life force energy that has no firmer definition. However, to modern Western medicine the most definitively magical aspects of Reiki lie in Reiki’s experiential nature. Reiki results are individualized to the practitioners and to the recipient and even more specifically to the particular session. Reiki’s theoretical underpinnings rely on the idea that “Reiki energy flows through the practitioner’s hands into these negative energy patterns of the human biofield and charges them with positive energy” (Natale 2010, 171). Though magic can be definitively hard to pin down, under Western ideals Reiki can be argued to meet a base criteria of magic.

Still, though Reiki can be said to meet a magical definition, this does not necessarily exclude Reiki also meeting a modern Western definition of biomedicine as well. Biomedicine inhabits what Kleinman describes as “the professional area” (1978, 87) of medicine which is demarcated by “a professional system staffed by professionals with many years of formal training and legitimated by the state” (Finkler 1994, 179). This is seen in opposition to popular health care, when sickness is managed in the home and folk health care when healing is ministered by lay evaluators (Kleinman 1978, 86).

Using this definition as a working definition for Western biomedicine, criteria can be named to evaluate Reiki under those terms. As mentioned previously, Reiki is an initiatory practice in which the knowledge of Reiki mudras and the ability to channel the Reiki current is passed through three degrees of initiation from a Reiki master to a student. Because of this person to person transmission, Reiki, while having individuals who practice the healing modality professionally, has no organization that verifies the veracity of a party’s Reiki training or practice and is mostly only associated through “informal networks of Reiki practitioners” (Hargrove 2008, 34). Not only does Reiki lack an accredited oversight board, but even for the official practitioners of Reiki the “initial training takes about 2 days and can be done in a weekend,” (LaTorre 2005, 185) and though a “prolonged period of study” is possible during Reiki train-

ing, this is an inconsistent standard that must be balanced against those that train “from a weekend workshop” (Engebretson 2002, 48). Actually, Reiki “does not require any special effort on the part of the practitioner as the energy is drawn through the practitioner according to the recipient’s need so that the practitioner needs do nothing but remain inwardly still” (LaTorre 2005, 185). Showing both the lack of collective oversight and long-term education, Reiki cannot be said to meet the definition of Western biomedicine.

And yet, biofield healing modalities do have a current place in the Western medical establishment as “the use of complementary therapies increased from 34% to more than 40% between 1990 and 1997, with a specific increase in the use of touch or energy therapies,” (Engebretson 2002, 48) to the point where “Reiki is reported to be offered at 15% of U.S. hospitals” (O’Mathúna 2011, 97). While complementary and alternative healing practices may not be mainstream, they are still extant in Western contemporary healing. So much so that in the United States alone “more than 30,000 nurses “are estimated to practice touch therapies” (Engebretson 2002, 48). Reiki has been utilized in both the treatment of mental health diagnoses, (LaTorre 2005, O’Mathúna 2011) and the treatment of long-term illness and pain (Herman 2004, O’Mathúna 2011).

The above alludes to the prevalence of Reiki in some US hospitals and its growing incorporation in complementary healings practices as noted by nurses and their trainings. Furthermore, the terms ‘magic’ and ‘biomedical’ have been problematized in regards to the overall dissemination, popular understanding, and narratives surrounding Reiki. However, despite trends by Reiki practitioners to situate Reiki within the purely scientific in popular literature, there is still a tinge of the magical that the overall Reiki community, if such can even be discussed, has not abandoned. Non-rational and biomedical explanations are both considered for Reiki’s purpose and effectiveness, perceived or otherwise, though the difficulties imposed by empirical testing situate the modality more in the realm of the magical from at least an American perspective. As such, further questions remain as to the broader question of Reiki’s place the hospital. As the following section will explain, the reason for this lies in the experiences of the recipients of biomedical treatments. This in turn allows us to consider epoché as discussed in the previous section, as well as broader anthropological issues as will be examined below, as a methodological means by which to incor-



porate the experience of practitioners and recipients in future Reiki studies.

## Energy and Experience

If traditional biomedicine more habitually relegates itself to the professional sector, why, in any way, are practices such as Reiki—which fit a more traditional definition of folk healing—utilized in modern western medical practices? For recipients of Western biomedicine, the line between contemporary Western biomedicine and folk healing is not simply black and white. Stanley Tambiah argues that “the danger of reifying such phenomena as ‘astrology’, ‘alchemy’, and ‘magic’ and soon as well-defined bounded systems, whose contours and motivations and propensities can be delineated ahistorically and universally in a context-free fashion,” (1990, 29) is ignoring the reason, creativity, and problem-solving foundational to the areas inception. I agree, but suggest adding science itself to that list. Modern science is not a natural fact like it seeks to study, but a philosophical principal that has evolved out of centuries of trial and error. As it has advanced, reason has become a main priority, but by doing so has allowed parts of the data set that cannot be quantified to take a seemingly secondary precedence.

While Interrogative Medicine, which includes biofield healing touch therapies such as Reiki, utilize reason, it “does include ideas and practices currently beyond the scope of the conventional... it neither rejects conventional therapies nor accepts alternative ones uncritically” (Culbert 2010, ix). Nevertheless, by incorporating practices such as Reiki into any aspect of modern healing practice the Western medical establishment is giving tacit approval to a healing modality that meets the definition of magic but not of Western biomedicine.

One theory as to why modalities such as Reiki maintain a place in contemporary Western medical practices is that “in the current fast-paced healthcare environment, the ability to maintain a caring focus is becoming increasingly more difficult to achieve” (Culbert 2010, 181). With biofield subtle energy healing modalities, such as Reiki, they “each uses a holistic approach that views the client as a dynamic within its own contextual relationship to life and environment” (Natale 2010, 172). Disease and illness are treated as synonymous under treatments like Reiki. Furthermore, the interpersonal relationship forged

between the Reiki practitioner and recipient due to Reiki’s need for prolonged physical contact allow for a personal side of the medical process that is sometimes missing from more traditional biomedicine. Likewise, “Some patients undergoing treatment that involved what I call a pleasant process also enthusiastically described their treatment not only as a way of getting rid of a problem but also as a means of transformation” (Halliburton 2003, 171). The use of integrative medicines such as Reiki can be as an attempt to find a healing modality that “seeks to restore core values of the profession that have eroded in recent times” (Culbert 2010, x). Here again Tambiah cautions us “not to adjudicate these differences in terms of true and false, but to suggest that all of these currents and influences feed into the river of history” (1990, 29). The philosophy of sciences informs the West’s use of science and reinforces the artificial binary dichotomy between magic and science. Reiki seems to be fulfilling a real need in the patients. As seen in the programs mentioned in the introduction to this paper, Reiki is an optional, additional treatment option that people are choosing to either learn or be treated by. Furthermore, Reiki’s simplicity of treatment removes the distance imposed between patient and practitioner seen in modern biomedical treatments. With Reiki, no instrument or glove separates the two engaged in the Reiki practice. Unlike modern biomedicine, Reiki literally retains its human touch.

Nonetheless, as anthropologists, a devotion to reason, as inherited from the natural science roots of the discipline, can be detrimental to our understanding of the entire human condition. Sahlins mentions that while seminal anthropologists such as Boas and Linton do not have the advantages of modern anthropologists to access, theory, and data they still retained the advantage of having “no paralysing fear of structure” (1999:399). William Walker agrees with Sahlins, but he also contributes to the argument by saying “Sahlins stresses that where practical reason drives economic, ecological, or agency explanations, it oversimplifies human practice” (2002, 159). This oversimplification can be seen clearly in both medical anthropology and anthropology of science because of these subareas’ closer relationship to reason. Even in fairly standard anthropological ideas—such as cultural competency—medical anthropology occupies a precarious position due to “how culture is defined in medicine, which contrasts strikingly with its current use in anthropology—the field in which the concept of culture originated” (Kleinman 2006, 1673).

However, these issues are answered by a stronger phenomenological approach to medical anthropology. This is not saying that phenomenological application and evaluation have been completely absent in medical anthropology. Kaufman gives an insightful call for a greater use of phenomenology in anthropology claiming that “phenomenological studies of existential responses to illness are necessary in order to understand cultural sources of unmet expectations resulting from chronic conditions,” (1988, 338) over twenty years ago. Yet this call for greater inclusion is still valid today. A Western rational approach to medical anthropology cannot fully encapsulate the experiential elements related to both being unwell and treating the unwell.

The importance of and expanded use of phenomenology, and more specifically the principle of *epoché*, is “the gist of phenomenology lies in the epistemological perspective of taking absolutely nothing for granted,” (Perniola 2011, 159) including the preeminence of Western detached rationalism as a methodology. This allows for greater inclusion of both patient and practitioner’s experiences and emotional reactions to the healing process. More specifically, “*epoché* forces us to ‘bracket,’ that is, disregard some aspects of the phenomena, notably their reality or being” (Overgaard 2010, 310) so that nothing is presumed by the researcher – one simply regards and analyzes the phenomena one experiences as tempered by one’s knowledge of one’s own previous experiences.

Allowing for a loosening of the importance of traditional Western rational thought in favor of examining a more experiential method of academic inquest opens new doorways in medical anthropology not only in regards to the intersection of magic, science, and healing, but also on any number of other topics in the discipline. For example, the phenomenological approach allows for a greater exploration of the relational perspective in medical anthropological work. L’Abate and his colleagues engage in just such an exploration for a social psychological perspective in their recently published monograph. (2011) This perspective is possible in such a close social science to anthropology, so surely increased awareness and exploration is called for.

## Conclusion

The question of magic’s existence in contemporary Western healing practices is not simply a matter of

examining the ritual of a trip to the chemist or exploring the extent of the placebo effect. Modern medicine has made allowances for magic in its current form no matter how complementary or alternative those allowances relegate those practices. Reiki is a biofield healing modality that by definition cannot be measured or its results replicated by current scientific practice. As I have argued, Reiki meets the definition of magic far more succinctly than it does of biomedicine or even a more general definition of Western scientific practice, and yet I have also shown how in modernized Western medical settings Reiki has been utilized and is increasingly more utilized in hospital settings.

In order to study more fully the reasons behind Reiki’s incorporation into the biomedical setting, I have argued for a methodological shift that future studies of Reiki could utilize within Medical Anthropology. As shown above, previous forms of research have emphasized Reiki’s attempt to fit into the biomedical model or have examined Reiki with the same tools applied to biomedical healing. Instead, I argue that by focusing on a holistic picture of patient experience, via a phenomenological approach, we may more readily and fully examine the inclusion of non-Western, even magical practices, in the biomedical setting. Indeed, such a methodological lens does not need to confine itself to studies of Reiki, but could be utilized in other experiential studies. However, in regards to Reiki, there is still the matter of its inclusion within American hospitals which bares consideration.

Despite competing narratives and the push by some popular literature to describe Reiki as a hereto unknown or not yet testable science, presently the practice meets a Western understanding of magic. This in turn problematizes the practice in the hospital setting when one places undue emphasis on Reiki’s empirical value. If Reiki is unable to be solidly slated as Western biomedicine, then where does its increasing popularity stem from? Sadly, that is a question too grand in scope for this theme – however, I propose that the value of this healing modality can be found by an inquiring scholar ready to take on this research in phenomenological investigation. Phenomenology, specifically the tool of *epoché*, allows the researcher to examine a concept from a new perspective because it allows the researcher to approach the instance while taking nothing for granted including the importance of reason itself. While it may not be “reasonable” to incorporate magical practices such as Reiki into Western biomedical practices and treatments, it does happen, and this incorporation can be seen in

the embodied experiences of the practitioners and recipients of the Reiki healing modality.

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# Hidden Apprenticeships, Hidden Loves: Transmission of Enhanced Awareness in Mediumistic and Shamanic Traditions

David Gordon Wilson



This article is based upon a presentation given at the Exploring the Extraordinary Conference (EtE5) held in York from 20-22 September 2013. That presentation was, in turn, based upon the research that lies behind the book 'Redefining Shamanisms', which was published in January 2013. Chapter 4 of *Redefining Shamanisms* sets out an ethnography of my time as a developing Spiritualist medium, through being a member of the development circle at Portobello Spiritualist Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, from February 2003 until June 2007. I subsequently became a working medium, giving demonstrations at churches and other Spiritualist centres in Scotland, England and Canada.

Although Portobello Spiritualist Church self-identifies as a Christian church, I argue that Spiritualist mediumship is usefully comprehended as an indigenous or traditional shamanism, on the basis that the particular apprenticeship maintained within the Anglo-American Spiritualist movement can also be identified in traditional shamanic cultures, and that this therefore forms the basis of a useful category definition for shamanism as an academic subject. When I refer to indigenous shamanic traditions or cultures, or (a) traditional shamanism, I reference culturally contextualised shamanic traditions as distinct from neo-shamanism, by which I reference contemporary western appropriations of particular practices found in traditionally shamanic cultures.

As in the EtE5 presentation, I begin with an overview of academic models of shamanism, so as to show the relevance of shamanic traditions to enhancing our understanding of western (modern Anglo-American) mediumship. A recent definition of shamanism proposed by Anthony DuBois is as follows:

Shamans are an integral part of communal religious traditions, professionals who make use

of personal supernatural experiences, especially trance, as a resource for the wider community's physical and spiritual wellbeing.

All definitions have their limitations, and this one is no exception. Most, if not all, traditional shamans might be expected to regard their experiences as entirely natural, verified both by tradition and by repeated personal training and practice. What is meant by trance? Is it properly a 'supernatural experience' or might it be a transmitted (taught and learned) technique that can be employed to give access to experiences well-recognised in many cultures, and 'supernatural' according to a distinction intelligible only in terms of recent western culture? DuBois' definition does show some progression from previous models but is still revealing of a western mindset that regards shamanism as a label for practices or beliefs belonging to 'other' cultures; the book 'Shamanism', from which the quotation above is taken, makes no mention of mediumship in nineteenth and twentieth century Anglo-American culture.

It is well-known that Mircea Eliade's work 'Shamanism: archaic techniques of ecstasy' was the first serious attempt to define an uncertain and confused academic field of study by establishing a cross-cultural synthesis. A major source for Eliade was Sergei Shirokogoroff's fieldwork among the Tungus-speaking peoples of Siberia, primarily the Evenki (from whom we have the word *šamān*), during 1913-18. Shirokogoroff's preliminary work, 'Social Organization of the Northern Tungus', was published in 1929, and was followed by the more comprehensive 'The Psychomental Complex of the Tungus' in 1935, both published in English. Although Shirokogoroff's publications are now rarely read directly, they are outstanding among early examples of ethnography and deserve wider appreciation; in addition, reverting to Shirokogoroff reveals some telling difficulties with Eliade's use of the material.

Eliade emphasised 'travelling' or 'journeying' to the spirit worlds as characteristic of shamanism; in doing this, he downplays the possessory aspects of traditional shamanisms whereby spirits of the dead are incarnated by the practitioner. Eliade's technique is to 'bracket out' examples of such practices or, where there they are obvious, to label them as examples of a 'deteriorated' tradition. The model proposed by Eliade anticipates the original worship of a 'high god' involving the travelling of the shaman to meet or approach that god, with instances of possession revealing of a tradition inadequately transmitted, leading to less proficient shamans who were unable to do more than connect with spirits close to the earth. A Christian influenced model is implicit here.

Shirokogoroff, by contrast, is clear that shamans are heavily occupied with the human spirits of the dead and that communication with them for the benefit of other members of the clan is often achieved by incarnating them so as to allow them to be conversed with. According to Shirokogoroff, the ability to incarnate spirits effectively is a recurrent feature of the demonstrations given by Evenki shamans, especially for the purpose of their initiation. Evenki tradition is strongly possessory, and there is no support from Shirokogoroff for the suggestion that this is in any way untrue to an earlier tradition. Journeying or astral travelling is indeed a feature of Evenki shamanism but it is taught of as involving risks that only an experienced and proficient shaman can be sure of managing correctly.

Shirokogoroff is clear that Evenki shamans do not hold to a fundamentally different world view from that of the wider society to which they belong; they differ only in that they have undertaken an apprenticeship that leads to their being recognised as specialists in spirit communication. That said, acceptance of spirit communication was not universal or even normative in many Evenki clans; some clans exhibited social norms that bounded shamanic practices tightly. The range of relevant spirits in heavily dominated by the spirits of the dead, particularly predecessor shamans, but also extends to the spirits of animals, plants and natural forces or elemental spirits.

Much scholarly discussion of shamanism is pre-occupied with visible artefacts such as clothing and other accoutrements, or with particular practices. Shirokogoroff was ahead of his time in that he looked for underlying social structures, and in relation to Evenki shamanism, the significant structure he identifies is that of apprenticeship. Specifically, this is an apprenticeship in how to maintain ongoing rela-

tionships with those (human and animal) who once inhabited this world by learning how to communicate with them safely and effectively. Frustratingly, although Shirokogoroff identifies the shamanic apprenticeship as key to understanding the Evenki tradition of shamanism, he also acknowledges that it is the aspect of the tradition 'most difficult of access' due to linguistic and cultural differences, and is accordingly unable to describe its structure and content in detail.

Evenki shamanism as Shirokogoroff described it is no longer accessible to us; the traditions of the Evenki shamans were lost largely as a result of Soviet persecutions and prohibitions, which were particularly severe during the second quarter of the twentieth century. Traditions comprising practitioner embodied lore transmitted and maintained by a succession of master-apprentice relationships across the generations are almost impossible to recover if the succession is broken. Even well-intentioned attempts to re-establish such traditions necessarily involve the development and maintenance of new lore, which may or may not have similar content to that which was lost.

In *Redefining Shamanism*, I suggest, in effect, that my time as a developing medium at Portobello Spiritualist Church gave me access to a similar kind of tradition, which is also difficult of access for exactly the same reasons Shirokogoroff was aware of in relation to Evenki shamanic tradition.

At first sight, Spiritualism as the main tradition embodying western mediumship can look quite different from traditions we are habituated to as shamanic (whatever precisely we might mean by that). Spiritualism itself challenges many assumed boundaries in modern western culture. Its adherents describe themselves as pursuing a science and/or philosophy but are generally also willing to describe their tradition as a religion that is not necessarily Christian but which embodies practices that reveal a Christian origin. Specifically, Spiritualism maintains churches or other centres, uses forms of 'service' containing prayers, hymns and readings, addresses akin to sermons, and adopted from Methodism the practice of having visiting 'speakers' (mediums) who maintain a personal circuit of churches at which they work. This is a movement that coheres around the practice of mediumship, which therefore functions as its defining institution, and which classically applies that practice to the demonstration of personal survival beyond death, to healing, and to the giving of advice 'from spirit' or prophecy (as distinct from divination). Demonstrations can be given publicly (as with shamanic

séances) or privately (as a member of an Evenki clan might consult its shaman).

