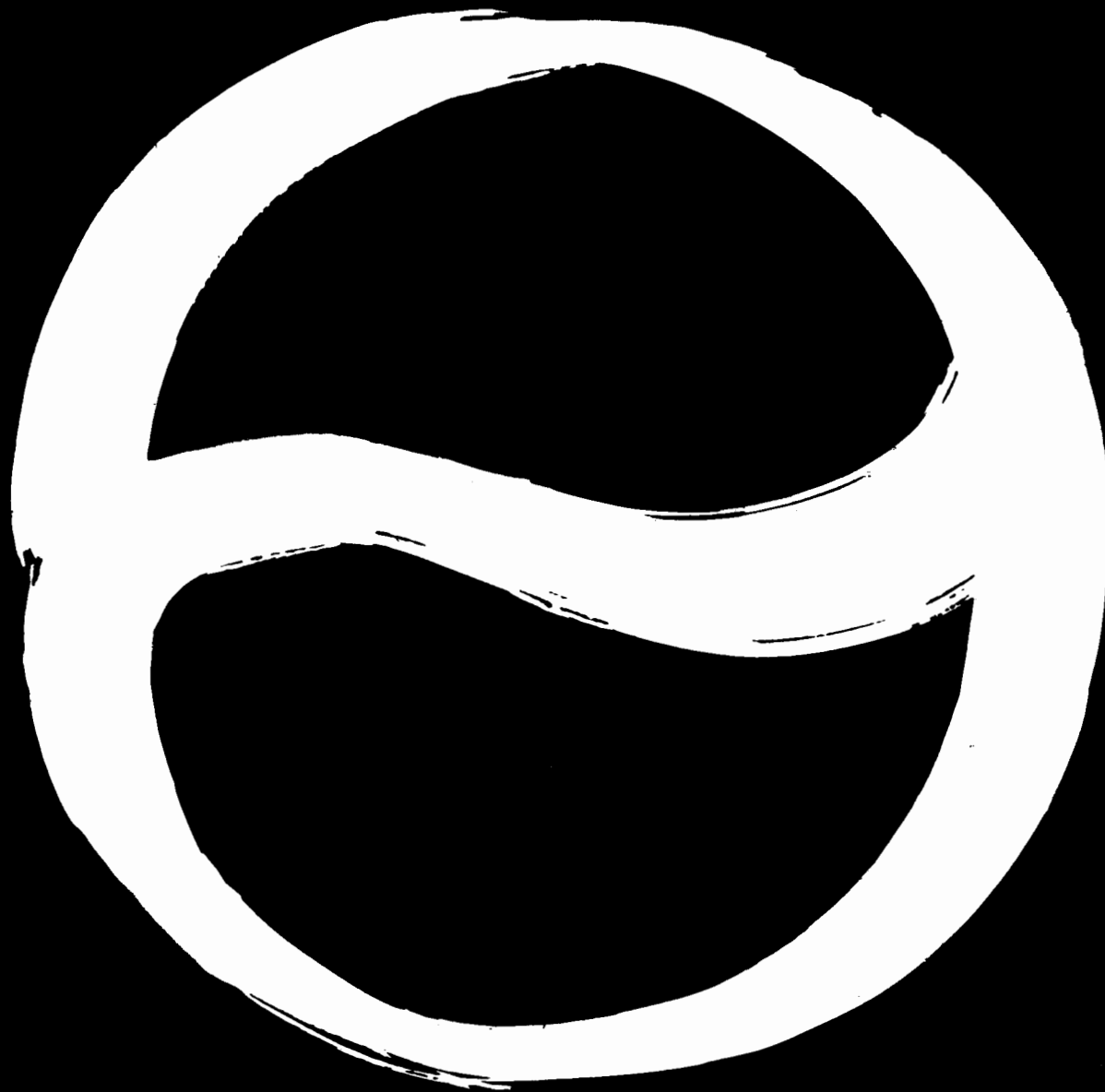


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Research Foundation

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A Poltergeist in Los Angeles

D. Scott Rogo

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To begin with, none of the three family members who were the chief witnesses to the poltergeist activity were good observers of the events. Our investigation showed that they often misreported events for which we kept an objective record. The events apparently began during the last week of September, 1974. Violent poundings on the front screen door were the first manifestations recorded by the family, and were witnessed by all the family members (all of whom are here given fictitious names): Mrs. Jones; her aunt, Mrs. Tooms; and her 13-year-old daughter, Karen. At first glance, this case would seem to follow a typical poltergeist pattern since other reporters have also noted that pounding noises often herald the onset of more violent PK displays (Palmer, 1974; Zorab, 1973). Mrs. Jones phoned the police but the officers, upon investigating, could only find a loiterer outside the house whom the family denied could have caused the poundings. Objects were tossed about the house during the next several days—especially small lotion bottles, shoes and glassware—often breaking upon impact. This led Mrs. Tooms to phone a local news agency to report the incidents and ask if they knew where she could get help. After making several calls to them, a representative of the station phoned the Southern California Society for Psychical Research which turned the report over to Mr. Raymond Bayless who subsequently phoned me. This was on October 9, 1974. That evening we called upon the family (at their request) at their two-storey rented house and spent three days there observing the incidents and counselling the family.

Although thirty incidents took place in either Bayless' or my presence, most of them were unevidential since Karen, the prime agent around whom the events occurred, was often uncontrolled at the time. I will not, therefore, give a full chronology of the events we witnessed, but will concentrate on a few well-observed and controlled incidents and then comment on the psychological and psychosexual aspects of the case.

I arrived at the house at 5:52 p.m. on October 9. All three principle family members (and Mrs. Jones' four and one-half-month-old baby) were outside the house, too afraid to enter. Mrs. Jones reported to me that "it", referring to the poltergeist, was upstairs at that time and Karen and Mrs. Tooms then escorted me into the house through a back door. On three occasions within the first four minutes of my entering the house, and with both persons in my direct view, I could hear what sounded like small objects being thrown upstairs. The second incident caused Karen to run out of the house. Although Bayless arrived at this time, he did not hear the objects thrown. We later discovered that a portion of the ground floor of the house had been partitioned to form another residence, so these noises might possibly have come from next door. But from my vantage point in the living room, the noises appeared to come directly from the upstairs area. (The partitioned portion of the residence does not include any of the second storey.) Also, the noises did corroborate the family's report that the poltergeist was centered upstairs at that time.

One minute after Bayless had entered the house, we had gone upstairs to plan our investigative tactics when we heard an object thrown down the stair-well. Immediately we ran down the stairs and found a moisture-cream bottle at the foot of the stairs. Karen was at the other side of the house. She could not therefore have thrown the bottle up the stairs so that it would bounce back down. Mrs. Tooms, however, was at the foot of the stairs with her back to them at the time, and conceivably could have thrown the object, though this seems unlikely. Shortly after this episode, another bottle was hurled down the stairs after striking noisily at the top of them. Since the family members were unobserved at the time, these incidents must be considered unevidential.

Mr. Bayless left at 8:33 but I remained with the family. During that time I was able to verify the paranormal nature of at least some of the PK, when one incident occurred while the family was under my complete supervision. I was sitting on the living room couch which looked over the entire room and which gave both a view of the stair-well and the hallway. (Both lead out from a common wall.) Mrs. Jones was standing directly in front of me at the hallway entrance. Karen was sitting on the floor next to her mother, her back propped against the wall. Mrs. Tooms was next to me on the couch. At the time of the incident I was talking and looking directly at Mrs. Jones and Karen. At 9:06 p.m. we heard what

sounded like a sledgehammer blow half way down the hall.

I immediately ran to investigate and found a plastic compact case lying against the wall across from the bathroom (which opened into the hall.) This object had not been there previously during my constant patrolling of the hall. No member of the family could have thrown the object since everyone was in my direct view. Even if the object had been "planted" earlier, this would leave unaccountable the loud noise made at the time of the incident. This noise was out of proportion to the size of the object thrown and, to repeat, sounded like a blow from a sledgehammer. Yet the compact case itself was not even chipped, nor had it bounced off the wall on impact as would have been expected had it been thrown normally with any force. This incident does conform to a poltergeist pattern. Other investigators have noted that unusually loud noises or popping sounds sometimes occur when objects are moved by PK (Roll, 1969; Bayless, 1967). Two other objects were thrown that evening, one of which struck me, but the family was not under observation at either time. The events subsided once the family retired for the night.

Another well observed incident occurred at 2:01 p.m. on October 10. I was seated on the livingroom couch at the time. Karen was resting in a chair next to the couch at right-angles to me. Mrs. Tooms and Mrs. Jones were in the kitchen (off the main hallway), and Bayless was at the kitchen door facing both of them. Suddenly we heard a metallic "ping". Looking up, I saw a spoon bounce off the edge of the hallway door which was fully open into the hallway. The spoon bounced right into the living room. I did not see the spoon in motion before it struck the door, but did see it bounce off the doorway into the living room. Karen was in my peripheral view at the time of the incident, and I would certainly have seen her if she had thrown the spoon normally. Further, the spoon would have moved across my line of vision if she had thrown it and I saw no such movement. Finally, the angle at which the spoon bounced into the living room was not consistent with the idea that Karen had thrown it.

Mrs. Tooms had, unbeknownst to us, phoned a local news agency by this time and they had asked if they could film the events. A crew arrived at the house at 2:59 p.m. (We only learned of the call a few minutes before the reporters arrived.) We tried to convince the family that the crew would cause unwanted publicity and might unduly upset Karen, but Mrs. Tooms doggedly insisted on letting the newsmen into the house.

The arrival of the news crew was preceded by several thrown objects, none of which could be verified as due to PK. The reporters severely disrupted our attempts to keep the family under supervision so we were not able to verify the authenticity of any of the seven incidents which occurred during the one-half hour when they remained in the house. However, on one occasion when I

was in a back bedroom writing out some notes, I heard an object strike the wall behind me and fall to the ground. I was facing the door so no one could have thrown the object from the hall. Unfortunately, I could not determine what had been thrown since the room was full of broken objects.

A few more incidents occurred after the crew and Bayless left the house. Most of the time, large objects toppled over when Karen was alone in a room. This was not typical of the poltergeist incidents we had thus far recorded and it seemed, as we had feared, that the excitement and attention caused by the presence of the newsmen had encouraged Karen to begin faking PK activity. A few hours later, Raymond's wife Marjorie Bayless observed Karen going into the bathroom. A few minutes after her return, an object from the bathroom skidded suddenly across the floor from under the table at which they were both sitting. Mrs. Bayless felt certain that the girl had thrown the object herself. Karen realized that we were becoming suspicious and she developed a hostile attitude toward us about the same time.

Despite the fact that Karen most likely had a hand in the alleged PK, I was able to observe another incident when the family was under good observation and which also suggested possible psychological causes of the poltergeist activity. It was clear to us that Karen was jealous of her mother's newborn baby, and was unable to deal with the feeling that she had lost her mother's attention. This is, of course, a psychological problem typical of children her age. Since Mrs. Jones was terrified that the poltergeist would injure the baby, at one point during our investigation I suggested she take the child into her bedroom (at the end of the hall downstairs), and close the door. I remained with Karen in the kitchen, which was next to the bedroom off a common wall. I then sat down at a table which guards the entry to the hall. Mrs. Tooms was outside the house. Almost immediately after Mrs. Jones had shut the bedroom door, Karen and I heard a hard wooden knock and found a bottle of fingernail polish lying next to the closed door. Even if Karen could have somehow gotten past me, she would have to have thrown the object in a curved trajectory. This would certainly have been difficult to manage.

