

ANOMALY: JOURNAL OF RESEARCH INTO THE PARANORMAL

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DISCHARGE CHARACTERISTICS OF BATTERIES USED IN PARANORMAL RESEARCH

By Dave Wood

The 'unusual discharge' of batteries that are used to power hand-held equipment during paranormal research is often cited as a 'symptom' of an active haunting case. This project tested the alternative hypothesis that relatively low ambient temperatures may be the cause of this unusual discharge.

A procedure was carried out in an allegedly haunted location where such 'battery drain' had been previously recorded. Sixteen alkaline batteries and four camcorder batteries were tested in room temperature and low temperature conditions.

The data relating to camcorder batteries supported the idea of drainage due to low temperature rather than 'hauntings', whilst the AA alkaline battery data did not register any discharge; recommendations were made for future study and good practice conclusions were drawn.

INTRODUCTION

Any review of paranormal investigation websites will demonstrate that the ability of 'spirits' to drain power is almost unquestioned. Many investigation reports allude to battery 'drain' that was deemed to be atypical. This has now, seemingly, passed into investigator 'general knowledge'.

The battery drain idea appears to be sustained by the 'fishing' approach to paranormal research where individuals look for 'odd' events during such investigations and attribute a paranormal conclusion. This is a common theme in lay research: where cameras take odd photos, EMF meters register unexpectedly, where individuals have unexpected physiological reactions, etc, and a paranormal conclusion is frequently jumped to.

The first question should be 'why is this association made'? Just because action A occurs in situation B, why would the two be linked? And even if the two were linked, why should the conclusion be otherworldly? For example, participants are known to become hungry and thirsty during an investigation. However the chances are that they would have become equally hungry or thirsty in a non-haunted location. Why is a link not drawn here? Perhaps a better example is fatigue. During the seemingly compulsory overnight investigation individual participants seem to become tired; the fatigue is linked to the 'investigation' but has a very normal cause. Only rarely do paranormal researchers explain that it

was the 'ghost' that drained their energy at 2am; although these claims have been made on occasion!

The key differences between 'fatigue during investigations' and 'battery drain' appear to be:

- a) knowledge and experience
- b) so-called 'paranormal theories' that seem to tie-in with the event

Because we are very familiar with our bodies we know that we get tired at night; conversely, many of us are not very familiar with the mechanics of battery operation (or camera functions, EMF meters, and the like). If the only scenario in which we take hundreds of low-light photographs in cold settings is during paranormal investigations, we are unlikely to be aware of the normal battery discharge involved.

Very few paranormal theories involve 'ghosts' making individuals become tired, whereas the association between hauntings and 'energy' are well-known. Many theories of the causes of hauntings involve some theory of energy; whether that be ghost manifestations emitting energy or ghosts 'using' energy sources to manifest. It would appear that the reason for the popularity of the 'battery drain is paranormal' theory is because of this tie-in with the energy theory. The theory goes that if a battery is unexpectedly drained that the cause must, surely, be that a nearby 'ghost' is using this energy to manifest itself.

The flaw with this line of thinking, firstly, is that there is no proven association between energy and hauntings. Needless to say there is no model that links the two concepts, and the only evidence to present the theory tends to be the unexpected behaviour of electrical appliances. This evidence is anecdotal at best and never takes place in the context of systematic enquiry or use of control conditions (e.g. using the same batteries/equipment in similar non-haunted settings to find out if it is the environment and usage that causes the drain, regardless of whether the location is 'haunted' or not). As such the energy theory becomes a sustained superstition: an unscientific view is held and is sustained by the biased interpretation of anecdotes.

This idea of the draining of batteries being attributed to 'spirit influence' being arguably a xenonormal event requires research in order to rule out (or rule in); and to add to the accumulation of our knowledge and allowing researchers to focus on other phenomena (and, indeed, take steps to avoid such problems in future).

Anecdotally, several causes of battery failure have been advanced, including the use of old batteries, use of faulty batteries and use of faulty equipment. These

may be contributing factors, although they are more difficult to study meaningfully. Another major cause identified is the propensity for batteries to under-perform at any temperature lower than room temperature (Clark & Clark, 2003).

Again, anecdotally, it would appear that battery drain is more likely to take place in cold locations. Cold locations account for a reasonable proportion of commonly investigated locations, being poorly heated, old buildings.

We know that batteries do drain at lower temperatures but there is no literature this author could find that answers the question of whether batteries are liable to drain in such ways – observed by paranormal investigators – simply by use in a fieldwork setting.

Anecdotal evidence does exist, from a PSI investigation, that when comparing a camcorder in a warm location operating for 20 minutes with a camcorder in a cold location for 20 minutes that more ‘charge’ is drained. Specifically, the ‘warm’ condition drained the expected 20 minutes whilst the ‘cold’ condition drained 40 minutes (Wood, 2009). This was anecdotal research only, and hence flawed, but does provide a steer to the present research.

The hypotheses this project tested were:

H1: AA alkaline batteries will loose more power in a ‘cold’ condition than a ‘warm’ condition.

H2: Camcorder batteries will loose more power in a ‘cold’ condition than a ‘warm’ condition.

H3: There will be no difference between the loss of power by either type of battery when comparing ‘haunted’ and ‘non-haunted’ locations.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

A double-blind procedure was adopted where neither the experimenter (who briefed the assistants and recording readings) or the assistants themselves had any knowledge of the aims of the procedure.

PROCEDURE

- The research took take place at a similar time of year and a similar time of day as the original discharge event.

- The chosen rooms included the original 'cold' room, a similar 'cold' non-haunted room, and two 'warm' rooms (one 'active', one 'non-active') on the same site.
- The power level of 16 AA Alkaline Batteries was tested before the procedure and the level of power noted on a crib sheet.
- The power level (in minutes) of 4 camcorder batteries was tested (using the camcorders 'minutes remaining' display) and the level of power noted on a crib sheet.
- Four AA batteries were placed in each room, next to a barewire probed temperature data logger. These were left for one hundred minutes.
- Camcorders were also set up next to the logger in each room.
- Camcorders were set to identical settings and left to record for one hundred minutes. Camcorders were set in such a position as they would not be walked in front of, so as to adjust the settings and hence the discharge.
 - Four research assistants checked and recorded the number of minutes of 'power' left at four minute intervals.

EQUIPMENT

- 4 x Sony HDD Camcorders on tripods
- 4 x Bare wire probe temperature data loggers on tripods
- 1 x Battery meter
- 4 x New camcorder batteries (fully charged) – these were kept in identical conditions prior to the procedure
- 16 x New AA Alkaline batteries (new and from the same packet) – these were kept in identical conditions prior to the procedure

RESULTS

Table 1 – Minutes remaining registered on camcorders

	Interval (mins)	'Haunted' 'Warm'	'Non-Haunted' 'Warm'	'Haunted' 'Cold'	'Non-Haunted' 'Cold'
Start	0	88	91	74	65
2	4	86	87	70	60
3	8	84	85	66	56
4	12	83	82	66	54
5	16	81	81	60	50
6	20	77	79	57	48
7	24	74	76	54	44
8	28	72	73	50	41
9	32	69	70	47	39
10	36	66	67	45	37
11	40	62	64	42	33
12	44	59	61	39	31
13	48	55	57	36	29
14	52	57	54	33	26
15	56	48	50	30	23
16	60	44	47	28	19
17	64	41	43	25	16
18	68	37	39	21	13
19	72	33	36	17	10
20	76	30	32	14	8
21	80	26	29	11	4
22	84	22	25	7	1
23	88	19	21	3	0*
24	92	15	18	0*	
End	96	12	15		

* Drained between records

Graph 1 – Records at intervals against expected

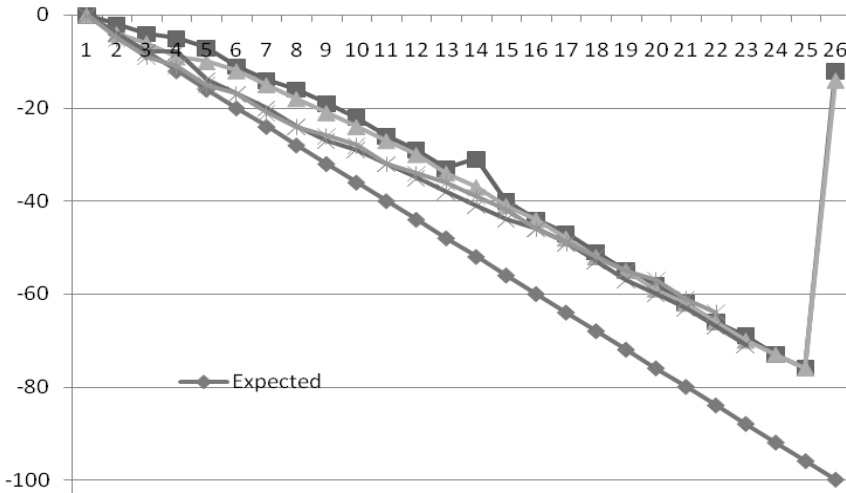


Table 2 – Charge levels of AA batteries

	Location	Before Charge	End Charge
1	'Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
2	'Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
3	'Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
4	'Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
5	'Non-Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
6	'Non-Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
7	'Non-Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
8	'Non-Haunted' 'Warm'	9v	9v
9	'Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
10	'Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
11	'Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
12	'Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
13	'Non-Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
14	'Non-Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
15	'Non-Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v
16	'Non-Haunted' 'Cold'	9v	9v

DISCUSSION

Table 1 demonstrates that there was no clear difference in discharge rate regardless of whether the camcorder was operating in normal or low temperature, or in the 'haunted' or 'non-haunted' areas. This supports H3 that there is no difference between haunted and non-haunted areas, which would suggest that discharge is not dependent on whether a location has past reports of hauntings (or, indeed prior battery discharge in this case).

Graph 1 also demonstrates that:

1. All batteries performed 'better' than expected in not discharging at the expected rate, which might suggest some compensation by the manufacturers for batteries performing better when new.
2. Whilst each battery performed predictably overall, individual data points varied greatly. This suggests that the 'minutes remaining' display on camcorders is unreliable on a minute-by-minute basis.

Upon initial inspection the H2 that camcorder batteries would discharge to a greater degree in cold conditions was not supported, as the camcorders in the 'cold' conditions seemed to discharge at a similar rate when compared to the camcorders operated at room temperature. However when manufacturers Sony were consulted in writing they informed us that that the 'minutes remaining' indication was based not upon the standard battery power output but was moderated by specific circumstances of use (including differing settings) and Sony confirmed that, in this case, the battery reading in the cold rooms automatically took account of the then low temperature because the 'minutes remaining' was directly based on the current (cold) level of discharge.

To create a level playing field we shall consider the final reading as at interval 22 – the last interval at which all camcorders were functioning – the warm (active) and the warm (non-active) had both discharged 66 minutes compared to the cold (active) and the cold (non-active) at minutes 67 and 64 respectively.

However whilst both warm conditions initially read approximately 90 minutes (88 and 91) the cold conditions read 16 and 25 minutes less than 90, respectively, at the start of the procedure. All four camcorder batteries were subsequently checked at normal temperatures to ensure that they held an approximate 90 minute charge. This demonstrates that the cold conditions saw a battery discharge to the extent of being 18% (non-haunted room) and 28% (haunted room), which supports H2.

Table 2 demonstrates that every AA alkaline battery maintained its 9v charge throughout the period of the procedure, regardless of whether placed in a haunted, non-haunted, low or normal temperature location. This suggests that

top brand AA alkaline batteries – whilst theoretically possible to discharge in low temperature without use – retain their charge effectively. This supports H3 but not H1.

LIMITATIONS

This study was limited in its balance between sound methodology and ecological validity. Theory suggests that unexpected battery drain is more likely to take place where batteries are older and have been used repeatedly. Results may have had more validity if old batteries had been tested. However this was unacceptable from a methodological perspective as the individual differences between the batteries – which would have been the key variable – could not have been reliably measured.

This study was also limited by using a relatively low number of batteries over a relatively short time frame, and with relatively insensitive measuring equipment (especially relying on the camcorders internal measurement of battery time remaining, although this blunt measure did have more ecological validity as this is the measure researchers typically use). Industrial studies of battery discharge would tend to be more robust where expensive measuring equipment is held and the process could be automated in large numbers, rather than being limited by having human assistants and experimenters.

It is now clear that the AA alkaline battery condition may have been limited by the cameras not being in use throughout the procedure.

As usual, all such research is limited by our ability to classify rooms as ‘haunted’ and ‘non-haunted’ by the subjective measure of a history of previous anomalous reports or otherwise.

FUTURE RESEARCH

A longer term project could produce a more robust study. If rechargeable batteries were to be tracked in their use over time – assuming that storage and usage remained identical over the period – the experimental setting and hence results could be more true to life: i.e. battery drain using old batteries.

There may also be mileage in repeating the procedure with lower quality AA alkaline batteries so quality of battery could be compared with different characteristics battery drainage.

A repetition of the AA alkaline procedure may be useful where the batteries could be in continuous use throughout the procedure, so that the normal rate of discharge could be monitored. However for sixteen batteries to be in continuous

and identical usage over that time period would represent an operational challenge, particularly where there are limited resources.

IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates that a camcorder's own 'minutes remaining' function, whilst reliable over time, is not accurate on a minute-by-minute basis. Where researchers consider individual data points of battery charge to be important it is vital to collect surrounding data points to ensure accuracy.

This study has also demonstrated that discharge can be impacted by up to 28% in lower temperatures in the same building. This should guide the conclusions of any researcher who, for example, finds a 90-minute battery has fully drained after 65 minutes in that the most likely conclusion is normal rather than paranormal.

Few firm implications could be drawn on the current data regarding AA Alkaline batteries, however the current evidence suggests that to avoid discharge issues (and to avoid risk of subsequent type II of claiming a false paranormal conclusion) batteries should be stored in a warm place, higher quality batteries should be used and new batteries should be used on each occasion.

Finally, there is absolutely no evidence for the idea that battery drain is caused by paranormal events. This is consistent with the lack of current scientific evidence for this theory, and researchers should reconsider the idea 'battery drain' as a symptom of a haunting.

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A NEW APPROACH TO PARANORMAL RESEARCH

By Maurice Townsend

Recent revolutionary advances in science, particularly neuroscience, have profound implications for paranormal research. It is now obvious that many apparently paranormal experiences can be explained by the way our brains work. Clearly, the current model of paranormal research, almost unchanged for over a century, having delivered very little, is overdue for its own revolution. Current methods

It is ironic that, over the last decade or so, much paranormal research has reverted to old-fashioned, assumption-led methods, no doubt inspired by the media. These could be described as Victorian techniques with better cameras! They have failed to deliver a testable theory of the paranormal or reproducible paranormal effects.

Here are some examples of the current research methodology problems:

ASSUMPTION-LED INVESTIGATIONS

A lot of current ghost research is 'assumption-led'. In other words, investigators start with certain assumptions, like 'ghosts are spirits', and then seek evidence to confirm that assumption. This is circular logic and not the way science works. In science, you start by collecting evidence in a neutral way, ensuring it is accurate, and then using it to form theories that explain the evidence. These theories are then tested to see if they are correct.

The use of assumption-led techniques increases the likelihood of suggestion as a factor generating spurious evidence. If people are expecting to contact a ghost then they are more likely to accept random events as a positive response. The fact that the investigators usually know the results of previous investigations at the site further increases the importance of suggestion.

FORMAL PARANORMAL TESTS THAT DO NOT REVEAL CLEAR, OBVIOUS, REPEATABLE, UNAMBIGUOUS EFFECTS

These include tests to assess psi (extra-sensory abilities), guessing cards etc.

USE OF PSYCHICS WHO MAY NOT BE PSYCHIC AT ALL

It is difficult to pin down exactly what a psychic is. However, a very generalised definition might be: someone who supplies information, on a particular subject, that they were not previously consciously aware they possessed.

There could be many reasons to explain this, many of which are not paranormal:

CRYPTAMNESIA (OR LATENT MEMORY)

This is becoming more of a problem in the twenty-first century. Through the internet, for instance, information on people, places, history and even hauntings, is becoming simply and freely available. A supposed psychic invited to describe their feelings at a haunted location may be remembering (albeit unconsciously) something they had earlier read, and then forgotten, about the history of a building, rather than picking anything up 'new' from ghosts. Remembering something from latent memory can feel as though it is information coming from nowhere, like correctly answering a question in a quiz when you had no idea you knew it.