In *Redefining Shamanisms*, I detail the four-year apprenticeship I underwent in order to achieve recognition as a medium. This was an interesting experience of itself but it also struck me that this apprenticeship was characterised not only by interesting experiences but also by a very particular structure that had clear stages through which developing mediums progressed. I came to use the description of the mediumistic apprenticeship as the basis of a wider definition of shamanism but the process that definition grew out of was obviously much more particular.

Realising that within the Spiritualist movement mediumship might loosely be referred to as a 'gift' but was actually regarded as a set of learned skills was the first insight; becoming a medium was assumed to involve becoming an apprentice for a number of years, usually at least four but, depending upon the particular form of mediumship aspired to, potentially up to twenty. Many recognised mediums were to tell me that there is no such thing as a 'developed medium' and that development never ends, advice heard from the mouth of many a shaman.

Mediumship and the particular apprenticeship I became aware of at Portobello were eventually described by me as follows:

Mediumship is a culturally contextualized apprenticeship outcome in the development and management of personal awareness so as to engage with additional realities. The apprenticeship comprises a process of learning, that involves communicating and developing relationships with spirit guides, facilitated by an existing practitioner who usually also undertakes responsibility for passing on a body of accumulated traditional knowledge. The apprenticeship typically proceeds from an initial uncontrolled (often possessory and/or unwelcome) psychic experience or phase to a point where the apprentice is granted communal recognition as having the ability:

- (i) to manage her/his personal awareness so that s/he is no longer at risk from uncontrolled spiritual forces; and
- (ii) to use her/his spiritual skills to communicate with spirits, at will, in ways that are recognized as beneficial to members of the client community.

I do not regard the psychic experiences that prompted my interest in mediumship as being in any way supernatural for the simple reason that they are part of my everyday experience of being in this world; from my perspective, they are entirely natural. Instead, it is obvious to me is that I inhabit a culture whose normative dialogue is materialistic, which dialogue operates to exclude dialogues willing to utilise experiences that threaten to undermine the materialistic world view. This is not simply the pleading of an insider (although it is partly that), it is also the assertion of an academic researcher that human experience encompasses non-tangible but real experiences which our science should take appropriate account of if it is ever to claim justifiably that it offers a comprehensive account of the world in which we live and the meaning we make of it. A science dependent upon the reification of experience lapses easily into the prejudice that the immaterial is not real, or at least not *as* real, because it tends easily to disregard or distrust the experienter. I may be an insider who has developed academic pretensions but I can find myself on the receiving end of the same reservations held towards those academics regarded as having 'gone native'. Equally I have encountered academics who shroud their personal religious practice in secrecy, fearing that their professional work might be regarded as suspect if knowledge of that personal practice were more widely known.

There is a failure of nerve here, which results in a science unable to account fully for what human beings actually do and experience in the world. This point was emphasised recently by Everton de Oliveira Maraldi and Wellington Zangari in Issue 66 of the *Paranormal Review* of the Society for Psychical Research as follows:

The experiences that we study and that are so essential for us and for all that are interested in the advancement of our field would not have any value, or even would not exist, without those who reported and experienced them. However, throughout history we have sometimes behaved as if those people were not as relevant as their own capacities or the alleged phenomena that they report. In fact, we have acted as if it would be possible to separate an experience from its complex individual and social context. This attitude has been proved to be a very limited perspective by developments



in psychology and social sciences since the last century.

The appreciation of mediumship as an individually learned and collectively enabled practice, or set of practices, prompts reflections upon both the nature of consciousness upon the development of an appropriate methodology for its exploration. If mediumship is fundamentally the outcome of a process of learning that leads to an expansion or enhancement of human consciousness, might human consciousness itself be a learning outcome, and therefore socially constructed?

This is not by any means a new suggestion but it is interesting that ethnographies of mediumship and Evenki shamanism should lead us to reappraise it. In 'Apprenticeship in Thinking: cognitive development in social context', Barbara Rogoff proposes that the ability to be cognizant of that which lies beyond ourselves is fundamentally the outcome of a childhood participatory apprenticeship; by implication, further enhancements of human consciousness can usefully be explored as the outcome of subsequent socially enabled, participatory apprenticeships. Rogoff's work is an important assertion of the importance of experiential knowledge and its role in expanding or enhancing consciousness, including that of the researcher. Good science is not the product of diminished consciousness.

Ethnography is a methodology uniquely suited to the needs of anthropology, partly because it is also suited to developing anthropology as a discipline capable of rendering useful accounts of human skills and experiences encountered across cultures but which some cultures have difficulty handling because of the nature of their normative discourses. A challenging anthropology would deliberately focus on those experiences that most expand our awareness, among which I would include the experience of love.

Overwhelming love gives rise to emotions but of itself seems more in the nature of a particular energy; much of the Spiritualist dialogue I have experienced is taken up with talk of 'energies', of which love is spoken of as a particularly important one. I hope to expand upon this on another occasion but it is my experience of mediumship that the ability to love is something that can be developed as part of one's wider mediumistic development, and that there are forms of mediumship at which one becomes more proficient as a result.

This, in turn, leads me to contemplate what a methodology of love might look like? Psychological explorations of love have been undertaken but my mediumistic experience leads me to argue for ethno-

graphic explorations as having significant potential. That would require us to identify those knowledge traditions that embody the teaching and practice of love, so as to identify possible settings in which to conduct ethnographic study, which of course takes us back full circle to those traditions we tend to put in the 'religion' box. Some of my religious studies colleagues criticise much traditional anthropology for approaching religion in terms of ritual, and part of my reason for writing this article is to encourage ethnography based upon apprentice-participation. There are significant practical difficulties that stand in the way of extended ethnographical research of any kind but it is, I think, worth pushing for, because it offers the possibility of an adventurous and revealing anthropology that wholeheartedly encompasses the 'para'.

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# Communication Across the Chasm: Experiences With the Deceased

John A. Napora



The point of departure for this paper is Michael Harner's (1980: 1-8) well known story of having a similar vision under *ayahuasca* as that of a Conibo shaman. As you may recall, the first time that Harner drank *ayahuasca* he experienced a number of fantastic sights and sounds, including having dragon-like creatures show him how they had landed from outer space and inform him that they are "the true masters of humanity and the entire planet" (1980: 4-5). When Harner recounts this to the elderly, blind and "the most supernaturally knowledgeable" of the Conibo shamans "who had made many excursions into the spirit world with the aid of the *ayahuasca* drink" (Harner: 1980:7), he is "stunned" to hear him say "Oh, they are always saying that. But they are only the Masters of Outer Darkness" (Harner: 1980:8). And this was without Harner having yet told him that he had seen them landing from outer space. The blind shaman had had a similar extraordinary vision of the dragon-like creatures (Harner: 1980:8).

I had long marveled at this story, and when Michael Harner gave me the opportunity to talk with him at a past AAA meeting, I asked him how was it that he and the elderly Conibo shaman might have had such a similar experience. How could he account for such a similar vision that occurred cross-culturally and between two people of such radically different cultures? Very matter of factly, Harner looked me in the eyes and with precise intensity said "The spirits are real."

Though anthropology has paid attention to beliefs in many types of spirits in many societies and despite beliefs in numerous cultures across the globe that spirits of deceased ancestors continue to persist, anthropology has largely neglected accounts of spirits of the deceased continuing to exist in secular societies, especially spirits of the recently deceased. This is consistent with people's accounts of experiences with deceased family members being discounted by the academic community generally, thus contributing to

the persons who have had such experiences being marginalized.

I argue that neither such experiences nor the people who have them should be trivialized. Their experiences resonate with those of nonwestern peoples, and considering them as part of the human condition broadens our understanding of it, and adds to our understanding of how some in the West continue to emphasize the importance of the spirit in the face of a scientific and political economic discourse which celebrates the material and posits a spiritless universe. In this paper I shall describe the experiences of members of a working class family in a northeastern state of the U.S. with the spirit of the recently deceased father of the family, experiences which took place within six months of the father's passing in July of 2009. I will show that though the initial experiences were challenging and disturbing, they had a functionality to them. Ultimately, however this functionality was shattered through a dream the son had of his father.

The dream was in fact disturbing, like other experiences I describe below, and thus cannot be dismissed as "wish fulfillment." This is significant because any of these experiences cannot be easily explained through a purely psychological frame of reference. Instead, I maintain that the material presented in this paper should contribute to a growing ontological turn in anthropology, (Clammer, Poirier, and Schwimmer 2004, Schroll 2010, Glass-Coffin and Kiiskeentum 2012), in which the ontology of "the natives," whether they be in indigenous societies or western ones, is given credence, including their beliefs and relationships with spirits. Although the form that these take may of course vary widely according to context, I would argue that because of the ubiquitous belief in some form of spirits across the globe, anthropologists should seriously consider that their particular "natives," again, regardless of context, may be on to something. In this essay I am dealing with relations with a familial spirit, and though the setting is the contemporary U.S., I further argue

that this material should contribute to the literature on familial or ancestral spirits across the globe, to what Turner (1992) has termed experiential anthropology, and to what may be called the anthropology of the extraordinary (Goulet and Granville Miller 2007) or of the paranormal (cf. Stoller and Olkes 1987, Turner 1992), but more precisely, to an anthropology of the intersection of the spiritual and paranormal. This is a *lacuna* that anthropology needs to address, and in doing so, anthropology may not only do justice to people(s) who have had their experiences discounted, but also at least push back against, if not broaden, the dominant western conception of a materialist universe.

The working class family I am describing lived in a small town in western Pennsylvania in what has become part of the Rust Belt. It consisted of the father, his elderly wife, and three adult children, two married daughters with six children between them and an unmarried, adult son who now lives out of state but who stays in the family home when he visits periodically. Partly because of the disturbing nature of the son's dreams and experiences, I shall focus more on the son. The father worked numerous jobs during his ninety-three years, but mostly as a steel worker in the local town's mills. However, in the summers he worked as a teaching professional of golf at a local course for most of his adult life. The mother worked intermittently full time, but mostly part time on weekends as a counter person and cashier. They were married for 71 years. In terms of experiences with the father after his death, the daughters had none. The mother did. I do not have the space to fully describe her experiences here, but I will note that she saw him in dreams standing in her bedroom, looking pleasantly at her -- quoting her, "he was kind of smiling" -- and once, immediately upon waking, sitting on her bed. She also interacted with him in others, kissing him in one (and promptly telling him that "we shouldn't be doing this!")

I now turn to focus on principal experiences of the son. Within a week of the father's passing the son woke from sleeping in his apartment at 4 AM because of the feeling of choking or being strangled. It was a very disturbing experience. When he told the sister he was closest to about the experience, she told him that was how their father had died -- quoting, "He choked to death." This had occurred from natural causes. He could not swallow because his esophagus had stopped working properly. It is interesting to note that when I told of this experience to a meditation instructor who has studied dreams her whole life,

she said that a survivor having such an experience is not uncommon. It is as if the deceased will use their last moment of contact to this, the earthly, realm to contact the living. The time was also significant. During the son's last visit to his parents' home during which his father was still alive, the son awoke at 4 AM to use the one bathroom in the house but was unable to because it was occupied, by his father.

The second experience also occurred in the son's apartment a couple of nights later and was also discomfiting, but can also be seen as reassuring. Again because of constraints of space, I cannot provide as full a description as I would like. I can only recount that at the end of the dream a small terrier-like dog appeared and looked quizzically at the son. The dog could be identified with his sister's peekapoo. The father had taken care of it at times, and thus, it can be identified with the father. The dog took the son's left hand into its mouth. The son could feel the teeth pressing into his flesh, but the dog did not bite. He awoke at ten minutes to four, with his hand still in the dog's mouth.

The third experience happened about one month later not in the son's apartment but in a friend's house he was staying in while driving across the state to return to visit his parents' home. It too was a dream. A small red or copper colored figure opened the door to the bedroom in which the son was staying. He had very curly, tangled hair, almost dread-like in appearance but shorter. Though moving quickly, he had trouble walking, as his father did in his later years. When he entered the room he was not looking at the son. He appeared in profile. The son could see a prominent hooked or Roman nose, as his father had. Though he could not see his face clearly, what he saw scared him for it seemed death-like, as if in the beginning stages of decay, and when the figure turned his head to look directly at the son, the son screamed -- whether only in the dream or not he could not be sure. But he awoke immediately. He remembered to look at the digital clock next to his bed. The numbers on the clock said 4:04. It took the son more than an hour to get back to sleep. The father was reddish or copper colored on his face, neck, and arms below the short sleeves from years of exposure to the sun while having been on the golf course. The anomaly in the figure's identification with the father was his mass of curly hair. The son had only known the father with straight hair. But when the son returned to his parents' house, his mother showed him a remembrance a long-time friend of her husband had sent her, describing him when a young man, and saying that the

father had been so well known for the thick mountain of curls upon his head that his nickname had been "Curly." He told his mother that this was the first time he knew that his father had had curly hair. Later she showed him a picture of her husband as young man, having a tangle of thick, curly hair on the top of his otherwise closely shorn head.

The fourth experience occurred after that visit to his parents' home. It was again in his apartment, and was, finally, a pleasant experience. The father appeared in the mirror of the bathroom in the family home, facing him indirectly. He could see his father's face, neck, and torso in the mirror. He was clean shaven, as if he had just shaved. He looked much younger than at the time of his passing, with some gray hair around the temples, as if he were just entering middle age, and better than the son remembered seeing him during his life. He looked pleased, and contented. He did not smile fully or look directly at the son. He looked demurely down and/or to the side as if being modest or slightly embarrassed, or simply not wanting to look the son directly in the face. (A colleague at the University of South Florida has told me that it is very scary to see a figure look directly at one in a dream.)

I maintain these experiences provided a means of coping with the loss of the father, both for the son and other family members. They were communicated between them, thus providing further communication about the loss, and thus a means to some closure. The experiences and communicating about them provided healing for the son, wife, and the daughter who was closest to the father and closest to her other family members.

However, this functionality was shattered for the son by another dream he had of the father about two months later in November of 2009. Once again I cannot recount all the detail here, but I will note that neither in this dream did the father look directly at the son. In fact, his head and most of his face were covered by his trademark fedora which he always wore when leaving the house. He was also wearing his signature overcoat, the same beige trench coat he had also always worn to leave the house. As he was putting the coat on – the son could hear him rustling in the next room – he came into the room where the son was lying down and for the first time spoke to him. He said he was "going to Dave's place." He repeated this again, "Yeah. I'm goin' to Dave's place." Dave is the name of the husband of the daughter to whom he and the other family members had been closest. The son did not know what to make of this

because the family had always referred to the house by the name of the daughter, e.g., as Mary's house (not her real name), never as Dave's place. Instead of asking what this meant, the son tried to verbalize how good it was to see his father, but unable to fully do so, awoke.

A couple of days later, the son was told by his mother that his beloved sister had been diagnosed with cancer of the liver, and that she had had it for some time. The son realized what his father had been obliquely communicating. It had been a forewarning. His sister -- *the author's sister* -- did indeed pass away, on October 20, 2011.<sup>1</sup> (To be clear, the experiences of the son in this paper were indeed those of the author.)

Ultimately, though taking a radically different form from what he experienced, I must agree with Michael Harner that the spirits are real.

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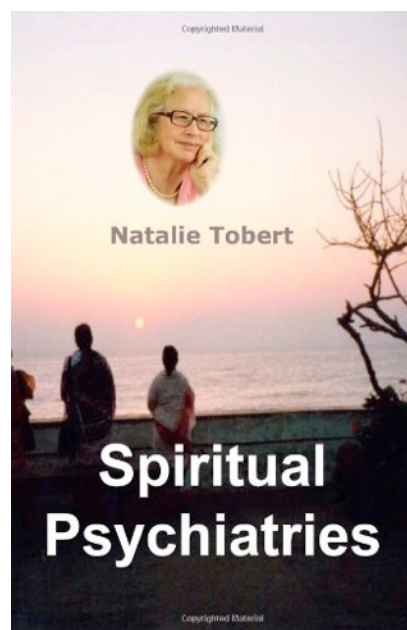
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<sup>1</sup> During the night of her passing, I had a dream of my sister, yet not my sister. It has been my only dream of her. I am not sure which home we were in, but she was standing in the kitchen facing the sink, her back to me. I thought I recognized her voice speaking to someone else. She was somewhat overweight, as my sister had become throughout her later years, but I thought her somewhat taller. Also, she had long very blond hair, as opposed to my sister who had always had rather short dark hair. After originally thinking during the dream that this was my sister, I thought that it was not her. There were also two young daughters present, in keeping with my sister having had two daughters, but both daughters also had long very blond hair, as contrasted to the dark hair of her daughters. The one daughter repeatedly ran up to me and resembled the younger daughter of my sister. Again, originally I thought this was her daughter, only for me to think that it was not. (Also, as she playfully ran playfully up to me and then away, she said something which I could not quite make out or perhaps not remember, but I think she said, "No, I'm not her.") In any case, the morning after I had this dream, my mother called to inform me that my sister had passed away during the night.

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## Book Hauntings

Mark Valentine



Flying saucers...big cats...ghosts...the Loch Ness Monster...it's generally the big strange things that get the headlines in the field of the unexplained, and therefore the research. But most of us, I suggest, won't ever encounter anything remotely like that. However, we would do well to remember that not all extraordinary experiences are dramatic. Sometimes they happen quietly, stealthily. Perhaps one of the most common, if under-recorded, examples is an intangible sense of "otherness", a feeling or impression of being close to a different way of knowing. This may take many forms: and this essay looks at one specialised example, in the field I know: book collecting.

I'd like to illustrate three types of unusual experiences relating to book collecting. They are: *knowing a book you want is there*; *feeling an uncanny skill at finding books*; and *being drawn to an unknown book that will prove important*.

Here's an example of the first of these (1). It's written with a literary flourish by a man who knew all about how fiction can turn to myth, Arthur Machen, the creator of the legend of the Angels of Mons, and writer of much fine supernatural fiction. But this isn't a story by him, it's an essay, a memoir of a happy day spent out with his oldest friend, the scholar of the occult, and book collector, A.E. Waite. He wrote some fearsome books on the Holy Grail, the Rosicrucians and just about every corner of the esoteric....

However, he had other interests. He and Machen were out walking in Pentonville one day, when suddenly Waite stopped. "There was a singular expression on his face," said Machen. "His eye – I think – became fixed. His nostrils – to the best of my belief – twitched. Otherwise, there was an odd fixity about his position." Like a sporting dog, said Machen, 'at point'. And Waite said to him: "Machen, I feel that I must go into that shop over the way. I know there's something there for me!"

