

psi research nowadays in the world. And it is really important that they not only support the research, but also publish their results, making possible dialogue among scientists and spreading information to those interested in general.

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**My Thirty Years Among the Dead** by Carl A. Wickland with N. M. Watts, C. L. Gorez and O.D. Gorez. National Psychological Institute, Los Angeles, 1924. 390 pp. (hardcover). (Also a 95 paperback version with the same title published by Amherst Press, Wisconsin, which has an introduction and postscript to the main volume and copies of some of the contents.)

This must be one of the strangest books in the annals of psychiatry and psychic research. The short version informs us that Carl August Wickland was born 1861 in Norland, Sweden; that he emigrated to St. Paul, Minnesota and in 1896 married Anna Anderson, also of Swedish birth. We learn that Mrs. Wickland was a medium who had given public demonstrations since 1891. She was to become the center of Wickland's practice and of his book.

We also learn that Wickland received his MD in 1900 from Dunham Medical College, Chicago, and was a general practitioner for several years. He was drawn to mental illness and in 1905 built a generator of static electricity for the treatment of obsession. Wickland explains, "The static machine which I use, constructed by myself under the direction of intelligent spiritual forces . . . contains fourteen 30 inch diameter glass discs, all active, giving a powerful current" (p. 14). A photo shows the machine next to Wickland and behind his wife. It is an ornate box of dark wood, about four by five feet, elevated a few feet from the floor. The front of the box is open and shows the machinery and the leads for the client to hold. Wickland's facility included a dining room for patients and a hall for social functions (p. 39).

Aside from supposed spirit guidance via his wife, Wickland was inspired by John Wesley's *Primitive Physics*. I knew that Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church but not that he was a lay physician who had four clinics in London where he used static electricity to treat "lunacy, epilepsy, headaches, dropsy, paralysis, and convulsions" (p. 14).

Wickland describes the function of the machine and Mrs. Wickland's role in the treatment of patients: "The transference of the mental aberration or psychosis from a patient to the psychic intermediary, Mrs. Wickland, is facilitated by the use of static electricity, which is applied to the patient, frequently in the presence of the psychic. Although this electricity is harmless to the patient it is exceedingly effective, for the obsessing spirit cannot long resist such electrical treatment and is dislodged. Induced by our invisible helpers the spirit may then enter the psychic, when it becomes possible to come into direct contact with the entity, and an endeavor is made to bring him to a realization of his true condition and of his higher possibilities. He is then removed and cared for by the advanced spirits and Mrs. Wickland again returns to her normal self."

In 1909, Wickland established the National Psychopathic Institute in Chicago and worked there with Mrs. Wickland to treat patients until 1918 when they moved to Los Angeles. There he set up the National Psychological Institute where the couple worked until 1937 when Mrs. Wickland died. Wickland then retired and the Institute closed; he died in 1945. Reading between the lines, it becomes clear that the writer-editor of the short version was Nellie Watts, a spiritualist who helped take care of Wickland's patients and typed the communications from the spirits who spoke through Mrs. Wickland (in this and the following read "ostensible spirits" for "spirits"). Watts is listed in the large volume as one of three coauthors.

There is little doubt that Mrs. Wickland had psychic ability. When Wickland was in medical school, one day he was to perform his first dissection. He was unaware of this fact before leaving home, "therefore my wife's subconscious mind could not possibly have taken any part in what transpired later" (p. 30). When Wickland returned home after dissecting a man's leg, his wife suddenly seemed ill and almost fell. He placed a hand on her shoulder to steady her, but she drew herself up and exclaimed, "What do you mean by cutting me?" Wickland replied that he was not aware of cutting anyone but was told, "Of course you are! You are cutting on my leg!" After further exchanges, the spirit agreed that it had died, had no further use for its old body and that Wickland could cut away. But then it suddenly added, "Say, Mister, give me a chew of tobacco" (p. 31). Wickland replied that he had none. He noted that Mrs. Wickland disliked the sight of anyone chewing tobacco, ruling out the possibility that her subconscious played a role in the episode. He later examined the teeth of the cadaver and found that the man had been a regular tobacco chewer. Wickland mentioned two other instances when spirits from the dissecting room seemed to follow him home and communicated veridical

details about their lives through Mrs. Wickland. He also said that he had often verified the spirits that came through Mrs. Wickland as people he had known or who were known to relatives of his patients.

