

Orion RNG, which was placed close to the patients from one hour before to one hour after the distant healing intervention time. This study intended also to verify the possible effects of this distant healing in the test group in comparison to the control group. We hope to have access to the evaluation of data soon.

We consider the Third Psi Meeting: Real-life Implications and Applications of Psi superior to the previous ones not only in terms of quantity and quality of papers—which has improved in general—but also in consideration of the depth of discussions on such a difficult subject. We can say that Psi Meeting is, nowadays, one of the most important events in the field of psi research held in Latin America. The increasing quality of each edition permits us to wait for future conventions that are even more successful than the third one.

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From Shaman to Scientist: Essays on Humanity's Search for Spirits, by James Houran. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004. 286 pp. \$45.00 (paper). ISBN 0810850540.

From Shaman to Scientist begins by a preface by Richard Wiseman who has undertaken several studies on allegedly haunted locations in the UK. Wiseman notes that despite his certainty that the phenomena fall under the realm of normal scientific explanation, these phenomena are a fascination of, and passionately embraced by the general public. He suggests that ghost experiences can be insightfully revealing about the nature of human psychology. This sentiment is echoed by several writers throughout the volume. Wiseman also suggests that the fundamental questions about definitions, ways of exploring and ontological considerations regarding ghost phenomena can and should only be fully answered via the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches to their study. As editor, Houran has valiantly endeavoured to incorporate multidimensional perspectives to the study of ghost phenomena in this volume.

Wiseman correctly observes that gaining an accurate and extensive understanding of ghostly phenomena must also respect the social, cultural and historical context in which they are observed. He considers that this volume "is a celebration of those diverse perspectives and deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone with a serious, but open-minded, interest in things that go bump in the night. Whatever those things turn out to be" (p. ix).

Houran sets the scene for this volume with a personal view on his own fascinating work and experiences investigating apparent haunting phenomena from the perspective of a psychologist. He shares that his skeptical mind does not rule out the genuine existence of ghosts and unexplained haunting anomalies, although he considers that ghosts may result from the very nature of human psyche. This idea is echoed by other authors in this collection. Houran notes that science, at present, may not be able to explain all aspects of these phenomena, but he suggests that scientific study of haunting phenomena is still under development. Whatever the explanation for ghostly phenomena turns out to be, it is clear that ghost experiences are both common and subjectively very real and as such deserve to be explored from a variety of approaches.

Chapter One, titled "Science in search of spirit" is about the development of human understanding and investigation of spirits across history, by Annekatrin Puhle and Adrian Parker. They describe how spirits were commonplace in the world of the shaman, who frequently entered an inner world and connected with spirits and the souls of ancestors who had long been deceased. This world was ruled more by intuition than logic, which is in stark contrast to the dominant western world view of rational science and technical thinking. The western view has tended to disallow for the existence of spirits, and ignored or belittled them as madness or irrational foolishness. The authors suggest that modern scientific disciplines such as parapsychology and quantum physics could potentially alter this perspective. The authors observe how there is a consistency in the core elements of ghost and spirit phenomena across time and cultures, although there are differences in the interpretations of such phenomena, which shift according to cultural beliefs.

Puhle and Parker are not yet convinced that rationality can truly understand the phenomena, perhaps because laboratory studies are so different from the natural context of these experiences. It is noted that parapsychology has shifted toward seeing paranormal phenomena in terms of applied quantum theory, where interconnectiveness and belief systems are part of the recipe. It is of interest that one of the most successful experiments in parapsychology was one in which the authors undertook rituals, which might be returning to the outlook of the early shaman, who these authors view as a prototypical psychical researcher.