There was. Waite collected boy's story books of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Penny Dreadfuls as they were called. And in that dingy stationery shop, hidden in a

row of dusty, tatty old books, there was a copy of *The Old House in West Street*. One of the very rarest titles of that fugitive juvenile literature. In high delight, Machen and Waite went off to have a celebratory gin.

In speaking to other book collectors, I've found that this sense, as in Waite's case, of "knowing" that a book is there for them: a feeling that a "find" is about to happen is not uncommon. It can happen outside a bookshop, as in this case, or more often once inside.

But there is another sense, several steps beyond this, where it seems to the bookfinder as if their fingers cannot fail, as if they are going to draw out book after book they want, with an uncanny ease and skill. Some collectors believe that there are times when they have "magnetic fingers" that cannot help but locate important books.

That was the title, "Magnetic Fingers" of an essay (2) by John Gawsworth, poet and man-of-letters, and the second king of Redonda, an uninhabited guano-streaked rock in the Caribbean. A formidable drinker, Gawsworth was always hard up, and one way he sometimes got funds was to go out and find books he could sell on more expensively. In the essay he recounts his exploits in a week of truffling out rare treasures in musty bookshelves. And he prefaces this by quoting from the Irish poet and mystic "A. E." (George William Russell). A. E. had seen the same phenomena at work, with his friend the poet and book collector Seamus O'Sullivan, and developed his own theory about it:

"I had gone about the quays with this poet watching him, and I remembered how surely the rare books, the first editions, brought themselves under his notice. He did not seem to peer about or look at titles. He dropped long delicate fingers, casually, as it seemed, into a welter of books in a cart, and drew out what was rarest. It was attracted to him by some law of affinity like that which attracts iron filings to a magnet. It must be so, for when I dropped my fingers into a cart in deliberate imitation of



him I brought out nothing more valuable than a book of sermons or an out-of-date directory.”

And A.E. had a theory about this. “Has the book, once it is printed and bound, a consciousness of its own?” he asked, “or is it endowed gradually with consciousness by those who have pondered over it?” And then, over the years, he wondered, did the book reach a state where it was sensitive to “the aura of the true book-lover” and summoned those to them? There might be a whole science here, thought A.E., of the joyfulness of books.

Incidentally, there is a possible variation of this type of experience, sometimes encountered by scholars and researchers. When they are in pursuit of a strand of thought, books with the insights, connections, unexpected linkages and sidelights suddenly start coming into their hands. Is that because they are in a heightened state of alertness, or is some other subtle energy in play? It cannot usually be accessed at will. For book collectors, and for scholars, there are also days of dejection, when these apparent powers or influences are unmistakably turned off, when the books are cold.

And there is also a turn in the stair. So far we’ve considered the way collectors get the books they want, seemingly sometimes mysteriously. They may also, however, draw books to them – or find that books draw them – that they knew nothing about.

Most book collectors dislike being asked what they want in a bookshop, or whether they are looking for anything in particular. One colourful collector, if asked what he was looking for, would reply: “I’m looking for a fifty pound book priced at five pounds”. But really most collectors aren’t being awkward. Of course, they have their specialist fields and their wants lists. But many, I suspect, also have a hope of finding a book they can’t quite define because they do not quite know what it is.

Graham Greene described book collecting to rare book dealer Rick Gekoski as like “always being on a treasure hunt”. And Gekoski added that the romance of book collecting, what he called ‘the animating archetype’, was that: “the treasure hunt must go on: there are buried, unlocated, misunderstood, misrepresented objects of every kind which are of value both commercial and cultural, and are essential to our understanding of ourselves. It is our job to find, to understand and to preserve them.” (3)

One Canadian bookstore understands this well. When interviewed by the *New York Times* in March last year, the owner of The Monkey’s Paw bookshop

in Toronto, named after the famous ghost story by W.W. Jacobs, said: “This isn’t the store where you’ll find the book you were looking for. It’s the store where you’ll find the book *you didn’t know* you were looking for.” (4). He spoke there to a sense some readers and collectors have of a book they would want, a longing, that they do not care to define too closely. And this may lead to unexpected experiences, when, for example, they have felt their gaze drawn to an unpromising volume.

Here is a fictional example. In his short story ‘The Green Room’ (5), Walter de la Mare allegorises this – the way unknown books call to us and haunt us. His subtle, delicate tale evokes a sad ghost in a bookshop. She is the author it seems of some unpublished writing in an exercise book hidden among all the published books. De la Mare’s keen collector, Alan, has an encounter that begins with a heightened awareness–

“Every nerve in his body was stretched taut. And time ebbed away. At this tension his mind began to wander off again into a dreamlike vacuum of its own...A curious thrill ebbed through his body. It was as though unseen fingers had tugged at a wire – with no bell at the end of it. And yet in effect it so nearly resembled one that it might have been only the sigh of the blast of the east wind at the window. He waited a minute, then, with a slight shiver, glanced up...”

He is about to see the ghost – and then her book. Well, we don’t all see ghosts before we find a crucial book: but de la Mare’s is offering us a fine symbol of the way they sometimes seem to come to us, with that sense of a change in the atmosphere.

The Arthurian and Glastonbury author Geoffrey Ashe recorded an experience he thought was hard to explain (6). For some time he’d been trying to find inspiration to start writing a particular book. At Toronto Public Library, he said, he “dug out a book which mentioned one tradition” that “caught [his] imagination,” and this proved to be the catalyst he needed. Years later, after reading hundreds of books on the subject, he realised both that the Toronto book was extremely rare and the tradition it told of was completely unrecorded elsewhere. “So,” he said, “I’d hit on the single right book to get me moving, in the right place (a damned unlikely place, far from home) at the right time...and the odds against were colossal.” This seemed to him part of a pattern, that he’d



“been surrounded by hints all his life...as if some unknown agency was working on this for decades...to fix matters so that a conviction would take shape gradually as I found out more and more.”

I have written before of a similar experience I had in a bookshop in the cathedral city of Chichester one day, I saw a slim volume with a spine of faded green, the wan colour of a field in winter. There was a glimmer from the worn gilt of the lettering, like tired sunlight. The book room was empty and quiet. Something made me want to see what the book was. I took up the book and was at once attracted by the title: *Flower Phantoms*. Could it possibly be a rare, lost fantasy?

I opened the book to the demure pages in the good quality paper of Jonathan Cape, the publisher, and began to read. Well, it was indeed an exquisite fantasy, about a mystic communion with the soul of an orchid in Kew Gardens. It is told with a fine delicacy, in a languorous, sultry prose that is apt for its setting, beautifully rich and sinuous. But it is also more than this. The book is also about the possibility of higher forms of consciousness, and succeeds in suggesting these without recourse to the specialist esoteric language seen in much occult fiction. It expresses rarefied states of mind with an evanescent subtlety.

The book's author soon became one of my favourites, and I pursued more information about him, and was able to meet and correspond with his family. And I said earlier that I had written before about finding this book. Where? In the introduction to the reprint I was eventually able to arrange, from Valancourt Books. That was where that reaching out to the faded green book in the Chichester bookshop in the end led.

What can we conclude? Certainly, if you look long enough and often enough at many shelves of books, some wonderfully unexpected finds are likely to come your way. But is that all that is in play? Do

book collectors develop a mysterious extra sense? Or do some books *call* to them, as AE suggested? It may never make the headlines, but I suggest there is apparently at moments a strange and subtle sorcery in the art and craft of book collecting.

In the damp and dingy lean-to shed next to a junk shop, I have felt my hand move to a faded black volume whose title couldn't be read and which proved to be an exceptionally hard to find novel of pagan mysteries in the Welsh hills. Instinct? Hard-won experience from years of gazing at rows and rows of books? Could be. But I can only say how it felt at the time. It felt like a sudden leap of knowing.

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*This essay is a version of a talk I gave to the Exploring the Extraordinary conference in York, 2013.*



Hear Jack Hunter and David Luke talk about their new edited book 'Talking With the Spirits: Ethnographies from Between the World' on the Mysterious Universe Podcast. The conversation covers mediumship, psychedelics, psychic surgery, paranthropology, and much more:

<http://mysteriousuniverse.org/2014/05/11-18-mu-podcast/>

# Orbs, some definitive evidence that they are not paranormal

Steven T. Parsons



## ABSTRACT

The orb has become well established within amateur paranormal research as evidence of some form of spirit manifestation or interaction. This paper looks at the history of orb photography, the technology of the digital camera and introduces some of the claims being made for the paranormality of orbs. A series of studies which took place from 1998 to 2003 have led to a greater understanding of the method of orb production as a normal part of the camera operation but did not generally affect the perception of orbs having a paranormal cause within the paranormal and wider community. A new experimental study commenced in 2009 made use of a newly developed stereo digital camera which subsequently was able to demonstrate conclusively that orbs are produced by well understood means rather than paranormal anomalies.

## Introduction

The evolution of digital imaging which began in the late 1990's resulted in a revolution within amateur paranormal research. Investigators began to report a phenomena previously unseen on images taken using conventional film based cameras. By common consent this seemingly paranormal phenomenon was christened the 'Orb'. Orbs are considered to be generally bright circular anomalies within any part of the image. Other shapes such as angular and elongated forms are also found and described. They may appear as single or multiple anomalies and may also vary both in colour and intensity. To date, tens of thousands of orb pictures have been offered forward by amateur paranormal investigators and lay members of the public as evidence and proof of something truly paranormal being captured by the camera. The orb debate has continued within paranormal research for many years now with both the believers and the non believers each putting their respective arguments and presenting their evidence.

Proffered explanations as to what orbs actually represent vary widely; e.g. many investigators believe they are evidence of, or for, ghost or spirit manifestations. Others consider orbs to be the energetic emissions of angelic and otherworldly beings. The extent and nature of these widely varying beliefs and explanations can be found by entering the simple search term "orbs" into an internet search engine. A Google search using that single search parameter conducted by the author in August 2012 produced several million page hits. The internet is filled with pictures containing orbs presented by paranormal investigators as evidence of some type of ghostly manifestation. Newspapers and magazines regularly publish pictures of orbs, repeating the claims for paranormality occasionally adding a celebrity endorsement as in the case of TV star Noel Edmonds. In September 2008, he claimed in a television interview that his deceased parents "Are melon sized orbs" which he described as being "Little bundles of positive energy" and went on to state that "Conventional photography can't pick them up but digital cameras can" (Daily Mail, 2008).

There have also been a number of books written describing the paranormal nature of orbs. Hall & Pickering (2006), discount the phenomena as being simply the result of the photographic process and introduce orbs as manifestations of angels, fairies, ghosts and offer guidance to those seeking to take their own orb photographs. *Ascension Through Orbs* (Cooper & Crosswell, 2009) is concerned less by the photographic process and instead proposes personal spiritual enlightenment can be gained by interacting with orbs.

Many paranormal investigators now prefer to try and steer a middle ground through the orb problem. When one reads the explanations of orbs provided on the websites of the majority of paranormal investigation groups and individuals they apparently accept that dust, flying insects, water vapour and other airborne particles are the probable cause of the majority of the orbs found on their digital pictures and also acknowledge the likelihood that the majority of orbs can be explained in terms of normal photographic processes. However, a large proportion of such sites then go on to state that there remains a number of orb photographs, typically a figure of around 1% or 2% is favoured; that cannot be explained and so must therefore be paranormal. No explanation as to why this statistic has been reached and it appears that this figure is somewhat arbitrary, reached by consensus or repetition of other websites and group pages.

### Digital Photography

The first commercial digital cameras started to appear in large numbers during the second half of the 1990's. They were expensive and of poor quality compared to their modern counterparts or even the cheapest 35mm compact 'point and shoot' cameras of that time. Around the same time, digital imaging technology allowed the production of smaller, lighter and cheaper video cameras and these too began to hit the high street stores in large numbers. The technical breakthrough that permitted this new development in photography was the imaging chip used

in both still and video cameras, the Charge Coupled Device or CCD.

The CCD was developed originally for use in astronomical telescopes and spy satellites and uses the principle of many individual light sensitive photodiodes built into a silicon matrix, each photodiode or pixel producing an electrical charge when it is exposed to light.

Small and relatively simple to manufacture the CCD allowed affordable consumer devices to be mass produced. Another form of silicon imaging device, the CMOS (Complementary Metal Oxide Semiconductor) sensor is also used for the same purposes. Although the CMOS sensor uses a slightly different approach to image production, for the purposes of this discussion will be treated the same as the CCD. To all intents and purposes a digital still camera is in reality nothing more than a video camera that captures single images to its memory instead of a continuous stream of information. Although the imaging sensors were capable of producing excellent quality video pictures their use in still cameras was greatly restricted at first by the small amount of image information that the early devices were capable of registering simply because of their small size, typically around a 1/3rd of an inch.

However, as with all consumer electronics, technological developments and increased consumer uptake quickly allowed cameras with high resolution image sensors to become affordable and today we have still cameras with pixel densities of between 5 and 36 million pixels on the sensor.

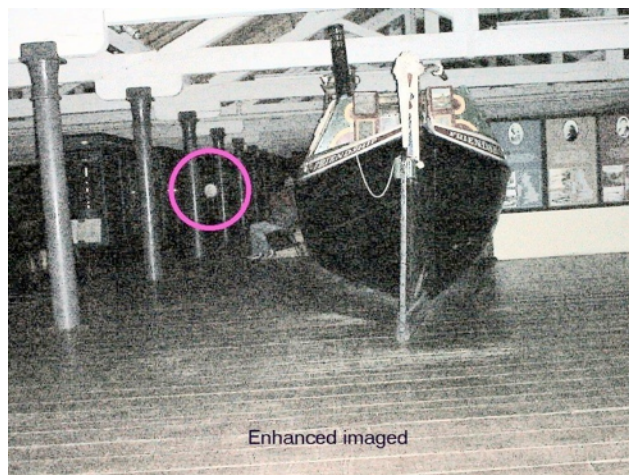
Digital photography and video had some other problems that needed to be resolved before commercial digital photography and video became a viable proposition. One of these was the way the imaging sensor responds to light. They are for example much more sensitive to infra-red (IR) light and this, if left unresolved would result in strange colour casts appearing on the photographs. Special electronic and optical filtering is required to remove this colour abnormality but this IR sensitivity of the sensor was exploited by Sony and other manufacturers who provided the user with an option to de-activate these IR filters allowing the camera to see in apparent total

darkness. Additional IR lighting is required, either mounted integrally within the camera or mounted as an optional accessory. Sony launched a range of consumer cameras and video cameras equipped with this night-vision facility that were readily exploited by paranormal enthusiasts, the characteristic green picture from these night-vision equipped cameras also became the de-facto standard for paranormal TV shows. The digital still camera has also taken off with sales now vastly outstripping conventional film photography. Virtually all are small and straightforward to use. With a few exceptions they are more closely related to the earlier 35mm film compact camera in their range of functions and capabilities. These new digital cameras allow everyone to take a picture and with a home computer produce good quality pictures almost instantly.

### The Early Orbs

The author was an early adopter of digital photography video. During 1998, as part of a long-term investigation at Ellesmere Port's Boat Museum, a series of pictures were taken using an 800,000 pixel digital camera that stored the pictures onto a removable floppy disc. The pictures were taken in the dark using flash. Later, when viewing the images something unexpected and not seen before was observed within the pictures. A number of circular bright anomalies could be seen.

For example, in a sequence of three pictures taken over ten seconds, one of these bright circular anomalies appeared to have moved. During the course of the investigation more than 200 digital stills had been taken within the same location, but only a handful showed these bright anomalies (picture 1).



**Picture 1. One of the earliest Lightball images captured in 1998**

These pictures were enhanced and examined. The results showed that the light anomalies did not initially appear to be the result of any camera or imaging faults. The pictures and a full description of the events were sent to Sony UK for their comments and they confirmed that the camera was not malfunctioning. 'Lightballs' as they were christened, could not, it seemed be easily explained. Later, at a different location in an old school the same phenomenon was photographed, close to where many witnesses had reported a ghostly figure. A number of digital pictures were once again taken. On this occasion a newly acquired Sony night vision equipped camcorder had been positioned to observe the same area. Playing back the video footage revealed a moving ball of light that quickly moved into the frame. The lightball appeared to stop, then change direction rapidly before exiting the bottom of the frame (picture 2).



**Picture 2. Still taken from night vision video showing a Lightball anomaly rapidly moving out of the frame.**



Other investigators using digital photography and video also began to post similar pictures of bright circular anomalies onto their websites. In fact they were becoming almost a common occurrence. They gained a new name, from the USA where groups had started to refer to them as Orbs. As the number of presented orb pictures increased, the discussions and theories about their nature grew rapidly. Many believed that they represented direct evidence for ghostly or spirit manifestations. Some thought them to be a visualisation of Poltergeist activity. Others believed them to be Angels made bizarre claims they could even tell the sex of them by looking at the colour of the orb, pink for a female entity and blue for a male. Faces were frequently described as being seen within orbs and they were said to move about in a controlled and intelligent way responding to the investigators requests for them to perform.

A number of groups began to undertake more detailed studies of this new phenomenon including Para.Science and the Association for the Scientific Study of Anomalous Phenomena (ASSAP). It was discovered that the actual cause of the orb anomalies was most likely to be light being reflected from the still camera's flash or built infra-red lights in the case of video. The airborne object was required to be physically close to the lens and within a narrow angular range between the illumination and the object reflecting the light. ASSAP christened this area where orbs were likely to be produced as the Orb Zone (ASSAP, 2007). These initial studies resulted in many investigators questioning the true nature of orbs and leading to more groups subsequently carrying out their own experiments with the result that the probability that orbs were simply the result of airborne dust and other material was widely acknowledged. However the inability of any of the studies to conclusively demonstrate that airborne matter and moisture is responsible for orb production allowed the debate between the orb believers and the orb sceptics to continue, to the obvious detriment to paranormal research and to the continued confusion of all concerned.