The poltergeist abated after Karen realized we were becoming suspicious, and after we encouraged her to freely express her hostilities verbally. I have previously reported on a poltergeist case which ceased completely after the free verbalization of hostility (Rogo, 1974). On two occasions during the following month, the family reported recurrences of the disturbance. On each investigation I witnessed direct fraud by Karen which led me to believe that most, if not all, of the subsequent events in the house were designed by the girl for two purposes: First, so that she could continue to stay home from school, which she had done during the outbreak, and second, to regain our interest and attention.

Discussion

I feel that a few RSPK incidents were observed in this case while the family was under good control. Unfortunately, it is difficult to appraise most of the incidents which were observed since fraud could account for many of them. However, out of the thirty events we witnessed, not including the three noises I heard on first entering the house, four PK incidents occurred when the family was completely accounted for.

The fraudulent activity seems to have been caused by two factors. First, we had told the family that such outbreaks as they were experiencing were usually short-lived and would soon ebb. Second, we also counselled them that it was necessary for Karen (who was using the RSPK as an excuse to play hookey) to return to school, and this suggestion caused her to develop a deep hostility towards us. The fraud was Karen's ploy to stay home from school. She was also impressed by the publicity the poltergeist was attracting (i.e., the visit by the newsmen), and this probably caused her to prolong the events fraudulently. The "publicity angle" became obvious on subsequent visits to the house. This case, then, like the Newark poltergeist reported by W.G. Roll, seems to have been typical of a genuine poltergeist which was gradually and then completely taken over by fraud.

In the past, most poltergeist investigators have given psychological analyses of the primary agents around whom the poltergeists focussed, and have studied the nature and trajectories of the objects moved by the poltergeist. An in-depth examination of the trajectories of the thrown objects in this case would be misleading, since we cannot tell which incidents were genuine and which were bogus. To be sure, twenty-three of the thirty incidents occurred in the direct physical presence of Karen, and generally projected away from and from behind her. Yet this pattern also fits the fraud hypothesis. However, if we consider only those objects thrown during incidents which I feel to have been genuine, we find that they followed curved trajectories.

We could not make a formal psychological examination of Karen for several reasons. To begin with, the family was reticent about allowing any such examination. Mrs. Tooms was already accusing Karen of being insane. If we tried to give her any psychometric tests, this might have served to encourage Mrs. Toom's belief. It also became clear to us that Karen would start faking PK if we showed her such attention. Both Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Tooms were in such an affected state due to the ordeal they were living through that we were concerned about their mental health should the poltergeist, real or fraudulent, persist. We could not, therefore, take the chance of inciting Karen to fraud. Nonetheless, it was obvious that Karen was a very frustrated youngster whose pent-up anger was directed at several people around her.

Karen harbored four levels of hostility, and these apparently guided the poltergeist. First, hostility towards her mother whom she felt had deserted her for the new baby. Second, hostility toward the baby itself. This seems to be substantiated by the fact that a large number of baby items were hurled during the investigation. Karen also showed a compulsive concern for caring for the child, probably representing a typical reaction-formation defense mechanism towards it. Third, Karen often lashed out at the aunt who had come to help care for the baby. The reason for this hostility is self-evident. Finally, Karen disliked the house and the environment in which the family lived. She even defaced the walls after the poltergeist abated, acting out her frustrations. Karen had pleaded with her mother to move just before the onset of the poltergeist, although a move was a financial impossibility. The poltergeist might therefore have represented, in part, a symbolic attack on the house itself. In 1974 I reported on another case in which a stalemated attempt to move from an undesirable home precipitated a poltergeist (Rogo, 1974).

Modern poltergeist investigators have not, in general, been overly interested in the sexual aspects of poltergeist cases even though earlier researchers have often been concerned with these aspects (Fodor, 1958; Carrington and Fodor, 1941). According to their reports, sexual traumas were often seen as the cause of outbreaks and this case conforms in part to this view. Karen was certainly preoccupied with her own sexual development and pressures. Both her primary and secondary sexual characteristics were completely developed and she could have passed easily for 16 or 17 years old. In fact, I mistook her for 16 when I first met her and was almost stunned to learn that she had just turned 13. Menstruation had begun approximately a year before. She had been harshly treated by her school mates because of her sexual development, and this was a primary factor in her refusal to attend school. Her step-father had also rebuked her about her development—which probably represented a reaction-formation on his part against his own attraction towards the girl, an attraction of which Karen must have been partially aware. This father-daughter relationship and outcoming trauma was first suggested by Fodor (Fodor, 1958) as a principle cause of the poltergeist activity, though he offered little empirical evidence to support his theory.

Karen's mother and aunt reported to us that Karen, concerned about her appearance, often spent hours in front of her mirror. This indicates an other than normal fixation. This concern, coupled with the jeers of her classmates and the sexually-loaded rebukes of her step-father, could only result in extreme psychosexual pressures with which Karen probably could not deal. I feel that these factors linked, in addition, to the hostility she harbored toward her family members, were the most probable roots of the poltergeist activity. We found that over 30% of the objects thrown during our stay were related to personal grooming and hygiene.

Conclusion

This is certainly not a complete report on this poltergeist case. I can offer no appraisal of the physical characteristics of the objects moved, and many views on the psychological factors involved in the case must rest on inferential evidence. The case does, however, represent an RSPK outbreak which was not attenuated by the presence of outside investigators and was, therefore, witnessed by trained observers. Further, the case seems to fit a common poltergeist pattern: frustration and hostility manifesting as a family dysfunction. It also indicates that future investigators should study the psychosexual pressures and factors which might complicate poltergeist cases. This aspect of the poltergeist, though fully appreciated by researchers in the past, has been overlooked by many contemporary researchers.

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The Watseka Wonder: A Critical Re-Evaluation

Rodger I. Anderson

Mr. Anderson is a free-lance writer.

Few cases in the history of psychical research are more celebrated than the so-called "Witseka Wonder." In 1890 Richard Hodgson, then still the bete noire of spiritualism, confessed after examining the case that he could "not find any satisfactory interpretation of it except the spiritualistic" (Hodgson, 1890, p. 470); William James, though characteristically non-committal, nevertheless admitted that Hodgson's report "increased the plausibility of the spiritualistic interpretation of the phenomenon" (James, 1891, 1, 398); and the philosopher Curt John Ducasse expressed the opinion that the case could not be explained except as one of "paranormal 'possession' by a particular identified mind having survived discarnate..." (Ducasse, 1962, p. 403). For these scholars, among others, the Watseka Wonder provides striking evidence for the continuation of human personality beyond bodily death.

The history of the case can be briefly told. In 1877, at Watseka, Illinois, a thirteen year old girl named Lurancy Vennum fell into a trance which lasted some five hours. This marked the beginning of a series of such trances, sometimes accompanied by violent fits. Lurancy's condition continued for about six months, so alarming the inhabitants of Watseka that many felt the girl should be institutionalized. Opposed to this move was the town's leading citizen, Asa B. Roff, whose own daughter Mary had died insane some twelve years before. The Roffs were, moreover, spiritualists, and attributed Lurancy's seizures to "uncultivated spirits," this conviction being based in part on Lurancy's claims, when in trance, of visiting heaven and speaking with the inhabitants thereof. The Roffs, after much persuasion, finally convinced Lurancy's father to allow Dr. E.W. Stevens, a self-ordained minister and "magnetic healer," to investigate the case.

At their initial meeting, Stevens found Lurancy sullen and withdrawn, speaking only to heap abuse upon her bewildered parents. She first claimed to be an old woman, but soon confided that she was really a man. She became very belligerent at Stevens' questions, and when he arose to leave, she fell into a fit. Stevens succeeded in alleviating this condition by mesmerizing the girl, suggesting that she replace the previous unpleasant personalities with "a higher, purer, happier, and more intelligent or rational control" (Stevens, 1887, p. 7). Agreeing with this, Lurancy suggested a host of possible "controls," listing among other candidates the spirit of Mary Roff. The Roffs, who were present, enthusiastically agreed to this, and thus began one of the longest cases on record of purported "possession."

As the Roff's dead daughter Mary, Lurancy moved into the Roff residence, remaining there for some three months. During this time Lurancy displayed an astonishing knowledge of Mary Roff's life and interests, more than amply confirming the Roff's faith that Lurancy was in fact their deceased daughter. Aside from some minor "possessions" by other discarnates during this period, Lurancy sustained the role of Mary until May 21, 1878, when Lurancy was officially "restored" to her body. The purpose of the possession, which was to cure Lurancy of her fits, was successful, and apart from a few social "visits" from Mary when the Roffs were present, Lurancy became again a normal, healthy fourteen year old girl.

Astonishing as they are, there can be little doubt about the essential correctness of the above facts. Stevens completed a report on the case only a few weeks after Lurancy's "return," including ample corroboration from the principle witnesses. Col. J. Bundy, editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* where Stevens' report originally appeared, made independent inquiries about the case both before and after publication, and Richard Hodgson personally visited Watseka in order to cross-examine the chief witnesses. The results of those interviews perfectly confirmed Steven's earlier report, persuading Hodgson that the case was "unique among the records of supernormal occurrences" (Hodgson, 1890, p. 470). Hodgson later made another report of his investigation to the English Society for Psychical Research, there remarking that the case in his estimation "belongs in the main manifestations to the spiritistic category" (Anon., 1901, p. 103).

While there can be little doubt that the facts recorded by Stevens happened as reported, there are a number of factors which prevent our accepting the case as evidence for survival. First among these is the problem of determining how much Lurancy Vennum could have known about the life of Mary Roff. In a town the size of Watseka there are many opportunities for normally acquiring information about others, especially about a member of one of the town's leading families whose bizarre behavior and mysterious death had occasioned much gossip. This is only increased when we remember

that the affliction from which Mary Roff died was very similar to that from which Lurancy Vennum was suffering, a fact which considerably augments the likelihood that Mary's "tragic history possessed a morbid interest for her little neighbor—herself a girl of unstable equilibrium" (Podmore, 1897, p. 437). Considering, furthermore, that the Roffs and Vennums had been near neighbors when Lurancy was seven, and that one of the Roff boys was near Lurancy's own age and thus a likely playmate, the possibilities of normally acquired information become very great indeed.

This, however, does not exhaust Lurancy's possible sources of information about the life of Mary Roff. According to Stevens' report, Lurancy showed no exceptional knowledge of the Roff girl until she had actually moved in with the Roffs, where the chances of picking up stray items of information were greatly increased. Conversing with the Roffs "upon all matters of private or general interest to the family" (Stevens, 1887, p. 15) provided Lurancy with ample opportunity to learn the kind of intimate details needed to complete the personation, though the Roffs were hardly in need of additional persuasion. From the very beginning they appear to have accepted the personation at face value, and made no effort to block Lurancy's now greatly multiplied opportunities for acquiring information. Using her already acquired knowledge as a basis for acquiring more, it would have required no effort on Lurancy's part to stuff her mind with just the sort of details reported by Stevens, any mistakes being attributed to those frequent moments of temporary repossession by the original Lurancy or other interested discarnates.