UNCONSCIOUS INSIGHT

In the stories of Sherlock Holmes, the eponymous hero is able to deduce things about his clients simply by observing their clothes, their manner, the way they talk and walk and so on. In the case of the fictional detective, he has a conscious gift of insight. Someone may think they are psychic if they have an unconscious gift of insight that might appear paranormal. They may be particularly sensitive to body language or notice small details about places or objects, all of which may tell them things about a person or situation that others miss. It is, indeed, an impressive gift, it just isn't paranormal!

COLD READING

This is a technique used to obtain information from people in such a way that they are not aware it is being extracted. It is used primarily by stage magicians, as a trick. It is also possible that some people may develop such techniques, without being consciously aware of it, if they are already convinced they are psychic.

ATTITUDE

To believe you are a psychic, you will, of course, believe in the paranormal. This makes it much easier to accept that what may in fact, be the result of unconscious insight, latent memory and so on, is paranormal. Once having declared to the world that you are psychic, psychologically it may be difficult to back down even if you start to doubt your own abilities.

A psychic might feel they are getting information about someone from a 'spirit'. In reality, they would be picking up information about the person through many unconscious cues. We all pick up such cues through body language, but psychics may take this unconscious ability to another level.

TECHNICAL ARTEFACTS DISTRACTING RESEARCHERS FROM SERIOUS WORK

These include orbs and flying rods. Orbs are circles of light, generally varying between white and dull grey, which appear in some photographs. They became common with early digital cameras but are gradually becoming rarer as camera technology improves. Some people took orbs to be a paranormal phenomenon, particularly when they showed up in photos of haunted locations. They are known to be out of focus bits of dust or insects caught in the camera flash.

Although most serious paranormal researchers regard orbs as just photographic artefacts, interest remains high, particularly among the public and media. The situation isn't helped by the fact that several competing 'natural' theories for orbs (most with serious problems) have been proposed. Recently, the Orb Zone Theory, based on the explanation offered by camera manufacturers and serious photographers, has been tested and applied successfully to the problem of orbs.

MISINTERPRETATION OF INSTRUMENT READINGS

Readings from EMF meters and other instruments may be misinterpreted. There is a widespread idea among some new paranormal researchers that ghosts emit an electromagnetic field and that their presence can, thus, be detected by EMF meters. However, there seem to be no formal studies to support this idea. Instead, there are a few anecdotal reports that EMF meters 'spike' during paranormal activity at haunted locations OR that haunted locations produce more variable EMF fields than non-haunted places. In both cases, it is difficult to trace any original first-hand reports of these claimed connections and available reports are vague and lacking in crucial technical detail. So, why do some people claim that ghosts emit EM (electromagnetic) fields?

The idea of ghosts emitting electromagnetic fields seems to have emerged relatively recently. It is tempting to speculate that the idea arose simply because investigators started using the meters, in the same way that the idea of paranormal orbs (which proved to be photographic artefacts) coincided with the early use of digital cameras. Whenever instruments are used at haunted locations, there is inevitably a tendency to attribute unusual readings to the haunting, even without any other corroborating evidence.

A more speculative notion is that the idea may have been prompted, in some way, by Persinger's laboratory work that suggested that some ghostly experiences might be magnetically-induced hallucinations (EIFs - experience inducing fields). He used weak, low frequency magnetic fields to stimulate susceptible people's brains and they had experiences, like a sense of presence, that were similar to those reported with ghost sightings. This suggested that EIFs present in a building might induce experiences of ghosts in some witnesses. Unfortunately, EMF meters do not have the sensitivity and frequency response to detect such EIFs.

COLLECTING INFORMATION PRIMARILY FROM VIGILS INSTEAD OF FROM PRIMARY WITNESSES TO EVENTS

Many groups hold vigils in the dark, i.e. with the lights turned off. But is there any justification for this?

Ghosts have been reported at all times of day in a variety of levels of illumination. Crucially, however - unlike in Hollywood films - apparitions do not glow (with the possible exception of 'radiant boys'). Most witnesses report ghosts as looking and behaving like normal people. It is possible that a ghost could walk right through the middle of a 'lights out' vigil without anyone even noticing it!

There are other problems with putting the lights out for vigils. For instance, people's eyes take time (around 20 minutes) to get used to the dark before they can see much. This means that for 20 minutes out of each watch, vision is useless. Even once eyes are dark-adapted, they can only see poorly (in particular, missing detail) because human eyes don't work well in low light. In addition, sitting around in the dark raises levels of suggestibility. This makes it more likely to mistake misperceptions for paranormal phenomena. People can end up 'experiencing' non-existent phenomena that were not even reported by the original witnesses. Thus, such vigils may generate new reports of phenomena which are entirely spurious. Other night vision problems include autokinesis and the night blind spot.

Since most haunting phenomena are generally experienced by original witnesses in perfectly normal lighting, holding vigils in the dark is an artificial experience. It does not duplicate the original conditions of the reported experiences. It may therefore stand less chance of reproducing the originally reported phenomena, rather than more.

There are, of course, also health and safety concerns with dark vigils. Quite simply, it is easier to have an accident if you're walking around in the dark!

People will report different things on vigils when they are in the same room at the same time! This effect is not confined to dark vigils but the additional ambiguity introduced by losing visual cues hardly helps. Sight is the most powerful sense in forming impressions and without it, other factors, like the group dynamic, can predominate.

WYSIWYG THINKING - THE TENDENCY TO TRUST WHAT WE EXPERIENCE TOO MUCH

WYSIWYG - pronounced 'wizzy-wig' - is a term most commonly used in computing. It stands for What You See Is What You Get. It refers to the idea that what you see on the computer screen is the same (or very close to) what appears when you print it out.

WYSIWYG thinking is a similar idea but applied to life in general and the paranormal in particular. Specifically, it means trying to understand things by taking them at 'face value'. So, with WSYIWYG thinking one might conclude that the Earth is flat because that's the way it looks. Of course, we all know that the Earth is really spherical and it is never more convincingly demonstrated than by seeing a photo of it from space. Although the Earth was shown to be spherical centuries ago by various means, the image of the planet from space is still a much more powerful argument. We humans have an in-built tendency to trust what we see as being reality.

Science has shown us that almost nothing is really the way it looks. Every object you see, and the air you can't, is made up of tiny invisible atoms. The sun doesn't rise out of the ground every day and cross the sky - the Earth rotates on its axis. Obviously, most people know these things because they are 'common knowledge'. However, when it comes to the paranormal, 'common knowledge' lets us down.

It is 'common knowledge' that 'ghosts are spirits'. However, this 'common knowledge' is not supported by real evidence and is, in fact, largely derived from legend and fiction! Unfortunately, science has not, so far, provided definitive explanations for paranormal phenomena. This is probably why legend and fiction fill the gap in 'common knowledge' instead.

Personal experience forms an important part of the WSYIWYG approach. We humans learn by personal experience, which works fine for most things in everyday situations. However, such an approach is limited to simple cases of 'cause and effect' - like hitting a ball into the air. With most things the effect is visible but the cause is not. Science demonstrates that hardly anything is WSYIWYG and that personal experience is often a poor guide to reality.

Personal experience can be very powerful. If you see a ghost for yourself, it can be hard to accept that it could be a misperception. Our brains can fool us so well that we truly 'see' a 'ghostly figure' that is, in fact, a tree viewed in poor light. We really 'hear' an EVP voice in a snatch of sound, when it is really a recording of a distant table being moved or paper crumpled.

THE CHALLENGE OF NEW SCIENCE

Neuroscience, the study of how the brain and nervous system works, is a fast moving field driven forward by technical advances like fMRI scanning and TMS. These allow researchers to watch the brain performing tasks in real time and even temporarily manipulate the way it works. These, coupled with other more traditional psychological methods, have revealed astonishing things about perception that profoundly affect how paranormal experiences are interpreted.

For instance, we know that the 'picture in our heads' is not simply the raw output from our eyes. It can also include objects from our visual memory. Paranormal researchers have always accepted that a tree might be misinterpreted as a human figure (ghost) in poor viewing conditions. Now we know that our brains can actually substitute such a tree with a 'human figure' from our memory, with details including limbs, face, clothes, etc. Because this is done before it enters our consciousness, we literally 'see' the human figure instead of the tree! It explains why witnesses insist they really saw a ghost and not a tree!

Here are some examples of scientific advances that affect paranormal research:

VISUAL SUBSTITUTIONS - SEEING ONE THING WHICH IS REALLY SOMETHING ELSE

Though our eyes contribute to the 'picture in our heads', there is also input from our memory. In particular, objects in our vision can sometimes be 'substituted' with similar things from visual memory. So, Venus may be 'substituted' with a flying saucer, complete with portholes, straight out of a movie. These 'visual substitutions' may be responsible for many ghost, UFO and other anomalous sightings.

FORMANT NOISE - HOW WE HEAR 'HUMAN SPEECH' IN CERTAIN AMBIENT SOUNDS

If we are listening to someone speaking in a noisy situation we may not hear all the words. Our brains will, however, 'fill in' the gaps with likely words, sometimes wrong, based on expectation. We will actually 'hear' and remember 'filled in' words even if they are wrong. The words we hear are produced in our brains, not our ears.

In the phoneme restoration effect, someone is played a recording of a spoken sentence where one word is replaced by white noise of the same duration. And yet people still 'hear' the missing word. Their brain has inserted it using context and expectation.

In the verbal transformation effect, someone is played a word repeatedly. After many repeats, the word turns into another with a similar sound structure ('truce' may transform to 'truth', for instance).

These effects, together with other scientific evidence, demonstrate that the brain decides what it hears based on experience, context and expectation. This explains why EVP recordings, which are often very noisy, can be interpreted differently by different individuals. Your ear hears sounds but only your brain hears words.

Formant noise is random noise that happens to contain two or more frequency peaks in a harmonic ratio. Such noise can switch our brains into 'speech' mode so that we interpret such noise as words. Some of the techniques used by EVP researchers, such as using noise reduction software or limiting frequency range, actually serve to amplify this effect. Formant noise may explain many EVP recordings which are really random noise.

MISPERCEPTION - HOW ALL OUR SENSES REGULARLY DECEIVE US

Though misperception has been studied quite extensively in the laboratory, it is not so well documented in the field. Perhaps this is a gap that paranormal researchers could fill! The following examples of visual misperception 'triggers' are anecdotal, so it should not be taken as a definitive or exhaustive list:

- quick glances - objects are often misinterpreted when only seen briefly
- poor viewing conditions - low light, bright light, highly coloured light, fog, etc. can all produce misperception
- corner of the eye phenomena - poor resolution on the edge of the visual field produces misperception
- distant objects - these can be the subject of visual substitution
- ambiguous shapes - simulacra, optical illusions, etc.
- partial views of an object - if the shape of an object is partly obscured it may be misinterpreted

- rapid head turning - may cause apparent movement in the new scene even when everything is stationary
- fast moving objects - may appear to 'vanish' if they do not move as our brains predict they will.

Using such techniques, you can see a ghost for yourself! Once you become aware of misperception, it is likely you will start to notice mysterious objects, glanced briefly or seen in the 'corner of your eye', that vanish when you look at them properly. You might one day be aware of a 'human figure' in the distance or just glanced briefly. On closer examination it may turn into a tree, a plant or some other object that vaguely resembles a human. The 'figure' will appear to vanish, just as ghosts frequently do. That's because your brain inserted the 'figure' into the 'picture in your head' instead of the tree which it couldn't see properly. When it gets a more detailed look, your brain shows what is really there, causing the 'ghost' to 'vanish'. This may well be precisely how many ghost sightings happen. Just keep a lookout in your peripheral vision and, from time to time, you will see ghosts!

MAGNETIC GHOSTS

There is now much laboratory evidence in favour of magnetically induced hallucinations so that some paranormal researchers are taking it as read that they are the source of certain anomalous experiences, notably some kinds of ghost. However, the field evidence for such magnetic fields is slight at present. But that could soon change as equipment capable of detecting them (not EMF meters!) is now being deployed at locations of reported hauntings. If these magnetic fields exist outside the laboratory, what exactly is causing them? Some possibilities include any appliance that includes moving metal.

A study at Muncaster Castle showed that a bed associated with several haunting reports had, very unusually, an iron support that distorted the local geomagnetic field. Anyone moving about in the bed, for example tossing and turning during disturbed sleep, would change the magnetic distortion so much that it would form an EIF in their own head!

Mind tricks

As well as misperception, there are other times when the way our brains work serves to deceive us. Here are just a few examples:

SLEEP PARALYSIS

If you wake up and find yourself paralysed with strange things happening around you, including ghost sightings, this is an example of sleep paralysis. Most people will experience it at least once in their lifetime.

HYPNAGOGIC/HYPNOPOMPIC HALLUCINATIONS

These are strange hallucinations that occur just as you are waking or falling asleep. They may be associated with the 'default network' brain state that people go into when they are day dreaming.

SENSORY DEPRIVATION

When you perform a repetitive task with few sensory stimuli (eg driving at night) you can hallucinate. The same state may occur on a dark vigil!

CONFABULATION - HOW MEMORIES ARE ALTERED AND EXAGGERATED WITH RE-TELLING

Witness testimony is central to establishing the facts of paranormal cases. It is often the only evidence we have about unexplained events. We know that witnesses can be fooled by misperception and hallucination but, once they've experienced something, how reliable is their memory?

Computer memory is extremely reliable. As well as using tried, stable technologies, it usually includes mechanisms to verify that what is stored is correct. Human memory, by comparison, is fallible, fades with time and there is often no way to verify it. Confabulation is where extra details are unconsciously 'invented' when a story is retold so that it makes 'sense'. Thus, if someone thinks they've seen a ghost, they may add 'details' when questioned about things they do not actually remember. Once these details are added, they become part of the witness's long term memory and will be 'recalled' freely. It means that investigators should take extreme care when interviewing witnesses.

A NEW WAY

It is clear that science has 'raised the bar' for the standard of evidence required to demonstrate the paranormal. Paranormal research needs to rise to that challenge and abandon the old fashioned methods that have failed us for decades.

The way to demonstrate the paranormal remains the same as it has always been - you first need to eliminate all natural causes. It is clear that assumption-led techniques fail to do that. Many paranormal investigations fall short because the researchers present are not aware of all the possible mundane causes for any

particular incident. Thus, many incidents labelled as 'paranormal' are later challenged because possible prosaic explanations were not explored at the time of the investigation. By that time it is usually too late to go back and do more tests.

Even with existing methods, we have found that most paranormal reports are either definitely, or probably, explainable by natural causes. If you add in those that cannot be demonstrated to be paranormal, because not all natural causes were explored, few if any old cases remain unambiguously paranormal.

The way forward is obvious - we need to know much more about possible 'mundane explanations' that cause so many apparently paranormal reports. The advantages of this approach are huge. For a start, unlike conventional paranormal research, progress is guaranteed because we know the things we are studying are definitely real!

An important concept in this approach is the xenonormal - the unfamiliar masquerading as the paranormal. When paranormal reports are found to have mundane explanations, it is almost always a case of the witness experiencing something they did not recognise - either entirely new to them or something known in an unfamiliar guise. An example might be people who've never noticed a planet before mistaking Venus for a UFO.

Here are some examples of how this new approach to paranormal research works:

XENONORMAL - HOW EXPERIENCING THE UNFAMILIAR GENERATES APPARENT PARANORMAL EXPERIENCES

Why do people report certain events as paranormal? Most such reports, when properly investigated, turn out to be normal phenomena. At this point in a case, many paranormal researchers tend to lose interest as they are, understandably, looking for the genuinely paranormal. The problem with this approach is that many of these, often rare, natural phenomena that resemble the paranormal are never properly researched and documented. This means that when such events occur again, researchers may have to relearn everything that others have already found out.