An experiment considered by the author some time ago was the use of stereo (left and right) photography to explore the orb phenomena. Using this technique it should be possible to properly test the hypothesis that orbs are airborne matter, physically close to the taking camera. Thus, if an orb was found to be present on one picture of a stereo pair of pictures taken simultaneously and absent on the other, then the original source of the anomaly must be located within the angle of view formed between the flash and the lens i.e. within the orb zone, causing the characteristic bright anomaly to appear on the final picture. Also, such an object appearing on only one of the stereo pictures must be physically close to the camera as it would appear on both of the stereo pictures if it was located more than a few centimetres from the camera. Although stereo photography is a well understood technique that has been used with film photography for many decades, the technical difficulties applying it to digital photography and ensuring that the resultant images were identical proved technically and practically insurmountable at that time. The difficulties included; finding a means of ensuring that both pictures were taken simultaneously, that both pictures had identical photographic settings i.e. focus and exposure and that both pictures had identical post image processing applied i.e. scene pre-sets, colour balance, file compression etc. The use of a stereo lens fitted to a digital camera was also considered but discounted, as firstly it partially blocked the light from the camera's built in flash and secondly the use of a single lens / image sensor meant that it would not be possible to fully exclude any artefacts and errors caused by either the lens or the sensor, both of which are known possible causes of some orb like photographic anomalies such as coma aberrations. Launched in mid 2009, The Fujifilm W1 3D digital camera was at the time a unique digital camera comprising two separate lenses and two separate high resolution image sensors forming a matched pair of image taking systems integrated within the same camera body. The two image taking systems shared a single common flash positioned equidistant between the two lenses. Cru-

cially, both matched image taking systems were activated by the same shutter button and used the same focus, exposure and flash settings, thereby ensuring that the two resulting images produced for each press of the shutter were identical in every respect except for the parallax separation between the left and right pictures. This camera permitted the hypothesis that orbs are the result of nearby airborne matter reflecting the flash light back toward the camera to finally be properly tested. The author was fortunate in being able to secure one of the first examples of this new type of camera shortly after its launch in the autumn of 2009 in order to begin a renewed investigation of the orb phenomenon.

Locations were selected to encompass a broad representation of allegedly haunted venues e.g. castles, industrial sites, modern retail premises and also included both indoor and outdoor locations. In most instances the photography was undertaken whilst paranormal investigators and members of the public, unaware of the particular nature of the camera or the experiment being undertaken conducted some form of paranormal investigation. In order to replicate the point and shoot nature of most digital photography undertaken during amateur paranormal investigation, the camera was only used in the fully automatic exposure and focus mode. The use of the fully automated mode also ensured that the resultant pair of stereo images were identical in terms of any software processing of the images that is applied in-camera i.e. those affecting the colour balance, scene pre-sets, file compression etc. The stereo paired images were subsequently downloaded from the camera to a laptop computer. No enhancement or manipulation of the resulting images was undertaken. Each simultaneously taken stereo pair of images was then viewed side by side and simply compared visually for the presence of orb anomalies on either one of the pair.

## The Results

To date 1,870 stereo pairs of images have been taken and examined. Orb anomalies have been

found on 630 pairs. In 491 pairs, a single orb or multiple orbs was seen to be present in only the left or right image but not in the corresponding second image of the pair. In 139 stereo pairs, orbs were seen to be present in both of the images (left and right) but not in a position that corresponded to the individual orb being the same object (pictures 3 - 6).

**Pictures 3 – 6. Samples of the stereo paired images, showing no corresponding orbs appearing on both left and right pictures.**



An additional series of more than 1,000 stereo pictures were taken in non-haunted i.e. control locations using the same methodology and camera settings. The results were identical; no orb

was observed to be in the same corresponding position in both of the paired pictures (picture 7).



**Picture 7. Sample of picture taken at control location**

Interestingly, a further four stereo pairs of images showed other anomalies that are frequently offered up as evidence of the paranormal. Two are images of the camera strap, whilst two more show breath condensation as the author exhaled. As with the orb photographs these four anomalies appear on only one side of the stereo pair, again showing that they were quite normal in origin (picture 8).



**Picture 8. Stereo images show the camera strap appearing only on the left side of the pair.**

## Conclusion

This comprehensive survey demonstrates that orbs are produced by airborne material, located close to camera and within a range of angles that permits the light from the flash to be reflected back towards the lens axis and strongly supports the orb zone hypothesis proposed by ASSAP and others and provides long overdue evidence that their origin lies firmly within the mundane and explainable, not the paranormal or supernatural. Before concluding it is also worth bearing in mind those original statistical claims made by paranormal groups that 1% or 2% of all orb pictures represent paranormal orbs. The survey to date has captured over 600 orbs so it might be expected that we should find between 6 and 12 that were anomalous, potentially therefore paranormal. The survey found that all 630 orb pictures obtained in the survey were readily explained using the stereo photography technique. Statistically speaking that is 0% paranormal but 100% explainable.

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## Interview: Andy Sharp (English Heretic) Hannah Gilbert



*English Heretic has been going for over 10 years now - a fantastic achievement. How did it come into being?*

The project developed organically from a series of conceptual recordings I did as part of a small record label that I had set up. These recordings were called “Lost Objects” and were CDs that were left at symbolically significant locations: occult bookshops, caves etc. I am very interested in the Buddhist Terma tradition, in which spiritual texts are supposedly secreted under rocks – to be discovered by the person they are meant to be discovered by. So I was trying to subvert the notion of material distribution in the record industry and also material attachment to our creativity.

The English Heretic concept developed from this specifically when I discovered that I lived very close to the final resting place of the Horror film maker Michael Reeves. He had died very young and his ashes were scattered at Ipswich crematorium, a place I drove past every day on the way to work. There was no commemoration for him there, and I felt a definite need to pay some homage to his passing. I think when young people die there's the momentum of life in their peers that makes their deaths seem all the more insignificant. When I visited the garden of remembrance, I had a vision of his funeral, the shock of all his friends at his passing, the huge welling of grief that happens when someone dies unexpectedly, but that grief would have soon dissipated like the blossom and ashes on the lawn of the crematorium. So I decided to do a recording using field recordings at the site and at the location of his films and create a plaque for him, in the form of a CD that I left under the tree where his ashes were scattered. From there the idea developed to commemorate an alternate history of tragic figures – Black Plaques, and called the project English Heretic, as a subversion of English Heritage.

*English Heretic very much feels like a more magical version of English Heritage. Do you think that mainstream ‘historical guardian’ organisations steer away from extraordinary history? Why might this be?*

I think it's because magic, occultism and the esoteric are marginal areas to the mainstream, so I'd imagine it is probably a lack of awareness of these figures, and also what sells to the public. The analogy I'd give is the difference between what's on the national curriculum and what say on the broadly marginal publications like Fortean Times. But from another perspective, if you look at the word magic as being etymologically linked to the imagination, then definitely there is the element of magic missing in English Heritage - your experience say at a castle under the auspices of a commercial concern is very much geared toward a factual history: audio guides detailing dates and events, but nothing to really fire the imagination. Ironically, the place should be enough to fire the imagination: witness the way children will use the place as an aid to their creative visualisation and creative play. Creative visualisation is the critical faculty to any extraordinary perspective in life, whether it be in the concrete arts such as writing or painting, or in occult practices – such as shamanism and ceremonial magic.

*What would you say are the principle influences on your project?*

To a certain extent the main influence on the project was my life at the time – raising a young family and visiting English Heritage places, observing what was going on there and the dichotomy between the adult consumption of history and place, and the child's engagement with it as part of their active imagination. From a cultural perspective I was and am very influenced by the REsearch publications of the early to mid 1980s. These were beautifully put

together documents on counter-culture that completely fed my imagination and encouraged a thoughtful and systematic subversion of mainstream culture. They published a journal of obscure low budget horror films (called Incredibly Strange Films), documented the Industrial culture movement, and did the first main compendium on JG Ballard. These were incredibly nourishing for a youngster in the 1980s prior to the vast dissemination of information now available on the net. Through those books I was led to a host of deviant father figures such as the film maker John Waters, the highly illuminated Robert Anton Wilson, and artists such as Jim Shaw.

*Your Black Plaque project has sought to commemorate a very diverse range of public figures, many of whom are often excluded from more mainstream historical forms of remembrance. Can commemoration bring us closer to past figures? Can it appease them?*

Personally commemoration brings me closer to a projection and an apprehending of their tragedy. I think this is very important as a way to move the soul. I am a little dubious to be honest of the benefits of such ideas of catharsis in creativity. I think that can create a cathartic loop when you can only achieve the catharsis you need by indulging in the cathartic practice itself. That to me seems like an addictive process. However I feel you can appease your projections of their disquiet – the disquieted dead require a living agent as the receiver. We can't imagine death without the dead and they can't imagine life without the living – ideally there's a commensal relationship between the living and the dead, though to extend the medical analogy that relationship can be parasitic – such as in poltergeist experiences.

*How did you choose your Black Plaque recipients?*

The majority of the Black Plaque recipients have chosen me! I've tried to follow the path of a channeller in a séance. For example, I did a plaque for Joseph Kennedy Jr who was the brother of JFK. I did this pathworking using the location for Daphne du Maurier's *The Birds* near Polridmouth Cove in Cornwall. I found out that Polridmouth Cove was used as a decoy site in the Second World War, and so started merging texts from her story with a pamphlet about WWII decoy sites. This rather disturbing vision came out in the resulting piece of writing that told me to visit all the airfields in Norfolk. I had this vision

of a badly burned RAF fighter pilot in the pathworking. So I decided to follow up this command. I decided I would start out from the airfield nearest to home and work north (I live in Suffolk). Anyhow the second or so site I researched was Fairfield, where I discovered the fascinating and tragic story of Joe Kennedy's demise had unfolded. Kennedy had flown in this treacherous mission from Fairfield, and his plane blew up near the Suffolk coast. So in a sense Kennedy became the spirit of this fighter pilot. I felt duty bound to commemorate him as a result. I am very interested in the psychic experience, and with the project to a certain degree I am trying to extend the séance room to an urban and psychogeographic arena. I am also aware that this can be construed as absurd, but I do think there is an important role in magic for absurdity – after all, the first card in the tarot deck is the path of the fool.

*You've used fictional as well as real individuals. What are the advantages of using fictional figures in this way?*

Fictional figures are a useful way of exploring psychopathology without the unpleasant connotations of commemorating real life psychopaths. In no way did I want the project to be associated with the glamourising of say serial killers, but I wanted to explore what James Hillman expounded in his *Dreams and the Underworld*: the psychopathic presence, immutable and always a fixture in the soul. If the poltergeist represents the trickster in the soul, then the demonic might be the presence of the psychopathic.

*What is the importance of experience, ritual and place for your work? How do you seek to capture this and incorporate it into your work?*

I treat location visits as a form of ritual. The ceremonial arena is a place where you allow all actions to be considered as magically significant, a form of accepted paranoia, where everything is symbolically meaningful. Therefore when I am out recording in the field, all the sounds captured are accepted as symbolically significant in a resulting musical piece for instance. This has a lot of interesting effects when you start to process the sounds. For a start they are very potent visual cues – images will arise from the sounds, associations and connections. And when you start mixing sounds from different locations you get new hybrid visual cues. It fecundates the imagination which I feel is a feel key

benefit of ritual.

*You have examined and incorporated a number of diverse writers, like JG Ballard, Kenneth Grant, James Hillman. How have these figures ended up in the English Heretic landscape?*

Well these figures in particular form an axis to harmonise seeming dissonances in paradigms of belief. I feel a real negative part of modern cognition is the barrier of the paradigm. If you look at Ballard his world view is visionary scientific. Freud's world view is anti-occult, and in some ways Darwinian. Grant is a flagrant occultist, but also with an eye to the significance of major world trauma in the magical realm. His insights on Hiroshima are fascinating, and forms a common obsession with Ballard. Hillman I see as an erudite bridge to traverse from the Freudian world view of Ballard to a neoplatonic and hermetic reading of the world's soul. From the neoplatonic realm you can rationally negotiate a route to the occult, and therefore view seemingly antithetical belief systems as harmonies of the same voice.

*Are there any anthropologists who have inspired you?*

I am in no way a trained anthropologist though I am a massive admirer of Carlos Castaneda's work, partly because of its controversial nature: the suggestions that he was making this stuff up, I find more fascinating - simply because he seems to have tapped into the core of creative visualisation as a tool to manifest the waking dream state. Interestingly Kenneth Grant for the same reason states the importance of Castaneda. Also, when you read Ballard's work such as Unlimited Dream Company, there is something very similar going on in the shamanic transformations of the character to that 'experienced' by Castaneda under Don Juan. I think there is something fundamentally important in fabricating reality to understand the reality as a fabrication in itself. As Sartre says - "one cannot arrive at the essences with truth alone".

*Your next project is 'The Underworld Service'. Could you tell us more about it, and what inspired it?*

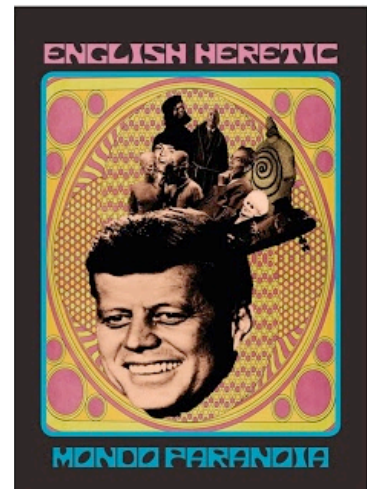
The Underworld Service is a series of recordings and texts largely taken from my journeys over the past couple of years. I am exploring what the Greeks called "The Katabasis" a form of ritual descent to

the underworld. The Katabasis is also a journey from land to sea. The work derives a lot of its inspiration from James Hillman's work in the late 1960s and early 1970s during which he experienced a negative epiphany regarding Jung's individuation process, and returned to the Greek myths to accept and work with the fragmented nature of the soul rather than to delude ourselves of a monotheistic herculean myth. I am tying all this in with our cultural fascination with Greece in the 1970s, TV thrillers like The Aphrodite Inheritance which were obviously spawned by an interest in the work of Robert Graves and John Fowles' The Magus. So it's really a quite eclectic brew of material.

English Heretic Website:  
<http://englishheretic.blogspot.co.uk/>

**Mondo Paranoia: A Medieval History Of The Early 1960s**

explores the thanatological synchronicities of the 22nd November 1963: the simultaneous deaths of JFK, Aldous Huxley and C.S. Lewis. Paradoxically 22nd and 23rd November also witnessed the activation of two mind bending Pop programmes: The Beatles' world conquering second album and the first episode of Dr Who.



Mondo Paranoia serves as an initiatory and analeptic voyage into the deep mind of the 60s: further katabatic excursions to its queasy and oleaginous core are planned for 2014.

Wrapped in a crime scene linocut cover by Lisa Cradduck, comprising of a 33 min documentary and 12 page essay, Mondo Paranoia, English Heretic's 11th release beckons in the coming fimbulwinter and honours with relish the diabolical release schedules of our media cabals.

CD - With music constructed from forensic sampling of JFK's funeral, amplifications from ancient television transmissions, and field recordings from the Kennedy memorial at Runnymede.

<http://englishheretic.blogspot.co.uk/p/souvenir-shop.html>

# Playback Hex William Burroughs and the Magical Objectivity of the Tape Recorder

James Riley



## ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1972 William Burroughs, author of *Naked Lunch* (1959), began an “operation” against the Moka Bar, a Soho coffee shop. He made recordings and took photographs of the premises at 29 Frith Street before intercutting the tapes with noise from other locations. Burroughs then returned to Frith Street for playback in situ whilst he took more photographs. After repeating the exercise Burroughs claimed that the Moka Bar lost trade and finally closed down on October 30th, 1972.

First documented in ‘Playback from Eden to Watergate’ (1973), this episode has become a favourite of biographers and those who present Burroughs as a countercultural ‘guerrilla’. That’s to say, the details of the ‘operation’ and the existing recorded and photographic evidence demonstrate a trajectory that moves beyond the expected boundaries of the cut-up; a shift from theory to practice in which Burroughs actualizes the conspiratorial, magical and combative strategies originally discussed in, and applied to, the Nova texts (1961-1964, 1964-1967).

This article argues that although such a reading is expressive of Burroughs’s positive cultural reception, it is critically problematic. The plotting of a teleological movement from word to street, covertly reads Burroughs’s compositional praxis as a qualitative semiotic hierarchy. Speculative manipulation of the symbolic word seems to precede the efficacy of a materialized engagement with indexical recordings and iconic photographs. In contrast, my argument reads the interaction of image and sound in the Moka Bar operation as exemplifying a wider theory of recording that integrates the specific material zones of text, tape and photograph.

## I

Between 1966 and 1973 the American author William Burroughs was resident in London, living in a small flat in Duke Street, Mayfair. During the summer of 1972 he often frequented the Moka Bar, a coffee shop at 29 Frith Street in Soho. First opened in 1953, the Moka had a certain degree of fame as London’s first espresso bar but for Burroughs it merely confirmed what he had come to expect of life in urban England: bad manners, terminal unfriendliness and inhospitality.<sup>1</sup> After a particularly trying afternoon at the café that had involved “outrageous and unprovoked discourtesy and poisonous cheese-cake”, (Burroughs 1974, p.18) Burroughs decided to take matters into his own hands.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1972, he stood on Frith Street opposite the Moka armed with a camera and a Sony TC portable cassette recorder. He took photographs of the building and recorded the sounds of the surrounding street as well as the ambient noise of the café itself. Returning to his flat he intercut this material with his own voice, sound recordings taken from his television and swathes of static from his transistor radio. Burroughs had been making recordings of this type since the early 1960s. In *The Third Mind* (1978) a book he wrote with Brion Gysin, he described the process as the ‘drop-in’ method of composition:

Record a few minutes of news broadcast. Now re-wind and cut-in at random short bursts from other news broadcasts. Do this four or five times over. Of course, where you cut-in, words

are wiped off the tape and new juxtapositions are created by cutting in at random (Burroughs and Gysin 1978, p. 89)

Whilst living in New York in the mid-sixties he applied this method to reel-to-reel tape recorders producing soundscapes similar to those he would later collate on cassette in London.<sup>2</sup>

In the specific case of the café tapes, however, this compositional strategy was connected to a much wider sphere of operations. Having compiled the tape, Burroughs then returned to Frith Street and played back the now adjusted material *in situ*. He took more photographs, made more recordings before manipulating the tapes again and returning for more playback. The performance of this loop continued at regular intervals for three months. As Burroughs describes it, after recording and playing back on location the sounds of a three-card *monte* game (now you see it, now you don't) "Their business fell off. They kept shorter and shorter hours. October 30, 1972, the Moka Bar closed. The location was taken over by the Queen's Snack Bar" (Burroughs 1974, p.19)

According to Barry Miles, author of the recent biography, *William Burroughs: A Life* (2014), Burroughs conducted a similar operation against the London headquarters of Scientology at 37 Fitzroy Street. Soon after, the organization moved to 68 Tottenham Court Road, although as Miles notes, "subsequent attempts failed to move them from their new quarters" (Miles, p.494). In contrast, Burroughs's work against the Moka Bar seems to have inflicted a much greater degree of damage upon the site. As Genesis Breyer P. Orridge states, not only did the business change in October 1972, but the "space remained empty for years, unable to be rented for love or money" (P.Orridge 2003, p.110). In 2007 it was the site of a Halifax branch. At present, it's a pawnbrokers. From busy café to vacant space, from liquidity to collateral: the unstable history of 29 Frith Street invites a certain speculation. In the light of what Burroughs called a "simple operation" to "discommode" the location, it appears to have suffered an uncanny reversal of fortunes, becoming uninhabitable as a consequence of its lack of hospitality (Burroughs 1974, p.18).