A second, related objection to the spiritistic interpretation of the case is the completeness of the investigation. Dr. Stevens, a convinced spiritualist, was evidently persuaded of the paranormal qualities of the case long before he actually saw Lurancy. While this in itself does not necessarily imply that Stevens was an incapable investigator, it does raise questions about how well he appreciated the purely normal possibilities of the case. He carefully recorded, for example, Lurancy's seemingly incredible knowledge of Mary Roff's life, but apparently never inquired too closely about how Lurancy might normally have come by such knowledge. Sometimes sheer induction on Lurancy's part is adequate to explain an incident Stevens reported with awe, while at other times it is unnecessary to postulate anything more preternatural than Lurancy's conviction (whether real or feigned) that she was in fact Mary Roff. If Lurancy made any mistakes we are not informed of them, and though Stevens refers to many marvelous instances of Lurancy's knowledge of Mary Roff's life, he is sparing with the kinds of details needed to properly evaluate the case. Hodgson, who was more aware of the value of a comprehensive report, arrived upon the scene too late to more than confirm the broad outlines of Stevens' article, which he later admitted could be explained as a

case of secondary personality combined with super-normal powers.

While some parapsychologists have adopted this view of the case (Bruce, 1908, pp. 171-197), it is necessary to remember that in a case of this kind there is really no way to be certain of how much Lurancy Vennum knew about Mary Roff through normal means. In view of this, and in the absence of clear evidence to the contrary, it is unnecessary to assume that Lurancy was possessed of either ESP or spirits, for neither are required in order to explain Lurancy's fund of information about the Roff girl. Of course we do not know that Lurancy availed herself of this knowledge, but the possibility requires that we assume she did. To assume otherwise is a violation of the principle of parsimony, which forbids our assigning to unknown causes facts which are explicable on the basis of known causes.

If we then, on grounds of economy, discount the knowledge shown by Lurancy as evidence of paranormality, all that remains is Lurancy's claim that she was Mary Roff. As every student of psychical research is aware, however, a claim of this sort is worthless if unattended by evidences of identity normally inaccessible to the entranced medium. The history of parapsychology is littered with examples of fraudulent impersonation, and there is no lack of cases wherein the claimed "communicator" was actually a fraction of the medium's personality dramatized in accordance with the expectations of his or her sitters.

In the justly famous case of H el ene Smith, for example, there is no reason to suppose that the purported "communicators" were anything but split-off aspects of the medium's own personality, offering as evidence of identity material which H el ene had heard or read but subsequently forgotten (Flournoy, 1901; Chari, 1962, pp. 44-51). This same tendency for a medium's trance-consciousness to assume a spiritistic but wholly spurious role under the influence of suggestion has been observed in even the finest cases of mediumship, leading early investigators to postulate the existence of what F.W.H. Myers called "a *secondary self*... a latent capacity... of developing or manifesting a second focus of cerebral energy which is apparently neither fugitive nor incidental merely... but may possess, for a time at least, a kind of continuous individuality, a purposive activity of its own" (1885, p. 27). Released by either trance or sleep from the inhibitory control normally exercised by the waking mind, such a "secondary self" is only too eager to play whatever role is assigned to it, whether the original of that role is living, dead, or wholly imaginary. Dreams are perhaps the most common example of how these mental fragments can assume various dramatic poses when freed from the domination of the conscious mind, which normally suppresses such wayward fantasies as irrelevant to the business of living.

There can not be any doubt that much of the phenomena of mediumship can be attributed to the opera-

tion of such a secondary consciousness, though this does not mean that all mediumship is pathological. Less dramatic instances of personality alterations are commonplace in daily life, and range from the differences between the same person awake and asleep to the sometimes startling contrasts in behavior for which "I wasn't myself" is the usual explanation.

More nearly analogous to the feats of mediumship are the phenomena of hypnosis, where the inventiveness of the subliminal mind in creating plausible impersonations of others is most evident. Summoned into being by the hypnotist, such personalities are phenomenologically indistinguishable from those of the s eance room, the vividness of each being determined by the subject's dramatic instincts and the fund of information upon which he or she can draw concerning the assigned personality. A subject knowing next to nothing about Napoleon, for example, may still provide a striking imitation of Napoleon as the subject imagines him to have been, even though the only truly Napoleonic trait exhibited may be the familiar pose of hand-in-shirt. Another subject more acquainted with the life of Napoleon will provide an even more striking imitation, though in this case it may require considerable research to discern any flaws in the impersonation. In neither example, it must be stressed, is the subject "acting" in any normal sense of the word, but is instead temporarily convinced that he or she is in fact Napoleon, Emperor of the French.

The susceptibility of the entranced mind to suggestion is equally evident in the phenomena of the s eance room. Take, for illustration, the experience of C.H. Tout (1895), who at a s eance spontaneously fell into trance. Feelings of isolation and remoteness overwhelmed him, he later wrote, and a sense of coldness and loneliness oppressed him. In this terrifying state, Tout felt he was seeking for someone, thought he knew neither the object of his quest nor who it was that was doing the looking. Finally he heard a sitter remark, "It's his father controlling him," whereupon Tout seemed to suddenly realize who he was. He re-enacted his father's death, and as his father comforted himself for the misunderstandings which had arisen between father and son.

For our purposes, what is most significant about this experience was Tout's analysis of the situation which prompted him to assume the identity of his father. A hymn sung at the beginning of the s eance had been a great favorite of his father's, and this along with the remark he overheard that it was his father controlling him was sufficient to convince Tout's dreaming mind that he was in fact his own father. The feelings of isolation and wandering sprang from a ghost story that Tout had read years before, and "his father's" purpose in coming fulfilled a need Tout had often felt to tell his father that now he understood and appreciated him much better than before. If Tout's experience is at all typical of what is going on in the mind of the average

medium while in trance, it may help to explain why many otherwise redoubtable mediums have at one time or another questioned the ontological status of the entities ostensibly controlling them (Piper, 1901; Fodor, 1937; Garrett, 1968, chap. 14).

If such aberrations of personality can occur among persons understood as normal, they are even more evident in certain psychopathological disorders. In schizophrenia, for example, the patient is frequently convinced that other beings are controlling his thoughts and actions; and in the so-called "dissociative" disorders, the person's normal consciousness is subject to all sorts of bizarre fluctuations. These may vary from full-fledged multiple personalities to simple "sleepwalking," and in at least one instance a diagnosed somnambulist exhibited much the same symptomology as Lurancy Venum, although in this case the controlling personality admitted to being part of the patient's consciousness (Oesterreich, 1966, pp. 70-75). Of course, pathological states such as these do not necessarily remove the possibility of spiritistic influence, but such influence is something which must first be proved, not assumed.

Applying these generally well established facts to the so-called "Watseka Wonder" leaves little room for the spirit of Mary Roff. The spontaneous trances and personality alterations observed by Dr. Stevens reveal what would now perhaps be diagnosed as a dissociative type of hysterical neurosis. Stevens' hypnotizing of Lurancy along with the suggestion that she become someone less offensive, may have acted as a powerful stimulant upon the trance-consciousness of Lurancy Venum, fully preparing her to accept the identity of Mary Roff. The fact that Lurancy's seizures had been for months the talk of the town, occasioning many "scoffs and scandals thrown out toward the Spiritualists on account of their opinions regarding the case" (Stevens, 1887, p. 5), combined with the implicit spiritualism of Dr. Stevens' treatment, could have predisposed Lurancy to act out the role assigned her under hypnosis. Add to this: an undetermined amount of knowledge about the life of Mary Roff, the oft-noted retentiveness of the trance consciousness, and the Roffs' manifest desire to accept the personation, and we have all the explanatory ingredients necessary for a successful "possession."

If there appears to be little question why Lurancy Venum became Mary Roff, there still remains the question of why Dr. Stevens' proposed treatment actually succeeded in restoring Lurancy to her right mind. This, however, is precisely what should be expected if the case were genuinely one of alternating personality. In cases of this type, one personality usually takes the lead in integrating the other(s), and in at least one instance the investigators finally managed to persuade the helpful personality that it was a spirit sent to supply supernatural aid. This is the case of Doris Fisher investigated by Walter F. Prince (1915-16). Significantly, the per-

sonality of "Sleeping Margaret," who had repeatedly resisted the suggestion of her spiritistic origin, finally accepted the role assigned her, though even in surrender she did not admit defeat. "I am a spirit, so-called by people who live on the earth," she wrote in response to one of Dr. Prince's inquiries, adding, "There, you may believe as much of that as you like" (p. 1264). Later "Sleeping Margaret" fully accepted the identity assigned her by Prince, though Mrs. Soule, a medium consulted by Prince at the suggestion of James H. Hyslop, described the personality of "Sleeping Margaret" as merely Doris' "subconscious" (Hyslop, 1917).

In Lurancy's case also the ostensible controlling spirit was purposively introduced to restore harmony to Lurancy's fragmented personality, finally eliminating altogether those "cruel and insane" influences that had previously tormented the girl. Essentially this same approach has been successfully used in other cases of hysterical dissociation, cases in which there is no reason to suppose that the "possessing entity" was anything other than a fragment of the patient's personality masquerading as a spirit of the dead. Many of the cases collected by Dr. Carl A. Wickland (1924; cf. Prince, 1927) readily lend themselves to this interpretation.

What is perhaps most astonishing about the Watseka Wonder is that it should have appeared in the spiritualist press instead of the medical journals in which it clearly belongs. In the 1870's the symptoms of "hysteria" were well enough known among the medical community to enable competent physicians to diagnose these cases and to prescribe a cure. Catatonia, convulsive attacks, sudden personality alterations, religious delirium, easy suggestibility, memory loss, and various physical complaints, were all recognized symptoms of the disease exhibited by Lurancy Venum. The disease, it was further recognized, was often aggravated by repressed sexuality, most often exhibited in young women (Carter, 1853). In this connection it is interesting to observe that an inhabitant of Watseka later stated that one of Lurancy's motives for moving in with the Roffs was to be near one of the younger Roff boys with whom she fancied herself in love (Bruce, 1908, p. 197).

Physicians were then in disagreement about how the disease should be treated, but one influential school of thought stressed emotional gratification along with removal of the patient from the environment in which the disease had first announced itself. These two conditions were more than amply fulfilled by Lurancy's removal to the Roff residence, where her demands for attention were met with instant satisfaction. The Roff family further provided the necessary security and affection so that "Mary" could do the job Dr. Stevens assigned her, which was to restore a mortal body to health and, at the same time, to create a medium for the propagation of spiritualism. Dr. Stevens' second hope was dashed with the fulfillment of the former, as "Mary" virtually disap-

peared once Lurancy was restored to her health and right mind.

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Two RSPK Cases in New New England

Report From a Field Investigator

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The two cases discussed here took place during the latter part of 1979 and the early part of 1980, although in one case the disturbances had been occurring periodically since 1975. I investigated them acting as a field reporter for the Psychical Research Foundation. While the two cases were independent of each other, the location of both was in the suburbs of a metropolitan area in Massachusetts. Unusual events and phenomena are involved in both cases. The disturbances resemble those recorded in other, documented instances of poltergeist activity or recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK).

Case 1

In January of 1980, I was asked to investigate some strange phenomena which had been occurring for six months, but which had seemingly intensified during the three months immediately preceding the request for help from the family concerned. I contacted Pam (false names throughout), the mother in the family, and she described many disturbances that had been disrupting their family life. Among the phenomena taking place were: furniture being upended and rearranged, eggs breaking while stored in the refrigerator, eggs flying through the air, a shattered window, rocks and pebbles being thrown, record albums breaking, a stuffed animal flying into the corridor outside a bedroom, and, outside the house, car doors unlocking, opening and closing while the car was in motion. Needless to add, the family felt that none of these occurrences were explicable by normal causes.