In witness reports of anomalous phenomena you will frequently hear phrases like 'I've never seen anything like it before' or similar. Even when witnesses don't say this, it often becomes obvious through interviewing that they were not familiar with what they saw. Such phrases are usually taken by investigators to mean that what was seen was extraordinary, possibly paranormal. Taken literally, however, they simply confirm that many witnesses see things they don't

recognise, regardless of whether they are paranormal or not. Xenonormal means unfamiliar but normal.

NEW HOUSE EFFECT - HOW AN UNFAMILIAR ENVIRONMENT IS A PREDICTABLE SOURCE OF XENONORMAL EXPERIENCES

Do you remember the last time you moved house (or flat)? Do you recall a moment when you woke up in the middle of the night in your new house, perhaps not quite sure where you were? Did you hear a distant knock or a loud creak nearby that caught you by surprise? Was there a shadow on the wall of your room that looked unfamiliar and even faintly sinister? This is the New House Effect.

Many people report cases of haunting when they first move into a house, despite the previous occupants having had no problems. Similarly, it is often visitors to a building who report strange things going on that the residents have never noticed. That's because the residents are used to all the creaks and groans that any building inevitably produces. Building work can also produce the New House Effect because it can change the noises and sights in an existing building. Such structural changes are, of course, often associated with haunting outbreaks.

EVP ANALYSIS

Suggestion can have a powerful effect in determining EVP message content, which is why you should never tell people what to expect when playing them EVP samples. It may be possible to test a sound sample to see if it is 'formant noise', which produces illusory voices, by selectively filtering out certain frequency bands to break the spurious ratios that resemble formants.

CULTURE - HOW IT AFFECTS THE WAY WE INTERPRET UNFAMILIAR EXPERIENCES

Ghosts and other paranormal phenomena have been reported for millennia. When systematically investigated, haunting cases often produce evidence of odd events but usually nothing like the kind of sensational events portrayed in popular ghost stories or films. The reality of authentic paranormal investigations hardly ever reaches public attention. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the public attitude to paranormal phenomena appears to be heavily influenced by media portrayals. These media portrayals may, in turn, be influenced by longstanding cultural influences. So when people hear weird noises in their house, instead of calling a builder, they call a ghost research group! Memories from their latent memory, supplied by movies, may actually decide the form of their misperception.

The aim of the new approach overall is to use research into the xenonormal to produce, and then use standard tests, to detect its presence in paranormal cases. At the moment, attempts to reproduce apparent paranormal phenomena on site are limited by the knowledge of the investigators present. In future, standard techniques could be produced for almost any likely xenonormal phenomenon. For instance, misperception has distinctive characteristics that can be looked for in witness accounts. Only by eliminating the xenonormal decisively can we detect the truly paranormal.

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ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE PARANORMAL: APPROACHES TO THE INVESTIGATION OF PARANORMAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

By Jack Hunter

This article will attempt to explore the potential contribution of anthropology to the study of the paranormal. I will be paying particular attention to the experiences of two anthropologists, E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1902-1973) and Edith Turner, who both recorded “paranormal” experiences while conducting fieldwork. I will consider the differences in approach these two anthropologists utilised when documenting their “anomalous experience”. I will explore the anthropological approach to data retrieval and interpretation, as well as more general philosophical standpoints, in order to assess the potential benefits such methodologies might have on the investigation of the paranormal. This article will conclude by demonstrating the importance of complete immersion and engagement with the paranormal if it is to be understood.

APPROACHING THE PARANORMAL...

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the term “paranormal” as:

“Designating supposed psychical events and phenomena such as clairvoyance or telekinesis whose operation is outside the scope of the known laws of nature or of normal scientific understanding; of or relating to such phenomena”

The realm of the paranormal is, perhaps, one of the most controversial areas of scientific exploration. There has long been a rivalry between those who would claim that the paranormal is a tangible reality and those who denounce any such claims and beliefs as ill-founded, irrational and false.

It is interesting to note the fact that, even after centuries of investigation, the debate is still raging today. Perhaps it is an insoluble puzzle (interestingly the Collins Pocket Dictionary defines paranormal as “beyond scientific explanation”). Indeed, parapsychologist George P. Hansen (2001) has argued that paranormal phenomena are inherently anti-structural and paradoxical. Their very nature is such, and they cannot be reduced to anything less than ambiguity.

But what do I mean when I use the term paranormal?

In the context of this article the term will be used to refer to a variety of different phenomena in general “whose operation is outside the scope...of normal

scientific understanding”, including; clairvoyance, clairaudience, mediumship, mystical/religious/spiritual experience, UFO abduction, apparitions, near death and out of body experiences telekinesis, telepathy and so on. All of these phenomena are not currently accepted (at least in the majority of instances) as suitable subjects for scientific investigation; they are anomalous.

The study of the paranormal, in any sense of the word “study” (whether parapsychological, psychological, anthropological, etc.), poses the researcher with a number of theoretical difficulties. These difficulties are deeply rooted within our scientific tradition (Laughlin jr., 1988, 12), which has built itself upon certain philosophical foundations that provide a rigid structure to the scientific method.

This is an important point; the very nature of what we define as “paranormal” is determined by our conception of what science is and is not. The 19th century sociologist Émile Durkheim (1868-1917) pointed out just this fact when discussing the notion of the supernatural in his book *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (2008):

“...the idea of the supernatural, as we understand it, is of recent vintage.... In order to call certain phenomena supernatural, one must already have the sense that there is a natural order of things, in other words, that the phenomena of the universe are connected to one another according to certain necessary relationships called laws” (2008, 28)

The laws we utilise to distinguish the supernatural, or paranormal, from the natural are derived from our scientific perspective.

One of the key philosophical stand-points of modern science is positivism. Positivism, as defined by the French philosopher and founding sociologist Auguste Comte (1798-1857), is an epistemological stand-point that is concerned only with what can be scientifically apprehended, and not with issues of metaphysics or speculation:

“In...the positive state, the mind has given over the vain search after absolute notions, the origin and destination of the universe, and the causes of phenomena, and applies itself to the study of their laws, that is, their invariable relations of succession and resemblance. Reasoning and observation, duly combined, are the means of this knowledge” (Comte, 1853 [1976], 19)

It is from this “positive state” that science has been exploring the physical world for well over 150 years; a process that has led to an increasingly materialistic perspective: material objects are, after all, readily apprehendable by our physical senses and as such are perfect for the application of science in order to be understood. Positivism is concerned with this aspect of reality and not with

metaphysical speculation as to more subtle facets of existence (although modern quantum physics is increasingly concerned with less and less tangible aspects of reality). This stand-point assumes that the world can be adequately comprehended using traditional western notions of reason, entirely based upon what can be directly observed, often referred to as empiricism. Empiricism places great significance on that which can be directly apprehended utilizing our physical senses

Anomalous experiences bring the assumption that positivistic laws adequately account for all experiential observations into question, particularly when such observations are made by individuals trained in the application of a scientific perspective. Indeed, many researchers, both in the laboratory and in the field, have encountered such anomalies, and have reported them regardless of academic biases against them.

This highlights the issue of the scientific paradigm, a concept proposed by the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) in his groundbreaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1973). Kuhn argued that science progresses in “revolutions”, whereby one scientific tradition establishes itself as dominant only later to be succeeded by a new mode of understanding the world; revolutions based upon new discoveries and methods of investigation. Kuhn defined a scientific paradigm as:

“...an accepted example of actual scientific practice – examples include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together – [that] provide models from which spring coherent traditions of scientific research” (1973, 10)

These “coherent traditions” develop and establish themselves as orthodox within the scientific community; research and investigation into the universe proceeds from the accepted perspective. Kuhn suggested that these traditions reject observations that fail to fit within their conception of the world until, eventually, evidence demands a reconsideration. Up until the point of reconsideration, relationships between the two opposing factions can be sour to say the least, with the dominant view condemning that of the upstart as unfounded, ridiculous or impossible. This is the sentiment felt by many scientific investigators of the paranormal; they feel that they are being rejected and ignored because their explanations for certain experimentally replicable phenomena (Beischel, 2008), do not fit within the dominant scientific world-view.

Anomalous experiences imply, therefore, either that the laws we have established to explain the phenomena of the world around us are incomplete, or that there is no intrinsic reality to those claims made by experiencers of anomalistic phenomena.

There is, however, reason to treat claims to paranormal experience seriously. The 19th century psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910) made this abundantly clear in his classic work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (2004). In this book James analyses phenomenological reports from numerous individuals claiming to have been privy to mystical, religious or supernatural experiences, and in so doing highlights the compelling similarities between such accounts. Other researchers of different phenomena have also found this to be the case. The Harvard psychiatrist John E. Mack (1929–2004), for instance, was compelled to take the claims of alleged UFO abductees seriously because of the impressive interpersonal commonalities in reports of these experiences (Mack, 1994).

If we can accept, then, that there is something tangible to the numerous claims of paranormal experience we must investigate them fully in as many ways as possible.

WHAT CAN ANTHROPOLOGY TELL US?

Anthropology, as a discipline, is concerned with the study of human culture and behaviour utilising the scientific method, it is wholly a product of the western scientific endeavour (Barnard, 2000, 1-2). Consequently, anthropology has long had to tackle with the concept of the supernatural, as a great amount of human culture and behaviour is constructed around such notions.

Early anthropologists, such as Sir E.B. Tylor (1832-1917), argued that notions of supernatural realms and spiritual beings have their origins in dreams and the sensations associated with them. Tylor considered that our awareness of other realms derives from falsely believing that the experiences we encounter during sleep, and various trance states represent a distinct reality:

“When the sleeper awakens from a dream, he believes he has really somehow been away, or that other people have come to him” (Tylor, 1930, 88)

This argument is somewhat reductionistic, and ignores the reports of those who have undergone paranormal, or anomalistic, experiences. Very often an experiencer will specifically state that the experience they have undergone was "more real" than a dream.

According to the old evolutionist schemes in anthropology, supernatural beliefs and conceptions were held to be primitive hangovers from a bygone age. Sir James Frazer (1854-1941), in his voluminous exploration of human mythology, *The Golden Bough* (1993), suggested that human evolutionary development proceeded through 3 stages: the magical, the religious and the scientific. According to this framework anthropology considered belief in paranormal

phenomena, and a supernatural world, to be primitive conceptions destined to be superseded by a scientific outlook, inevitably culminating in extinction. To some extent this view continues to dominate academe.

Such evolutionary models are, however, highly reductionist, and fail to accord with the ethnographic data. Contrary to the suggestion of this model supernatural and paranormal beliefs have not disappeared, even within what we might call “modern secular society”. The sociologist Peter Berger has written of how elements of supernatural belief are still to be found even within the most “advanced” of modern secular societies:

“For whatever reasons, sizeable numbers of the specimen ‘modern man’ have not lost a propensity for awe, for the uncanny, for all those possibilities that are legislated against by the canons of secularized rationality. These subterranean rumblings of supernaturalism can, it seems, coexist with all sorts of upstairs rationalism” (Berger, 1971, 39)

This simple fact fundamentally negates the evolutionist perspective that magical, religious and scientific perspectives are exclusive from one another. They are not incompatible.

In the 20th century, approaches to anthropological investigation developed rapidly. After the work of Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), the founding father of British Social Anthropology, anthropological theory placed much greater import on the methodology of participant observation, which can be defined as the process:

“...by which fieldworkers attempt to achieve ethnographic understanding through an artful synthesis of ‘insider’, ‘subjective’ participation and ‘outsider’, ‘objective’ observation” (Erickson & Murphy, 2003)

Anthropologists are trained observers; like any other scientists they go into the field/laboratory to gather information for analysis with the purpose of forming general theories that might be applied to other societies, or even the human sphere at large. The success of an anthropological theory, from this perspective, might be deduced from its applicability to societies other than the anthropologists specific field of investigation.

Anthropological fieldwork is usually centred within a community. The anthropologist operates on the ground-level; in the reality of social life. Observations of interactions between individuals and between groups are made, inferences about the way in which culture influences the lifestyle and behaviour of the group are made, kinship, economic, political and religious systems are explored and their relationship to the individual investigated. These are just

some of the social element interesting to anthropologists, indeed there are countless others. The point is, though, that anthropology is specifically concerned with people and how they live their lives.

HOW CAN THIS PERSPECTIVE BE INCORPORATED INTO THE INVESTIGATION OF THE PARANORMAL?

Paranormal claims are made by human beings; people who live with their beliefs and experiences within a wider community. Quite simply anthropology can provide us with a means to explore how people live with their beliefs and experiences within a social group, and how they make them meaningful. Anthropology can help us to explore the experience within a wider social and cultural context.

In *Structural Anthropology Vol.1* (1986), Claude Lévi-Strauss distinguishes between the supernatural as a “thought-of” order, as opposed to a “lived-in” order (like kinship systems and social organization, for example). I feel, however, that the supernatural can also be investigated as a “lived-in” order. As already mentioned earlier the conception of the supernatural/paranormal is dependent upon our perception of the world as consisting of immutable physical laws. To others (and even to many within our own society), the supernatural/paranormal reality is an everyday component of life; it is lived with and experienced as normal. This is particularly true for those who live their lives in the knowledge that they have clairvoyant, clairaudient, mediumistic or other psychic gifts, or amongst families living with poltergeist activity and so on.

SUBJECT/OBJECT BREAKS DOWN...

Anthropologists also report anomalous experiences (Evans-Pritchard, 1973, 11; Turner, 1993; McClennon & Nooney, 2002; Richards, 2003), but they do so in different ways. The cases of Evans-Pritchard and Edith Turner will be used as examples of the way in which anthropologists interpret anomalous experiences.

Evans-Pritchard’s classic text *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic Among the Azande* (1973), contains an account of a late night encounter with discarnate witchcraft:

“I have only once seen witchcraft on its path. I had been sitting late in my hut writing notes. About midnight, before retiring, I took a spear and went for my usual nocturnal stroll. I was walking in the garden at the back of my hut...when I noticed a bright light passing at the back of my servants’ huts towards the homestead of a man called Tupoi” (1973, 11)

On recounting this experience to his informants, Evans-Pritchard was told that what he had seen was an “emanation” from the body of a witch (which is lying in

bed), sent out to “remove the psychical part of his victim’s organs” (ibid.). Incidentally, a man living in the direction in which the light was moving was later to be found dead in his hut. Despite receiving the “native” interpretation of what he had witnessed that night, in his write-up Evans-Pritchard says:

“I never discovered its real origin, which was possibly a handful of grass lit by someone on his way to defecate, but the coincidence of the direction along which the light moved and the subsequent death accorded well with Zande ideas” (ibid.)

This is one approach to anomalous experiences: to admit that an experience has occurred, but to suggest that its true cause is most probably clandestine and consequently does not accord with the “indigenous” understanding of the event. It is perhaps a product of the positivist ideal; to make observations but not to speculate on the nature of what is being experienced.

Edith Turner (1993) has referred to the response of modern science’s dominant paradigm to the paranormal as that of “positivists’ denial” (9). In a discussion of her experiences during the ihamba healing ceremony amongst the Ndembu, Edith Turner breaks down the barrier of “positivists denial” when talking of the “grey energy” she saw extracted from the back of a suffering patient.

She is clearly calling for a new means of approaching this intriguing subject that does not break down “indigenous” beliefs into categories entirely removed from their own understanding of what they have, and continually, experienced:

“Again and again anthropologists witness spirit rituals, and again and again some indigenous exegete tries to explain that spirits are present... And the anthropologist proceeds to interpret them differently... We anthropologists need training to see what the Natives see” (1993, 11).

Turner’s solution to the problem is the investigation of supernatural beliefs from an interior perspective; that is through deep participant observation. To my mind this form of deep participant observation calls for an almost metaphysical approach to understanding a culture (an essentially un-positivistic standpoint).

“Turner is calling for a return to holism among anthropologists. However, this holism goes beyond a simple return to the holism of anthropology’s earlier days of somewhat distanced reporting of the Other. It is one that seeks an experiential union with the Other and not only a respect for the spirituality of the Other but also an acceptance of it” (Salamone, 2001, 155)

Through abandoning the strictures of positivism anthropologists can discover the inherent logic in the “supernatural beliefs” of the group or society under

study. If the anthropologist is allowed to encounter the “supernatural experience” directly they are able to actually see how an experience can call for a different interpretation of reality. Faced with the facts of experience an anthropologist, like any human being, will draw conclusions and make inferences. Through this process a greater insight into the conclusions and inferences of the group under study can also be gained; it is actually possible to get at the first cause of a set of beliefs.