Psychic information about a person in the presence of the person or in the presence of an object the person has handled is commonly produced by mediums; cases where the communicator apparently has no link to anyone present are rare. During a psychic circle in Chicago, November 15, 1906, Mrs. Wickland was entranced by a spirit who repeatedly said, "Why didn't I take more carbolic acid? I want to die; I'm so tired of living" (p. 39). The spirit then whispered, "My poor son!" When pressed, the spirit said that her name was Mary Rose and that she lived at 202 South Green Street, an address unknown to the Wicklands. The spirit could not recall any date, but when asked, "Is it November 15, 1906?" she replied, "No, that is next week." She said that life had been a tribulation, that she had chronic ailments, and that she took poison to end it but found she was still alive. Wickland inquired at the address given and learned that a Mrs. Rose had lived in the house and had been taken to the Cook County Hospital. A son was still in the home. Wickland inquired at the hospital and discovered that Mrs. Rose had died there November 8 from taking carbolic acid (p. 40).

Veridical entities with no obvious connection to anyone present, such as Mary Rose, are now referred to as drop ins and usually come through during attempts to contact departed friends and relatives of those present. Alan Gauld (1971), the British psychologist and psychic researcher, has investigated a number of such cases from Ouija board sittings by a group near Cambridge. An examination (Roll, 1982) shows that most of them had geographical links, which is to say psychometric links, to members of the group. Single drop ins will be found in Myers (1903, Vol. 2, pp. 471-473), Tyrrell (1939), Zorab (1939/1940), and Stevenson (1973).

Wickland was convinced that multiple personalities, such as the four alternating personalities that Morton Prince (1900/1901) identified in his patient, Miss Beauchamp, in fact were spirits of the dead.

Most of the book is taken up by verbatim dialogues between Wickland and the spirits. He routinely asked for name, address, and time on earth but, except for the cases mentioned, the responses were too general to check. It seems that the spirits were either unidentifiable drop ins or represented Mrs. Wickland's personification of the mental problems of the patients of her husband.

In any case, Wickland's exchange focused on convincing the spirit that its body was gone and that the body of the patient and of Mrs. Wickland, which the spirit now briefly occupied, did not belong to it and that it was time to move on.

Wickland was certain he was dealing with spirits of the departed. He gives three reasons: (1) The behavior of the spirits reflected the symptoms of the patient; (2) the patient felt relieved when the supposed intruder was removed and gradually recovered, "although there may be a number of spirits requiring removal from the same patient" (p. 33); and (3) he often authenticated the identity of the spirit.

The cases appear in the form of lengthy dialogues between the spirits and Wickland where the spirits behave like prisoners who have been forced to appear in front of a magistrate. They do not know what Wickland wants from them and when he takes their hands (i.e., Mrs. Wickland's) to restrain them, they say that he is not to touch them, and so on. This is countered by Wickland trying to demonstrate that they are dead and need to move to a better place. These attempts are not always successful. A female entity, the first of four that occupied a client (pp. 43–68) could not be convinced and had to be removed by spirit guides. After remonstrations amounting to eleven pages in the book, two other entities went by themselves. The fourth left in the company of several spirit helpers, one an American Indian girl. When Wickland asked if her name was Silver Star, one of Mrs. Wickland's controls, the answer was affirmative. The patient, who had been unable to work, was now able "to take a clerical position in a large commercial house" (p. 68). American Indians often act as spirit guides according to the spiritualist tradition.

Separate chapters deal with the spirits of criminals, suicides, drug addicts, religious fanatics, and others. There are chapters about the supposed errors of Christian Science and Theosophy that include visits to the Wicklands from the spirits of Mary Baker Eddy and Helena Blavatsky, respective founders of the two schools. Eddy and Blavatsky apparently changed their minds post mortem and now favored spiritualism. Wickland's work occupies a curious place in the history of psychic research. Some might say that it is not even part of that history. There is no entry for Wickland in the *Biographical Dictionary of Parapsychology* (Pleasants, 1964) and his work is rarely mentioned. Nevertheless it comes from the same source, spiritualistic sessions with mediums, which inspired the work of Richard Hodgson (1855–1905), James Hyslop (1854–1920), Eleanor Sidgwick (1845–1936), and many others. Scott Rogo (1987) has a review of work involving spirit possession and related topics.