The family consisted of Pam, the mother; Will, the son (age 11) and Will's maternal grandparents. Pam had two other daughters (aged 18 and 20), but neither of them lived at home. Pam's husband had been absent from the home since 1973. Pam and Will lived in a house next to Pam's parents and Will spent a lot of time at his grandparents' house.

I met with Pam, Will and the grandmother at a mutual friend's house. When I first arrived there, I was greeted by the mother and grandmother, but not the son. It was explained that Will had been placed in a special school for a three-month period of evaluation, and was now allowed home only on weekends. Fortunately, our meeting that day was on a Friday, so that I was to meet with Will later in the afternoon.

Both Pam and her mother related in detail the unexplained phenomena that had been upsetting them. I learned that the first large-scale disturbances had been noticed at the grandparents' home, when grandson Will was visiting. The grandmother noticed that several eggs she was storing in her refrigerator were being cracked and broken at an unusual rate, despite having been first checked and then placed with great care.

It was only when Will had entered their house that the eggs would be found broken or cracked. This was occurring often enough that the grandparents could not afford to keep replacing the eggs. Frequently, Will would tell his grandparents to look in the refrigerator. At first, they thought that Will was playing tricks on them, since he always seemed to know when the eggs were broken. However, on one occasion, some carefully inspected new eggs were placed in the refrigerator while Will was kept under constant observation during the entire time he was in the house. Despite this, after a short period of time Will told his grandparents to look in the refrigerator and, when all three of them did so, they found eggs thrown all around the inside of the refrigerator. The grandparents knew that Will had not been out of their sight all day.

On another occasion, Will was sitting in his grandparents' house watching television. He and his grandfather were the only ones in the house. Suddenly, the grandfather saw an egg fly past him, coming from the kitchen. It passed through the living room entirely and seemingly continued on into yet another room. Will just laughed. When they went to see where the egg had landed, it could not be found anywhere.

Another time, Will was riding with his grandfather in a pick-up truck driving down the road. At one point during their journey, the doors of the truck both on the passenger and driver's side began to open and close very quickly. As the truck was travelling about 45 miles per hour, Will's grandfather was greatly alarmed. Will, however, thought this was amusing. This particular event was repeated several other times. Now the grandfather will no longer drive alone with Will. Other instances of vehicle doors opening and closing also have occurred with Will in a moving car with his older sisters. They, too, are leary of riding alone with Will.

In an incident which happened outside the home, Will was in a schoolroom with his teacher and other classmates. Will was staring out through a window when it suddenly shattered. The teacher immediately blamed Will for breaking the window. The boy protested his innocence and was himself quite frightened.

All of the phenomena related thus far have in common the fact that Will was present when they occurred. But is Will the active agent in these incidents? At this point, a brief background of the boy may provide more perspective on these events as well as some others.

Throughout his early years in school, Will did not get along well with the other children. He had no friends. Often he preferred to be alone, although he talked often about a playmate of his whom only he could see, and had stated occasionally that he had seen his great-grandmother, who was several years deceased. In class, he had a difficult time concentrating and would often become fidgety, causing disruptions. Will was moved from class to class, and from school to school. He frequently became ill and remained at home.

After Will had missed a substantial amount of time at school, the school authorities required Will and his mother to appear in court regarding Will as an habitual truant. Pam contacted a number of persons: several lawyers, social workers, psychiatrists and school officials, from whom she sought aid in her case. In attempting to tell these people her story and that of her son, she tried to discuss openly some of the unusual events which had occurred at home. In all instances, she received ridicule and blunt suggestions of "being crazy."

After appearing in court on two occasions, with two different legal advisors, Will was finally placed for evaluation in a special school over 50 miles distant, initially for three months. This marked the first prolonged separation of Will from his mother. It was shortly after this event that I began to investigate this case.

During my meeting with Will, I found him to be fairly tall for 11 years of age, but otherwise possessed of no outstanding physical characteristics. He did speak with a slight lisp. Most of our discussion concerned his interests: in music, sports and his hobbies, as well as his school activities. Will's part of our conversation was mostly limited to one or two word answers.

When I mentioned some of the unusual occurrences at his home, Will did not want to discuss them. He sat next to his mother and continually asked when they were to leave. Eventually, however, he did speak about some of the events which had taken place since he had begun attending the special school.

One evening, he told us, while he was in bed, his teddy bear flew off his bed and into the corridor outside the room. One of the hall monitors came by, picked up the teddy bear, walked into Will's room and told him not to throw his toys around. Will told the monitor that he had not thrown it. After the monitor had returned the toy and had left the room, the toy again flew into the corridor. The entire scenario was repeated several times until a very angry hall monitor finally threatened Will with severe punishment. The boy was now doubly frightened, but continued to protest his innocence. Another time, Will found many of the records in his collection smashed. Although he insisted that he was not responsible, the monitors took away his record player and accused him of destroying his own property.

The more I asked about such incidents, the less Will wanted to tell me. He soon became visibly upset and said that if he talked about these events, then they would happen again. Although I was intrigued by this possibility, it was time for Will and his mother and grandmother to leave. We agreed that I would meet again with Will, next time at his mother's house.

As of this writing, the last I heard about Will and his mother was that they had left the state and moved to an undisclosed location. Not only did they not keep their second appointment with me, but also they did not appear for appointments I had made for them with a psychologist and a lawyer, both of whom I knew to be sympathetic to unusual cases such as this one. Perhaps they had lost their faith in members of the helping professions.

The importance of this case is reflected not only in the unusual phenomena with some eye-witness accounts, but also in the unaware and unsympathetic attitude of some individuals in the helping professions. Troubled persons such as Will and his family ought to receive proper guidance and counselling, but very often do not.

Case 2

Not long after I had investigated the previous case, I received a call to look into a case involving a family of four. Interestingly enough in this instance, the initial call to the Psychical Research Foundation came as a result of a police detective's suggestion to the family involved that they contact someone in parapsychology.

I spoke first with the mother of the family. A series of disturbances both within their house and around some of their surrounding property had this family concerned. The phenomena included: small objects disappearing then reappearing in out-of-the-way places, small electrical appliances turning themselves off and on, objects in the home being rearranged in careful, orderly lines, stuffed animals found dismembered and hanging around a room in ritualistic fashion, odors of unknown source, light bulbs blowing out at a very high rate and clothing found rearranged or even placed in another room.

This family consisted of Mary (the mother), Bob (the father), Ann (the 17 year old daughter), Larry (the 13 year old son) and a large great dane. Their house was situated on several acres of wooded land and open fields. A short distance from the house was a stable containing horses, and also an old carriage house. The entire family greeted me and initially seemed to be willing to discuss the events which had upset them. The father, however, discounted the phenomena. Although he had been witness to some of the happenings himself, Bob refused to accept that there might be something paranormal involved.

One unusual incident did involve the father. Returning home from a drugstore with a newly-filled prescription, Bob entered the living room and placed the bottle of medication on a small table. He turned away for perhaps ten or 15 seconds, but when he turned around again to pick up the bottle, he found it was gone. Yet he was quite alone in the room. Some weeks later, the bottle had still not been found.

On another occasion, the entire family was sitting watching television in the living room, when the set volume began to alternate between loud and soft on its own. Following these changes in the volume level, the family watched as the television shut itself completely off and then on again. This was not the first time that something electrical had behaved oddly in their house.

During a one year period, this family had no less than three microwave ovens replaced in their kitchen. The ovens were constantly breaking down in unusual ways. Once, the son, Larry, placed a piece of frozen bread into the microwave oven, turned the appliance on, and found that within a few seconds the bread was on fire. (I have been told that microwave cooking does not produce such flames). Another appliance, their electrical stove, had several times been found turned on after having been carefully turned off shortly before. The family had called in an electrician on three different occasions to check the wiring and electrical system of the house. Each time, everything was found to be in good working order, with no hint of any electrical problems.

While strange phenomena had been witnessed by everyone in the family, and at different times, many of the events took place with the mother, Mary, nearby or in the house. She is in her early 40's, and is also the only

member of the family to report unusual phenomena occurring outside their home.

Mary told me that in a few instances, while she was in a supermarket or bank, nearby cash registers or computers had begun to malfunction erratically. On one particular occasion, while she was waiting for service in a bank line, one of the bank's computers suddenly stopped working. Mary was feeling angry and impatient at the time because she was pressed for time but faced with a fairly long wait for service. She mentioned that as soon as she expressed her frustration verbally, the nearby computer again resumed functioning. Apparently, similar experiences had happened to Mary with cash registers in both a supermarket and a department store. Mary would often joke with her husband about her apparent effect on these machines.

The local police became involved in this case because of particular incidents which happened in the family home and in the nearby stable. It was customary, on birthdays and holidays, for members of this family to exchange gifts of stuffed animals. Each person had a good-sized collection in his or her own room. Occasionally, one or two of these stuffed animals had been found seemingly out of place, but no one thought anything of this until the family began to return home to find *all* their stuffed animals out of place! Some were hanging from the ceiling, some were even dismembered, but all were placed in such a fashion as to seemingly indicate some type of ritual.

The family was also especially upset by an occurrence which happened at their stable. One morning, Larry, the son, went out to the stable to check on the horses and discovered an unusual red sediment floating on top of the horses' drinking water. It resembled dried blood in color and texture. The horses were immediately examined for any cuts or other injuries that might have caused bleeding. No cuts or injuries were found. The horses were not even bruised. The substance found floating on the water was later tested in a police laboratory. It was found to be nontoxic, but was not positively identified. The family had called in the police to investigate as they had begun to wonder whether someone was lurking about their property intending to do them physical harm.

No signs of forceable entry into the family house or stable were found during the police investigation. And,

further, cash and other valuables had remained untouched in the house during the unusual occurrences. The matter was turned over to a detective. When he heard from the family about some of the other phenomena, he suggested that as the case seemed to be beyond his expertise, it might be a good idea to contact someone working in parapsychology. After his suggestion, Mary had contacted the Psychological Research Foundation in Durham, NC.

I interviewed the detective involved with this case, and also examined a series of written reports made concerning this particular family, reports which dated back to 1975. All these reports related incidents of seeming vandalism in this same house, including instances of objects being knocked over, strange items appearing as if from nowhere, and other items being "misplaced." The detective explained to me that he had read a little about poltergeist activity, and that the events he was investigating in this case seemed to him similar to poltergeist occurrences.

My investigation of this case ended rather abruptly, after I had proceeded to set up appointments for some psychological testing for the family members. Three successive appointments for testing were cancelled by the family. Therefore, no information was gathered concerning individual personalities of the family members, or their relationships within the family group. During individual and group questioning, I did notice certain signs of tension between members, particularly between husband and wife. The mother, Mary, had mentioned to me that her relationship with her husband was not as good as it was once and, also, that she felt stifled in her family position and in her marriage.

When I last spoke with the family several months ago, strange phenomena were still occurring, although not as frequently as previously. It was agreed that they would contact me if anything further developed. Since that time, I have not heard from them.

It is interesting to note that Case 1 involved a number of professional people who were quite ignorant of poltergeist phenomena. By contrast, Case 2 featured the insight of an informed and open-minded detective who suggested that the family consider the possibility of a parapsychological explanation for the events.

Déjà Vu

A Haunted House

Eleanor Mildred Sidgwick

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Eleanor Mildred (Mrs. Henry) Sidgwick (1845-1936), was one of the founders of psychical research and contributed to many works and investigations, including The Report on the Census of Hallucinations, in Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research for 1894, and was in 1908-09 the 12th President of the SPR.