Just pursuing this simple avenue can lead the anthropologist into a much deeper understanding of not only the individual, but of his/her beliefs and experiences as well. The anthropologist Zeljko Jokic, in his paper on the initiation of Yanomamo shamans (2008), gained a great insight into the cognitive life-world of the people he was studying. Through participating fully in the initiation ceremony himself, including the ingestion of the psychoactive snuff Yopo (containing DMT), Jokic was able to experience culturally significant states of awareness that he could not have encountered in any other way:

“I treat my own experiences not only as subjective, isolated events of my own intentionality of consciousness but as an intersubjective dialogic product arising within the interpersonal field of social relations. Shamanism for me is a point of intersubjective entry into the Yanomami lifeworld, and the resulting experiences are the window that provides my own subjective insights into that world” (Jokic, 2008, 36)

If we apply this mode of inquiry to the supernatural the insights could be vitally significant to the way in which we approach the scientific study of the paranormal, we could approach paranormal phenomena from an “as if” perspective and learn from within.

It is interesting to note the similarity between this approach to exploring these phenomena and the philosophical writings of both mystics and scientists. In this example, quoted by Lawrence LeShan in his book *The Medium, the Mystic and the Physicist* (1974), Rehit Mehta expresses a mystical viewpoint which pre-emptly Turner’s call for subjective participation in spirit phenomena:

“There are indeed fundamentally two categories of knowledge – Knowledge by Ideation and Knowledge by Being. All scientific knowledge, whether physical or super-physical, belongs to the first category. Such knowledge is based on the duality of the observer and the observed. In spiritual perception, however, there is Knowledge by Being – it arises in that state where the duality of the observer and the observed has vanished. This is the very core of direct or what is otherwise called the Mystical experience” (Rehit Mehta, as cited by LeShan, 1974, 54)

What Edith Turner is advocating is an approach that utilizes “Knowledge of Being”, an approach which analyses experiential claims from an experiential perspective. It is clear, then, that in order to understand these phenomena and their cultural interpretations (which is the goal of ethnographic investigation) it is necessary to approach them on their own level – what LeShan (1974) calls the “Clairvoyant Reality” (34) (the term clairvoyant means “clear seeing”), indeed it stands to reason that we should have to explore from within; just as the anthropologist must leave his/her home and enter another community. You cannot investigate without engaging with the object of investigation.

It is interesting how this immersive approach to the investigation of anomalous experiences is, in essence, one and the same as the process required to be undertaken for the experience to be experienced at all. It is an initiation into another mode of interpreting existence. In many respects it is the equivalent of a shamanic initiation in itself.

This approach is marvellously enlightening, particularly with regard to understanding experiences and their cultural interpretations. When conducting fieldwork for my dissertation (Hunter, 2009), at a home-circle dedicated to the development of trance and physical mediumship (Di Nucci, 2009), I opted to take the immersive approach to participant observation recommended by Edith Turner, and as a consequence had some anomalous experiences of my own. I won't go into detail about these experiences now, but the point is that simply having such experiences gave me a much more complete understanding of the beliefs and practices of the group I was investigating. This degree of “hands on” approach enables the anthropologist to analyze directly the same experiential data around which belief and practice systems have developed; you can see for yourself how logically practices and beliefs relate to experiences, while without that insight they would seem illogical and entirely irrational.

EXPERIENCE...

An anthropological approach to the paranormal would be a phenomenological one; an immersive form of experiential anthropology. The term phenomenology refers to the study of the experience of the objects of experience, without the necessity to ascertain whether the object being experienced is real or not. From this perspective all experiential phenomena are placed on the same plateau; they are all as valid as each other, whether the experience is of a table or an angel.

From this perspective the anthropologist can enter into his/her fieldwork without automatically assuming that the beliefs and practices of the people he/she is studying are based on falsities. It breeds a necessary relativism; no view is absolute or immutable and all experiences are valid. The anthropologist can now study from a human perspective without attempting to maintain an

illusory sense of objectivity. The human perspective is necessary when trying to understand paranormal beliefs and practices; we need to engage with them naturally and unashamedly to appreciate the subtle depths in which they are rooted.

An important concept to understand when considering supernatural beliefs and practices is what the folklorist David Hufford (1982) has termed the “experiential source hypothesis”. This hypothesis holds that religious/supernatural/paranormal beliefs do not have their basis entirely in cultural notions (as the cultural source hypothesis would suggest), but that rather they are rooted in phenomenological experiences, which, at the very least, are real to the experienter. The experiential source hypothesis does not definitively state whether the experiences reported are grounded in what might be termed a “supernatural reality”, but neither does it suggest that all experiences are the product of hallucination, illness or mal-observation. What the experiential source hypothesis suggests to us, then, is that we must take experiential claims seriously.

Moves have been made over the course of the last 25 years to take anthropology into a new paradigm of thought with regard to issues of the paranormal, or what is now referred to as “psi” (Schroll & Schwartz, 2005). The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness (SAC) was officially recognized by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 1989, and since then has provided an avenue for anthropologists to explore the issue of consciousness, and related phenomena, in the field. Much of the SACs work is concerned with:

“...states of consciousness (both "normal" and "altered"), possession, trance, and dissociative states; religion; ethnographic studies of shamanistic, mediumistic, mystical, and related traditions; indigenous healing practices; linguistic, philosophical, social, and symbolic studies of consciousness phenomena; and anomalous phenomena, including the roles these play in traditional and modern cultural practices” (www.sacaaa.org)

Anthropology is beginning to take these issues seriously. No longer is it necessary to be bound by what Edith Turner called “positivists’ denial”. The anthropological method lends itself particularly well to the study of such matters; it is an immersive methodology – it is experiential.

This is perhaps one of the most significant lessons we can learn regarding the paranormal: the necessity of engagement.

CONCLUSION

The key issue, to my mind, is that there are experiences out there in the world, which we would term “paranormal”, waiting to be encountered by anyone willing to do so. Regardless of the ontological nature of the experience, it is a valid facet of the human condition – an aspect of our existence every bit as complex and beautiful as any other. As William James said with regard to altered states of consciousness: “No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded” (James, 2004, 335).

Why should we, as researchers, close ourselves off to such experiences?

I feel that it would do the endeavor for knowledge and understanding well to realize that there are countless different ways of being in the universe; numerous epistemological standpoints, all equally successful. The American linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941) summed this notion up perfectly in his book *Language, Thought & Reality* (1956):

“Just as it is possible to have any number of geometries other than the Euclidean which give an equally perfect account of space configurations, so it is possible to have descriptions of the universe, all equally valid, that do not contain our familiar contrasts of time and space” (Whorf, 1956, 58)

Furthermore, anthropology can enlighten us through cross cultural comparisons, and the theoretical approaches derived from this mode of investigation can allow us to gain fruitful insights. We can learn about general trends in the paranormal beliefs of human beings across the world and how they are incorporated into everyday life. Cross cultural comparison can provide us with insights into the workings not only of distant “exotic” belief structures, but also into our own culture. This is particularly pertinent for what we term the “paranormal” or “supernatural”: we are not the only ones who recognize its existence, and our framework is not the only one used to describe, understand and live with it.

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THE VAMPIRE PHENOMENON

By Dave Wood

“If there is in this world a well-attested account, it is that of vampires. Nothing is lacking: official reports, affidavits of well-known people, of surgeons, of priests, of magistrates; the judicial proof is most complete. And with all that, who is there who believes in vampires?”

- *Jean-Jacques Rousseau, eighteenth century philosopher*

“Vampires are all around us, in shops, supermarkets, the high street, everywhere.”

- *Arlene Russo, editor of Bite Me magazine*

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the vampire as “a preternatural being of a malignant nature (in the original and usual form of the belief, a reanimated corpse), supposed to seek nourishment, or do harm, by sucking the blood of sleeping persons; a man or woman abnormally endowed with similar habits.”

From their origins in folklore over centuries and across continents, to their explosion onto the gothic literary scene of the nineteenth century and their vast career in movies and television in the last century, the vampire is perhaps one of the most enduring of all would-be anomalous phenomena.

But for all their renown the vampire is possibly the most notable folkloric concept to lack much by way of widespread research or investigation. Contrast the vampire with other, similar folkloric concepts such as ghosts, the Loch Ness monster and black dogs. In modern times vampires are seen as more symbolic or metaphorical.

Vampires seem to fall in line with oddities such as werewolves and fairies in being sidelined by researchers. Yet unlike these other creatures of folklore vampires, as will be discussed, are claimed to walk the earth in hundreds, or even thousands, depending on whose guesswork you examine.

This paper will discuss who studies vampires, the idea of the metaphorical vampire, how media portrayals of vampires have changed and how has this informed those people who claim to be real, modern-day vampires.

WHO STUDIES VAMPIRES?

If ghosts are studied by psychical researchers and the yeti is studied by cryptozoologists, then who studies the vampire? The only answer would appear to be ‘vampire hunters’. Beyond media studies, the vampire would appear to be a niche interest, only advanced by a few dedicated individuals.

In the Journal of Scientific Exploration Eberhart (2005, p110) makes specific exclusions in what cryptozoology is concerned with, excluding ‘bizarre humans’: “No vampires or zombies need apply, since these creatures seem to be reanimated dead members of our own species. Perhaps this makes them a cryptophysiological puzzle, or even a problem in cryptothanatology.”

Although cryptophysiology would not appear to be a widespread discipline, the medical study of ‘vampirism’ would seem a little more promising in its application both to folkloric claims and in its treatment of people claiming to be vampires. Some of these slightly dubious medical claims will be examined later.

As for cryptothanatology – thanatology being the psychological, medical and social study of the process of human death – this author drew a blank on its alleged crypto- counterpart. Only one reference was found, in a UFO journal, discussing cattle mutilation (Strainic, 1993); even this did not fit, where thanatology is clearly concerned with human death rather than cattle.

What of traditional psychical research? In the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research (JSPR), Puhle (1999) notes that the Austrian National Library in Vienna offers the ‘best’ selection of material on the subject of vampirism, adding that it is classed as a subdivision of ‘ghosts’. A word search of ‘vampire’ in a number of parapsychology journals returned a relatively small forty-five entries over more than a century. Most references in the last fifty years seemed to relate to book reviews by non-academic authors, whilst the previous fifty years seemed to be mainly accounted for by the so-called ‘Vampires of Onset’; the Vampires of Onset being a seemingly dysphemistic term for a camp of fraudulent spiritualists (Anon, 1891).

Of the few remaining references the first seemed promising; with an early JSPR article categorising the vampire as a type of ghost (Godwin Baynes, 1937). Another gave a nod to vampires in the context of so-called crypto-physiology, in an article about sleep paralysis. The author recounted a list of the way different cultures across time have perceived hallucinations relating to hypnogogic/hypnopompic states including demons, ‘old hags’ and vampires, especially amongst Europeans (Terrillon & Marques-Bonham, 2001).

Despite these apparent links with the ghost phenomenon and the much-studied hypnagogic/hypnopompic states, further references were scant. Perhaps the attitude towards vampires in the field of psychical research generally is better described by an account of an SPR conference where the authors describe a session for light relief about vampires, werewolves “and other oddities” (Comley, Davidson & Haynes, 1980).

With some exceptions, folklorists do not seem to pre-occupy themselves especially with vampirism, leaving the bulk of research, such as it is, with a few individual specialists. Apart from the books on the subject that seem mainly concerned with history and media studies, vampire research is advocated by a very small number of societies (mainly of ‘vampire hunters’), defunct specialist journals and a number of almost sinister ‘education’ websites appealing to ‘real’ vampires.

VAMPIRES AS A METAPHOR

Nina Auerbach noted that “every generation embraces the vampire it needs”. Literary critics have long acknowledged vampires as a metaphor. The enduring success of the vampire can be seen as deriving from its versatility. Our examination, below, of vampires in popular culture demonstrates that the image of the vampire changes markedly with time: to meet the needs of the times.

The pre-literature folkloric vampire met the needs of its generations. In pre-modern times the vampire was not exactly a metaphor but was simply, for many, an accepted aspect of how we viewed the world (Oldridge, 2006). The vampire’s existence – along with other figures of folklore, like ghosts – was simply accepted as common sense. For a society with understanding largely based on religious truth, the concept of the dead walking again was not the unacceptable stretch of imagination that it is today (Oldridge, 2006). In such times the vampire can be seen as serving the ‘needs’ of society, in reinforcing religious belief or even reinforcing the social control of western religion. Where vampires were often seen as terrifying monsters – not the alluring figures of modern times – and were often believed to be members of ones own community, the emphasis was on how one could avoid returning, posthumously, as a monster. Common actions believed to lead to vampirism included suicide, excommunication by the church, not conducting religious rituals upon death, being a witch in mortal life or a victim of murder not being avenged (Suckling, 2006). Such traditions can easily be seen as a method of social control; ensuring our lives were lived in accordance with the prevailing norms of the time for fear of posthumous damnation.

In more enlightened times the folkloric figure was revamped as the metaphor in the fiction of literature and on screen. The modern vampire is not an enduring metaphor, but a popular figure that adapts to the needs of each generation.

Much of the analysis of vampires as a metaphor in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries focussed on the vampire as an expression of sexual ambiguity, deviance and gender deconstruction; this served as a necessary expression in more sexually repressed times (McGunnigle, 2002). In more recent times the vampire was also seen as a metaphor for homosexuality before it was legalised (Caron, 2001). However, as sexual norms were liberalised the vampire needed to reinvent itself; and there was much talk of the 'humanisation' or 'domestication' of the vampire (McGunnigle, 2002).

From the 1970s onwards, changes to the presentation of the vampire in literature and screen have seen many parallels drawn. Remington (2006) talks about the genre initiated by *Interview with the Vampire* as being a metaphorical analysis of depression, in the wake of growing public awareness. From 1980s onwards several theories discussed the vampire as a metaphor for the gay man during the first AIDS crisis (Caron, 2001); and of disease carrying, generally, in a modern world preoccupied by epidemics (Carter, 2001). The shift of the vampire tale towards the big city has been seen as an expression of the fear of loneliness and isolation in such urban environments (Abbott, 2006). Vampires have also been used as a direct metaphor for the era of corporate dominance (Sutherland, 2006).

It is clear that the enduring and changing image of the vampire reflects our needs at any one time. But are vampires simply art that imitates life, or is life beginning to imitate art, too?

POPULAR CULTURE AND CULTURAL TRACKING

In anomalous research the theory of cultural tracking has mainly been associated with UFO phenomena (Randles, 1996), but applies equally well to other areas of research. Cultural tracking is the idea that the perception of anomalous events is influenced by our cultural norms; that what people experience is guided by our individual and societal knowledge. Examples often used include how UFOs seem to reflect the cutting-edge technology of the time; so in the mid-nineteenth century zeppelin-UFOs were spotted, in the 1870s air balloon style UFOs were more the norm and as technology advanced UFOs appear more as spacecraft as we imagine them – or as the media informs us they would look like – today.

The same was found to be true with haunting phenomena. Until the 1990s and 2000s, where the predominant cultural concept of a haunting involved an apparition, the majority of ghost sightings involved one (e.g. Green & McCreery, 1975; and the SPR 1894 Report of a Census of Hallucinations). However, in the last 10 years where reality TV has shifted our conception of hauntings away from apparitions (for obvious, TV-related reasons) reports of hauntings have contained fewer apparitions; it was thus found that the media dictates our perception of xenonormal phenomena (Wood, 2008).

Although the vampire phenomenon seems to deal with at least as many individuals purporting to be vampires, rather than simply experiencing them, it is perfectly possible that the developing vampire of popular culture over the last two hundred years has come to guide so-called 'real life vampires'.

The first written stories featuring vampires as we would know them today are widely recognised as being Byron's *Fragment* and Polidori's *The Vampyre* in 1819; over the following three decades the vampire had become a stock character, almost a cliché, in the popular field of gothic literature, with the female vampire with lesbian tendencies making its most noted debut in 1872 with *Carmilla* (Twitchell, 1981).