Burroughs first wrote about this incident in 'Playback from Eden to Watergate', an essay from 1973 that gained wide exposure in his collection *The Job* from 1974. It is also makes an appearance in his later novel *The Place of the Dead Roads* (1983). The combination of this self-reference coupled with the

subsequent documentation of 29 Frith Street by Burroughs readers has had the effect of framing the incident as a particularly resonant episode in the author's mythos.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, although Burroughs doesn't use the word in the 'Playback' essay, the Moka operation has become emblematic of his interest in and practice of magic.

Magic, understood here as the direction and channelling of the will for the purposes of effecting change, is a thematic preoccupation that runs through much of Burroughs's writing. From the focus on astral projection in *The Yage Letters* (1953) to the emphasis on funeral ritual in *The Western Lands* (1987); from the imagery of possession in *Queer* (1953) to the focus on exorcism in *The Retreat Diaries* (1976) Burroughs presents the individual subject as an entity open to and generative of control in the form of projected and counter-projected intention. Tape recordings made much earlier than the street material of 1972 also deal explicitly with such themes as is indicated by 'Curse Go Back' his incantatory chant that appears in Antony Balch's film *Towers Open Fire* (1963).<sup>4</sup>

However, when we look beyond this representation and performativity, the reception of Burroughs as a *practicing magician* is somewhat more ambivalent. In general, this perspective finds two very different audiences. On one side there is the post-punk generation of Burroughs readers: the artists and musicians of the so-called 'industrial culture' such as Genesis P. Orridge and Monte Cazzaza who in the late seventies and early eighties did much to popularise *The Job*, *The Third Mind* and essays like 'The Electronic Revolution' (1971) as practical manuals of urban guerrilla warfare. Following on from Burroughs's appearance as a tape recorder guru in Muscha's 1984 film *Decoder* and P.Orridge's Burroughsian work with Thee Temple Ov Psychick Youth, this positioning was increasingly wedded to a broad paradigm of chaos magic.<sup>5</sup>

The academic and critical flipside of this readership generally sees such topics (i.e. that which Burroughs discusses in essays written during the long gestation of the Red Night Trilogy) as a supplement to his fictional *oeuvre*, a body of work that is to be treated with a number of philosophical misgivings if not actual disregard. As James Grauerholz commented interviewed on the subject of Burroughs's 'legendary' "magickal experimentation",

[...] my cast of mind leads me to suspect that the Moka Bar, if it really did sell lousy tea with terrible service, might have been headed out of

business, with or without the sound-text-tape-film sidewalk pacing routine. (Grauerholz and Foland, 2010)

In the face of this polarity between belief and scepticism, it is unproductive to try and argue in favour of one viewpoint over another; particularly because both perspectives exhibit the same underlying assumption. They each present Burroughs as an author who, at the turn of the seventies departs from his work as a writer and moves into a very different field of experience. For example, in his mapping of the multi-focal nature of the cut-up process, Oliver Harris compares Burroughs's "application of cut-up methods *beyond* the text" (my emphasis) to a movement "from laboratory to field research." (Harris 1996, p.384). Similarly, in his absorption of Burroughsian methodology as the basis of manifestoes such as 'Nothing Short of Total War' (1989), P.Orridge places emphasis on the application of a set of identified strategies in the absence of reference to their origins in specific texts (P.Orridge 1989, p. 46). This perspective, what could be termed an 'extension thesis' positions Burroughs's work with the routines of *Naked Lunch* (1959) and the textual cut-ups of the Nova texts (1961-1968) as a kind of theoretical space which then gives rise to the practical work of tape recorder experiments, sound weaponry and urban curses.

This framing posits a two-fold problem. First, despite Friedrich Kittler's description of Burroughs as an "ex-writer" (Kittler 1999, p.110) during this period, the evidence that pertains to material and creative practice is not indicative of such a stark renunciation of the role. Second, the critical implications of this matter upset the distinction, that's to say, when Burroughs's methodology is examined, it's hard to see how the appreciation of his work as a 'magician' have to come at the cost of an appreciation of his work as a writer. The Moka Bar incident offers the necessary hinge with which to harmonize these perspectives. Specifically, recognition of the tape recorder as a magical instrument within Burroughs's work can help to establish a pivot between these seemingly polarised areas of practice.

## II

Magnetic tape, as with cinematographic film operate within Burroughs's work as media that he subjected to cut-up procedures following his first textual experiments with the technique in 1959. The idea of

the cut-up was to apply the techniques of painting and collage to the printed page. It was intended as a generative process that disrupted syntactic order as a means of producing new texts. Some of Burroughs's earliest recordings were used to document this process before he quickly graduated to cutting and adjusting recorded tape, particularly sound recordings of him reading from his own work.<sup>6</sup> The key point here is that, as with his film work with Balch Burroughs's tape work did not represent a shift in media but an intermedial integration of recording technologies within the cut-up project as a whole. He used the tape recorder as a creative and compositional tool in parallel with his use of pen, typewriter and scissors. Case in point is *The Ticket That Exploded*, one of the three main Nova texts. Olympia Press first published the novel in 1962 before it appeared as a revised edition via Grove Press in 1967. This second version added considerable amounts of new material to existing sections such as 'operation rewrite' and 'silence to say goodbye'. The first section contained methodological data pertaining to his tape recorder experiments of the intervening years whilst the second featured phrases drawn from the tape cut-ups themselves.<sup>7</sup> The cut-up tapes, then do not merely function as evidence of his non-writing activities, "proof", as N. Katherine Hayles has pointed out, "that Burroughs actually performed the experiments he described" but constitute an integral aspect of his compositional process as a writer (Hayles 1997, p.91).

This strategic elision works as an index of the paradigm that informs the cut-up methodology. For Burroughs, language functions as a communicative prerequisite but also occupies multiple sensory channels: the graphic, the symbolic and the auditory. Similarly, language acquisition requires systemic habituation: neurologically and physiologically, the user has to adapt to its functional demands. This material, parasitic reading influenced by Alfred Korzybski is broadly post-structuralist in its understanding of language as an arbitrary and normative signifying system.<sup>8</sup> In Burroughs this perspective goes onto assume conspiratorial significance as the parasitic system is seen to be open to exploitation by 'control', Burroughs's general term for the operation of mendacious subjectifying discourses that produce a kind of social ventriloquy. For Burroughs, examples would be the spectacular operation of media advertising, political discourses, Muzak and so fourth.

In the absence of an ideal, transcendent or metaphysical (i.e. non-linguistic) vantage point, Burroughs posits that resistance is to take the form of

code-breaking, jamming and re-writing. Strategies that oppose control through direct engagement with and use of the matter, materials and methodologies that constitute it. In the light of this world-view, the cut-up thus *has* to work on two-fronts in accordance with the bi-polarity of the linguistic sign: the process is specifically intended to engage with the symbolic order of the written word *and* the sonic sphere of the vocalised word. The tape thus becomes as potent a canvas as the page. If cutting text places the writer “in tactile communication with the medium, the raw words” (Gysin 1978, p.44) then the materializing capabilities of the tape recorder are equally effective in opening up the sonic sphere to haptic engagement. The ability of the device “to transform sound frequencies into actual patterns of magnetic dust on tape” permits the writer to manipulate their “own words” in addition to those written (Hayles 1997, p.91). As such, the tape recorder occupies a horizontal rather than a vertical position in Burroughs’s cut-up strategy: it is not a device he graduates towards having mastered the text, but it is an instrument he uses in tandem with his work on the text due to the particularity of the word virus he challenges.

### III

It is this focus on a ‘pre-recorded’ universe and Burroughs’s cultivation of a set of associated strategies that have come to be recognised as the kernel of his conceptualisation of magic. Commenting on what he called “the magical processes” of Burroughs and Brion Gysin, P.Orridge commented:

Everything is recorded. If it is recorded, then it can be edited. If it can be edited then the order, sense, meaning and direction are as arbitrary and personal as the agenda and / or person editing. This is magick. For if we have the ability, and / or choice of how things unfold – regardless of the original order and / or intention that they are recorded in – then we have control over the eventual unfolding (P.Orridge 2003, p.106).

Note here the use of “magick” in the Crowleyite sense: “The art and science of causing change to occur in conformity with the will” (Crowley 1973, p.3). For Burroughs, if change is to be achieved in conformity with the will, it is an achievement that is due to the artifice of ‘reality’ the fact that it is malleable matter consisting of sound, image, symbol and vibra-

tion that can be subject to various forms of intervention.

David Conway made a similar point in *Magic: An Occult Primer*, a text published in 1972. According to Matthew Levi Stevens Burroughs had read and was enthusiastic about Conway’s text having previously studied Dion Fortune’s *Psychic Self Defence* (1930) (Stevens 2013). Conway’s take on the science of the projected will was that thought possessed a molecular materiality and constituted a form of energy generated by brain activity. If powerful enough the thought “may imprint itself on the etheric or astral atmosphere”. In elaborating upon this “occultist view”, the idea that an invisible, semi-material substratum operates within the world as an information channel, Conway defers for illustrative purposes to “the over-worked comparison with a radio wave”:

The brain becomes the broadcasting studio from which all thought radiates. We become aware of radio waves only if they are picked up and densified by a suitable receiver, but they exist nonetheless. All the receiver has done is make them accessible to our senses just as printed verses express a poet’s vision in a form others can appreciate (Conway 1988, p.41)

Burroughs would agree with the science here but not the analogy. That’s to say, Burroughs would regard the electromagnetic wave spectrum as part of the fabric of a magical universe, not that which is broadly comparable to allegedly parallel concepts such as “aether” and “astral plane”. Teletechnologies along with the figurative, representational and plastic arts “painting, sculpture, dance, music” and particularly *writing* have, according to Burroughs, their origins in ceremonial practices. They constitute methodological developments of attempts to physically manifest the will and affect change within or upon another in the absence of direct physical contact: spooky action at a distance. “The artist,” states Burroughs in ‘The Fall of Art’ (1995), manipulates their media in order to “make something happen in the mind of the viewer or reader” (Burroughs 1995, p.4).

In offering the argument is not that Burroughs is merely posting a relativistic view of magic – presenting the term as an archaic synonym for art and / or science. Similarly, the tape recorder does not function as a ‘magical instrument’ in his ‘system’ purely by virtue of its electromagnetic operational specificity. Burroughs’ focus on the use of various processes to make *something happen*, highlights that within the cos-



mology he delineates, magical practice is linked to the manipulation of an ontic texture. It is this perspective that can be used to highlight a certain degree of particularity.

In her book *Literature, Technology and Magical Thinking* (2001) Pamela Thurschwell looked at the interface of psychoanalysis and modernist literature in the years 1880-1920. She argued that both exhibited a preoccupation with the direct transfer of thought and the notion that consciousness had the potential to collapse spatial and temporal distance. The “emergence of new technologies [...] create new imaginative correspondences” in the work of such writers as Henry James and these, we are told, are used to map the intimacy suggested by such psychic and physical transmissions. This connection between various forms of telepathy and the imaginative economy of tele-technologies like the telegraph, the telegram and the telephone extrapolates a symbolic conceit from the presumed result of such devices: their own apparent ability to elide physical distance (Thurschwell 2001, p. 4).

Such immediacy is of course based on a distinct mediating function in which the density of spatial distance is increased due to the physical apparatus itself and the channel noise that permits its transfer of information. It is this type of mediating gap that interests Burroughs. His use of the tape recorder is primarily non-archival. He does not use it to document the sonic results of various workings but instead pushes its functionality to produce noise, distortion and interference; a materialized, but modified version of that which it records.

In his discussion of what he terms magical objects – everyday items with peculiar resonance, Steven Connor argues that a key criterion is their *excessive* nature. What is phenomenologically magical about a brandy glass, for example, is the way that it sits in the hand like a dove. For Connor, such suggestiveness, symbolisation and attractiveness far exceeds its ostensible role as a container of liquid (Connor 2001, p.5). The same can be said of the magical objectivity of Burroughs’s tape recorder. He causes it to swerve away from its normative role of functional objectivity, ‘merely’ recording the world and instead puts it to work as a generative tool, one that operates in his terms to re-make the world. However one might wish to interpret the ‘results’ of his operation, there is an important consistency to observe. From Burroughs’s perspective, the tape recorder is engaging with the same physical material as that which he manipulates on the page. As such, the device is symbolically as

well as functionally excessive. It exists as a compositional tool, textual signifier and applied device. What could be termed Burroughs’s magical worldview is focused on an understanding of these territories existing in confluence. What we see in his use of the tape recorder is an attempt to map out and re-design their integrated architecture.

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<sup>1</sup> The Moka Bar opened in 1953. For more information see:

<http://greatwen.com/2011/11/09/william-burroughs-and-the-strange-demise-of-londons-first-espresso-bar/>

<sup>2</sup> Recordings made in New York can be heard on *Real English Tea Made Here* (Audio Research Editions, 2007). See the track 'Are You Tracking Me?'.

<sup>3</sup> Other artists have used Burroughs's description of the operation as the basis for their own work. See: <http://austerityprattle.tumblr.com/post/44125053530/performative-reenactment-of-cassette-tape>

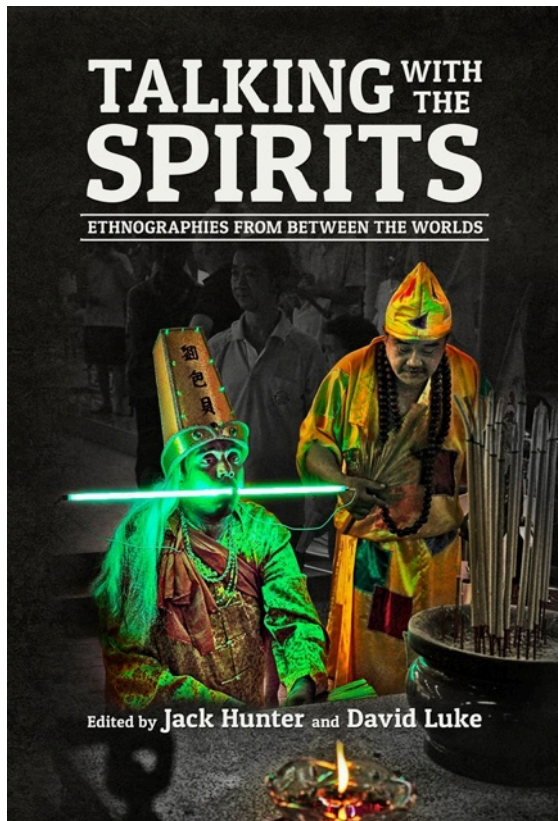
<sup>4</sup> 'Curse Go Back' can be heard on the William Burroughs album *Break Through in Grey Room* (Sub Rosa, 1986). As well as appearing on *Towers Open Fire*, Burroughs recited the incantation as part of his narration for the Balch's 1968 version of *Häxan: Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922).

<sup>5</sup> Burroughs called it Phil Hine's *Condensed Chaos* (1995) "the most concise statement ... of the logic of modern magic." His artwork adorns the cover of Hine's *Prime Chaos* (1993). According to Douglas Grant, Burroughs was a member of the Illuminates of Thanateros and was buried wearing his IOT initiate ring. See Grant (2003, p.29).

<sup>6</sup> The 1959 recording 'Creepy Letters' is an audio recording of Burroughs performing a cut-up. Compare this with the likes of 'Captain Clark Welcomes You Aboard'. Both can be heard on *Nothing Here Now but the Recordings* (Industrial Records, 1981).

<sup>7</sup> For more details on these revisions see Oliver Harris's new edition of *The Ticket That Exploded* (USA: Grove, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Alfred Korzybski's *Science and Sanity: An Introduction to Non-Aristotelian Systems and General Semantics* (1933) was an important text for Burroughs in the development of his linguistic theory.



Talking With the Spirits is a cross-cultural survey of contemporary spirit mediumship. The diverse contributions to this volume cover a wide-range of ethnographic contexts, from Spiritualist séances in the United Kingdom to self-mortification rituals in Singapore and Taiwan, from psychedelic spirit incorporation in the Amazonian rainforest, to psychic readings in online social spaces, and more. By taking a broad perspective the book highlights both the variety of culturally specific manifestations of spirit communication, and key cross-cultural features suggestive of underlying core-processes and experiences. Rather than attempting to reduce or dismiss such experiences, the authors featured in this collection take the experiences of their informants seriously and explore their effects at personal, social and cultural levels.

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## REVIEW: Exploring the Extraordinary Conference (Gettysburg College, 21st–23rd March 2014)

T. Peter Park



Friends, thinkers, colleagues!

I attended the Sixth Exploring the Extraordinary ("EtE") Conference at Gettysburg College in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania on the weekend of Friday to Sunday, March 21st through 23rd, 2014. The "EtE" was a 3-day event with 23 speakers on various anomalous, paranormal, or spiritual phenomena, and some 40 to 50 participants in all, many of them academics.

The Conference was organized by the Exploring the Extraordinary network together with the Gettysburg College Sociology Department. Exploring the Extraordinary is a mainly British-based international interdisciplinary network for discussing research into the "extraordinary" experiences transcending the mundane often considered paranormal, supernatural, religious, transcendent, ecstatic, exceptional, mystical, anomalous, magical, or spiritual. The network was founded in 2007 by Dr. Madeleine Castro, Dr. Hannah Gilbert and Dr. Nicola Holt, at that time post-graduate members of the Anomalous Experiences Research Unit at the University of York, UK.

This conference, the network's sixth and the first to be held outside the UK, was organized by Dr. Castro, now senior lecturer in Psychology at Leeds Metropolitan University, and Dr. Gilbert, director of Compassionate Wellbeing, now writing a book on grieving. They were assisted as conference hosts and masters-of-ceremonies by Dr. Charles F. Emmons, Chairman of the Sociology Department. Dr. Emmons, a student of the sociology of religion and of Chinese society and culture, is unusually sympathetic to the paranormal for a tenured academic, and in fact is also himself married to a practicing Spiritualist medium. He is the author of *Chinese Ghosts and ESP* (1982), *At the Threshold: UFOs, Science, and the New Age* (1997), and *Science and Spirit: Exploring the Limits of Consciousness* (2012), as well as of books on Chinese and

Hong Kong politics. Dr. Emmons also organized group dinners for the conferees on Friday and Saturday nights at charming local Gettysburg restaurants: at O'Rourke's Family Eatery and Spirits on Friday, and at the Café Saint-Amand French Bistro on Saturday. He likewise arranged for flavorful on-campus group lunches at the conference site on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, giving the group extra time to sit together, chat, and exchange views and perspectives.