....Various apparitions and other occurrences...led the inhabitants of a certain house to regard it as haunted. The house in question was taken for the months of August and September by a member of the Society, in the hope that residence there for some weeks might lead to some light being thrown on the subject. He stayed there himself for the greater part of this time, and had friends at different times to stay with him. Nothing, however, tending either to confirm or to destroy the more important part of the previous evidence occurred. Still, a few points of interest were noted, and these, together with some additional facts learnt from the witnesses previously cited, form the subject of the present paper.

The following brief account of the apparitions seen was given by the ladies of the house, Mrs. and Miss S., to Mr. Myers in May last, and will recall to the reader the previous narrative:—

"There are certainly four separate 'ghosts,' if not more.

1. The maid-servant, seen oftenest. Dress light mauve, quite plain in cut. Face pale, not often well seen; full face when seen by Mrs. S. showed some cast or other defect in left eye. Expression ordinary. Hair sometimes down her back, sometimes done up. No cap; parting of hair broad and white.

2. The lady, about 35, dressed in silk or other soft material; red shawl or opera cloak, apparently thrown over one shoulder and twisted round neck. Face rather pleasing. Has been very well seen, especially by Mrs. S. (*Journal* for April, p. 249), when a large nightlight was burning quite near figure.

3. The man, seen frequently leaning half out of attic window, window being open, and observer in garden. Expression not disagreeable; dark face and whiskers, coat high round neck. Often seen in garden especially by Winnie Thorne, aged 12, sister of Emilie, who used to see him in the garden night after night, to her great alarm, and run downstairs in nightdress to tell Emilie. She (Winnie) thought someone had come to take the fruit. Oddly enough, Emilie never could see him at these times, though this (with a similar instance with Mrs. S. and Winnie) is the only case in which one of the ghosts was seen by one person, but invisible to others looking that way. Once Miss S. saw him in garden also, when Winnie had given the alarm, and a neighbour was summoned and garden searched, but no one was there. It would not be difficult for trespassers to get into garden; but the form seen by Winnie Thorne in garden was plainly not a real man, or Emilie would have seen him too. Nor was there shadow or effect of light to explain it. If the man in white dress seen by Miss Humble (p. 249) was the same ghost, the expression as well as dress must have changed; and so also if the evil face seen by Mrs. Serpell was this same man.

It is noteworthy that part of the house was once used as a racing stable; and there may have been low characters about.

Figures have twice appeared on January 22nd, but we cannot connect that date with any known event.

4. A child-ghost must have added to the list, though it has not been seen. Mrs. S. heard the gleeful clap of hands and laugh of a child, say of four years old, so clearly just behind her that she turned sharply round, thinking for the moment that one of her Sunday-school class must be in the room; but there was no one. The pattering sound as of a child's bare feet was also marked."

One or more of these various figures have been seen by eight persons, namely, Mrs. and Miss S., their servant Emilie Thorne (who remained in the house through August and September, and appeared to those of us who made her acquaintance to be a sensible and trustworthy person); Mrs. Serpell, a former servant of Mrs. S.'s; Mrs. Trays and Winnie Thorne, sisters of Emilie; Miss Blencowe and Miss Humble, friends of Mrs. and Miss S. All the apparitions have occurred within a period of three years....

The house...stands alone in its own garden. It was formerly a farmhouse, and when Mrs. S. first took possession of it in 1884 did not include the part beyond the Green Room. This part was then a cottage, but was thrown into the house in 1885, when other alterations were also made. These alterations, apparently, made no difference to the "ghost." Before they were made the entrance was opposite the foot of the staircase, and the present hall was the kitchen, the large chimney of which

now forms a useless block up the middle of the house. Mrs. and Miss S. think that "disturbances seem usually near this chimney, or in the rooms above the cellar, which is a very large one, paved with stone," under the dining-room. The attic, mentioned above, is over the drawing-room and looks toward the main street of the village. The attic window is very clearly seen from the garden. The rooms are rather small and low, and the staircase, so often mentioned, is a short, steep flight. The figures have thus been seen very close.

The house appears to have had no previous reputation of being haunted, and the sound of footsteps in an empty room, about six months after Mrs. and Miss S. came into the house, was the first thing that struck them as peculiar. This was in January, 1885. The apparitions began later. It is difficult to make out the chronology, as the dates have not in all cases been recorded, but I think that the figure with red jacket and candle, which Miss S. took for her mother, was probably the first thing seen, and either Mrs. Serpell's evil-looking face, or the appearance of the maid-servant's figure at the top of the stairs... to Miss S., the second. By far the most interesting apparition was the next, when Miss Blencowe, *not having heard anything about the supposed ghost*, saw a similar figure, as of a maid servant, in the same place, on October 1st, 1886. Miss Blencowe very kindly described her experience to Mr. Myers in May, and subsequently to Mr. Sidgwick and myself in September. She allowed us to question her as much as we liked, and gave her evidence well. She is thoroughly convinced that at the time of this experience she knew nothing about the haunting. Miss S., however (see p. 245), thinks that she had said something about "the ghost" just before Miss Blencowe saw the figure, though without any particulars whatever. This seems to have been the only one of the apparitions which was similar to what had previously been seen, and was perceived by a person who had heard no account of it:—except, possibly, the figure to be presently mentioned, seen by Miss E.S.; but of this we have no details.

When Miss Blencowe, in the following February, again saw the figure at the same spot, but from the opposite side, it was believed that a pet dog saw it, too. Mrs. and Miss S. say:—

"Our two existing dogs, and a dog now dead (all that we have had in the house), have fully shared, as it would seem, in the sight of the ghosts. We do not keep a cat now. One of the dogs will not cross the Green Room at dusk; whines at the open door, and has to be carried through. Repeatedly the dogs have stared and shivered when we could see nothing. In the case described (p. 245, February 19th, 1887), when servant's ghost appeared during a party, the dog's shriek attracted everyone's attention. All looked at the dog and probably thus missed seeing the ghost, whom Miss Blencowe alone saw—she being then close to the open door outside which the ghost appeared."

It seems doubtful, however, whether the evidence is sufficient to support this explanation of the dog's behaviour. We learn from Emilie Thorne that he suffered from fits after this, if not before, and Mrs. S. treated him

for a fit on this occasion; it does not seem necessary to suppose a supernormal origin for this fit.

It also seems doubtful whether the other persons present failed to see the appearance on this occasion, because they did not look in the right direction, or because it existed only for Miss Blencowe. We understood from her that she believed the latter, and thought that in following the dog Mrs. S. and her friend must have passed over the spot apparently occupied by the apparition. And certainly from the description of its position I should have judged this to be the case.

The following is an account of Miss Blencowe's experiences, written by Mr. Myers after his interview with her, and which entirely agrees with my recollection of what she said, except that I should have said near a gas lamp instead of "directly under":—

"Miss Blencowe, when she saw the girl (October 1st, 1886, and February 19th, 1887), observed nothing wrong with her eyes [as Mrs. S. did when she saw a similar figure in December, 1887]. Noticed very white parting, but does not think hair was thin; it came down low on forehead. Expression was simply that of a servant waiting for orders. On each occasion the girl stood within a few feet of her. The peculiar cold numbness which Miss B. felt was not due to fear; because (1) on the first occasion she simply supposed the girl to be another servant whom she had not seen, not being then intimate with the S.'s; and (2) on the second occasion the numbness distinctly preceded the sight of the figure; in fact, it was the odd feeling of numbness which made Miss B. look round. She 'went down' to Mrs. S. (p. 246) because Mrs. S. had followed the dog downstairs and was pouring water on him, supposing him to have had a fit. The figure on each occasion disappeared as though into a corner, the head being last seen. On each occasion it stood directly under a gas-lamp, in the same place."

The frequency of the apparitions seems to have culminated in December 1887, in which months Emilie Thorne twice, and Mrs. S. once, saw a figure resembling the "servant-ghost," and in which month also Mrs. S. saw the figure in the red shawl.

The latest appearance recorded was a very singular form of hallucination. It occurred on June 13th, 1888, and was described as follows by Miss S. a few days afterwards:—

"I was coming up stairs about 10 o'clock at night. There was no gas lighted either up or down stairs, but the window blind in the passage was not down. I had no light in my hand but was carrying little Stumpy. He trembled when I picked him up and continued to tremble. When I was about four steps from the top I saw a shadowy substance. I can scarcely describe it. It was about four feet high, in shape like a large toadstool, the lower part was dark and the top was quite white. I walked on *through* it and into my bedroom. After a few minutes I came out again and went slowly up and down the stairs two or three times (of course without a candle), to see if it were possible it was a shadow, or reflection of any kind, but there was nothing to be seen.—F.S."

The following additional information about sounds and other phenomena was supplied to Mr. Myers by Mrs. and Miss S., who signed the account written down by him from notes of their conversation.

To the witnesses cited in *Journal* three more may be added, viz.:—

1. Miss E.S. (a cousin), who complained much of the banging of doors in Pink Room, between Grey and Pink Room all night,

as she slept in Grey [?Green] Room. Begged that doors might be more carefully shut. Mrs. S. shut them carefully (had done so previous night also), but Miss E.S. still heard them bang. These doors (I tried them and found them to shut with ordinary firmness.—F.W.H.M.) do actually open and close again, movement of handle being plainly observable. Miss E.S. was also frightened by noises once when Emilie Thorne was at church, with the rest of the household; remarked to Miss S. that she had heard noises, but then saw someone whom she supposed to be Emilie come back from church. Emilie was in church, so the figure seen was probably the servant-ghost. Nothing was said to Miss. E.S. as she is to come again at Christmas and would have been alarmed.

2. Miss E. Maud Grepe [seen by F.W.H.M.] writes:

"I heard my name [Maud] called twice distinctly, and I answered Coming! and on going into the room where the voice came from I found no one had called. The voice sounded like that of Miss S. (Signed) E. Maud Grepe."

3. The German cook, mentioned p. 248, repeatedly heard herself called. She could speak little English; and fancied that some one was playing tricks on her.

The hypothesis of tricks is practically out of the question. The phenomena have occurred under all conditions: e.g. (a) When we first came, with servant brought from Plymouth, before Emilie came to us; (b) when Emilie was out; (c) when no one at all was in the house (face seem from garden); (d) when Miss S. was alone in the house, etc.

The *piano-playing* has hardly been sufficiently noticed in *Journal*. Miss Humble heard it play chants (p. 249). Miss Auchmuty heard chants, and Emilie Thorne had heard it repeatedly when the drawing-room was empty—and once at least when the piano was *shut down*. No barrel organs come near the house, and church is too far for organ to be taken for piano. The rooms are small, and the sound unmistakable.

With this may perhaps be ranked the bell-ringing; but on some occasions at least when the bell is heard the bell actually *moves*. Once Mrs. and Miss S. heard two or three bells sounding together, and Emilie saw them shaking. For this phenomenon a plausible natural explanation might be suggested, as there are mice in the house.

Movements of objects certainly occur.

(a) Besides the case of re-lighted gas (p. 247) there was a remarkable case of re-made and re-lighted fire. We had had a party in the drawing-room (where a fire is seldom lighted), and the fire had burnt itself out—nothing remaining in grate when we went to bed, about 10, except a mere handful of ashes, with slight glow. At eight next morning Emilie told me that there was a bright fire in drawing-room. I went and looked; a large log was in the grate and burning brightly; I think coals also. There had been wood in the room.

(b) On one occasion, on going into the drawing-room in the morning, Miss S., who went in first, found a chair standing upon the sofa. Emilie had not been into the room.