Although the gothic vampire tended to be a romanticised figure when compared to earlier folklore, the concept of the attractive, alluring figure was most categorically defined by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* in 1897. The influence of *Dracula* would appear not to be unrelated to anything remarkable about the text, indeed it made a great deal less impact at the time than earlier vampire novels had; its influence lay in its reworking of the concept, being the basis of a substantial minority of subsequent media portrayals, particularly since the novel was adapted by Universal Studios in 1931 (Day, 2002).

Although the most prominent, 1931's *Dracula* was not the first big-screen portrayal of the vampire – or even of *Dracula*, which was in 1921 – with a full twenty-five vampire films made in the silent era between 1909 and 1928. Perhaps the first 'classic' of the genre was *Nosferatu* in 1922, which itself was an unofficial treatment of *Dracula* and prompted legal action from Stoker's widow (Skal, 2004). In *Nosferatu* the count is portrayed as a monstrous figure, more akin to earlier folklore than to the romanticised figure of *Dracula*. *Nosferatu* was perhaps most important for the very first introduction of the idea that vampires are killed by sunlight; *Nosferatu* himself faded away in sunlight but by the time of Hammer's *Dracula* in 1956 the idea of the painful peeling and bursting into flames was entrenched (McCarthy, 2006).

By the end of the twentieth century over three hundred vampire films had been made, depending on what parameters are used (Skal, 2004), over one hundred

of these starred the suave and urbane Dracula (Russo, 2005). By the 1970s the genre was looking very tired indeed, including a string of sub-Carmilla lesbian vampire films. The traditional vampire film, although it hardly featured him, seemed to die with the reproachable 1978 *Zoltan: Hound of Dracula* (AKA *Dracula's Dog*).

Following a period of nearly four years with only one mainstream vampire film – in a century where the average was nearly four vampire films per year – the genre began to reinvent itself.

The vampire spoof kicked off with *Fright Night* in 1985 and has delivered a reasonable number of instalments, mostly dire, over nearly twenty-five years including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992) and *Lesbian Vampire Killers* (2009). The vampire 'shoot 'em up' sub-genre, typified by films like *Blade* (1998) and *From Dawn till Dusk* (1996), also took hold. Several films also tried to update the genre, making it relevant to a modern audience, starting with *Lost Boys* (1985).

Perhaps more worthy of note is the tradition, over the last thirty years, of the tortured vampire struggling with morality. This tradition was popularised by Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, penned in 1976, although the bulk of the franchise was written between 1985 and 2003. The *Vampire Chronicles* often portray vampires as the anti-hero, struggling to come to terms with 'life' as a vampire. The overtones are ones of emotional pain and struggle. This theme of the brooding vampire-figure with human qualities continued, variously, through several successful franchises including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Twilight* (2005 –present) and individual efforts including *Låt Den Rätte Komma* (*Let the Right One In*, 2004).

It is perhaps this latter genre of 'tortured soul' vampire that has really inspired the 'real life vampires' of the last thirty years.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY 'VAMPIRES'

The present day 'vampire' would appear to exist online, with scores of websites and forums dedicated to discussion and vampire networking. In 1976 the 'Vampire Research Centre' claimed to have over one thousand real vampires on its books (Suckling, 2006) and more recently an in-depth census was conducted using a similar number (Russo, 2005) as its base. One recent guess, reported in the *Washington Post*, suggested there were tens of thousands worldwide, with one thousand in New York alone (Hesse, 2008). Many such websites, forums and even books are convinced that thousands of vampires live amongst us today. Several different categories of current vampires seem to 'exist', including:

psychic vampires, lifestyle vampires, sanguine vampires and 'immortal' vampires.

There is scant literature related to so-called 'psychic vampires', with very few references in professional texts (e.g. Walker, 1978; Gubb et al, 2006). Some claim the idea started with the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn believing in some magical origin; however the current consensus of opinion – such as can be determined – suggests that psychic vampires are unintentional practitioners (Belanger, 2004). Psychic vampires are said to draw 'energy' from their 'victims'. Some such individuals claim to be normal, family-oriented individuals with an affliction (Hesse, 2008). These 'vampires' seem to be regular human beings with this indefinable ability. No model has been proposed for how such 'vampires' abilities operate and they have not been tested. A recent self-selection 'survey', conducted by the Atlanta Vampire Association and reported in the Washington Post, of seven hundred apparent vampires concluded that 31% are solely psychic (Hesse, 2008). Few people discuss this concept seriously, and it would appear to be nothing more than a metaphor for discussing normal social interplay between vulnerable individuals; although the individuals involved seem convinced something supernatural is taking place. Some allude to ideas of psychic vampirism originating in the Far East, although there is no firm evidence and the plea smacks of post-hoc rationalising.

The typical 'lifestyle vampire' also does not claim to be anything but mortal. 'Lifestylers' typically do not feel they have any supernatural powers either. Lifestylers, variously, operate in social networks, dress in gothic garb, wear fake fangs, walk around in graveyards, sleep in coffins, attend vampire events at Goth clubs, organise trips to watch vampire films, and a small number engage in sexually sado-masochistic, vampiric lifestyles (Russo, 2005). The lifestyler community in the UK is said to only consist of a few hundred dedicated individuals; these people live the 'lifestyle' of the vampire, not the 'life' of the vampire, with very few choosing to drink blood (Russo, 2005).

Lifestylers began to predict the collapse of the 'lifestyle' several years ago. The early 1990s was seen to be its heyday – encouraged by the big-screen adaption of *Interview with the Vampire*, and the role-playing game *Vampire: The Masquerade* – but by the mid-2000s lifestyle websites and communities began to fold (Russo, 2005). An Internet search for some of the most prominent and popular sites reveals they have either closed, or intend to close shortly. Where the highly romantic images of vampires in *Interview* may have inspired a generation of 'lifestylers', the popular vampire culture of this decade is clearly failing to inspire. Perhaps the most popular vampire franchise of the twenty-first century is the *Twilight* series. In *Twilight* the main protagonists – and the only vampires portrayed as attractive – are living in the present day, abstaining from human blood, attending school or work, wearing normal clothes and

generally not acting like 'lifestylers'. This seems to be the last in the line of attempts to 'castrate the vampire', to turn away from the traditional dark and potent metaphor (McGunnigle, 2002). We may need to wait for the next 'traditional' franchise, returning to its gothic roots, to reinvigorate the 'lifestyle' community.

It appears that the 'sanguine', or blood-drinking, vampires appear to be those claiming to be the 'real' vampires. So what does it mean, practically, to be a 'real' vampire? Sanguinarius.org 'the foremost vampire information and resource site on the net' has an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) section (Sanguinarius, 2009) to answer many questions: vampires are not immortal, vampires hurt as humans do, they are not stronger than humans, Christian iconography and garlic present no problems, the majority of vampires are from California, there are no physical differences between vampires and humans. So what makes a vampire a vampire? According to Sanguinarius.org the defining characteristic is the craving to drink blood, along with other characteristics including improved night vision.

Sanguine vampires purport to be more secretive and, in a sense, they may be wise to be so. Sanguine vampires appear to develop circles of willing 'donors'. Donation is sufficiently formal that a 'Donor Bill of Rights' has been proposed (Ashantison, 2007) and several websites exist to instruct vampires and donors about safe practices. This may be a wise precaution as the inception of AIDS in the 1980s threatened to diminish vampirism considerably (Russo, 2005) although the community hit back quickly with their rebuttals to concerns about safety.

On the face of it, sanguine vampires appear to be little more than humans who have either a penchant for human blood, or feel some form of psychological dependency upon it. Some claim medical reasons for these dependencies, but few claim to be actual 'immortals'.

As we have seen, the majority of self-professed vampires are a far cry from the 'immortals' of popular culture. As one writer puts it "...most of the vampire subculture these days is a benign form of role-playing" (Ramsland, 2000).

Those claiming to be, or claiming contact with, 'immortal' vampires seem predictably few and far between – one 'researcher' claims to have come across a number of different types of 'vampire' over twenty years searching, and never found anyone claiming to be an 'immortal' (Thower, 1995) – and even writers on 'vampire' sub-culture seem to more or less rule out the possibility of 'immortals'(e.g. Russo, 2005).

The unsolicited Internet seems to provide the main visible haven for self-proclaimed 'immortal vampires'. Such claims should be treated with due caution: for each whom the Internet allows an introverted or neurotic personality type to fully explore their 'true self' – if they feel, for whatever reason, that they are an 'immortal vampire' – there may be another using the anonymity the medium affords as an opportunity to play 'identity games' (Amichai-Hamburger, 2005).

So-called 'help' websites discussing 'immortal vampires' confirm that they are 'changed' by a traditional supernatural event, such as blood draining, that they have supernatural powers and do not age (e.g. Vampire Help, 2009). There are several examples online of individuals claiming to be 'immortal' vampires, several claiming to have life spans of several hundred years and to be possessed of supernatural powers (e.g. 'Bianca' et al, 2004; 'Tradwitch', 2008). Anonymous anecdotes, however, are worth little save for general interest. Whether the generally poor spelling and grammatical ability of the typical 'immortal vampire' online is indicative of their own pre-dating of the era of mass education, or whether it indicates teenaged victims of the modern education system, is a matter for conjecture.

CULTURAL TRACKING REVISITED

To what extent are twenty-first century 'vampires' influenced by the media portrayal of vampires, in line with the cultural tracking theory? Clearly 'lifestyler' vampires are wholly guided by media portrayals, but what of those who genuinely feel they carry vampiric traits?

Putting aside the near ubiquitous concept of vampires drinking blood, both in the media and in folklore, there are several areas of similarity and difference between the vampires of folklore and popular culture.

Many of those claiming to be vampires also claim to have a great sensitivity to sunlight. They do not claim to be killed by sunlight – this would not be credible – but claim they cannot remain in sunlight without suffering harm in the form of sunburn, headaches, etc. The sunlight link to vampirism is a new one, created by the medium of film in 1922, as discussed above.

Most people claiming to be vampires do not claim aversion to garlic, Christian iconography and the like. The reason for this is unclear. It would be possible for a would-be vampire to develop a psychological aversion to these in the same way as they would sunlight. Interestingly, although embellished by Bram Stoker, aversion to garlic and Christian iconography do have a basis in traditional vampire folklore (Johnson, 2001). The concept of vampires being able to shape-

shift is also grounded in Romanian folklore (Johnson, 2001) but is not demonstrated by self-professed 'real vampires' for obvious reasons.

From Stoker to present, the popular culture vampire, in most cases, is meant to cast no reflection. This has no basis in folklore (Johnson, 2001) and appears to be a media invention shunned by today's 'vampires'. However this 'trait' could not be psychologically constructed and could be easily disproven by the vampire's detractors.

Although this section has only scratched the surface of the relationship between the 'traits' of modern-day would-be vampires and their folkloric and popular cultural inspirations, it is clear that there is no obvious theme. Would-be vampires seem to be media-inspired in their aversion to sun-light, shun folklore and media in their views on garlic, Christian iconography and shape-shifting and go against popular culture in their views on reflective surfaces. One common theme would appear to be adherence to 'hidden' traits that they would not be required to demonstrate, although garlic and Christian iconography appear to be an exception to this.

Perhaps aversion to sunlight is the most striking trait reported by self-proclaimed vampires, being a trait nearly universal in media portrayals and almost unheard of in traditional folklore. In this area the conclusion involving fewest assumptions must be that these 'real' vampires are inspired by popular culture, which undermines their assertion of being 'real' vampires.

MEDICAL VAMPIRISM?

It is tempting to assume that those claiming the physical traits of 'vampires' are deluded or lying. However the case has been advanced that modern medicine can explain certain elements of 'vampirism' in terms of porphyria, catalepsy and anaemia.

The seemingly still widespread myth of the connection between porphyria and vampirism began with piece in the New York Times in 1985. The piece covered a speech at the American Association for the Advancement of Science in which porphyria, already long linked with werewolves, was linked to vampirism (Boffey, 1985). The article explained that sufferers were photosensitive – sensitive to light – disfigured if left untreated and that the treatment derived from the injection of a blood product. This must have sounded too good to be true – one condition associated with all the accepted traits of vampirism: aversion to sunlight, disfigurement, garlic aversion and the need for blood – and there is little wonder that the media hype took hold and continued for a long time after the link was discredited (Cox, 1995).

The original speaker claimed that porphyria could be the inspiration for the vampire mythology; there are a number of generally accepted reasons as to why this is not the case. In the first instance vampires of folklore, or even vampires of literature prior to 1922 (McCarthy, 2006), suffered no harm or aversion from sunlight, and in some traditions were said to wander from noon until midnight (Johnson, 2001). Cox (1995) notes that, in folklore, exhumed vampires tended to look as they did in mortal life, ruling out the disfigurement idea. Although there is little doubt that blood drinking is a long-standing trait of the vampire, drinking blood would not actually alleviate the suffering of a porphyria sufferer (Winkler, 1990). Where porphyria is so rare and alleged vampires in folkloric times so relatively common, there is no credibility in the argument that disfigured, non-blood drinking sufferers with an as-yet unheard of aversion to sunlight and garlic could have inspired the vampire myth.

Anaemia is another medical condition associated with historical vampirism. The theory is that anaemics, weak and appearing pale, would appear in less enlightened times to the victim of a vampire attack. Whilst this assumption would appear reasonable, there is no reason to confine this line of argument to anaemia. It is generally accepted that, particular in the seventeenth century in Eastern Europe, that any wide-spread plague or disease would be blamed on vampires (Johnson, 1991).

Catalepsy has long been cited as a possible explanation for early vampiric belief. As early as 1920 catalepsy – a nervous condition which can be marked by muscular rigidity and reduced heart rate to the extent that the sufferer could be mistaken for being dead – was identified as a possible inspiration for the vampire myth (Spence, 2003). In theory an undiagnosed cataleptic, in less advanced times, would be buried and later exhumed; by this time they would be fully functional and mistaken for a recently risen vampire. Whilst the symptoms fit neatly it again seems implausible as it is exceptional for such episodes to last for extended periods of time (Spence, 2003).

The possibility of mental illness should also not be overlooked. There is certainly evidence for the ‘pervasive’ idea of vampirism to begin to ‘inform’ the thoughts of the already schizophrenic person to the extent that they begin to believe they are vampires and believe they need to drink blood (Kelly, Abood & Shanley, 1999). The controversial area of ‘clinical vampirism’ – usually sexual pleasure derived from taking the role of the vampire in drinking blood – is considered rare, is not listed in some textbooks and is associated by many with schizophrenia (Gubb et al, 2006). There may be some overlap between so-called ‘clinical vampirism’ and so-called ‘sanguine vampires’.

THE DARK SIDE OF VAMPIRISM

As we have seen, so-called modern 'vampirism' appears to be a world of metaphor, lifestyle, role play and make believe. As with any activity, however, extremes have emerged. The harassment, crime and murder goes well beyond the descriptions of 'wannabe Buffys' and occasional 'nutcases' fighting with 'Vampire lifestylers' described in subculture texts (Russo, 2005) and online harassment, the subject of campaign website Stop Vampire Hate Crime on the Web (VHOTW, 2009).

In the UK in the early part of this decade there were a series of vampire related crimes (Khan, 2003): two men harassed a vicar, believing themselves to be vampires; in Wales a seventeen year old man's quest for immortality led him to stab a pensioner twenty-two times whilst a year later a twenty-two year old stabbed his 'friend' forty-two times and ate 'part of this head'.

In 2007 two 'vampire hunters' were convinced that late dictator Slobodan Milosevic's home town was in danger of his rising from the grave, in accordance with local folklore. The pair drove a metre-long stake through the heart of the corpse (Ronay, 2007).

In the mid-1990s in the US a man who engaged in role-playing game Vampire: The Masquerade broke into an animal shelter and mutilated puppies and proceeded to murder and mutilate several people; there is also a several hundred year history of such crimes (Ramsland, 2000).

The debate about the relationship between media and violence is too lengthy to engage in here, but it is reasonable to assume that those with the level of mental illness or social exclusion necessary to commit murder are likely to have used the concept of 'vampirism' as an inevitable expression of their condition.