The Exploring the Extraordinary network's members include many individuals from various academic disciplines, such as anthropology, art, English studies, folklore, film studies, geography, history, natural sciences, parapsychology, philosophy, physical sciences, psychology, religious studies, sociology, theatre studies, and theology - as well as those not affiliated with such institutions. It thus serves as an "amphibious" interface or contact point between the world of "mainstream" academia and the "liminal" subcultures (in the terminology of parapsychologist George Hansen) of people engaged in cultivating or exploring anomalous, extraordinary, "paranormal," "mystical," "magical," or "occult" experiences or interests often ignored or dismissed by academia for not fitting in with our society's prevailing concepts of the "rational," "realistic," and "scientific."

The conference's 23 intriguing presentations on unusual, anomalous, and "liminal" experiences provided ample, flavorful food for thought for myself as a self-described "mental amphibian" equally at home in the seemingly disparate cultural worlds both of "straight" mainstream academic research and scholarship on the one hand and of probes into the off-beat, marginal, and anomalous outside the conventionally academically respectable on the other! Most of the speakers discussed ghosts, mediumship, and other evidence (or seeming evidence) for life after death, a few spoke on topics like UFO's, healing, and remarkable coincidences, and some others on histori-

cal and sociological aspects of paranormal investigation. They all explored a "third force" middle zone between the usual contrasted realms of science and religion, of material reality and familiar mundane everyday routine on the one hand and of a wholly transcendent God and a purely spiritual soul on the other.

Nearly all questioned our society's reigning cultural and philosophical paradigm of scientific materialism, where even religion is fastidiously confined to a purely spiritual realm with no messy, embarrassing causal interaction with observable events or objects in the physical world. Things take place far more often than the "Establishment" admits that scientific materialism cannot explain away, the speakers nearly all noted. A prevailing focus on ghosts and séances by the conferees did not obscure a more general sense as well that reality itself may be more fluid, elusive, ambiguous, "tricksterish," and "not-quite" than our society's prevailing materialism, rationalism, and "scientism" allow for. Though only George Hansen mentioned Weber by name, they almost all saw extraordinary experiences as challenging the historic trends of "rationalization," "secularization," and "disenchantment" that the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) saw as increasingly dominating modern Western society in a rigid, stifling, bureaucratized "iron cage."

Dr. Julie Beischel, Co-Founder (with her husband Mark Boccuzzi) and Director of Research at the Windbridge Institute for Applied Research in Human Potential in Tucson, Arizona, delivered Friday afternoon's Keynote Address, "A Scientist Among Mediums: Intriguing Findings from 10 Years of Laboratory Research." She described the Windbridge Institute's use of multiple-blind scientific methods and protocols to prove not only the reality of A.I.R. (Anomalous Information Reception), in other words of extra-sensory perception, but also of what she and her colleagues believe to be the very probable conscious survival of the human personality after bodily death, noting that the evidence strongly favors communication with discarnate personalities and not merely ESP information gathered by mediums or psychics from the minds of the living: for one thing, she stressed, mediums report that these two processes FEEL very different - communication with the dead or discarnates is more like "seeing a movie," ESP from the living more like "reading a book." They also produce quite different EEG brain-wave patterns. Evidence of survival, she felt, could have practical, cultural, social, and academic benefits. It would be

helpful in counseling and comforting the bereaved, for instance, and culturally in questioning scientific materialism as our society's only valid form or source of knowledge. Psychologically, Dr. Beischel noted, 83% of mediums are NF (Intuitive & Feeling) types on the Myers-Briggs personality inventory (MBTI), in contrast to only 16% of the total general population—likewise, 55% of clergy and 54% of arts or drama people are NF, but only 4% of police and detectives!

The Conference's 22 other speakers opened on Friday morning with University of British Columbia historian Christopher Laursen, whose dissertation examined 300-odd poltergeist cases from the 1930's to the 1980's and described the historical shift in 20th century explanations of the poltergeist, speaking on "Of Thy Neighbor: Investigating who and what's next door in cases of hauntings." Laursen noted how parapsychologists studying poltergeist hauntings largely shifted after the mid 20th century from attributing them to ghosts or spirits to explaining them rather in terms of psychic or biopsychic energies stimulated by psychological conflicts in affected households, often in families with a troubled or conflicted adolescent. He then argued for greater attention by parapsychologists to the general social setting as well as the internal family conflicts of poltergeist households, observing that poltergeist case investigators have rarely paid much attention to neighbors or to local ethnic conflicts.

After citing the first season of the FX Television series *American Horror Story*, where a widow next door graciously offering a New Agey sage cleansing of the house turns out to be an integral key to a murder-haunted poltergeist-afflicted Los Angeles house, Laursen then turned to the famous "Baldoon Mystery" of 1820's frontier Ontario, where conflicts with the indigenous Anishinaabe (Ojibway and Odawa), and differences between Judaeo-Christian and Native Canadian perspectives on the supernatural, underlay the haunting of a Scottish pioneer settler farm. Exploring relationships between the settlers and their surrounding landscape, nearby burial sites, neighborhood people, and local First Nations, he found, a deeper context for the anomalous occurrences. In essence, according to Laursen, the consideration of "neighbors" in broader terms illuminated a complex web of exchange and action when unusual things took place.

Stephanie Boothby, a graduate Anthropology student at the University of Florida, followed Laursen on Friday morning with an account of her

participant-observer study of a Gainesville, Florida ghost-hunting group in "From 'Weekend Warriors' to Paranormal Researchers: Identity, Performance, and Experiential Meaning in Ghost Hunting." She went on dozens of paranormal investigations herself with the "Florida Paranormal Investigators," accepted as a full-fledged member of the team while quite open about her role as an anthropology student doing fieldwork research, and recalled several baffling paranormal experiences of her own at supposedly haunted sites. Paranormal reality television shows, she noted, have sparked a huge burst of popular interest in the supernatural, and inspired the creation of hundreds of paranormal and "ghost-hunting" groups both in the US and abroad. They have also created a public perception of "ghost-hunters" as mere thrill-seekers, a stereotype of paranormal investigators as frivolous, credulous "weekend warriors."

Many groups, however, consist of serious scientific researchers, often with mundane "day jobs" who however devote their spare time to scientific investigation of the paranormal. Her own group, Boothby noted, is quite serious, its leader looking down on "weekend warriors" as mere thrill-seekers, hobbyists, and dilettantes, as "the lowest of the low" and the "bottom of the barrel." These paranormal and ghost-hunting groups, Boothby argued, represent the growing popularity of alternative ways of thinking about and dealing with the anomalous, the supernatural, and the afterlife, mediating between the realms of religion and science—a common theme in many of the weekend's talks. Ghost hunting has emerged as a third option alongside religion and science, straddling the ideologies and methodologies of both—again, a common theme at Gettysburg. Boothby noted a certain tension between ghost-hunters and parapsychologists, adding that there are two basic parapsychological paradigms: disembodied spirits versus living individuals' ESP or psychic energies, yet again a common conference theme. Boothby also emphasized the helping role of ghost-hunters and paranormal investigators, trying to answer the questions and relieve the anxieties of clients baffled or frightened by strange phenomena around their homes or workplaces.

Hypnotherapist Hayley McClean from Barton-le-Clay, Bedfordshire, UK, described her own healing from rheumatoid arthritis through hypnosis and various spiritual practices in "Healing from Within: The Story of Moving Beyond Chronic Illness by Combining Hypnosis with Spirituality." Now 47, she developed chronic rheumatoid arthritis in her early teens,

has had many joint replacements, and became interested in hypnotherapy as a way to manage her disease in her thirties. Her training confirmed her decision to leave an abusive marriage, after which her "tingly hands" started, and she discovered that she could channel healing energy. She combined the two to heal herself, so that she has been in remission from arthritis these past three years. She has learned to combine positive thinking and hypnosis with such spiritual practices as meditation and Reiki to heal herself and others. In her work, she has found that blending a spiritual outlook with hypnotherapy greatly augments the healing process. Among other practices, she relies on Reiki, dowsing for health, the study of auras and chakras, and an ancient Indian meditative technique called Japa, based on repeating a "God-sound," studied by American psychologist and popular self-help author Wayne Dyer.

Marcel Cairo, himself a medium, invoked Gene Wilder's (as "Willie Wonka") "You should never, never doubt something that no one is sure of" in his own discussion of the problems and questions of mediumship in "Willy Wonka and the Afterlife Machine: Re-energizing the Scientific Method with a Dash of Madness," even showing clips of the Wilder film. While critical of what he considered unwarranted skepticism about spirit communications or the paranormal in general, Cairo made no bones about his staunch disbelief in physical manifestations like ectoplasm. He adamantly considered them, especially ectoplasm, to be merely fraudulent Victorian sleight-of-hand magic tricks, scathingly ridiculing physical mediums' insistence on séance-room darkness for their "manifestations," also describing them as basically an American and English specialty almost unknown on the European Continent. The famous 19th century Scottish medium D.D. Home, celebrated for his own levitations and mysterious bodily elongations, significantly called on other mediums to hold their séances and manifest their physical phenomena in broad daylight or fully-lit rooms as he himself often did, rather than in the dark.

On a more positive, less hyper-critical note, Cairo invited us to follow Wilder/Wonka into a world of "pure imagination," liberating scientific method as applied to Medium Research from the grip of skeptical thinking and academic limitations, infusing them with Willy Wonka's "Pure Imagination" madness turning time-worn conventions on their head. He outlined the three main hypotheses used to explain mediumistic mental phenomena (other than ectoplasm, of course!)—ESP (the medium using his or her



own psi to read the sitter's mind), super-psi (the "mental Internet," "Akashic Records," or telepathic reliance on multiple sources), and survival (rejected by most scientists, psychologists, and parapsychologists). Cairo nevertheless urged us not to rule out the survival hypothesis too hastily or dogmatically, quoting Willy Wonka's "you should never, never doubt something that no one is sure of."

University of Bristol anthropologist Jack Hunter, editor of the journal *Paranthropology*, analyzed "Ectoplasm, Somatisation, and Stigmata: Physical Mediumship as the Development of Extraordinary Mind-Body States," citing his own fieldwork at the "Bristol Spirit Lodge" mediumship circle. In psychologist and paranormal researcher Jon Klimo's definition of physical mediumship as the ability to "channel unknown energies that affect the physical environment," physical mediums produce directly observable manifestations of spirit. At the Bristol Spirit Lodge, Hunter had observed the production of ectoplasm (regarded skeptically by Marcel Cairo!), alteration of facial features, movement of physical objects, and levitation. Other phenomena similarly reflecting mental or psychic causes included stigmata, dermatography (skin writing), and psychogenic or somatogenic illnesses (also called somatoform or somatic symptom disorders in a constantly shifting terminology), such as the hysteria studied by Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893) at the Paris Salpêtrière in the 19th century and by Sigmund Freud's mentor Josef Breuer (1842-1925) in 19th century Vienna. Mediums developed the ability to manifest such phenomena at séances through practice and training, including biofeedback. Training was the key for Hunter, who suggested that physical mediumship may be a psychosomatic phenomenon, and that séances may serve as a kind of biofeedback training.

Hunter wished not to explain away paranormal phenomena, but to suggest possible mechanisms for their production. He saw links between physical mediumship and other psychosomatic phenomena, including conversion and somatoform disorders (with physiological symptoms but no organic cause), psychoneuroimmunology (stressing the role of psychological states in physiological healing), and stigmata (which shares many similarities to physical mediumship). He stressed culture-bound syndromes such as *koro*, the delusive Chinese and Southeast Asian belief that one's genitals are fatally shrinking, noting that somatic changes are influenced by cultural expectations: both stigmata and ectoplasm are culturally specific, he pointed out, as are healings by psychic heal-

ers. Hunter mentioned Joseph Breuer's curing of warts by hypnosis in fin de siècle Vienna, saw poltergeists as physical externalizations of psychic conflicts, and discussed such bizarre biological effects as the 19th century medium D.D. Home's physical elongations and anomalous bodily secretions, coining the term "ideoplasm" for ectoplasm influenced by thoughts. He admitted the presence of occasional fraud alongside genuine paranormal phenomena, such as "Katie" the "Gold Leaf Lady" discussed by parapsychologist Stephen Braude, a Florida housewife from a poor Tennessee mountain family who could seemingly cause gold leaf to appear on her skin—but whose gold foil sometimes turned out to be only brass.

In "Visions of Interiority," Dr. Donnalee Dox of the Texas A & M University Theater Arts Department explored the practices (sitting meditation, trance dancing, shamanic drumming, labyrinth walking, etc.) used to cultivate "inner peace" or feeling internally "centered" in modern lives marked by stimulation and distractions where the sense of an "inner life" has become an exceptional experience. Visual images, she argued, help construct an epistemology of interiority, making statements about the mind-body relationship, with enlightenment or wisdom portrayed as a kind of light. She examined four genres of visual images of interiority as a mental phenomenon, all constructing interiority in terms of mind-body dualism: (1) a homunculus or "ghost" reflecting the external world and operating the body, (2) bodies sitting cross-legged in meditation (the body reflecting an inner life), (3) bodies subjected to technologies like electrodes and fMRI machines to reveal the neural correlates of inner experience, and (4) interiority as a map of brain activity (the mind as one part of the physical body). She then explored three images of interiority involving the whole body and positing an inner life as non-dual consciousness: (1) bio-mechanics as in modern postural yoga, (2) visual artwork associated with meditative dance and neo-shamanic practices, and (3) her own preferred genre of holistic health of mind, body, and spirit. She noted the paradox of media celebrities like Oprah Winfrey and Deepak Chopra promoting meditation and spirituality in an atmosphere of frenetic marketing, wondering whether they promoted contemplation in a context nullifying it, or rather made it more accessible? After her talk, I myself also compared this to the severely, dreadfully mundane aesthetics of many fundamentalist and pentecostal churches, aiming to



promote religious experience in a grubbily, almost aggressively tacky, workaday, un-sacral setting.

Parapsychologist George P. Hansen, author of *The Trickster and the Paranormal* (2001), stressed the ambiguous, "liminal" (boundary-crossing, "anti-structure," socially marginal), "betwixt and between" character of the paranormal on Saturday in "Structural Analysis and the Betwixt and Between." Noting the almost universal reliance on myths and rituals in dealing with the supernatural or paranormal, he added that even in parapsychology myth and ritual have received too little attention, and then turned to the key topics of "binary oppositions" and of "liminality" or "anti-structure" for understanding the paranormal. He described cultural anthropologist Victor Turner's studies of liminality and anti-structure, and the work of structural anthropologists Claude Lévi-Strauss and Edmund Leach in understanding myth. He then turned to parapsychology's structuralist intellectual lineage, emphasizing the key contributions of the French poststructuralist and deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004). For Hansen, Derrida's *Specters of Marx* (1994), with its concept of "hauntology," the "haunting" of societies and cultures by the persistent memory of supposedly dead and gone past beliefs (including revolutionary ideals supposedly discredited by history), was "THE foundational text for academic work on haunting (except within parapsychology)."

Hansen stressed the centrality of the "Binary Oppositions" found by anthropologists like Edmund Leach in nearly all cultures, early societies identifying such crucial binary oppositions as Life-Death, God-Human, Heaven-Earth, Male-Female, and Human-Beast. Nowadays we usually consider the members of these pairs to be clearly, unambiguously distinct, with no middle ground. However, following Edmund Leach, he noted that mythologies do in fact posit a middle ground, a "betwixt and between" offering a "mediation" of the opposing paired categories, introducing a third intermediate category that is "abnormal" or "anomalous" in terms of ordinary "rational" categories—an abnormal, holy, taboo, non-natural middle ground full of incarnate gods, fabulous monsters, virgin mothers, etc. Thus, between Life and Death we have ghosts, mediums, spirits, and near-death experiences; between God and Human we have mystics; between Heaven and Earth we find angels and UFO's; Male and Female are "mediated" by "berdaches" (cross-dressing Native American men assuming female roles—however, I would also add that we could likewise add contemporary gays, lesbians,

bisexuals, and transgendereds here); Human and Beast are linked by Bigfoot, werewolves, and vampires. Moreover, Hansen added, these ambiguous "betwixt and between" creatures and phenomena often blur and overlap in bewildering ways in a promiscuous free-for-all criss-crossing and blending of seemingly distinct paranormal categories—e.g., UFO witnesses develop psychic powers (as in the case of celebrated 1961 "Interrupted Journey" abductee Betty Hill!), Bigfoot act like ghosts or are accompanied by UFO's, UFO abductions and "Close Encounters III" closely echo traditional folklore fairy encounter stories, etc., as emphasized by writers on a polymorphous paranormal like John A. Keel and Jacques Vallee.

Social marginality, Hansen continued, is a form of liminality. Paranormal phenomena and parapsychology are socially marginal. They are ignored, ridiculed, or nervously kept at a skittish distance by the large, hierarchical institutions of government, academia, industry, journalism, and even of organized religion. The only major industry seemingly welcoming them is the entertainment industry, which reinforces the idea that such phenomena are fictional, to be exploited for cheap thrills but not really taken seriously. As liminality is "anti-structure," groups attempting to directly engage paranormal phenomena on an ongoing continuing basis rarely establish permanent institutions with buildings and paid staff. Such groups, Hansen noted, frequently experience "para-drama," schisms, and vicious infighting. All this, he added, shows how the paranormal defies our society's large-scale long-range historical trends of "rationalization" and "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) described by Max Weber over a century ago—a theme Hansen discussed at greater length in *The Trickster and the Paranormal*. Hansen concluded by recommending University of California at Santa Barbara sociologist Avery F. Gordon's *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (1997, 2008), linking horror, history, and haunting, connecting seemingly disparate approaches and subjects like sociology and literary studies, the material and the spiritual, Argentina's "disappeared" and slavery in the U.S., to call into question our conventional ways of seeing.

LeMoyne College (Syracuse, NY) religion historian Darryl Catherine, who has studied the intersection of religion, culture, and politics in the United States and Latin America, analyzed the academic fate of religion- and paranormal-friendly American philosopher and psychologist William James (1844-1910)

in "Thinking Beyond the 'Primitive': Exclusionary Rhetoric and Cosmological Blind Spots in Parapsychological History." Despite his central role in establishing the discipline of psychology in the American academy, James is remembered today mainly as a philosopher, as one of the founders of Pragmatism, rather than for his theories of the human mind. This excision of James from the history of psychology, Dr. Catherine argued, was part of a larger ideological struggle for psychology to establish itself as a serious legitimate science in the Progressive Era, at a time when elite American academics increasingly subscribed to an anti-religious philosophy of scientific rationalism and materialism disdainful of the "primitive."