(c) The alarm of Miss S.'s alarm clock has five or six times gone off at 4:30 a.m., not having been set to that hour. This may be due to some defect in the clock (though we can find none); but it is noteworthy that about 4:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. are the times when most disturbance occurs.

(d) The removal and replacement of small articles continues.

The book mentioned (p. 252), as having been found after its unexplained loss, has now been again removed.

Last Christmas Emilie brought up three florins (change on a bill) to Mrs. S.'s room, and placed them in a china cup on the dressing-table. An hour or so afterwards she re-entered the room, where Mrs. S. was still in bed, and Mrs. S. asked her for the coins. They were gone. A florin was taken from the Pink Room a few weeks since, no one having been in the room except the Vicar. These coins are always replaced sooner or

later. Only florins are taken. As this might sound like a servant's practical joke, it is well to say emphatically that Emilie Thorne is no mere temporary servant, but a young woman of high character and perfect trustworthiness, whom we have known from her childhood, and who came to us from the South of England expressly to serve us. The manifestations are in no way specially connected with her presence, and she derives nothing but annoyance from them. Neither she nor any of us are timid; and we have no idea of leaving the house to the ghosts.

(Signed) F.S. M.S.

Mr. Myers himself writes as follows:—

May 21st, 1888. I have to-day seen Miss Blencowe and Mrs. and Miss Auchmuty, and have learnt a few fresh particulars, as follows:—

Miss Auchmuty again stayed in the house on April, 1888. Early in the morning of April 27th, 1888, she heard footsteps passing her room and some one brushing against handle of door outside. On inquiry the same morning she found that no one had been up at that hour.

Mrs. Auchmuty, on April 18th, 1888, was sitting in the drawing-room with a friend, when both of them heard some one walking with heavy boots on in the attic above. They took for granted that some one had been there looking for some object. No one had been there.

Miss B. corroborates the loss of the ring (p. 251). It was simply placed on the dressing-table, full in view, and left undisturbed. A few minutes later it was gone.

On Wednesday, April 25th, 1888, Miss Blencowe was awoke by feeling her bed shaken and pulled along the floor for several inches. It was then quickly shoved back. The room was light, but no one could be seen.

Mrs. S. (seen by me to-day) was kept awake when trying to sleep yesterday afternoon, May 20th, by persistent pacing up and down in passage outside her room. No one in the house was stirring.

May 22. I have to-day seen Mrs. and Miss Humble, at 12, Clarendon Square, Cheltenham. Mrs. Humble confirms the statement (p. 249) that she heard footsteps in drawing-room when stair was barred by boxes and no one in that room.

Miss Humble states that the female figure which she saw had no red in its costume; seemed in *deshabille*. It was seen near the place (in the Pink bedroom) where Mrs. S. saw the woman's figure. The man whom Miss Humble saw had a pallid face, dark eyes, no beard or moustache. [It seems doubtful whether this was the same male figure as that seen by Emilie Thorne, etc.] The piano was *shut* when Miss Humble walked into the room and found no one there, though the piano had been playing.

F.W.H.M.

It was, of course, important to ascertain whether the witnesses in this case were at all subject to hallucinations of the senses. Mr. Gurney made inquiries on this point but the answers did not reach him till after the issue of the April number. He put them together as follows:—

Miss Humble (writing on April 8th) says that she has on one other occasion seen a figure which appeared suddenly in a spot out of doors, which she believed she had ascertained to be vacant the instant before; and this figure corresponded in aspect with an appearance which others professed to have encountered at or near the same spot. It cannot be regarded as certain that this was a subjective hallucination; as, on the supposition that it had no reality of what we may call a "psychical" kind, we still cannot be sure that it was not a real living person.

Miss Blencowe writes on April 15th, 1888:—"I have never before the time stated in my written account, encountered any similar phenomenon, lights or sounds, in any other locality than at Mrs. S.'s house; in fact, until the first appearance of the girl in lavender, I never believed in ghosts, nor did I at the time know the house was haunted."

Mrs. Serpell writes on April 4th, that several years ago she twice saw the figure of a man at the end of a passage, without being able to account for the appearance; but she adds, "I did not think much of it at the time, as I thought some one had been playing me a trick. I have never seen or heard anything else of the kind [i.e., of the same kind as the experiences in the present case] anywhere."

Miss S., who put the necessary question about hallucinations to others of the witnesses, writes, on March 28th:—"Emilie [Thorne] has never in her life heard or seen anything supernatural. Miss Helen Auchmuty has never seen anything supernatural. Mary Trays never had seen or heard anything supernatural, and made fun of Emilie till she lived in our house."

Miss S. herself has had one hallucination of vision unconnected with the present case, representing a figure with a light.

E.G.

To this Mr. Myers adds that he learnt from Mrs. S. that she had had no previous hallucinations.

Our own observation during a week spent in the house early in September perhaps suggest explanations of some of the mysterious noises.

In the first place I should describe the house as both a noisy and a rickety one, by which I mean that sounds and movements are easily transmitted from one part to another. For instance, a servant walking about in the attic is not only very audible indeed in the drawing-room below, but shakes the room considerably, making the doors and windows rattle. Moreover, the presence of a parrot and other birds in the house should be taken account of in trying to explain noises.

Secondly, we think that the sound of a piano heard when no one was playing in the drawing-room may very probably have come from a piano in a neighbouring house. We heard such a piano, seemingly in the house ... very distinctly indeed as we sat in the drawing-room, one morning, with the window open. It was equally distinct outside the room. When the music was loud we could even hear it quite well with our window shut. We were at home the greater part of every morning during our stay, but this was the only time we heard the piano, so that we may suppose that it is not often played under similar condition.

Thirdly, my friend Miss F., who stayed there with me and occupied, during part of the time, the Green Room, was lying awake one night when she felt her bed jarred and heard something like a blow on it. Immediately afterwards she heard a metallic sound, proceeding, she thought, from the iron curtain rod, which divided off the end of the room to serve as a passage.... This sound was louder than that made by tapping the rod with a door key and we could not imitate it by shaking the curtain rings. Miss F. irritated it at breakfast by striking two spoons together., Miss S. seems to have had similar experiences while sleeping in this room, though more intense (see *Journal* for April, pp. 243, 249.) In Miss F.'s case they occurred as our host came up to bed, as she knew by hearing him come upstairs and open and shut his door; and she heard the same sound, but fainter, on another occasion, at the moment that my husband descended the stairs.

We found considerable difficulty in reproducing the sound; but did ultimately succeed, by treading about over the upper steps of the stairs and the passage at the top, in making a faint sound of the same kind occur in the Green Room.

Miss F. also had another experience, similar to one described in the *Journal* (p. 242); and it should be mentioned, by the way, that though Miss F. had read the April number of the *Journal*, she had no conscious recollection of the nature of the experiences described. She was in the bath-room on the evening of her arrival, and, at the moment when I came up the back stairs and entered the Pink Room, thought she heard footsteps coming along the oilcloth that extends from door to door of the Green Room. She thought it was the maid and opened the door to see, but no one was there. She imitated the step for us. It was short and quick (like a child's) and sounded, she said, like that of a person with bare feet or slipshod. We did not succeed in reproducing this sound of pattering feet; but I think that this may have been because it is very difficult to reproduce the condition for what, if connected with my coming upstairs at all, was probably a misinterpretation of some real sound. When Miss F. expected me to come up the back stairs she was naturally not in the same mental attitude in judging of the sounds I made as when she had to infer the facts entirely from the sounds. We found our experiments on sounds difficult too, because they were constantly spoilt by noises in the house and outside.

This completes the evidence at present obtained on the subject.

If we try to review it as a whole we must admit, I think, that it is difficult to draw from it any very definite conclusion. The evidence about sounds, and about movements of objects may, perhaps, be left out of consideration for the present; the first because there seems, as I have said elsewhere (*Proceedings*, Vol. III., p. 79), to be no sufficient reason for regarding unintelligent sounds as other than ordinary physical ones merely because they have not been explained; and the second because the phenomena as described scarcely seem sufficiently beyond the range of possible mal-observation and forgetfulness to warrant us in attaching great importance to them. It is difficult to make evidence of this kind convincing to those not actually concerned in the occurrence, and, in fact, to be convincing it would almost need to be experimental. It would almost be necessary that

the position of an object should be specially noted with a view to observing its subsequent disappearance. Some attempt has, I understand, been made to obtain evidence of this kind, but the objects have not so far disappeared.

Turning to the sights;—after seeing the place I should be inclined to suggest that the figure seen by Mrs. Trays in the garden was a real woman waiting for some one; and it seems possible that some of the other figures, namely the man seen in the garden by the little girl, and, perhaps, the man at the attic window, were illusions, that is, misinterpretations of real things seen. Further, I am inclined to think that the apparition to Miss S. of her mother, and possibly some other cases may have been dreams. But after making all allowance for such explanations there remains a considerable number of cases of genuine hallucinations of the senses, occurring with a frequency which is certainly very remarkable when we consider that the percipients were not seeing hallucinations elsewhere. And if we assume that the majority of them may have been produced by self-suggestions, resulting from the idea that the house was haunted—an hypothesis which their variety somewhat supports, I think—there still remains the central point of the whole story, namely, Miss Blencowe's seeing what was apparently the same figure as that previously seen by Miss S. and in the same place, though knowing nothing of it. If this were the only instance of such an occurrence we might attribute it to chance; but it is, as readers of the *Proceedings* and *Journal* know, by no means an isolated case. As to the cause of the phenomenon, we know nothing. Was it thought-transference—mental suggestion—from Miss S. that caused Miss Blencowe to see what she did? Or was there some other mind, independent of both of them, or some physical cause, which produced it? We cannot tell. We can only say that there is no *known* person living or dead with whom to connect the figure.

The Society will of course watch any further developments of the case with interest. But it is to be feared that it will be difficult to obtain any future evidence from persons who have not heard of the haunting, since the report of it seems now well known, at least in the immediate neighborhood; and when we were there it was a favourite amusement with the village boys to serenade the "ghost" as the shades of evening fell.

Reviews

ADVANCES IN PARAPSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH, VOLUME 2: Extrasensory Perception.

edited by Stanley Krippner

(New York: Plenum Press, 1978. 308 pp. \$22.50)

Reviewed by R. Jeffrey Munson

Mr. Munson is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Parapsychology.

The series: *Advances in Parapsychological Research*, edited by Stanley Krippner, could fairly and beneficially be used as textbooks to introduce the serious college-level student to the field of parapsychology. The first volume in the series covers psychokinesis (PK). The volume under consideration here, Volume 2, focuses on extrasensory perception, including telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition. This book is divided into three main sections: research methodology, research findings and theories.

The brief (4 page) introduction is by Montague Ullman, a psychiatrist associated with the American Society for Psychical Research. In this he hints at a "philosophy for a more complex reality," suggesting a need for new a priori categories for understanding the transcendental self. His thoughts regarding "broadening our scientific base" are provocative, and this reader was left wishing that these considerations had been more fully developed.

The somewhat academic task of describing research is quite neatly done by Robert Morris, presently at Syracuse University's School of Computer and Information Science. Morris presents first the traditional definitions and forms of extrasensory perception. Then he explains the general strategies for investigating psi and discusses spontaneous cases, field investigations and controlled laboratory research. The greater part of this section analyzes the basic elements of an ESP communication: subjects, targets, responses and barriers to psi, and also presents the fundamental logic of parapsychology.