CONCLUSION

Vampires were long creatures of folklore. Unromantic and often monstrous, their 'existence' served as a warning to the living, possibly a form of social control, and they were accepted unquestioningly by many.

The nineteenth century, which also saw the more widespread rise of rational thought, saw folklore become less pervasive. In this time the vampire became a stock character of gothic fiction, eventually transforming into the suave character that some say was a metaphor for sexual ambiguity and perversion.

This concept of the vampire being used as a changing metaphor to serve the needs of each generation continued through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

It is perhaps this essential relevance that causes life to imitate art, and spawning an army of vampire lifestylers and people who believe, whilst mortal, that they have to either feed on the blood of their peers or on their energy.

In the extreme people believe they are real, immortal vampires. Others have used vampires as the inspiration for murder and mutilation. Perhaps the socially excluded becoming lost in metaphor is the modern day 'warning' of the vampire.

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SURVEY OF PARANORMAL PHOTOGRAPHS

By Maurice Townsend

Paranormal photos are those that appear to show either things that were NOT seen at the time of exposure (such as orbs, rods) or things that WERE seen and considered paranormal (such as ghosts, UFOs). More generally, they are photos reported as paranormal!

The following account represents the results of an informal study of paranormal photos carried out over several years. The study involved the close analysis of over a thousand anomalous photos, taken over several years by over three hundred different photographers using dozens of different digital camera models. In addition, several hundred photos, published on the web, were also examined, though not as closely because the originals were unavailable.

Though the photographs were not collected as a statistically representative sample of all paranormal photos, the relatively large sample means we can probably assume most paranormal photos follow a similar pattern.

The main types of paranormal photos are each summarised here briefly. There is much more information on each on the ASSAP website.

TYPES OF ANOMALOUS PHOTO

The first result of the study was that 'paranormal photos' break down into distinct groups or types:

- the vast majority are photographic artefacts (out of focus, long exposure, beyond resolution, etc)
- a sizeable minority are misidentifications (simulacra, objects from strange angles, etc)
- a small number are of objects not noticed at the time of exposure
- a very small number are fakes
- a small number are of various other types

The most likely reason why there are so many photographic artefacts is that most people do not realise the significantly different way in which cameras work when compared to ordinary eyesight. Modern digital cameras are highly automated ('point and shoot') meaning that it is possible to take excellent photos without any knowledge of how photography works. As a result, it seems likely that few people bother to understand the theory of photography nowadays. Thus photographic artefacts may come as a surprise to many camera users and are

sometimes interpreted as paranormal. Most photos considered paranormal would routinely be rejected by serious photographers as faulty!

Digital cameras, which are now used almost universally, are significantly different to film cameras in several ways. The most important, from the point of view of paranormal photos, is a hugely increased depth of field for most models, compared to film. This has given rise to such well-known phenomena as orbs and ghostly mists (the latter often caused by the photographer's own breath on cold nights). Some camera programmes, or modes, even give rise to their own peculiar artefacts (such as 'Night Mode' which combines a flash and long exposure on many models). In addition, digital photos 'pixelate' if you zoom in on them too closely, meaning you can see the individual 'squares' (or pixels) that make up the image. This pixelation can give rise to its own artefacts by making blocky looking shapes that do not represent real objects.

EXIF

One major advantage of digital cameras for paranormal photo analysts is EXIF data. This is attached invisibly to the digital photo though it can be read in photo editor software (and is sometimes accidentally deleted by it in copying photos). EXIF data records vital exposure information like f-stop, shutter speed and whether a flash was used (a lot of photographers don't notice the flash going off). EXIF data is invaluable in analysing photos allowing things like long exposures to be identified easily.

PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTEFACTS

It is clear that the most important type of paranormal photo, by far, is the photographic artefact. This is something that looks different, compared to viewing by the naked eye, simply because it is being photographed. For instance, insects only ever appear as flying rods when they are photographed, never to the naked eye.

A camera is not a replica of the human eye - it reacts differently to light. For instance, if you stare at a constant light source for a long time, it remains at the same brightness. If you take a photo of the same light source with a camera, the longer the exposure, the brighter the source would look. These differences arise naturally from the way photography works. Here are some important differences between cameras and a naked eye view:

Situation	What the human eye sees	What a digital camera sees
Watching a constant light source continually	Remains the same brightness	Looks brighter with longer exposure
Area in focus	Everything usually in focus	Restricted to 'depth of field'
Fast moving object	Almost never blurred	Usually blurred or invisible
Object not seen well	May misperceive*	May lack detail
Bright objects / dark objects	Sometimes able to see detail	Detail lost (over- or under-exposure)
Peripheral view of scene	Less detailed than central vision	As detailed as centre
Distinguishing similar shades	Excellent discrimination	Poor discrimination
Any given scene	Few details remembered	Good record of a single instant

**See Anomaly Vol 42 'The Return Of The Merlin Matrix'*

Photographic artefacts divide into several types according to how they are caused. Many result from the differences listed above. The main ones are to do with the following aspects of vision and photography: focus, long exposure, reflection, resolution, low lighting and refraction.

ARTEFACTS: OUT OF FOCUS

There are two important concepts that decide how 'focus' artefacts form. Firstly there is the idea of 'depth of field'. This is the space in front of a camera where objects are in focus. An object will be out of focus if it is too close to, or too far from, the camera (though for certain settings this could stretch to infinity). The depth of field is the bit between these limits where all objects are in focus. Generally, the depth of field of a camera is not as great as that of the naked eye. In addition, our eyes adapt continuously to keep the scene ahead of us in focus as we turn our heads. In cameras, this is done by autofocus but it is slower and does not always work properly.

Depth of field can be calculated after a photo has been taken using EXIF information. There are online calculators available (you will need to know the approximate distance of the main subject as well as EXIF data). This can be

useful if there is a dispute over whether an object was too close or too far away to be in focus.

The second major thing to know about focus is how objects actually go out of focus in a photograph. They don't just go blurry! Instead they split into many tiny circles of light, each a highlight on the original object. These 'circles of confusion' are often visible on TV programmes filmed outside at night in the background. These circles of confusion are what forms orbs (see Anomaly Vol 38 'How to ...').

ARTEFACTS: FOCUS: ORBS

The vast majority of photographic artefacts examined were orbs. Orbs are out of focus bits of dust, insects, water droplets caught in the flash (though not always) of a camera (usually digital). The very high proportion probably reflects both the popularity and relative novelty of orbs. People are 'discovering' orbs all the time and turn to paranormal research societies for help.

Orbs became prevalent with the rise of digital cameras. The vastly increased depth of field of the early models, in particular, meant that objects that were just out of focus were now closer in to the camera. This brought them into the range of camera-mounted flash units. Moving the flash unit further away from the camera lens (eg. by using a separate unit instead of the built-in one) will eliminate most orbs.

Though the 'classic' orbs are small grey or white circles (not spheres as the name implies) there are many variations in shape, size and colour (and some even have tails). Orbs have been studied in detail and all examples examined in the current study were explained by the Orb Zone Theory (see Anomaly Vol 40 'A Life less Orbinary'). Nevertheless, a few people still think some orbs are paranormal and continually raise new objections to the theory. These objections are addressed as they arise and, so far, the theory continues to show that orbs are not paranormal.

ARTEFACTS: FOCUS: VORTEXES, GHOSTLY MISTS AND STRANGE OBJECTS

Objects other than tiny bits of dust or insects also appear out of focus in some paranormal photos. A frequent offender is the camera strap. Many straps have a ribbed construction. When out of focus, and particularly if strongly illuminated by the flash, they take on a strong vortex appearance. This may be the source of the widespread concept of a 'vortex ghost'. There seems to be little or no other evidence for such a type of ghost outside photos.

Another common out of focus object found in paranormal photos is a strange mist. It looks particularly odd, compared to fogs and mists seen with the naked eye, because it is out of focus and often strongly illuminated by the camera flash. Though ordinary fog can appear this way in flash photos, a more common source of such spooky mists is the photographer's own breath (or that of others nearby), caught against a dark background on a cold night. Smoke from a cigarette can also cause the effect. Due to the intensity of the camera flash, mists may appear on photographs that are not visible at the time of exposure to witnesses present. Such mists are frequently interpreted as ghosts despite the fact that apparitions are not usually reported to look misty; the 'misty ghost' idea probably arises from their popular portrayal in movies and on TV.

Other objects can appear odd when out of focus, whether by being too close or too far away (out of the depth of field - see above). The best way to identify such objects is by examining other photos of the same location, ideally taken at the same time and in focus, or to visit it. It is almost always possible to identify such objects as mundane.

ARTEFACTS: LONG EXPOSURE

Typical exposures for a camera of everyday scenes are 1/30s or faster. This is usually enough to freeze the action with a hand-held shot, so that the picture appears sharp. If you use 'zoom' settings (or attach telephoto lens when using a DSLR), you will need shorter exposure times to freeze the action.

Focal length determines how big a subject looks in a photo. If you use short focal lengths (wide angle), objects look smaller and you can fit more of the scene into the photo. The reverse applies to telephoto zoom settings, which make objects look bigger (as if you moved closer to them).

When cameras went digital, various different size sensor chips were used (physical size in mm, not megapixels). This meant that lenses had to change their specifications compared to film cameras. This is why manufacturers talk about the '35-mm equivalent' focal length. A 'standard' lens on a film camera, which was neither telephoto nor wide angle but approximates to normal human vision, is 50mm focal length. So, on a digital camera 18mm might be the 35-mm equivalent of the old 50mm standard lens.

Why does all this matter? It's because the shutter speed you need to freeze the action on a digital camera gets shorter with increasing focal length. So, when you examine the EXIF information you need to know the 35-mm equivalent of the focal length to see if the shutter speed was sufficient. Broadly speaking, you need a shutter speed (expressed as a fraction of a second) at least 'equal' to the 35-mm

equivalent focal length to freeze the action. So, for a 'standard' 50 mm (35-mm equivalent) you might choose 1/60s minimum but for 200 mm go for 1/250s.

Some digital cameras use image stabilisation systems that allow you to choose a slower shutter speed than you might normally and still get a sharp image. You might be able to tell from the EXIF, though not always, if it has been used.

If long exposures are used without image stabilisation or a tripod, images generally become blurred. This is not the same thing as going out of focus - you don't see circles of confusion, just images smeared, either completely or just round the edges. Such blurring can give objects a weird unfamiliar appearance giving rise to reports of paranormal photos.

You should always check EXIF data to see if there was a long exposure, relative to the focal length. Often the photographer was not aware of the long exposure at the time, which is why they were surprised by the result. Shutters are usually quiet, or even silent, in many digital cameras, so they may not notice the shutter closing a second or more after opening.

ARTEFACTS: LONG EXPOSURE: LIGHT TRAILS

If the whole photo is blurred by camera shake, it is usually obvious. However, in some paranormal photos it is just one or two objects that are blurred. This can happen if there is a flash accompanied by a long exposure (eg. in 'night mode'). It can give rise to light trails where bright objects appear smeared across the photo. This happens because the flash freezes most of the frame but then, as the camera is moved with its shutter still open, very bright objects (candles, torches or even reflections of them) have enough light to be recorded on the sensor chip. Such light trails often lead to a light source in the photo. However, because the camera may be moved to point in a different direction to the original frame, it means that light sources originally outside the frame may appear on it (their trail will cross the edge of the frame).

More diffuse light sources can cause a filmy light trail like a glowing mist.

ARTEFACTS: LONG EXPOSURE: GHOSTS

If an object is present for only part of the time during a long exposure, or if a camera points in a different direction for part of the time, you can get ghostly transparent objects or figures in a photo. In the case of the camera being moved to point in a different direction, something outside the original frame can be superimposed on the original scene. Amazingly, people can often hold digital cameras sufficiently steadily during a very long exposure (half a second or more) for a reasonable, if unsharp, image to appear. It can result in a ghostly, transparent object in an otherwise normal photo. Also, you do not see any

motion blur if the 'transparent' object moves reasonably quickly into the shot and then stands still (this is because images take time to build up in a photo)



Fig 2: Long exposure showing ghostly 'transparent' object with brick floor

Many classic ghost images may have happened, by accident, in this way. Long exposures and the use of tripods were once common when film was very slow. If a person walked into such a photo, stopped for a while and then walked off, it would produce the classic transparent ghost. They might not even have been noticed by the photographer! In reality, there are hardly any reports of transparent ghosts from real cases. The idea that ghosts are transparent probably originated as a movie and theatre device.

ARTEFACTS: LONG EXPOSURE: FLYING RODS

When you take a photograph of a moderately fast moving object, it can become blurred and look strange, even though the shutter speed is fast enough to 'freeze' the background. For instance, if you take a photo of an insect with a shutter speed of around 1/50s, you may get a 'flying rod'.

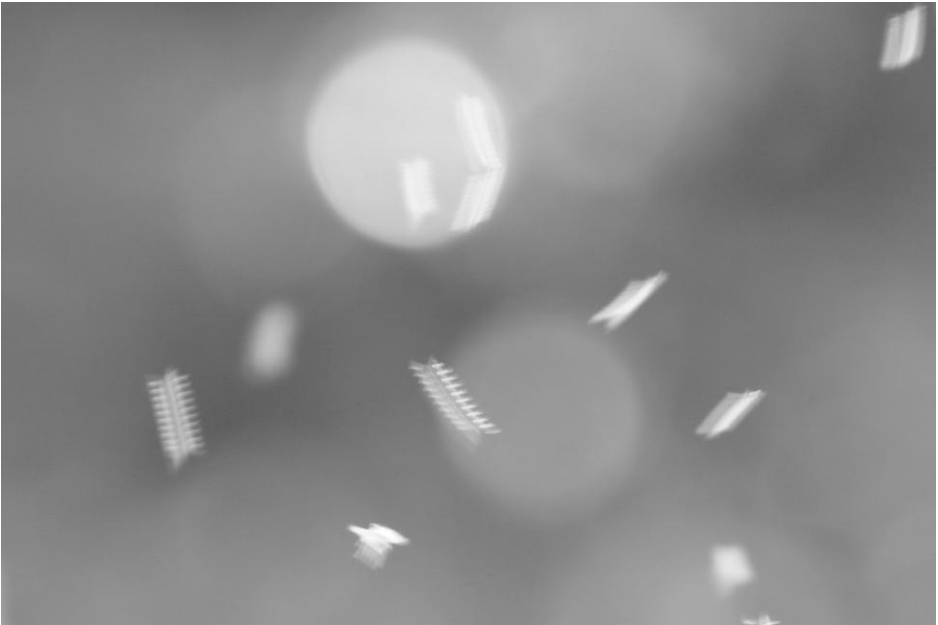


Fig 1: A group of flying insects forming flying rods

A flying rod is a mysterious extended shape generally with 'appendages', which vary between straight 'branches' and curved 'membranes', along its length. To appear as a rod, an insect needs to be in focus and large enough to show up in the photo when still. These conditions rarely occur which is why flying rods are unusual in still photographs. They are more common, though still rare, in the stills taken from video recordings.

The long rod shape is caused by the movement of the flying insect's body. The appendages are produced by the motion of the insect's wings.

ARTEFACTS: REFLECTION

If a photograph is taken through glass, such as a window or car windscreen, it will often not be obvious in the resulting photo. There might be a slight lack of sharpness but otherwise it will look quite normal. However, there may be an object reflected in the glass which will appear as a transparent object that 'shouldn't be there' (because it is BEHIND the photographer)!

When such a reflection is a person, it might well be taken for a ghost. In many cases, photographers do not recall that they took the photo through glass, although a visit to the site will often confirm it.

If flash is used and there is any glass in the frame, it can often show up as a bright white patch of diffuse light. This is the flash being reflected directly back into the camera. Some people report strange white shapes as paranormal in such circumstances. You can also get strange 'areas of light' caused by the flash being reflected off glass or a shiny surface which is outside the frame.

Sometimes light can reflect inside the structure of a camera. This usually happens when there is a bright light source in the frame or, more frequently, just outside it. This causes an effect called lens flare. It can take many forms, including circles and areas of misty light, of various different colours.



Fig 3: Lens flare caused by the sun.