James' detractors, according to Dr. Catherine, attacked him for allegedly supporting a "primitive" world-view that scientists of the day saw themselves as working hard to erase from "enlightened" modern "civilized" society. He scandalized a generation of intellectuals nurtured on works like John W. Draper's *A History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science* (1875), Andrew D. White's *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896), and James G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890, 1900, 1906-1915), all defining "progress" and "enlightenment" as the banishing of "myth," "magic," and "superstition" by "science" and "reason" in the general acceptance of a basically materialistic world-picture. Dr. Catherine did not himself mention this comparison, but James' detractors in effect shared the view of the 18th century French Enlightenment philosophe Denis Diderot (1713-1784) that Humanity would only be free when "the last king is strangled in the entrails of the last priest," a sentiment still echoed in our own time by the Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris type "New Atheists" and by the Carl Sagan, Paul Kurtz, and CSICOP~CSI style "skeptdebunkers"!

James was attacked, Dr. Catherine noted, partly for his belief in an irreducible mind not reducible to a mere epiphenomenon of the brain, and for his enthusiasm for "psychical research," his day's forerunner of modern parapsychology, but even more for his theory of the "subliminal self," a concept he had borrowed from his friend and fellow paranormal student the English poet, classicist, and Society for Psychical Research co-founder F.W.H. Myers (1843-1901). Unlike their contemporary Sigmund Freud, who also emphasized the subconscious mind but largely as a chaotic sub-cellar of primitive instinctual urges and conflicts, Myers and James suggested that the uncon-

scious could provide us with legitimate insights into reality—thus seemingly dethroning the supremacy of human reason as the only valid source of truth. The "unchurched" James did not endorse any specific religious or theological views of God or Divine influence, but did believe in a "something more," a Higher Power, a real influx of energies from outside the individual conscious personality through the subliminal self. By taking seriously the possibility of valid non-rational knowledge, James was seen as siding with the enemies of science and reason, as an apologist for the "primitive," for irrational beliefs with no place in modern civilized society. He was also felt to threaten psychology's professionalization as a scientific discipline run by trained and certified experts, trying to open it instead to popular culture and the fancies of untrained amateurs.

Following the French sociologist of science and cultural anthropologist Bruno Latour (1947-), Dr. Catherine stressed the rhetorical dimension of branding parapsychology as a threat to scientific reason and hence a kind of primitivism, analyzing the linkage between primitivism and the dominant narrative of "normal science" among James' detractors. By challenging rationalism, Myers' and James' "subliminal self" idea seemed a form of "uncivilized" knowledge during the Progressive Era. James was accused of "primitivism" under 19th century materialist and positivist metaphysical narratives. Through complex narratives of cultural evolution, both Spiritualism and Theosophy framed mediumship and psychic powers as ways of knowing anticipated long ago by many primitive and prehistoric races. James, like Myers, Theosophy founder Mme. Blavatsky, and the 19th century American Spiritualist philosopher Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910), was an heir of Romanticism and its belief in the economically and technologically primitive but morally and spiritually enlightened "Noble Savage" in tune with higher spiritual forces. With this Romantic reading of prehistory, James rejected the Progressive Era's prejudice against "primitives" as "backward savages" with nothing worth-while to teach us, a prejudice also widely used in his time to justify racism, colonialism, and imperialism. Like Andrew Jackson Davis and the Spiritualists, James supported an anti-elitist democratic mysticism underwriting a democratic radical politics, represented by the Spiritualists' support for Abolitionism, women's rights, and Fourierism and by James' own opposition to colonialism and imperialism.

Dr. Catherine concluded by urging parapsychologists to break out of their deadlock with "normal"

science by thinking beyond the paradigm wars model. Both normal science and parapsychology represent and express cultural efforts to imagine cosmological order. Parapsychology's positive findings offer a deep challenge to ideas of linear time and racial hierarchies implied by the dominant cultural narrative of normal science. They invite researchers from many fields to resume the unfinished business of imagining truly post-modern cosmologies free from 19th century Western "bourgeois" materialist, racist, classist, and sexist assumptions.

Cultural anthropologist, field archaeologist, actor, and "ghost excavator" John G. Sabol of the Ghost Excavation Research Center gave the weekend's most attention-grabbingly dramatic talk when he ringingly critiqued pop-culture "paranormal" kitsch, hype, and myth-making at Gettysburg. In "The Gettysburg 'Memoriscapes' of War: Layers of Spiritualist Absence and Ghostly Presence in the Heterotopia of a 'Haunted Battlefield,'" Sabol deconstructed in Stenorian tones the legend of Gettysburg as "acre for acre the most haunted battlefield in the U.S.," perhaps in the world. For most of its history, the battlefield has been the scene of a "monumental" haunting presence (over 1300 monuments) but an apparent absence of Spiritualist séances and ghost stories, both now common contemporary Gettysburg "manifestations."

Why, Sabol wondered, have séances and ghost tourism become such a popular cultural phenomenon in today's Gettysburg? Both "edutainment" and "para-history," he argued, have replaced the real ethno-history of the Gettysburg landscape in the last two decades. The "culture of death" and the "culture of war," immersed in 19th century Victorian mourning rituals and beliefs (in a "good death" in the bosom of one's family) have now been replaced by a "paranormal culture" and a particular "technology of memory," creating an "ethnographic displacement" between what happened there in the past and what is believed to occur there today. This problem of "ethnographic displacement," creating new supposed "ghosts" that were NOT there in the past, though falsely claimed or believed to have long been there, haunts the marketing and promotion of today's "Gettysburg Experience." The "truth about Gettysburg," wrote Civil War historian Thomas DeJardin as quoted by Sabol, is "buried beneath layer upon layer of flawed human memory," in what Sabol called a "stratigraphy of memory" as a series of culturally constructed templates.

Jennifer Lykes, Associate Professor of Psychology at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, analyzed the problems of "Encouraging Critical Thinking in Exploring the Extraordinary" among college students. Extraordinary experiences, Dr. Lyke felt, are insufficiently addressed in undergraduate education. When addressed at all, they tend to be glossed over and explained away in simplistic terms by so-called "critical thinking." Critical thinking, currently a buzzword in academia, is often used as a covert method to indoctrinate students into the dominant worldview—that is, into the "skeptical" scientific materialism described by Darryl Catherine as used by William James' detractors to attack his "primitivism." For several years, Dr. Lykes has taught an undergraduate course exploring various states of consciousness, emphasizing critical—but not dogmatically "skeptical" or reductively materialistic—thinking about extraordinary experiences such as out of the body experiences, alien abductions, near-death experiences, and mystical experiences. As critical of dogmatic "skeptical" debunking as of naïve supernatural or paranormal credulity, she pointed out the frequent inadequacy of standard "skeptical" dismissal of out of the body experiences as simply autoscopic hallucinations and of alien abductions as merely sleep paralysis, while gladly admitting the seemingly persuasive elegant cleverness of Swedish psychologist Henrik Ehrsson's oft-cited 2007 *Scientific American* article supposedly explaining out of the body experiences.

Dr. Lykes described two typical student perspectives, based on pre-existing assumptions and prejudices, from which students tend to approach ambiguous or puzzling experiences—either materialist ("skeptical," "goats") or dualist ("believer," "sheep"). She portrayed the "Believers/Dualists/Sheep" as "specifically focused" and as relying mainly on anecdotes, intuition, and personal experience, versus the "Skeptics/Materialists/Goats" as "generically focused" and relying more on scientific evidence and on testimonials by trained, qualified experts. Her class attempts to help both materialist Skeptic and dualist Believer students to more effectively explore extraordinary experiences by challenging assumptions and raising awareness of sociocultural bias, to develop more sophisticated skills such as understanding categories of empirical evidence, including subjective experience, and the scientific method.

Chicago-based editor, writer, and teacher Suzanne Clores, author of *Memoirs of a Spiritual Outsider* (2000), introduced "The Extraordinary Project," her online collection of her contributors' most un-

usual human experiences, inspired by her realization that coincidences, premonitions, and odd types of "knowing" happen to all of us across cultures. Coincidental and other hard-to-explain connections, she found, are common to all human beings across cultures. Her on-line forum [www.suzanneclares.com/extraordinaryproject](http://www.suzanneclares.com/extraordinaryproject) invites people of all backgrounds and beliefs to share their stories and view them in the greater context of universal experience. A few years ago, she realized that she herself had a long history of extraordinary experiences, and then a few years later also recognized that most people can recall at least one interaction with the extraordinary. Conversation about this aspect of human experience, however, she found, is rather limited at best. There is little mention of improbable circumstances or anomalous events in contemporary fiction or narrative nonfiction, she finds, unless it is accompanied and neutralized by a healthy dose of skepticism. In many parts of the world, people's minds are culturally trained to deny or dismiss an extraordinary event immediately after one occurs. This denial has eliminated any intelligent discussion of the extraordinary in popular conversation, with the exception of paranormal television shows and science-fiction literature. Her project, I myself think, could be interpreted as proving either Carl Jung's explanation of meaningful coincidences as the "synchronistic" working of an "acausal" connection between psychologically or spiritually significant events bypassing normal cause-and-effect, or Albert Einstein's remark in *The World As I See It* that "Coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous."

Two presenters, Donna Sinclair Hogan and John Napora, described their own unexpected, startling personal encounters with the Beyond. Donna Hogan, who has devoted 8 years of independent research into the paranormal, electronic voice phenomena (EVP), and instrumental trans-communication (ITC) after receiving a voice mail from her brother-in-law 4 days after his tragic death, an event unexplainable by her telecommunications provider British Telecom or by science, described her experience and the way it changed her life in "From Housewife to Paranormal Researcher: Investigating Electronic Voice Phenomena and Instrumental Trans-Communication." Donna has studied at the Arthur Findlay College for the Advancement of Spiritualism and Psychic Science in Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, UK with some of the UK's best-known mediums.

Conference co-organizer Hannah Gilbert read "Communication Across the Chasm: Experiences

with the Deceased" by the University of South Florida's John Napora, who could not appear in Gettysburg himself to deliver his paper, describing Dr. Napora's uncanny dream visitations from the spirit of his recently deceased father while visiting his own old working-class family home in a "Rust Belt" American community. Such experiences, he noted, are common among non-Western peoples, but all too often discounted by Western anthropologists who skeptically ignore or dismiss the possible reality of ancestral spirits contacting the living. They suggest, he felt, a level of spiritual reality long suppressed by mainstream Western scientific and religious paradigms. Here, Napora echoed Darryl Catherine's and Christopher Laursen's calls for more respect for the paranormal and supernatural beliefs and perspectives of so-called "primitive" peoples and cultures, and their skepticism about the all-sufficient adequacy of modern Western "scientific" materialism. Napora thus heartily endorsed the "ontological turn" in anthropology, and Edith Turner's (1992) "experiential anthropology," giving more sympathetic credence to native spiritual and paranormal beliefs.

Chase O'Gwin, a graduate Psychology student at the University of West Georgia, sympathetically but objectively critiqued the methodologies, instruments, and technologies used by parapsychologists and ghost-hunters in "Haunted by the Past: An Exploration of How Historical Assumptions Have Influenced Modern-Day Investigation of the Survival Hypothesis." O'Gwin focused particularly on the methods, assumptions, and technologies used in investigations of ghosts, apparitions, and haunted locations to verify the survival hypothesis, historically tracing back the various instruments and procedures used by investigators of the haunting phenomenon—e.g., the use of lighting, photography, videography, audio recordings, and other technologies, and such phenomena as EVP's (Electronic Voice Phenomena) and "orbs." He noted the interesting historical degradation and shortening of spirit communications, from the often quite lengthy religious and metaphysical discourses in many 19th century spirit communications to the typically very brief, fragmentary, and trivial "Hello!" personal messages of most 20th and 21st century communications. Most EMF detectors, O'Gwin felt, are not sensitive or subtle enough to catch quite real but subtle paranormal physical effects, especially the often significant drops and low points as well as the better-known, more familiar spikes and high points. He proposed the term "technopathy" to describe psi influence on the malfunctioning of equipment and

gadgets. O'Gwin dismissed "orbs" as a 21st century fad and blind alley of no real paranormal significance, basically a factitious artifact of digital cameras, noting that they are always 2-dimensional, never 3-dimensional. He also emphasized that real-life ghosts and apparitions, as actually seen by witnesses, very nearly always appear quite solid, realistic, 3-dimensional, and lifelike, never vague, misty, vaporous, or diaphanous!

Dr. Eric Ouellet, Associate Professor in the Canadian Forces College, combined ufology with sociology, comparing UFO sighting "waves" to poltergeist hauntings, in his "Military Institutional Response to Anomalies and Social Psi: The Belgian Air Force, 1989-1990," devoted to the Belgian UFO wave of November 1989 to March 1990. Dr. Ouellet took off from the late John A. Keel's suggestion as UFO's as a giant poltergeist, paranormally externalizing collective social tensions with physically observable phenomena just as ordinary poltergeists generate physical manifestations of a family's or household's emotional conflicts and tensions. UFO sighting waves and ordinary poltergeists alike, Ouellet argued following Keel, represent RSPK (Recurrent Spontaneous Psychokinesis), only on different scales. Like Keel, Ouellet saw UFO's not as nuts-and-bolts extraterrestrial spacecraft from distant planets around Alpha Centauri, Tau Ceti, Zeta Reticuli, or the Pleiades, but as a paranormal or "psychic" phenomenon expressing psychological and sociological stresses among the families, workplace groups, or even whole societies involved through anomalous physical effects. Ouellet based his analysis on the Model of Pragmatic Information (MPI), invoking quantum non-locality, developed to study RSPK by German physicist and parapsychologist Walter von Lucadou, who saw quantum non-locality as the root of psi. The MPI describes psi as the result of meaningful but non-local correlations embedded in psycho-social dynamics. By extending the MPI to macroscopic level social dynamics, Ouellet found that the Belgian UFO sightings unfolded very much like a poltergeist type RSPK episode in ways predicted by the MPI.

In late 1989 and early 1990, Ouellet explained, following reports by the now defunct Belgian UFO research group SOBEPS (Société belge d'étude des phénomènes spatiaux, "Belgian Society for the Study of Spatial Phenomena"), Belgium experienced a wave of UFO sightings, involving over a thousand witnesses—at one point, a UFO was tracked simultaneously by three NATO radar stations and chased by two F-16 jet fighters, exhibiting extraordinary ma-

neuvering capabilities before mysteriously vanishing—an event declared unexplainable by the Belgian Air Force after an official inquiry. The sightings started on November 29 at Liège near the German border, climaxed on December 11 along the line from Liège to Mons near the French border, and included the UFO chase on March 30-31—there were also a number of sightings of dark triangles, including one notorious hoax photograph. Most of the 1989-1990 Belgian sightings, Ouellet noted, were near or over important NATO and US Air Force installations. The wave, Ouellet emphatically confirmed in reply to my own question from the audience, very much coincided in time with the collapse of the East European Communist bloc, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution," dictator Nicolae Ceausescu's execution in Romania, and the beginning of the old Soviet Union's disintegration—a hopeful yet also very much uncertainty-laden moment in the "Cold War" of deep critical concern to NATO and Western European military institutions! It was also, Ouellet added, a time of impressive Marian apparitions in Egypt, recalling the earlier, more celebrated 1968-1971 apparitions in Cairo's Zeitoun district!

Award-winning professional photographer Shannon Taggart, an organizing member and curator of the "Observatory" arts, lectures, and events space in Brooklyn, described "Photographing Spiritualism." She discovered Spiritualism as a teen-ager, when her cousin had a reading from a medium revealing a secret about her grandfather's death that proved to be true. Deeply curious about how anybody could know such a hidden thing, she began photographing mediums and séances in Lily Dale, New York, the world's largest Spiritualist community, where that message had been received, in 2001. Spiritualism is quite alive and well in Lily Dale in the 21st century, she found, not just a half-forgotten 19th century fad with an aura of faded pre-war newspapers, the Graf Zeppelin, and the Entente Cordiale (as one skeptic once picturesquely put it to underscore what he only saw as its by-gone Victorian and Edwardian period-piece quaintness). She immersed herself for 13 years in Spiritualist philosophy, got readings, experienced healings, participated in séances, attended a psychic college, and sat in a medium's cabinet, all with her camera. She has photographed many Spiritualist mediums and their baffling but seemingly authentic physical phenomena, such as ectoplasm, in Lily Dale since 2001, as well as immigrant Haitian Vodun ("voodoo") practitioners in Brooklyn.

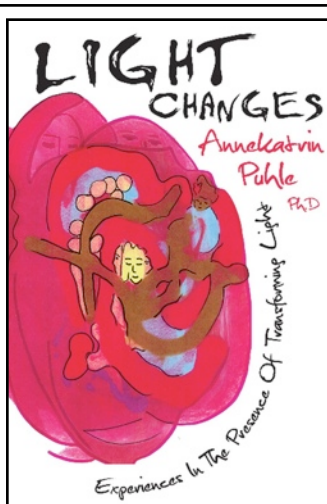
Photography and Spiritualism have a close intrinsic relationship, she noted, both being concerned with preserving time and defying mortality, both originating in the mid 19th century and both being popularized in the same city, Rochester NY, not too far from where she herself grew up, each using the other as a tool to understand its own objective limitations and subjective complications. They intersect in a place where many opposites meet—Mind and Matter, Heaven and Earth, Art and Science, Life and Death. Her own photographs are meant as meditations on this riddle of Victor Turner's and George Hansen's "liminality," the "alchemy of ritual and the magic of the photographic process," trying to manifest the unseen through images requiring both mechanical and spiritual explanations. She emphasized what she considered the all-important poetic and even playful, even more than just soberly evidential or informative, nature of such manifestations.

Sarah Metcalfe, of the University of York (UK) Sociology Department, described her own experiences as a sociologist fully immersing herself for five years in the British and European spiritualist and esoteric subcultures on Sunday in the conference's final presentation, on Sunday, "It's OK Going Native: The Emotional Management of a Sociologist Exploring the Embodied Emotional Labour and Ethics of Extra-Sensory Work." As she implied in her lecture title, she "went native" for 5 years as an active, largely "believing" psychic and spiritualist, attending mediumship training courses at the Arthur Findlay College in Stansted Mountfitchet (Essex, UK) in 2010

and in Spain in 2013, making many friendships among psychics and spiritualists, experiencing spiritual transformations, and seemingly developing extra-sensory abilities herself. Later, however, she told the conference, she developed a slightly more detached and skeptical attitude—though never quite becoming an out-and-off scoffer.

The above are just a few highlights of the 23 talks on extraordinary, anomalous, and "liminal" experiences I saw and heard in Gettysburg on the weekend of March 21-23. I hope I have given a fair general idea here of the range of topics and perspectives aired at Gettysburg over that weekend—but a complete run-down on all the talks there would just VASTLY exhaust and overflow any space!