The section on research findings in this book is written by John Palmer, who teaches and conducts research at John F. Kennedy University in Orinda, California. This contribution comprises two-thirds of the volume's 300 pages, and includes over 700 research references.

Palmer begins with a description of the "Hume game," whose point is that any imaginable fraud in an ESP experiment is more probable than the existence of ESP. This logic is based on a cause-effect model which is not sufficient to explain all the facts in the known world, and is a paradigm of the staunch refusal of some persons to admit the value of evidence requiring one to

question one's idea of the ordering of reality.

Palmer then enlarges upon the ESP versus fraud controversy, discussing examples of experimenter fraud in parapsychology including Soal and Levy. He completes the picture by delineating some of the ways one might most profitably and scientifically accept evidence for ESP.

To detail the research findings here would be impractical. However, some major categories that Palmer employs which need mentioning are: time and space, forced choice material, subject categories, motivation, social factors, altered states of consciousness, physiology, personality data, cognitive variables, disabilities, attitudes, spontaneous transient states, psi-prone trials, repeated testing and covert testing.

In the final part of this section Palmer elaborates on displacement and focusing effects, essentially discussing the accuracy of psi along with the "mistakes" it can make. Then he explores the meaning of all the facts he has collected here, using a method of examining "patterns of patterns." This is a well-balanced conclusion to the section on research findings, and left this reader with a feeling of deserved progress.

Palmer's contribution to this book is, first, a very impressive collative work that reflects his great familiarity with parapsychological data, methods and logic. Second, in a supportive way he points out flaws in past research, and calls for more and improved research in future. Finally, there is clearly a stable foundation of professional clarity and honesty underlying Palmer's presentation.

K. Ramakrishna Rao, Director of the Institute for Parapsychology, introduces his section dealing with parapsychological theories by noting briefly that ESP contradicts what C.D. Broad called our "basic limiting principles," or our usual understanding of the nature of the world. Further, in this section which is an edited version of an article published in the *Journal of Parapsychology*, Rao suggests that our conventional notions of the world's orderly nature need to be revised or even scrapped since we now have new and unusual facts that need to be assimilated.

The systems presented here are divided for discussion into three main areas: physical, nonphysical and acausal theories, although such divisions appear to be mostly for convenience. In the final analysis, the theory that successfully (or *most* successfully) explains psi must be sufficient for both physical and nonphysical reality.

Of the physical theories, the electromagnetic explanation of psi is presented first. The physical energy, resonance and field theories of Berger, Marshall and

Wasserman, respectively, postulate new energies or fields not previously admitted in physics, and are made to appear rather speculative. Two quantum physical theories, those of Dobbs and Walker, are given the most extended treatment of the physical theories, perhaps because of their greater plausibility in terms of modern physics, their detail of development and the good possibility of their experimental verification. Rao concludes his discussion of the physical theories of psi by describing a provocative and innovative attempt by Gertrude Schmeidler to integrate physical, psychological and physiological aspects of psi, an attempt which involves the development of the idea of "space-warps" and extra dimensions.

Most of the theories presented in Rao's chapter are in the nonphysical category: subliminal contact theories, field theories and projection hypotheses. Subliminal contact theories discussed here include: Myers' subliminal self, the boundless collective unconscious, Carington's association theory, psychodynamic theories of psi and LeShan's clairvoyant reality. Among these, the psychiatric material stands out because, first, the frameworks developed by the psychiatrists are the result of observation made during work with clients and because, second, these theories are descriptive and functional hypotheses that avoid postulating new entities or fields. And finally, this psychiatric material stands out here because Palmer does not discuss these psychiatric theories in his section dealing with psi research findings.

Next, field theories by Murphy and Roll are presented. Both theories emphasize the importance of interpersonal processes rather than individual factors. However, Roll's theory is developed in considerably greater detail, and research has been done based on his ideas. While the results are equivocal, the process itself is important for the growth of parapsychology.

The projection hypotheses include: Rhine's relativism, Broad's compound theory, the Shin theory and Stanford's psi-mediated instrumental response (PMIR). Rhine's relativism theory is notable because, as Rao points out, Rhine was first an experimentalist, yet his ideas on the mind-body distinction, mental energy and the mind's ability to "go out" to an object have had great influence on many parapsychologists. Indeed, the other three theories in this subsection can be seen as variants or extensions of Rhine's projection hypothesis.

Rao's section entitled "Acausal Theories" is included so as to accommodate Jung's theory of synchronicity. This concept is difficult to analyze because logical analysis itself proceeds on the cause-effect or subject-object model which synchronicity sidesteps. Synchronicity is a descriptive theory that does not purport to explain "how" something takes place, but rather appears to explore the personal import of meaningful coincidences.

Throughout his chapter in this volume, Rao paraphrases a theory in brief, then comments from his own

perspective when he feels it to be appropriate. His contribution here is, therefore, both a collection of synopses and a critical review. In sum, the synopses provide an idea of each particular theory, while his evaluations and criticism stimulate and provide perspective.

Advances in Parapsychological Research, Volume 2: Extrasensory Perception provides a systematic presentation of the logic, findings and theories that have evolved with the study of extrasensory perception during the past decade. Students can use this book as a springboard to launch themselves into the study of parapsychology.

POLTERGEISTS

by Alan Gauld and A.D. Cornell

(London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979. 406 pp. \$20.00)

THE POLTERGEIST EXPERIENCE

by D. Scott Rogo

(New York: Penguin Books, 1979. 301 pp. \$2.95)

Reviewed by Joyce Berger

Joyce Berger is Research Associate at the Florida Branch of the Psychical Research Foundation and a former Associate Editor of THETA.

Modern parapsychologists usually accept William G. Roll's definition of poltergeist phenomena, i.e., recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK) caused by a living agent (focal person). The authors of both books being reviewed, however, include as poltergeist cases many which orthodox parapsychologists would exclude because the commonly accepted explanation does not seem to apply to them. Since some of these hundreds of cases from around the world suggest the agency of a discarnate agency, they are of special interest to the readers of THETA.

Rogo's book, which appears to have been written for the popular market, is informal and "chatty" in style, but the references to each chapter indicate that a good deal of study went into its writing.

The author differentiates between the Type I poltergeist (RSPK) and the Type II or "entity-poltergeist" which he believes "...in rare instances... may be a true psychic invasion." He discusses in detail the Roman Catholic viewpoint of demonic possession and states his opinion that in these and similar cases the agency causing the phenomena is "an intelligence or will independent of the victim's mind..." a point that is made frequently and in differing contexts throughout the book. Based on the alleged ability of some subjects to exercise PK while out of body together with accounts of thought forms, such as Alexandra David-Neel's which took on a life of their own, Rogo later concludes, however, that the Type II poltergeist is "caused and directed

by a portion of the agent's mind and will, which can function independently of the mind and motivation that gave it birth."

Although Rogo does believe that human consciousness survives death, he is apparently not comfortable with the idea that consciousness might produce poltergeist phenomena and has accordingly sought in this way to explain the agency causing them.

Gauld and Cornell have given lengthy and serious consideration to the hypothesis that the intelligence behind poltergeist phenomena could be that of a discarnate entity. While the phenomena may seem to be related to or caused by a specific deceased person (whose ghost has occasionally been seen), the authors feel that the case of the discarnate entity hypothesis would be strengthened if the phenomena were independent of the presence or absence of any particular living agent or medium, or if they were manifested through the agency of various persons, exhibited purposes alien to the purported living agent or if any information communicated were unknown to the living agent. They summarize their own "exceedingly tentative" assessment of the discarnate entity hypothesis as follows:

"There are a few cases...which fulfil our proposed criteria for accepting the intelligence at work as that of a discarnate entity. We can see no grounds for dismissing the evidence in such cases *en bloc*, and are therefore constrained to admit that in such cases it is appropriate to explore the discarnate entity hypothesis further and more fully...."

"We do not think that much further progress is likely with regard to these problems, or any of the other very numerous problems that arise in connection with poltergeist phenomena, until sustained and competent investigations have been conducted into the nature and point of origin of the physical force, or indeed quite certainly forces, at work in poltergeists and hauntings." (pp. 359-360)

Although Gauld and Cornell have stated that their book is intended for the general reader, the serious student of the poltergeist is stimulated and excited by the wealth of information and careful study contained in it.

ALTERNATE STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

edited by Norman E. Zinberg

(New York: The Free Press, 1977, x + 294 pp., \$14.95)

Reviewed by Douglas M. Stokes

Dr. Stokes has worked as a researcher at the FRNM Institute for Parapsychology, a mathematics teacher, a clinical psychologist and an applied mathematician in the area of business consulting.

Volume 8, Number 4, Fall 1980

Alternate States of Consciousness contains the papers presented at an interdisciplinary conference on consciousness change held in April, 1975, and sponsored by the Drug Abuse Council of Washington, D.C. The first contribution is by the volume's editor, Norman Zinberg. Zinberg provides an overview of altered state research in general and the present conference in particular. He notes that the experience of altered states has by and large been suppressed in Western cultures in favor of "rationality." Zinberg also defends the discipline of psychoanalysis, which he felt had been attacked by the other participants in the conference, and he draws several parallels between psychoanalytic practices and meditational techniques.

The next paper is by Andrew Weil, the author of *The Natural Mind*. Weil draws a distinction between "lunar consciousness" and "solar consciousness." Weil attempts to differentiate between the two modes of thought by means of several analogies, including a comparison to the yin and yang principles of oriental thought. While these analogies are sometimes intuitively powerful, they do not, to this reviewer's mind, constitute a scientifically acceptable explication of Weil's concepts. He does note that "lunar" and "solar" thought processes are not to be equated with right and left hemisphere thought, but rather with old and new brain processes (i.e., the limbic system and brain stem vs. the neocortex). Weil also discusses altered states of consciousness arising from watching solar eclipses, eating psychoactive mushrooms and participating in the Indian sweat lodge ceremony.

The next contribution is by Peter Furst. Furst provides an historical and cross-cultural survey of consciousness alteration practices among American Indians. He proposes that the use of hallucinogens and shamanistic practices may have spread to the Americas from North-east Asia via migrations across the Bering land bridge.

Jerome Singer, well known for his studies of day-dreaming and imagery, analyzes the everyday stream of thought, which he regards as a highly neglected topic. He chastises academic psychology and psychoanalysis for focussing exclusively on logical, verbal thought processes, a criticism of somewhat dubious merit when directed at psychoanalysis (although it may be true that psychoanalysts have a tendency to underestimate the value of "primary process" thought). Singer also provides an overview of empirical research and theoretical work on the stream of consciousness, considering in depth such topics as the competition between "internal" and "external" stimuli for the attention of the mind.

Charles Tart discusses his well known conceptual model of altered states of consciousness. Tart divides the mind into several substructures, such as memory, motor output and awareness; he then proposes that the intensity of operation as well as the interrelationships among the structures may vary from one state of consciousness to another. To some extent Tart separates substructures which are perhaps best not thought of as

separate entities at the same hierarchical level. For instance, he lists emotions, the subconscious and the "interoceptors" as separate structures when they must surely overlap. He sees the ordinary waking state of consciousness as a culturally shaped construct which allows only a fraction of human potentialities to be expressed. He discusses the processes underlying the destabilization of this ordinary state as well as the induction of altered states. Tart suggests that the degree of totality with which one can theoretically observe one's mind might be dependent on the ultimate resolution of the mind-body problem. He also argues against a "physical operationalism" in drug research, observing that psychological factors may play a more decisive role than chemical dosage in marijuana intoxication. To a large degree Tart fails to make his model precise enough to be empirically testable, although he at one point states that he is more interested in providing a conceptual framework for state research than in constructing a testable theory.