ARTEFACTS: RESOLUTION

As we look at the world with our eyes, we see a continuous picture. There are no gaps or edges - unless you suffer from migraines or similar - or the dots that you see if you look closely at a TV screen picture. This 'continuous view' is a trick of the brain, although it can be fooled.

If you zoom into a digital photo in software you will reach a point where it pixelates - splits up into rectangular blocks. This represents the limit of the

resolution of the photo. Sometimes people report seeing 'faces' or 'figures' or other objects that weren't in the original photo, when they zoom into the detail of a photo using software. However, these 'objects' often consist of just a few dozen pixels. When you consider that each such pixel has a single colour and is shown as a rectangle, it is easy to see how strange shapes can appear that were never in the original scene in the real world. These pixels represent one bit of data from the picture – the colour in that position. You generally need dozens of such pixels to form even the finest detail in a picture. The simple rule is, if you can see individual pixels, you are beyond the resolution of the photo. You aren't seeing something that was ever really there, you are seeing a random shape caused by the rectangular shape used to display individual pixels.

ARTEFACTS: LOW LIGHTING

Sometimes people take photos which are largely dark. It could, for instance, happen if you took a flash photo outside at night with no nearby subject. The camera flash only has a range of a few metres so much of the photo will look dark. Such photos occasionally appear to include figures and other objects that 'shouldn't be there', particularly when they are 'lightened' in photo editing software.

The big thing to remember with such a photo is that it contains very little information, due to the lack of light, and almost no detail. However, photography needs a reasonable amount of light to show detail and so apparent details in a dark photo may be little more than noise. Electronic noise is common in the dark parts of photos and increases with higher ISO or sensor speed.

In addition, when you 'enhance' a photo in editing software it always changes the image. If you repeatedly 'enhance' a photo you will stop seeing more recovered detail and end up with artefacts of the enhancement process. It is possible that the true identity of an object in a dark photo cannot be recovered because the detail was simply never there in the first place. Instead you might see things that were never there in the real world.

The best thing to do with such photos is to look at other shots of the same scene, taken in daylight. Often the mysterious 'figure' will turn out to be a very poorly lit mundane object.

ARTEFACTS: REFRACTION AND DIFFRACTION

Digital cameras may be largely electronic but they still rely on optics. That means that various purely optical phenomena can affect photos. For instance, if you get water droplets on the lens of your camera it will produce a distorted

image. That is because the thin layer of water is acting like a mini lens, refracting light (ie. making it change direction). Such water droplets can produce strange splurges of light. The effect is caused by a combination of refraction and something called 'total internal reflection'. It means that light is bouncing around inside the water droplet before it finds the right angle to exit into the camera.

You can also get diffraction effects, producing spurious colours, caused by the sensor chip itself. These are very rare but can occur with a very bright light source in the photo.

ARTEFACTS: SHADOWS

When you take a photo with a flash, there are usually no visible shadows because they are behind the objects you are photographing (assuming the flash is mounted on the camera). However, sometimes people get weird shadow effects in flash photographs, sometimes interpreted as ghosts. There are two likely reasons for this. One is that there is a second bright source of light present, throwing visible shadows over the scene. The second is an object partially obscuring the flash unit itself. If something partially obscures the built-in flash of the camera taking the picture, the result is a strange shadow over the middle of the photo. If the photo was of a corridor, it might appear like a shadow ghost walking along it.

UNNOTICED OBJECTS AND MISIDENTIFICATIONS

Sometimes people notice objects or people in photographs that were not there at the time the shot was taken. At least, that is what they report. The fact is that we humans cannot remember all the major items of a scene, far less the detail, even when interviewed moments later. When photos are only examined hours, days or weeks later, our memory is even less certain. When it comes to comparing human memory and a photograph, memory is always going to be less reliable. If there is an obvious human figure in a photo then it was either really there or it is some kind of artefact (see above).



Fig 4: The bird in the centre of this photo could easily be unnoticed

Sometimes 'objects' are noticed in photos that are ambiguous in appearance. Parts of a tree or rock or building may resemble a face or figure. Such simulacra are fairly common. Humans have an inbuilt tendency to see faces and figures in otherwise random patterns. If the objects that make up the 'face' are clearly identifiable as other things then it is good case for considering it a simulacrum. UFOs often 'only' appear in photos (ie. not seen at the time of taking the photo). These often turn out to be distant aircraft, birds from unusual angles, toy balloons and any number of other aerial objects. There is a gallery of such misidentified UFOs on the ASSAP website.

FAKES

There is a tendency among some anomaly researchers to divide paranormal photos into 'fake' and 'genuine'. It is assumed that, if a photo is not a deliberately manufactured fake, it must be genuine. That is to say, it represents something paranormal. However, the vast majority of paranormal photos are not fakes but neither do they represent anything paranormal. Most are photographic artefacts or misidentifications, as explained above.

It is fashionable to examine paranormal photos to see if they have been deliberately manipulated by photo editing software. Very few have, apart from

compression to allow easier distribution. In fact, it is possible to produce far more convincing fake photos using old fashioned methods, like throwing a hub cap in the air to simulate a UFO or using double exposures (some modern digital cameras can do this easily) to produce a 'ghost'.

Those photos that have been manipulated can usually, though not always, be detected by various technical methods. The old fashioned methods, essentially manufacturing a 'ghost' or 'flying saucer' and then photographing it, often from a distance or in low light, are more difficult to detect. You should always ask yourself – 'is this photo too good to be true'? If so, it may well be a fake. If you suspect a fake, you need to examine the case as a whole, not just the photograph, for clues.

MISCELLANEOUS

There are many other possible causes of paranormal photos than those listed above. Some are natural, like mirages or spider's webs catching the sun. Both of these could be seen by the naked eye but might only be noticed once captured in a photo. We often only notice things in photos because cameras capture an instant in time and allow us to examine the details of a whole scene, something few of us do normally when simply looking.

But what about real paranormal photos - do they exist? If we take away all the photos that have been explained by the factors outlined above, there are very few left that remain unexplained. Even then, 'unexplained' does not necessarily mean paranormal. There may be a mundane explanation that no one has yet found for them. But without understanding the causes of apparently paranormal photos, outlined above, we wouldn't stand a chance of sifting out the real ones.

REPRODUCING ANOMALOUS PHOTOS

A vital tool in paranormal photo analysis is the ability to reproduce weird shots. It is important to reproduce photos using the original conditions in which they were taken. It might be easy to use a photo editor to reproduce a strange photo but that would not explain how it was done with just a camera.

The fact that it is possible to reproduce an anomalous photo in this way does not prove the original had natural causes. However, it does then become 'the theory to beat'. If a photo can be reproduced in the same conditions in which the original was taken, there would need to be some additional evidence available to imply that it, in fact, happened in some other way or paranormally.

All the major photographic anomalies described here can be reproduced quite easily. Exact reproduction of particular photos may be more difficult unless the

original conditions and equipment can be duplicated. For instance, some camera models have their own quirks (like producing diamond-shaped orbs) that others cannot reproduce. However, the fact that so many types of strange photo can be reproduced undermines the 'paranormal' status of many anomalous photos. The number of truly unexplained paranormal photos is tiny. The number of truly unexplainable ones is even tinier.

ANALYSING PARANORMAL PHOTOS

When analysing paranormal photos it is important to examine them, in the first instance, without knowing the circumstances of how they were shot. This is because the 'background story' can often contain (usually unintentional) assumptions about what the photo shows. This might influence what you see. You will often find that your interpretation of what is there, based purely on the photo, will differ from that of the photographer. Sometimes there will not even be an obvious anomaly at all. This is when the 'background story' can come in useful to help find it. It is always important to see the original photo as any copies may have been compressed, enhanced or even edited to 'show up' the anomaly.

It is important to look at the whole photo, not just at apparent anomalies. The rest of the photo often contains clues to the cause of an anomaly. For instance, a bright light at the side of the photo may be the source of coloured circles on the opposite side (lens flare).

The EXIF data is crucial for checking things like exposure time, whether flash was used (not always obvious from the picture), focal length and resolution. If the cause is not immediately obvious, you can always try recreating the shot to test your own theories.

It is very useful to examine any other photos taken around the same time and place as the 'paranormal' one. These can often resolve questions like 'is that a ghost or a tree in the dark churchyard?' A single photo is a frozen instant in time that can sometimes give a misleading impression of what was going on at the time.

POSTSCRIPT: PHOTOS OF GHOSTS

Many of the existing photos that are commonly thought to be of ghosts fall into the 'long exposure', 'unnoticed objects' or 'misidentification' categories. For there to be a convincing photo of a ghost we would need more evidence than just a single photo.

Given that ghosts are reported to look like normal people, in the majority of reports, perhaps there are photos of ghosts out there right now, completely

unrecognised. Or perhaps ghosts cannot be photographed. We don't really know for sure.

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CORRESPONDENCE

STREET LAMP INTERFERENCE

SLI is what happens when an individual seems to cause street lamps to turn off (or sometimes on) without physical contact, as they are approached. Trivial in itself, this carries momentous implications; for if it is a fact, it appears to demonstrate that a human being is capable of causing physical actions to occur at a distance without direct contact. This is something that science is – understandably – reluctant to admit. So if SLI can be shown to occur, it could be a breakthrough of great importance.

Such proof should not be difficult to obtain: if it could be performed under control conditions, and then replicated, that would establish it as a fact. But SLI is an elusive phenomenon, and has hitherto not shown itself amenable to testing. What we have is plenty of testimony – people saying ‘It happened to me!’ - but testimony is only as reliable as those who offer it, and needs to be confirmed with objective evidence. Because SLI is almost always spontaneous, and can rarely be anticipated or reproduced to order, such evidence is in practice difficult to obtain.

ASSAP has taken the lead in identifying SLI as a phenomenon. Following radio interviews, magazine features and other contacts, SLIDE (Street Lamp Interference Data Exchange) has received more than 200 letters from people from many countries claiming a SLI experience. Bearing in mind how few people know how to contact ASSAP, this suggests a fairly large population of SLIDers in the wide world. Several TV programmes have been devoted to the phenomenon, talking to us, consulting experts and of course interviewing the SLIDers themselves : but none has ever succeeded in capturing a SLI event on film.

WHAT PRECISELY TAKES PLACE IN A SLI EVENT?

It varies widely, but here is one letter we received from a young man from Harrogate:

My experience of SLI started in 1991 when I was 19. I was walking back from my girlfriend's house after a night out followed by a smooching session at her house. It was summer-time, in the small hours of the morning, and quite cold. I was walking through an open park lit by old-fashioned, ornate street lamps, when the nearest lamp-post to the footpath went out as I approached. I thought nothing of it except 'the bulb has gone'. The very same thing happened the following night, and again I dismissed it as a dodgy bulb and thought nothing of

it until it happened the next time I passed, at which point I started to think something was up.

Over the months as I returned home from my girlfriend's house, the lamp would always do the opposite as to its original state, i.e. if it was off it would turn on and vice versa. After passing the lamp-post it would usually revert to its original state - I would usually be over 100m from it when it did this. On the approach it would vary from 60m to 10m past the post before it would turn on or off.

I told my friends about the situation and to silence the sceptics and piss-takers I took them past the lamp-post one dark evening. Sod's law as nothing happened, not even a flicker.

It wasn't until I noticed I had the same effect on other lamp-posts that I noticed the conditions for the 'lamp-post thing' to happen. That is, it was usually late at night (after 9 pm, say), dark, quite chilly. And my state of mind. Usually I would be quite tired, on edge, nervous of my surroundings (fear of mugging, I suppose) and I reckon my adrenalin levels will have been up. This sort of explains why I couldn't 'perform' in front of my friends, having been in a relaxed situation. I have since shut my friends up as I have shown my ability on more than one occasion.

I can only think that the cause is over-active brain-waves, a result of my nervous emotions...

But SLI doesn't only happen to pedestrians; many motorists have recorded their experience. An American cab-driver reports:

I had been feeling uneasy all day... At around 9pm I drove west along East 4th Street: along this street were sodium vapour lamps spaced about 24 metres apart. As I passed, all of the lights on the south side of the street were going out, as I came up to a light, the next three would go out at the same time, then when I came to the fourth, the next three would go out.

The first question we ask is: are these really anomalous incidents? Or could the witnesses be misinterpreting perfectly natural events? Coincidence is ruled out by the fact that they happen repeatedly to the same persons, but not to others, and by recurring circumstances. Thus a Belgian SLIDER always experienced it after quarrelling with his partner, an American while driving home after having sex with his girlfriend.

Straightforward physical explanations are the first we look for. Car headlamps have been suggested, since most SLI occurs at night when headlamps are on. But as our Harrogate informant demonstrates, SLI is not limited to motorists. One witness told us 'It happened when I was walking, driving or riding my

bicycle', and another that it happened when he drove either of the two family cars, but never happened to his wife while she was driving the same cars.

So that rules out cars, but what about the streetlamps themselves? Could it be simple malfunction? We have all noted malfunctioning street lamps, but those involved in SLI incidents go out for some people and not for others. Sometimes they go out, one after another, in sequence. Or the same lamp may go out night after night when a particular individual goes near. For example:

Recently my mother and I stopped at a highway rest stop just north of Springfield, Illinois, to stretch our legs after many hours of driving. The previous day I had showed my mother that I made street lights turn off and she thought this was really odd. While at the rest stop, we both walked downwards to the restrooms and the light above us went out. This was the perfect opportunity to prove it to her. When we had come out of the restrooms, the light was back on again. So I walked toward the light and it went out again. We spent about 25 minutes individually walking toward the light pole and it went out every time for both of us. We stayed around and watched other people walk under it, nobody else had any effect on it.

So the easy explanations can be eliminated. SLI is not due to mechanical intervention or malfunction – or at any rate, not that alone. It is indeed a mechanical process, but it requires a human being to cause it to occur. And that individual is not just anyone, but someone who possesses a special ability which operates unconsciously and spontaneously.

RELATED PHENOMENA

If SLI were the only phenomenon of its kind, we might be able to dismiss it as a random puzzle. But of course it isn't. Psycho-kinesis (PK) has been shown to occur under control conditions – very rarely, indeed, and only with a few select individuals. Many RSPK (poltergeist) events display similar features. Closer to SLI, we have cases of people who cause machines to malfunction – kitchen appliances, radios and television, even wristwatches. One of our correspondents told us:

I worked in an office then, and one day the woman in the office next to mine called me over and really made me angry. Suddenly all the lights in her office went off, and the switchplate was too hot to touch. The maintenance man was baffled because she was on the same circuit as the rest of the offices, and only hers went out. I told her that I did it and she never bothered me again.

ASSAP has received testimony from people who claim to have affected railway crossings, restaurant power and stadium lighting, not to mention everyday

domestic lights. So we should regard SLI as just one type of event among many. We have concentrated on SLI because it is apparently the commonest of these happenings; because street lamps are public objects, visible to all and not easily tampered with; and because few people know how they actually work.

None of these phenomena has been established and explained scientifically, though the testimony is substantial and persuasive. ASSAP firmly discounts the supernatural, but inclines to the view that SLI results from an interaction between human beings and mechanical items, comparable to the remote on our televisions, but with the uncomfortable complication that only certain individuals, and perhaps only in a certain state of mind, and certain mechanical appliances, perhaps in an unstable condition, are involved.

WHAT CLUES DO WE HAVE?

Our investigation has focussed on the two elements – the street lamp itself, and the SLIder who interferes with it. We think it likely that those SLs which are affected are especially vulnerable – that they are verging on the unstable, and require only a small amount of interference to affect them.

The second element is the person who (generally) unconsciously does the interfering. Our informants range across the whole spectrum of humankind – all of them seemingly normal people leading normal lives. We have one confessed alcoholic, but he allowed for this when reporting his experience. Our attempts to establish some kind of profile have not produced any useful results.

The **behaviour** of the informants, on the other hand, does seem to be a promising line of approach. A great many SLIders report being in an unusual state of mind at the time. This is clearly an important clue, but here again we have not been able to establish any pattern. A Hungarian engineer said it happened to him only over a two-week period when he was concentrating on a difficult problem but others have reported that it happens to them when they are specially relaxed. A Greek lady (who also claims psychic abilities) told us that when dining out in a restaurant, she complained that the music was too loud. The manager refused to turn it down, so she concentrated her mind and blacked out the restaurant's power – they finished their meal by candlelight !