Two chapters truly stand out in this volume; that by James McClenon and that by Michael Winkelman. In fact, these make the purchase of the volume well worthwhile. Both chapters take the perspective that the perception of spirits is fundamental to human nature, but remain neutral with regard to the

ontological reality of ghosts. McClenon's contribution (Chapter Two) explores religion and paranormal experiences from an evolutionary and cultural perspective. The chapter presents McClenon's *ritual healing theory* in a potted form, and is an absorbing and fascinating read. The theory is that the human capacity for dissociation developed as a coping mechanism and means for accessing relaxation-facilitating altered states of consciousness in certain rituals. With the biological and social benefits associated with dissociative ability, it is proposed that there was an increase in the genes which are associated with dissociation and hypnotic ability. Dissociative experiences allow for a range of anomalous phenomena, including psychokinesis (PK) and other anomalous phenomena which became tied up with Shamanism. Anomalous experiences, in particular PK (observed in some rituals such as native American tent shaking rituals) engenders belief in spirits and life after death. This is because the apparent anomalies are directly perceptible and often occur around death. Physical anomalies then become associated with the dead person and are labeled as the acts of spirits. These events are then re-represented in folk narratives which can then propagate folk beliefs via retelling within a particular community. If all normal explanations are ruled out, these phenomena can become socially evidential. McClenon does not rule out the possibility that some of these PK/spirit phenomena could be genuine, and notes the fascinating work of Batchelder who observed how the removal of disbelief or encouragement of belief may facilitate genuine PK, via access to a pro-PK state of mind, even when the original stimulus for that belief might have been faked. In the context of Shamanism, dissociation driven removal of disbelief might also drive genuine healing experiences via positive effects on the immune system and pain relief.

In Chapter Three, Winkelman takes an anthropological/neurocognitive perspective on spirit experiences associated with Shamanism, and observes how spirit experiences are fundamentally revealing about the nature of human consciousness. He takes this view based on the neural structure of the brain, psycho-cognitive constructs (e.g., theory of mind, tendency for mirroring), and the social context of human consciousness. Winkelman suggests that the perception of spirits is tied up with being human, and although this does not establish their ontological reality, it does establish their phenomenal reality (p. 59). Winkelman observes that human consciousness results from a system of interacting components and is a process that mediates between the sense of self and the sense of social others, which is mapped via social mirroring and cross modal transformations to imagery based and language based representations. This social foundation of the self in relation to social others, implies that humans are hardwired to sense the presence of others. We also have a tendency to animate things, which allows us to further understand the animistic thinking (and feeling) that is apparent in shamanistic states of consciousness. The possession of a theory of mind and tendency to experience a sense of presence are implicated in the perception of spirit others in unity consciousness and

altered states of consciousness experiences produced via shamanism. Animistic experiences manifest in metaphoric cross modal links between symbols into kinaesthetic embodiment. Winkelman finishes the chapter noting that that it is surprising, given the structure of human consciousness, that we do not perceive spirits more often. He also suggests that locating spirits in the brain does not rule out the existence of genuine spirits.

Christa Tuczay's contribution is a very detailed historical chapter on the concept of apparitions, ghosts and revenants (undead souls who return to the world of the living) in both ancient and medieval sources. It draws from historical documents chronicling folklore about the twilight zone between living and dying; which has formed part of religious beliefs, cultures and rituals in all societies. The author explores the afterlife and interactions between living and dead in terms of Greek culture, then moves into the medieval era and finally considers the impact of Christian thinking on the behaviour and attributes of ghostly figures. The work is possibly slightly over-academic in its approach, but contains some valuable insights into understanding ghosts and spirits as part and parcel of the cultural eyes which are observing them. By looking at the origins of ghost experiences across historical kpoques, the chapter gives insightful context to a lot of ghost folklore that exists in the modern world. One example is in the case in the example in the origins of the vampire myth, which encompasses an ancient notion that the dead might return to the world of the living, and feast on the blood of the living. The notion of the returning dead, empowered by human blood is apparent in early Greek beliefs, the Norse folklore about the undead draughr, and the medieval/Christian idea of preventing revenants by putting a stake through the breast of the dead person prior to burial. Tuczay gives a multitude of examples from historical documents, which can leave the reader feeling at times interested, but overstimulated. At the end of this chapter, one has the impression that the concept of the ghost is far from simple and that modern folklore regarding ghosts is painted with remnants of ideas from the past fused with current belief systems.