Wickland's system explains all psychic and many psychological phenomena in terms of spirit activity. More significantly, he created a form of therapy for mental and sometimes physical disease that often seemed to work.

Wickland regarded his patients as fundamentally healthy. The problem was not that they had something wrong with them but that the personalities of the departed had invaded their bodies. The way to deal with an intruder was to dislodge it from the patient, have it enter the medium, and then use logic to persuade it that it was dead and needed to go to the world of spirits. This all happened in the presence of the patient and must have been powerfully suggestive.

Charles Tart (2005), a parapsychologist who specializes in altered states of consciousness, believes that Mrs. Wickland's psychic insight could have had a strong effect. "Insofar as a neurotic condition rests on some repression of important emotional episodes and/or convoluted defense mechanisms, a clear awareness of the basic issues by Mrs. Wickland (personified as a possessing spirit) could be quite shocking and temporarily or permanently crumble some defenses."

The effect of Wickland's treatment would be somewhat similar to the Freudian system, which is said to succeed because the patient's unconscious is brought to the surface by psychoanalysis. Peter Mulacz (2005), the Austrian parapsychologist, refers to Wickland's procedure as a form of persuasion therapy.

You can look at Wickland's method from two perspectives, scientific and practical. From a scientific point of view his theory is untenable because it cannot be falsified. When his treatment did not work for a patient, instead of rejecting or modifying the theory, Wickland attributed the problem to spirits who were too obstinate or too numerous to easily dislodge.

Yet, an unscientific approach may still be of practical use. It is quite possible that Wickland's patients were helped by the belief that they had been possessed by alien spirits that could be sent away.

It is interesting that for some people their mental problems are experienced as separate and often competing personalities. The four selves that made up Prince's (1900-1901) patient, Miss Beauchamp, is a celebrated example. I once went to a lecture by a well known multiple personality who had been reduced to a single personality by then. This came at a cost because integration meant that each personality would die, a fact of which they seemed aware. The integration of one and then another was vigorously resisted and caused them the agony of death, the central and surviving personality grieving each loss. This problem did not arise for the spirits of Wickland; they were not extinguished but sent to a better world.

I said that this book must be one of the strangest in the annals of psychiatry and psychic research. This may be true only for Anglo-Saxon countries. I have visited clinics in Brazil where medical and mental problems were routinely addressed by mediums and their supposed spirit helpers. Moreira-Almeida and Neto (2005) say that the spiritualistic approach to mental disease exerts a great influence on the treatment of mental disorder in Brazil and seems successful in many instances. Between the 1930s and 1970s nearly 50 psychiatric hospitals based on this principle were built. However, the Brazilian approach does not reject the biological, psychological, or social causes of some psychiatric disorders.

Moreira-Almeida and Neto suggest that the importance of spiritualism in Brazil calls for more academic research on this tradition. With this I can only agree.

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**Sheldrake and His Critics: The Sense of Being Glared At** edited by Anthony Freeman. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*. Vol. 12, No. 6, June 2005.

Rupert Sheldrake is a biologist and a former Research Fellow of the Royal Society and Fellow of Clare College Cambridge. For the past 20 years, he has conducted independent research and has written several books on psi and related topics. In his 2003 book, *The Sense of Being Stared At*, Sheldrake presents evidence for the existence of anomalous staring detection, the ability to detect the gaze of another person when normal sensory cues are not present. (My *JSE* review of the book is Bem, 2004.) This phenomenon and Sheldrake's proposed theoretical model of it are the focus of the special issue of the *Journal of Consciousness Studies* here under review. The issue comprises two articles by Sheldrake, commentaries by 14 contributors, and Sheldrake's response to those commentaries.

In the first article, Sheldrake provides an updated review of the empirical research on staring detection. As he notes, tests of the phenomenon were both initiated and set back for decades by two American psychologists, E. B. Titchener and J. Edgar Coover. Both claimed to have shown that the sense of being stared at was illusory. Titchener's paper was widely cited by skeptics for more than 100 years despite the fact that he provided neither experimental details nor data in support of his conclusion.