T. Peter Park was born in Tallinn, Estonia in 1941, but has lived in the United States since 1948, and is an American citizen. He received his BA from Adelphi College (now Adelphi University) in Garden City NY in 1963, his PhD in Modern European History from the University of Virginia in 1970, and his Master's in Library Science from the University of Maryland in 1972. He retired as Reference Librarian and copy-machine unjammer at the Lynbrook Public Library in Lynbrook, Long Island, and lives in Franklin Square, Long Island, as a free-lance independent scholar and researcher. Dr. Park considers himself a mental amphibian, equally at home in the "two cultures" of "mainstream" academic research and scholarship (chiefly in intellectual and cultural history, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, and comparative religion) and of the anomalous and paranormal. He has published articles on the Fortean and paranormal in *The Anomalist* and *Fate*, has been and is active on various on-line paranormal-themed lists, and has presented papers at the New Jersey UFO, ET, and Paranormal Conferences in the Trenton area. He is working on a collection of essays on the paranormal and its social & cultural aspects, tentatively titled *Explorations of a Mental Amphibian*.



Ever since the dawn of recorded history, humans have reported encounters with an exceptional light which appeared to them to be different, more intense, and brighter than sunlight. Often, these experiences had a strong and lasting effect on those concerned, changing their lives completely. But what exactly did they experience? In which shape did the light appear? Did it come along with a message, and what could it possibly communicate to them? And why did it change in their lives? All these and many more questions require answers. This book faces those questions and offers the thoughts and feelings of more than 800 individuals reporting these experiences over a time span of 130 years.

*Light Changes* explores 'Seeing and Inner Sight', myths, folklore, religion, philosophy, science, and in particular, psychical research, and offers clues into understanding how these important and meaningful encounters with light may affect us all.

[http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/light\\_changes\\_experiences\\_in\\_the\\_presence\\_of\\_transforming\\_light/](http://whitecrowbooks.com/books/page/light_changes_experiences_in_the_presence_of_transforming_light/)

## REVIEW: 'Folie et Paranormal' by Renaud Evrard Jean-Michel Abrassart



Renaud Evrard is a French clinical psychologist with a deep interest in parapsychology. In the French-speaking world he has become, in recent years, one of the most prominent public voices defending parapsychology as a legitimate field of scientific investigation, maybe second only to the sociologist Bertrand Méheust. He is a member of the "Institut Métapsychique International" (IMI) in Paris and co-founded a center for the study of exceptional experiences, the "Centre d'Information, de Recherche et de Consultation sur les Expériences Exceptionnelles" (CIRCEE).

His first book, *Folie et paranormal: Vers une clinique des expériences exceptionnelles* (2014), addresses the issue of how clinical psychology can welcome and help people who have had exceptional experiences. This book is a summary of his PhD thesis at the University of Rouen on this very subject. Most chapters were also published as articles in peer-review publications in psychological or parapsychological journals before being included here. The target audience is clinical psychologists who want to think about how to deal with exceptional experiences when they receive patients who report them. It will also be of interest to people who want to know more on the subject of how psychiatry and clinical psychology approach exceptional experiences.

Renaud Evrard has made in this book an impressive review of the literature on this topic. To give one example, he discusses the relationship between psychoanalysis and exceptional experiences in his third chapter: "Les psychanalystes et le transfert de pensée." He shows that Sigmund Freud had an ambivalent relationship to the paranormal and also that his position evolved with time toward less skepticism. This chapter is of special interest because right now there is a very heated debate in France about the question of psychoanalysis's scientificity, especially surrounding the issue of the care of autistic children. In the midst of that debate, the philosopher Michel Onfray (2010) attacked (in his paper "La parapsychologie freudienne") Sigmund Freud on the basis of

his interest in the occult and the paranormal. The idea is that because Sigmund Freud had some interest in the occult and the paranormal, which shows that psychoanalysis truly belong in the realm of pseudosciences. Renaud Evrard's third chapter sheds another light on this issue.

The book explores the question of the limit between the normal and psychopathological. If a patient comes and says that he has seen a ghost, what does a clinical psychologist should do with him? What if he says that he can hear other people's thoughts? These are very important questions, especially in an age of globalization when patients can come to see a clinical psychologist with very different worldviews. Renaud Evrard discusses, amongst other things, the topic of psychopathological diagnoses that include criteria that correlate with extraordinary experiences. Chapter 11 ("Les deux visages de la schizotypie") shows acutely the problem with the diagnosis of schizotypy. Schizotypy is arguably a pre-schizophrenia diagnosis, but scales to diagnose it include items like "I think that some people can read minds (telepathy)" or "Sometimes I feel a force or a presence near me even though I was alone at that moment."

It should be noted that the foreword for this book is written by Jean-Claude Maleval, a Lacanian psychoanalyst who also has an interest in the paranormal. He recently wrote "La Psychothérapie autoritaire et ses étonnantes mystifications" (Maleval, 2012), a harsh critic of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). If I don't find Maleval's core argument against CBT and for psychoanalysis compelling (in summary, according to him a genuine psychoanalysis doesn't use suggestions, contrary to CBT and is thus preferable), his book has a few very good chapters about false memory syndrome, including on the topic of alien abduction and satanic ritual abuse cases.

Renaud Evrard concludes by explaining that traditional clinical psychology and the clinical care of extraordinary experiences are not in competition. Another important conclusion is that psychologists



should stay neutral when a patient comes with some report of an extraordinary experience. He compares the clinical care of extraordinary experiences with spiritually integrated psychotherapy, in which patients can talk about subjective experiences relating to the transcendent. I agree with him that a clinical psychologist should not impose his own worldview on his patients and that is true for religious experiences as well as for exceptional experiences. Nevertheless, with that kind of principle of neutrality in clinical psychology, the danger is often to fall into cognitive relativism. There is a fine line between thinking that a clinical psychologist should stay neutral toward his patients' worldviews and thinking that all worldviews are equally true. That being said, I don't think that Renaud Evrard defends some kind of cognitive relativism in this book.

This book is a must read for clinical psychologists who want to take the time to think about the issue of extraordinary experiences and psychopathology. Renaud Evrard doesn't write much in his book about the question of the reality (or not) of paranormal phenomena, but lots of skeptics do have a very strong negative reaction to psychoanalysis, especially in the

French-speaking world. I must confess I'm not the biggest fan of psychoanalysis myself, but if this book does contain some psychoanalysis in it (mainly from an historical perspective), it is not a psychoanalysis book. For those reasons, I recommend this book to skeptics and proponents alike.

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## REVIEW:

### 'Speak of the Devil: Tales of Satanic Abuse in Contemporary England' by J.S. La Fontaine

Michael J. Rush



'I'm misunderstood, just like...um...what's-his-face?' complains Dilbert's boss in the newspaper cartoon strip.  
'Satan?' suggests Dilbert facetiously.

In the 1980s a misunderstanding of occultism was one of the preconditions that lead to the widespread belief that adults were sexually abusing children in rituals of Devil worship. A phenomenon made more surprising by the fact

that it occurred, not in 15th and 16th century Europe, but in modern day Britain and America.

Written by the author of the 1994 report *The Extent And Nature Of Organised And Ritual Abuse: Research Findings* commissioned by the *Department of Health*, this book discusses in greater detail the phenomenon of the UK satanic ritual abuse allegations which manifested themselves in the 1980s and early 1990s. La Fontaine found that, whilst in *some* cases there was evi-

dence of abuse, there was no evidence of satanic ritual, whether organised or not.

Jean La Fontaine, professor of anthropology at the *London School of Economics*, asks why people came to believe and act upon allegations of abuse in which children were alleged to have been assaulted as part of rituals devoted to the worship of Satan. She examines the roles of the media, Christian fundamentalists, social workers, the police force, foster-parents, and the children themselves, in a process which resulted in damaging consequences for many of those involved. Indeed, the fact that these allegations had real-world consequences is emphasised; some children were erroneously separated from their families and taken into care, relationships between the Police and social workers broke down, and successful prosecution of genuine child abusers was jeopardised.

La Fontaine outlines the development of the ritual abuse allegations in three phases. The initial impetus was largely provided by Christian fundamentalists and the circulation of adult 'survivor' accounts in sermons and literature imported from the USA. Such satanic 'survivor' accounts were common currency in such circles and even inspired best-selling books and films, for example *Michelle Remembers* (Smith & Pazder, 1980) now discredited as a work of fiction, and the horror film classic *Rosemary's Baby* directed by Roman Polanski. The second phase was the appearance of accounts from young children which then necessitated action by the authorities. Finally, the third phase was the transition of the phenomenon back into the adult world in the context of psychotherapy when material evidence for the child abuse allegations failed to materialise.

In performing her analysis La Fontaine compares the 'satanic panics' with the witch-hunts of earlier European history and also cross-culturally with Third World beliefs in witches and witchcraft, suggesting that the main similarity is an unverifiable belief in mystical evil.

This book is an important and necessary work, especially in showing how religion can impact on the day-to-day life of real people in the real world, rather than being just the concern of the faithful or of academics. I would recommend that anyone who is under the mistaken impression that religion

is irrelevant in today's modern world should read this book. The observations made by Professor La Fontaine may go some way towards preventing such mistakes before they arise again in the future. *Speak of the Devil*, whilst being of a high academic and very readable standard, is best read in conjunction with Professor La Fontaine's original research findings mentioned above. However, she was not the only sceptic willing to air her critical views. Kenneth Lanning of the FBI has summarised his own findings from the American side of the phenomenon and published them in the *Investigator's Guide To Allegations Of 'Ritual' Child Abuse* (1992) and *Satanic, Occult, Ritualistic Crime: A Law Enforcement Perspective* (1989). A further report by a team of Police and social services personnel based in the U.K. resulted in a highly critical analysis of the role these organisations took in the Nottingham cases. This report, known as the Joint Enquiry Team (JET) report was initially suppressed but is now publicly available on the Internet (Gwatkin, J.B. et al. 1990).

A significant factor in the precipitation of the SRA phenomena was ignorance about a subcultural minority; occultists and pagans. Part of Professor La Fontaine's book examines this subculture in the UK and demonstrates that its participants bear little, if any, resemblance to the alleged Satanists of the SRA hysteria. Whilst such simplistic and erroneous connections can be dismissed as fundamentalist Christian propaganda, it should not be forgotten that intolerance in these cases is actually a secondary issue. Neither should the main issue be one of wasted tax-payers' money spent on fruitless searches for bizarre and non-existent evidence. Our primary concern should be to learn from the mistakes, made on all sides, in order to guard more effectively against genuine cases of child abuse.

Aside from fundamentalist propaganda La Fontaine also considers other factors to be significant in 1980s Britain including; confusion over terms such as 'ritual', our heritage of European folklore, the newly publicised threat of child abuse in the home, misleading lists of 'satanic abuse indicators', poor interviewing techniques, and confusion between standards of evidence used by the Police and therapeutic practices.

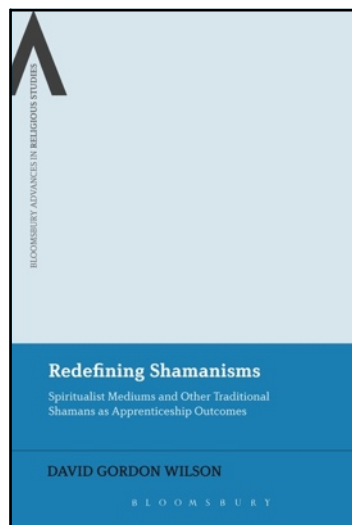
It should not be thought that these issues belong solely to the past. Christian fundamentalism is reported to be on the increase as believers leave the pews of the traditional churches to fill the ranks of the more evangelical organisations of the 'new Christianity' as La Fontaine calls it. It is amongst such organisations where the SRA allegations, or elements of them, are still discussed in less critical terms. Added to the fertile ground provided by public ignorance towards, and suspicion of, New Religious Movements, plus a sprinkling of socio-economic factors and we have the potential for renewed growth of the SRA phenomena.

For those of us interested in the study of religious experience the SRA phenomena serves to remind us of the mistakes that can be made from careless interviewing techniques or projecting our own biases onto the accounts which we are given, especially where young children are concerned. It also reminds us that a religious experience need not necessarily be a pleasant one.

Of course, as La Fontaine realises, no amount of material evidence to the contrary, or lack of it, will sway the opinions of the faithfully convinced. Especially those who have a vested interest in sustaining the myth, whether for theological reasons or for psychotherapeutic ones.

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Spiritualism and mediumship are often regarded as the product of lingering superstition in the Victorian era, and as having limited relevance in modern Anglo-American society. Scholarship to date which has considered Spiritualism as a distinct religious tradition has focussed on analysing the phenomenon in terms of spirit possession only.

This volume analyses the development of shamanism (communication with the spiritual world) as a concept within North American English-speaking scholarship, with particular focus on Mircea Eliade's influential cross-cultural presentation of shamanism. By re-examining the work of Sergei Shirokogoroff, one of Eliade's principal sources, the traditional Evenki shamanic apprenticeship is compared and identified with the new Spiritualist apprenticeship.

The author demonstrates that Spiritualism is best understood as a traditional shamanism, as distinct from contemporary appropriations or neo-shamanisms. He argues that shamanism is the outcome of an apprenticeship in the management of psychic experiences, and which follows the same pattern as that of the apprentice medium. In doing so, the author offers fresh insights into the mechanisms that are key to sustaining mediumship as a social institution.

For more information visit: <http://www.bloomsbury.com/us/redefining-shamanisms-9781441159502/>



**The Study of Religious Experience in Lampeter**  
**One-day conference (draft programme)**

4<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (Founder's Library)

- 10.00 Welcome
- 10.10 Dr Fiona Bowie, Kings' College London  
How to Study Religious Experience? Methodological reflection on the study of afterlife  
and other examples of religious experience
- 11.00 Discussion
- 11.30 Dr Robert Pope  
Theological approach to the study of religious experience
- 12.00 Dr Catrin Williams  
Religious experience in Early Christianity
- 12.30-1.30 lunch break
- 2.00 Dr Bettina Schmidt  
Anthropological reflection on the study of religious experience
- 2.30 Dr Maya Warrier  
The study of religious experience in rituals
- 3.00 Dr Thomas Jansen  
Study of Religious Experience in China
- 3.30 Dr Gary Bunt  
Religious experience in cyberspace
- 4.00 Final Discussion
- 4.30 Departure

Please be aware that this is a draft programme. More information (and abstracts) will be made available later.



The Ecology, Cosmos and Consciousness lectures series presents:

## Talking with the Spirits: Mediumship and Possession

Jack Hunter & Dr. David Luke

Tuesday 29th July

October Gallery, 24 Old Gloucester Street, London, WC1N 3AL

Please RSVP on Facebook (afraid so) so that we can anticipate numbers –  
Please pay on the door.

Entry £7 /£5 Concessions – Free entry for anyone buying a copy of the *Talking with the Spirits* book (at reduced price of £15) at the door!

Arrive 6pm for a 6:30pm Start - Wine available

Anthropologist Jack Hunter and psychologist David Luke will be discussing some of the material from their new edited book *Talking with the Spirits: Ethnographies from Between the Worlds* – a collection of a dozen ethnographic studies of trance possession cults and mediums from around the world.



### Talking With the Spirits: A Brief Introduction to the Anthropology of Spirit Possession - Jack Hunter

Jack will give a brief overview of the historical development, and contemporary state, of the anthropology of spirit possession, exploring the many theoretical paradigms that have been applied (not always satisfactorily), to this perplexing human phenomenon.

### Psychedelic Possession: The growing incorporation of incorporation into ayahuasca use – David Luke

Shamans the world over use mediumistic techniques and commune with the spirits of the dead, and many use psychedelic plants, but strangely rare is it that anyone ever uses psychedelics and spirit possession together. David will explore why that may be, and why this unique practice is now growing in parts of the world.



The *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology* (JEEP) is an online, international journal dedicated to the exploration and advancement of exceptional psychology, which is a field that studies experiences and phenomena traditionally germane to parapsychology and yet, goes beyond in breadth. Some examples of experiences under investigation by exceptional psychology include survival after death, out-of-body experiences, extrasensory perception, psychokinesis, poltergeists, mediumship, and hauntings. Also included are cryptids, abduction scenarios, possession, psychic healing, and synchronicity.

Exceptional psychology approaches these phenomena from a neutral and bracketed stance. Simply put, exceptional psychology uses an integrative and phenomenological approach. This includes embracing the varieties of inquiry such as experimentation, ethnography, phenomenology, personal narratives, art, and poetry. Each seeks to reveal, in its own way, the essence of the exceptional experience.

What's more, exceptional psychology encourages the application of helpful aspects of certain exceptional experiences to clinical praxis. This is just as much a part of the project as research and theorizing. For instance, clinical approaches include the use of psychic healing practices and the application of mediumship to the bereavement process.

The *Journal of Exceptional Experiences and Psychology* encourages the submission of manuscripts, creative writing, artwork, and video related to exceptional experiences. The journal is peer-refereed; submissions will be blindly reviewed and a recommendation for acceptance, revisions, or denial will be made to the editors. JEEP is published biannually and welcomes submissions all year.

<http://www.exceptionalpsychology.com/>



# Paranthropology

The image displays a grid of 20 covers of the journal *Paranthropology*, arranged in 5 rows and 4 columns. Each cover features a unique artistic illustration and a list of featured articles. The covers are as follows:

- Row 1:**
  - Cover 1: "Methodologies & Approaches" by David Taylor, Jack Hunter, and David Woodard.
  - Cover 2: "Paranormal Encounters in the Field" by Jack A. School.
  - Cover 3: "The Importance of Neuroscience Research" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 4: "PSYCHIC & PSYCHOLIC EXPERIENCE" by David Woodard.
- Row 2:**
  - Cover 5: "The Science of the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 6: "The Anthropology of the Paranormal" by David E. Trout.
  - Cover 7: "The Science and the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 8: "The Effect of Neuroscience Research on Paranormal Research" by David Woodard.
- Row 3:**
  - Cover 9: "A Paranormal Breakthrough" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 10: "The Science of the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 11: "The Science and the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 12: "The Effect of Neuroscience Research on Paranormal Research" by David Woodard.
- Row 4:**
  - Cover 13: "A Paranormal Breakthrough" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 14: "The Science of the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 15: "The Science and the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 16: "The Effect of Neuroscience Research on Paranormal Research" by David Woodard.
- Row 5:**
  - Cover 17: "A Paranormal Breakthrough" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 18: "The Science of the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 19: "The Science and the Paranormal" by David Woodard.
  - Cover 20: "The Effect of Neuroscience Research on Paranormal Research" by David Woodard.

At the bottom of the grid, there is a black banner with white text that reads:

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