Peter Mulacz is the contributor for Chapter Five, which chronicles a thorough historical perspective on poltergeist research. Mulacz does this by presenting biographies of those active in such research in France (Flammarion and Tizané); Italy (Bozzano); the German speaking countries (Puls, Piper, Baron Schrenck-Notzing, Moser, Wassilko, Bender, von Lucadou), United Kingdom (Price); and the United States of America (Roll). The result is both informative, and of great academic interest for those interested in anomalous physical phenomena which may or may not incorporate "spirits". Ideas differ across researchers regarding the nature of physical phenomena associated with poltergeists. Some of the context of this research focused on the activity of physical mediums (e.g., Rudi Schneider, Kraus, Eusapia Palladino, among others), while others have had the fortune to explore spontaneous poltergeist cases (e.g., Rosenheim and the Eleanore Zugun case). Some researchers addresses these phenomena as unresolved and

unconscious psychological problems, which become manifest in the physical world (e.g., Wassilko, Schrenck-Notzing, Bender, among others). As such, they consider that the focus should be on understanding the *psychology* of the focal person, and their immediate social environment. Recently, Roll has explored the importance of *the long body* (the relationship between the agent and other family members) and that physical phenomena were actual displays of physical energy. Roll also found that RSPK agents show symptoms of complex partial seizure—electromagnetic discharges in the brain, and hypothesized that these phenomena are inherently electromagnetic in their nature (supported by observations of a correlation with the earth's geomagnetic activity and theory). Recent theorizing fuses physics with parapsychology, in an observer created universe. Mulacz notes that for the majority of the twentieth century, the agency of the physical phenomena associated with poltergeists has been assumed to be located in human ability, rather than in the activity of discarnate spirits. Mulacz also suggests that this notion is not a new one, and may be traced back to ideas expounded by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa ab Nettesheim who he quotes as stating "In us—neither in the underworld, nor in the stars of the sky—Dwells the Spirit that, if it is strong, causes such" (p. 181).

Chapter Six is written by Sylvia Grider, who writes on *American children's ghost stories*. This chapter explores the role of the telling of ghost stories among mainstream American children in the modern era. Such stories feature a range of characters, including ghosts, witches, monsters, etc., in intentionally frightening plots. Stories are told, and perpetuated amongst peer groups of children at informal and adult free gatherings. They are very much performance-related and the story teller tends to manipulate the setting of the storytelling to maximize the level of inherent "spookiness", in legend climate (lights out, candlelit, whispered tales in sleepover situations). Adept storytellers adapt the stories according to the nature of the audience. Such stories are influenced by stories and traditions associated with Halloween, stories told via the media (books, TV and the internet), and via stories from a variety of immigrant cultures meeting in integrated schools. Grider gives some examples of the origins of traditional stories and stories derived from personal (e.g., visits to haunted houses) and media sources, and how they have been assimilated into American culture; in the language of children. Stories associated with traditional sources might have a joke component at the end, while personally derived stories are often labeled "true" by the storyteller. Similar themes are apparent in urban legends, told and perpetuated by adolescents and adults, which are darker in tone, but serve a similar purpose in communicating supernatural belief systems and life lessons. Grider considers that whatever the extent of true belief among American children, there are several roles for children's ghost story telling. Firstly, these stories allow for the learning of the rudiments of ancient supernatural belief systems. Secondly, they have a warning function with regard to staying away from dangerous situations. Thirdly, they may function as an aid to the

development of distinguishing fantasy from reality. Fourthly, they allow for a sense of control over fears by controlling the action of story characters. Finally, Grider suggests that development storytelling skills have a role in the development of narrative technique (e.g., literary structure, plot sequence, development) and flexibility and creativity among children. This is an interesting chapter, exploring a role for the perpetuation of ghost stories in a western culture. However, this author considers that the chapter does not really fit with the remit of the collection.