This is one of the rare instances when SLIders have deliberately caused SLI. One girl managed it to impress her sceptical boyfriend, and such events show that, sometimes at least, SLI can be brought under conscious control. But the great majority of incidents are spontaneous and apparently random. However, there may be an underlying pattern which for the time being eludes us.

INVESTIGATION

There have been a few attempts to put SLI on a scientific basis. The Research Committee of the SPR (under the late Professor Ellison) and the Psychology Department of the University of Hertfordshire (under Richard Wiseman) have done preliminary investigation, but with no useful results. This is understandable, for it is frustratingly difficult to test for something which occurs only sporadically and spontaneously, and which can rarely be performed to order, let alone replicated in lab conditions. That elusiveness is illustrated by this informant:

A friend and myself were talking about my ability to put out lights. He did not believe me, so I concentrated, and nothing was happening. As soon as I gave up, seven or eight in a row went out.

Almost every letter we receive contains some such sentiment as 'I am so glad to hear that you are investigating this matter – I thought I was the only person who had it happen to them.' We are glad to be able to reassure such people that they are not alone, but we would love to do more and explain to them just what is happening to them.

By its very nature – a seemingly simple, straightforward case of cause and effect – SLI should lend itself to investigation and exploration. ASSAP has hitherto been instrumental in gathering testimonial evidence for the phenomenon; now it needs to be explored more thoroughly, under control conditions, to establish beyond doubt what happens, how it happens, when it happens, to whom it happens, and most puzzling of all, why it happens.

In 1993 ASSAP published 'The SLI Effect', a report on what had been done and what remained to be done. This remains the only print resource on the subject and it is still valid. We have received a lot more testimony since then – our informants now number over 200 – but they simply add to the weight of evidence and confirm our original findings. The original letters can be inspected, and a limited number of copies of the report are available to members who would like to work on the project. ASSAP has taken the lead in establishing SLI as a phenomenon worthy of scientific interest, and so it would be appropriate if ASSAP could push matters farther by establishing the parameters within which it occurs.

If SLI has happened to you, or to anyone you know, ASSAP would love to hear from you. Equally, if you have any comments or suggestions. You can contact ASSAP direct by email at assap@assap.org or Hilary Evans at hilaryevans@btconnect.com

Further, I have been commissioned to write a book on the scientific enigma of Street Lamp Interference, in which people apparently affect street lamps as they walk, cycle or drive towards them, usually turning them off. Although I have 200+ statements by people who claim this experience, I am keen to gather all the data I possibly can. If SLI has happened to you, or someone you know, I would be glad to hear from you. Please provide as much information as you can, especially about the circumstances and your state of mind when it occurred. I would also be glad to hear from people who have affected other appliances, from domestic lights to railway crossings : also any comments or suggested explanations.

Contact me on hilaryevans@btconnect.com or by mail to 11 Granville Park London SE13 7DY.

Hilary Evans

BOOK REVIEWS

Book Review: The Near Death Experiences of Hospitalized Intensive Care Patients: A Five Year Clinical Study

By Penny Sartori

The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008. ISBN – 13:978-0-7734-5103-2. 564pp. Hardback. £85.00

This book is the result of a long term study into the reported incidence and phenomenology of Near Death Experiences (NDE) in a Welsh Intensive Therapy Unit (ITU).

At the time of commencement of this study, most NDE research was retrospective (Moody 1975, Ring 1980, Sabon 1982). A similar study, by Dr. Sam Parnia was begun at the same time, and followed a similar protocol, both projects being supervised by Dr. Peter Fenwick. Further prospective studies have since been published (Parnia 2005, Schwaning 2002).

The aim of this study was to establish if a reductionist argument for NDE's, including anoxia, hypercarbia or drug administration could explain what patients had described. One aspect of the study was attempted to verify the out of body component of the NDE by placing brightly coloured symbols in positions within the ITU which could only be viewed from an out of the body perspective. Similar quantitative studies are currently underway (Parnia 2008)

This study by Sartori was undertaken during the summer of 1997. The official data collection began in January 1998 and was completed in January 2003.

The methodology involved data collection, interviews, transcribing and data analysis. All of these were undertaken by the author for her PhD thesis. Each patient interviewed was simply asked "Do you have any recollections of anything during the time that you were unconscious?" The results were interesting; not least in the serious doubts they raise about the reductionist theories for NDE's suggested by some researchers (Blackmore 1993).

What makes this study even more interesting and useful, is that Sartori takes the time to place the NDE into its rightful historical context by examining the historical and cultural elements of the NDE. It may surprise many to learn that a commonly thought of 'core experience' of the NDE, the 'tunnel of light', is not present in some non western cultures and European historical accounts. For those who believe that the NDE is drug induced or the result of the 'dying brain' hypothesis, this is a severe blow.

That the NDE raises serious ontological questions about the nature of consciousness is beyond doubt to all but the most closed minded. Sartori raises

many epistemological questions during her research, and it is only with more studies of this caliber that we have any chance of getting to grips with one of the most puzzling and important questions facing us at the moment.

References:

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 Parnia, S. (2008) Personal communication
 Ring, K. (1980) *Life at Death*. Coward, McCann & Geoghegan
 Sabon, M. (1982) *Recollections of Death: An Investigation Revealing Striking New Medical Evidence of Life After Death*. Corgi Books
 Schwaninger, J. (2002) A Prospective Analysis of Near-Death Experiences in Cardiac Arrest Patients. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*, Summer, 20(4), pp. 215-32

David Taylor

Book review: Lore of the Ghost

by Brian Haughton.

New Page Books. 2008. 192pp. £11.99. ISBN 978-1-60163-024-7

This new book from Brian Haughton traces the origins of some of the most famous ghost motifs from around the world.

This is an original and thought-provoking book, which gives a long overdue and in-depth analysis of many famous ghost lore motifs. Brian does a fantastic job of tracing the folkloric and historical roots of many well known types of ghost – from the Wild Hunt and Women in White to Screaming Skulls and Phantom Hitchhikers.

With the Wild Hunt, certainly one of the most overtly pagan ghost experiences, Brian convincingly shows that modern reports of phantom horsemen have their roots in the Wild Hunt, from the Herlathing in England to the Cwn Annwn in Wales.

Along with phantom horseman, the spectral Lady in White is certainly one of the most enduring ghost motifs from around the world. She is often sighted alone in remote places, sometimes near stretches of water. Here Brian points out the similarities she shares with the Welsh Ladi Wen, or White Lady who is also often seen near pools and wells. It is this association that lends strong support to the notion that modern reports of White Ladies have much in common with pre-Christian chthonic deities.

There is a strong historical element running through this book, an element that thanks to Brian's excellent research, strongly suggests that many of the reports of apparitional experiences we know so well today, have their origins in a pre-Christian past. This is a past that includes phantom black dogs as chthonic psychopomps and headless horsemen who have more in common with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight than many modern researchers are aware or would like to acknowledge.

Brian is expertly placed to write this book as he is a qualified archaeologist and member of the Folklore Society with a strong interest in the paranormal, for which he is a consultant to the Midlands based psychical research group, Parasearch. Brian adds a feeling of someone who is extremely well read in the subject, and is able to guide the reader through a huge amount of historical literature with ease.

This is not simply yet another book on the folklore of ghosts and apparitions. What Brian has done is to show that folklorists and cultural anthropologists are perhaps best placed to investigate the paranormal. Folklorists and cultural anthropologists have for decades been grappling with a phenomenology fairly similar in complexity to that displayed by most paranormal subjects. The central phenomena of almost any folk tradition may have characteristics which are seemingly of this world and others which are more ephemeral, dreamlike, mythical, paranormal or even supernatural. To emphasise one aspect over the other, or to argue from an isolated position condemning the others, is an exercise in futility. Folklore accounts or narratives are judged to be the product of many forces; physical, social, political, economic, geographical, historical, cultural, psychological, mythical and religious (to name the most obvious), not the least among these being the sheer creativity of the human imagination. This is something that only a few researchers are beginning to understand and acknowledge. If anything, this new book only reinforces just how complex a phenomena ghosts are, and how important it is that we move away from a purely equipment led approach to the subject.

This is a scholarly book written in an easy to read style which will have you not only eagerly turning the page, but seeing ghosts in a completely new light. As Proust said "The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes".

David Taylor

Book Review: The Paranormal Caught On Film: Amazing Photographs of Ghosts, Poltergeists and Strange Phenomena

by Dr Melvyn Willin. Foreword by Guy Lyon Playfair.

David & Charles Cincinnati, 2008.140 pp \$16.99 (£12.99) ISBN 978 0 7153 2980

This collection of 'unexplained' photographs is a continuation from Melvyn's original book, *Ghosts Caught on Film*. It is for the reader to decide if there are, indeed, any mysteries to be solved in these strange photographs. As with so many other supposedly authentic 'paranormal' photographs the explanations often turn out to be rather mundane. The answers may be found in double exposure (in older cameras), lens flare and outright fraud, in many cases. My own take on this fascinating set of examples is that half of them may be easily explained but the other half are worthy of further investigation, such as one found on page 131. The faces of Mrs Webster's deceased parents appear to be captured on film behind the living subject of Mrs Webster herself. Readers will also decide for themselves whether or not they agree with my opinions.

Much as I would like to have recorded evidence of the supernatural, a part of me instinctively feels that we are not meant to have absolute, undeniable proof of an afterlife, if, indeed, such a thing exists. At my own investigations, conducted over many years in haunted properties across the U.K. and overseas, the ghosts have always refused to co-operate in the matter of providing evidence. On one occasion I was setting up a video camera when my assistant clearly saw an apparition at the end of the corridor. By the time the camera was ready it was, of course, all over. At another time I carefully set up a series of video cameras to 'trap' the manifestations that had been regularly seen in certain 'ghost walk' areas of Chicksands Priory. Over the course of a two night Christmas vigil three sightings were made by different witnesses. They were all on the first floor, where I had anticipated that they would be. They were, however, witnessed just out of the range of each and every one of our cameras.

Other researchers, like John Spencer, have told me about leaving video cameras running and then, either when the film ran out or the batteries drained down, poltergeist activity has broken out! My good friend and fellow APIS investigator, Michael Lewis, recounted an experience at the Talbot Inn in Leicester. The landlord had locked Michael into the pub, together with another investigator, who stationed himself upstairs. A stranger sauntered into the bar downstairs and went into a room near where Michael was situated. Michael called out to his colleague, who came downstairs and together they searched the room that the 'stranger' had entered. There was only one way in and out and the 'man' had completely vanished. Michael had seen the ghost of the Talbot Inn. On the bar lay Michael's fully loaded camera, everything had happened so quickly that he hadn't had time to get a photograph of the manifestation. These and many more

incidents have supported my feeling that somehow, some unwritten law decrees that we are just not meant to get incontrovertible photographic ghostly evidence.

The 60+ photographs in Melvyn's new book cover a wide range of anomalous phenomena, which are neatly and conveniently arranged under five separate subject matter headings. These are 'ghostly figures', 'strange lights and apparitions', 'simulacra', 'poltergeists and other phenomena' as well as 'back from the dead'. Some famous cases are represented here, such as the highly documented Enfield poltergeist of 1977, the allegedly spontaneous human combustion of Mrs E.M. of London in 1958 and the so-called 'Angel in the Vatican' that appeared in the Daily Express in 2007. We have examples from every decade from 1929 through to 2007 and the majority of these are from the U.K. and North America with others from Europe, Australia and South America. The story behind each illustration is given and sometimes helpful notes guide the enquirer to sources of further information. This is a well produced book that should be shared with like-minded friends. It may well provide a source of speculation which may prompt some interesting discussions.

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BOOK REVIEWS: LATE SUBMISSIONS

Summary reviews of books submitted by publishers too late to be allocated for full review.

Book Review: Exposed! Ouija, Fire Walking and Other Rubbish.

Broch, H. 2009: Johns Hopkins University Press: USA. pp.147 (hbk). No RRP. ISBN: 978-0-8018-9246-2

One could be forgiven for getting excited about receiving the follow-up to *Debunked!* by Henri Broch. In theory this brief text ticks all the right boxes, seven chapters covering everything from: dowsing to clairvoyance to developing psychic powers, all subdivided into an array of fascinating topics including Ouija, haunted houses, ESP and horoscopes; all with a concise and critically aware treatment.

Unfortunately *Exposed!* does not live up to expectations. Whether the original text or the translation makes for a dry read is not clear. The *a priori* assumptions and attitudes are a surprise. Ironically several sub-chapters boil down to little more than anecdotes which fail to scratch the surface of substantive areas of enquiry. An opportunity missed.

Book Review: Paranormal Hertfordshire: True Ghost Stories. O'Dell,

D. 2009: Amberley Publishing: Stroud. pp.159 (pbk). £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-84868-118-7

A well-written compendium of historical and current cases in Hertfordshire. Traditional location shots are interspersed with the occasional 'anomaly' photo. What really marks *Paranormal Hertfordshire* out from other heritage books is the deft interweaving of non-haunting phenomena into the mix in such proportions that haunted heritage buffs will walk away both happy and having learnt something a little broader.

Book Review: Paranormal North East: True Ghost Stories. Ritson, D.

W. 2009: Amberley Publishing: Stroud. pp.155 (pbk). £12.99. ISBN: 978-1-84868-196-5

Paranormal North East gets off to a good start with foreword by ASSAP chairman, Dave Wood. Readers have grown accustomed to finding something a little different when comparing Ritson books with traditional heritage books. *Paranormal North East* feels much more like a journey than a compendium, with each case coming from the author's own investigation records – sometimes

in the form of narrative – with musings on the nature of the paranormal and an overall sense of cohesion.

Sometimes the commentary is rather more open-minded than it should be, but readers can still expect a different type of book.

Book Review: Paranormal South Tyneside: True Ghost Stories.

Hallowell, M. J. 2009: Amberley Publishing: Stroud. pp.127 (pbk). £12.99.
ISBN: 978-1-84868-730-1.

Paranormal South Tyneside takes the anomaly heritage book to new levels with twenty-one themed chapters from ‘Angels’ and ‘Animal Anomalies’ to ‘Time Slips’ and ‘UFOs’. This approach is to be commended but, with chapters of a few pages then subdivided into several accounts, the commentary often feels brief and credulous.

Nicky Sewell

ASSAP Review Editor

ANOMALY: GUIDANCE NOTES & HOUSE STYLE

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

Papers should be submitted in the English language and should directly relate to some area of psychical research.

Authors take responsibility for any views aired, and published articles do not reflect the views of ASSAP.

TYPES OF SUBMISSION:

Please note that word limits are flexible.

- Letters may relate to previous articles published and can be written in a personal style. Letters should not be more than 1500 words.
- Book reviews should not be greater than 1500 words.
- Articles and research notes should not be greater than 8,000 words. We encourage authors to write such articles in an impersonal style, but this is not mandatory.
- Diagrams and photos should be submitted in grayscale if possible with a dpi of 300, but do seek guidance if you are unsure.

FOOTNOTES AND REFERENCES:

We prefer that footnotes are not used, however notes may be made at the end of articles with an appropriate numbering system in the text.

We encourage all authors to provide references, although this is not mandatory. This means that if you make an assertion of fact, especially about previous research conducted, you cite the source article, book or web address.

We prefer the Harvard system of referencing. Sentences containing references should include the author and year in parentheses, e.g. “theories suggest that orbs are not paranormal in nature” (Townsend, 2006).

Where such references are included in the text an alphabetical list should be included at the end of the document, in the following style:

Henry, J. (Ed.) (2005). *Parapsychology: Research on Exceptional Experiences*. East Sussex: Routledge

Parapsychological Association (2006a) *What is the PA?*

URL http://www.parapsych.org/mission_statement.html Date accessed: 04 September 2006.

Thalbourne, M. A. (2005) ‘The Pros and Cons of Being a Parapsychologist’. *Society for Psychical Research: Paranormal Review*, 36, 21-22

If you are uncertain please always seek guidance.

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