Space considerations prohibit more than a mention of the remainder of the contributions. Caryl Marsh attempts to provide a conceptual scheme for classifying altered states. David Shapiro discusses the possible role of biofeedback techniques in the production and measurement of altered states. Karl Pribram discusses the role of altered control processes in the brain in altered states. Arthur Deikman gives a highly impressionistic account of the formation of the self-concept in human beings, and Joel Elkes discusses subjective and objective descriptions in psychiatry. The essays in this volume vary in degree of formality, lucidity, levels of abstraction and reliance on objective vs. experiential investigative styles. The diversity of the approaches in the papers as well as the prominence of the authors guarantees *Alternate States of Consciousness* an important place in the field of consciousness research.

LIFE AT DEATH: A SCIENTIFIC EXAMINATION OF THE NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

by **Kenneth Ring**

(New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980. 310 pp. \$11.95)

Reviewed by **John McAllister**

Mr. McAllister is Associate Editor of THETA.

In *Life at Death: A Scientific Examination of the Near-Death Experience*, Kenneth Ring has written a book which provides what its title promises. Dr. Ring is a Professor of Psychology at the University of Connecticut and also First Vice President of the Association for the Scientific Study of Near-Death Phenomena. Since the 1970's particularly, we have been awaiting more definitive studies of near-death experiences (NDE's). Motivated in part by the earlier anecdotal work of Ray-

mond Moody and Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, Ring recently carried out a study in Connecticut in which 102 persons reporting near-death experiences were interviewed and their responses collated. *Life at Death* presents the results of this study. Moreover, this book provides perspective on other research into near-death experiences and clearly places Ring's own work on the leading edge of current NDE research.

Provisionally employing Moody's concept of a core NDE, Ring considers its possible components to be: 1. Ineffability; 2. Hearing the news (of one's own death); 3. Feelings of peace and quiet; 4. The noise; 5. The dark tunnel; 6. Out of the body; 7. Meeting others; 8. The being of light; 9. The review; 10. The border; and 11. Coming back. He addresses himself to four unresolved issues: the frequency of the core NDE's in those who seem to be in a position to experience them; the importance of the cause of near-death; the effect of a person's religiousness on NDE's; and the subsequent impact of the NDE on the survivors' lives. In what follows here, this reviewer will give a brief indication of the book's content, but I do recommend that interested THETA readers give *Life at Death* their personal scrutiny. This book deserves attention.

The first chapter includes a brief historical overview of some NDE studies, enough to remind us that these phenomena are not exclusively a modern concern. Early psychical researchers such as Sir William Barrett made pioneering studies of near-death phenomena.

In the second chapter, Ring explains how his recent Connecticut study was arranged and carried out. Also, he explains how each responding person's NDE was evaluated using a weighted index, designed to allow a measurement of the depth of the experience in each individual. The depth of the NDE's ranged on a scale from 0 (suggesting that none of the core components were present) to 29 (representing the deepest NDE).

Chapter Three indicates that the core near-death experience can be considered in five distinct stages, with the earlier stages of the NDE being reported more often than the later stages. The five stages identified, along with the percentage of ND experiencers in this study reporting each stage are: Peace and a Sense of Well-Being (60%); Leaving the Physical Body Behind (37%); Entering the Darkness (23%); Seeing the Light (16%); and Entering the Light (10%).

For the majority of core near-death experiencers, at some point the decision must be made, apparently, whether or not to return to physical life. In the fourth chapter, Ring discusses this aspect of the NDE. He writes (p. 67) that: "Awareness of reaching this point of choice is usually signaled by one of several remarkable phenomenological features." These features seem to be the life review, the encounter with a "presence," the encounter with deceased loved ones, and making the decision to return itself—some experiencers claim they are sent back to physical life, others come back of their

own volition, while still others bargain for another chance.

Chapter Five is concerned with some qualitative aspects of the NDE. More often than not, experiencers found it difficult to put their NDE into words, although this was not an overwhelming find, statistically speaking (60% had difficulty expressing themselves but 40% did not). But the overwhelming majority *did* claim that they knew they were dying or had died when they were undergoing their NDE. We also learn that respondents in Ring's study felt strongly that their experience was neither a dream nor an hallucination. In fact, Ring comments (p. 94) that: "Sensory and thinking processes seem to work together to make the near-death experience vivid, distinct and subjectively real." Other qualitative aspects considered here include: the presence or absence of noise; the sense of body, time and space; the sense of approaching a Threshold; and the return to one's body.

The sixth chapter is more technical than most of the book. In it, Ring presents data from his study that addresses the question of whether the near-death experience depends in some way on the way in which a person nearly dies. Three distinct causes of near-death are evaluated here: illness, accident and suicide. Ring summarizes this section by saying (p. 130) that: "In short, the experience of dying itself appears to be much the same, no matter how one comes close to death."

In Chapter Seven, the author considers the possible effect on NDE's of factors such as demographic characteristics, religious affiliation, religiousness and prior knowledge of research into near-death experiences. Ring finds that the core experience is not related to these factors except that, perhaps surprisingly, a person's prior knowledge of NDE research may actually reduce the likelihood or depth of a core experience for that individual.

Chapters Eight and Nine evaluate the effects of the NDE on the lives of the experiencers. Ring points out that the typical near-death survivor undergoes some very positive life changes. He or she often develops, for instance, a renewed sense of life and purpose, a high valuation on love and service to others, and increased compassion toward and acceptance of others. Further, core experiencers commonly become more "religious" after their NDE, in that they feel closer to God and are more tolerant of different forms of religiousness, although they themselves are less interested than before in formal religious services.

One notable aftereffect is that, while before their near-death experience these core experiencers were not sure about the possibility of life after death, after their NDE they were usually strongly convinced of the reality of an afterlife. Comments Dr. Ring (p. 169), "although experiencers were somewhat less inclined to believe in life after death to start with, compared to nonexperiencers... they are significantly more inclined to believe

in it afterward..." In addition, ND experiencers afterward tend to fear death less than before and seem to have, in general, a more positive concept of death.

In the tenth chapter, Ring compares his findings to those of Moody, Sabom and Kreuziger, Rawlings, Noyes and Kletti, and Osis and Haraldsson in the recent professional literature. Of course, not *all* the issues involved with NDE's have yet been raised here or elsewhere. Despite some impressive convergence of independent NDE research, the differences of understanding concerning the near-death phenomena are, at this stage of inquiry, perhaps as illuminating as the agreements.

The eleventh chapter is a discussion of possible interpretations of near-death experiences, including the "depersonalization" interpretation favored by Noyes and Kletti, as well as pharmacological, physiological and neurological explanations of various kinds. Ring concludes (pp. 216-217) that none of these other explanations from the "conventional sciences" are adequate to account for near-death experiences.

Chapter Twelve is entitled: "Beyond the Body: A Parapsychological-Holographic Explanation of the Near-Death Experience." This is the longest chapter in *Life at Death* and, from the standpoint of conventional science, it may be even more controversial than the preceding eleven chapters. Herein, Dr. Ring ventures the opinion that without parapsychological concepts, "the near-death experience simply cannot be understood" (p. 219). Having broken the NDE into conceptual stages, Ring suggests here that the initial stages of the core near-death experience are best interpreted as an out-of-body experience.

Further, Ring writes (p. 234), "The intermediate stages of the core experience can be understood as initiating a transition from a state of consciousness rooted in 'this world' sensory impressions to one that is sensitive to the realities of another dimension of existence." He suggests, too, that these latter stages of the NDE, which seem to involve altered states of consciousness, may be understood in terms of holographic theory, for which Ring particularly refers to the work of holographic theorists Karl Pribram and Itzhak Bentov.

The final stage of the near-death experience is, according to this conceptual breakdown, the World of Light. Ring proposes that this World of Light is in fact a realm of higher frequencies or "vibrations" than our physical realm, an idea which brings to mind the "astral plane" of occult thought. This other realm is created, Ring theorizes (pp. 247-248), by our disembodied mind functioning holographically (interpreting frequencies) in much the same way as our embodied mind or brain may function to give us our picture of physical reality.

In the final chapter of the book, Dr. Ring describes his personal beliefs concerning near-death experiences. Here, also, the author reflects on life at death. We learn, for instance, that he considers NDE's to be "teachings" and also revelatory experiences, and Ring suggests

some possibilities for their understanding and application.

For more specific information, readers of *Life at Death* may consult the volume's four Appendices as well as the useful Index. The wide-ranging Bibliography, while not a huge one, nevertheless reinforces the impression of this reviewer that Dr. Ring has familiarized himself not only with the medical, psychological and even parapsychological literature of potential relevance to the study of near-death experiences, but also with some "occult" material of possible value to NDE research.

Life at Death begins to subject near-death experiences to the kind of critical examination they must continue to undergo if they are to become scientifically well established as genuine, if puzzling and controversial,

phenomena. The theoretical issues involved with the study of NDE's discussed in this book nicely complement the necessary statistics and important qualifications carefully made by Dr. Ring. In addition, the volume's effective use of the respondent's own words to describe aspects of their near-death experiences also helps to provide this study with a personal, human dimension. Ring is quite aware of the fact that here he has had to leave many questions unanswered even with speculation. He hopes that his work will motivate other researchers to probe near-death experiences more deeply. In *Life at Death*, Kenneth Ring presents factual and provocative near-death material that should interest researchers and lay readers, alike.

Reviews in Brief

THE JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Vol. 3, No. 4, October 1980, 312-317. The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 326 Tunxis Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

"Notes on Mental Mediumship and Memory" by Carlos S. Alvarado.

This article briefly reviews some aspects of the relationship between mental mediumship and memory. Topics considered are the use of the medium's memory in mediumistic communications, memory interferences in communication, the relationship between the memory of mediums and spirit communicators, and living memories as sources of veridical spirit messages. It is concluded that most of the material discussed is speculative and of little scientific value. A suggestion is made for further research on the topic using procedures and ideas similar to those of laboratory ESP and memory research.

—*Author's Abstract*

THE JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Vol. 3, No. 4, October 1980, 318-324. The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 326 Tunxis Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

"'Feda' and 'Phinuit': Secondary Personalities or Independent Surviving Spirits?" by Raymond Bayless.

Apropos the survival hypothesis, this paper examines incidents seen as providing evidence that Mrs. Leonard's control, "Feda", and Mrs. Piper's control, "Dr.

Phinuit", were independent beings—not merely the often theorized secondary personalities of their mediums. The author discusses evidence such as xenoglossia, apparitional appearances of the controls to witnesses, tape recordings of their independent voices, and cases of their manifesting through mediums other than their "host" medium. Research to develop additional evidence for the independence of mediumistic controls is encouraged.

—*Abstract by Boyce Batey*

THE JOURNAL OF THE ACADEMY OF RELIGION AND PSYCHICAL RESEARCH, Vol. 3, No. 4, October 1980, 325-336. The Academy of Religion and Psychical Research, 326 Tunxis Avenue, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

"An Ideal Case for Belief in Survival" by Robert T. Radford.

The author develops an ideal case supporting belief in survival of death. The case is presented in a fictional narrative that contains many of the classic kinds of evidence for survival surveyed in the parapsychological literature: out-of-the-body experience, temporary death experience, experience at the hour of death, experience of a crisis apparition, mediumistic communication, and experience of remembering a previous life. The paper is aimed at forcefully posing the survival question for serious critical examination.

—*Author's Abstract*