John Potts presents a skeptical exploration of the practice of amateur ghost hunting in the modern era (by assessment of a variety of internet web sites). It is clear that attempts to demonstrate whether there is any validity to apparently supernatural phenomena can be traced back to the Spiritualist era. Early organizations founded to investigate paranormal phenomena were The Cambridge Ghost Club (1851), The London Ghost Club (1862) and the Society for Psychical Research (1882). These were followed by the development of academic parapsychology (in the first instance by J.B. Rhine at Duke University). Potts considers that modern amateur ghost hunting groups often function without recourse to the scientific method. They also adopt and often rely on a variant of "techno-mysticism", a fusion of the scientific methods (attempts to measure and record) with spiritual beliefs which has been apparent since the Enlightenment in Western culture. These methods (as applied to ghost hunting) include ghost photography, electronic voice phenomena, electromagnetic field detectors, thermometers, thermal scanners, night vision video cameras, motion detectors, etc. It is of note that the ghost hunting of academic parapsychology has less dependence on such technical "evidence" as the onus is more on ruling *out* normal explanations than demonstrating the existence of ghosts *per se*. Contemporary amateur ghost hunting reflects a diversity of approaches and methods; including empirical, pseudoscientific and sensational approaches. This diversity is clear from the number of web sites dedicated to ghost study and the presentation of 'evidence' for the existence of ghosts (including electronic voice phenomena, orb photographs, anecdotal accounts, etc.). There is considerable variation in the belief systems and approaches of the authors of these sites, but Potts considers that they are all characterized by an attempt to provide *evidence*. To Potts, many of these web sites demonstrate a harmless outlet for ill informed belief systems. However, high media treatment of such groups could potentially be harmful to the reputation of more scientifically oriented research groups, unless the scientific approach is adequately propagated.

In his capacity as a ghost investigator and paranormal researcher, Loyd Auerbach has written an interesting afterword to this collection. Auerbach considers that ghost phenomena are complex in their very nature, and as such, to truly understand their nature, studying them requires the consideration of a diversity of viewpoints and perspectives. As indexed in this collection, researchers of ghosts differ considerably in their focus. For example, where

some are proof oriented, others take on a more *shamanic* role—diagnosing the experience and providing a resolution to those who are experiencing the phenomena (whatever their origin). Auerbach considers that there is much need for the scientific study of ghost phenomena, but that this should be supplemented by historical, cultural and religious considerations. This is the case irrespective of the objective veridicality of "ghosts". He suggests that consciousness may be further understood by understanding more about ghost experiences, and that this is equally mysterious when addressing living minds as it may be for understanding potentially discarnate minds. Researchers can only explore the human conscious experience of ghosts, which can be influenced by a variety of factors, including beliefs and expectations. The public fascination with ghosts and mysteries often leads to an oversimplified understanding of the phenomena, which are sensationalized by the media. The interest should be supplemented by encouragement to question sources and think about *all* influences on ghost phenomena. He finishes his commentary by stating "Do ghosts exist? They do in the hearts and minds of human beings, whether one believes in them or not, no matter how one looks for explanations, people have these experiences" (p. 238).

James Houran includes a valuable list for further reading at the end of the collection, which take a more scholarly focus to the topic under consideration. He also includes a summary of the background of each of the contributors. Overall, this collection contains some interesting articles, but fails to hang together as a collective on humanity's search for spirits. It is worth reading for addressing aspects of overlap between shamanism and ghost experiences (particularly McClenon's ritual healing theory, Winkelman's understanding of the nature of consciousness and the history of poltergeist research) but is lacking in that many approaches to understanding the ghost experience are missing, despite the editor and commentators' suggestions that there is need for a multidisciplinary approach to this area. The writing within this volume commendably reflects a diversity of beliefs, and approaches to understanding the fundamentally human experience of spirits and hauntings. This topic benefits considerably from this type of approach. Houran hopes that the volume may help inspire a new generation of researchers of spirits. On reading the volume, this seems more suitable for those who are already interested in such phenomena, and who want to supplement their knowledge with areas they may not have previously explored (history and anthropology in particular). On reading the volume, there are some rich chapters which jump out from a backdrop of less inspiring articles, and as such it is a patchwork quilt of articles, which only marginally succeeds in hanging together as a unit.

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