

# Soul Searchers

## Paranormal Magazine

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# Editor's Note

Hello everyone, it has been a while since I last published an issue of Soul Searchers Magazine, the last 12 months of my life has been particularly challenging to say the least. There were so many things to sort out that I had to temporarily drop some of my projects and sadly Soul Searchers Paranormal Magazine was placed in hibernation. The good news is that the magazine is back and starting its resurrection with a Halloween issue. I am looking forward to publishing some exciting new articles hopefully with your support.

So why not let us showcase your articles and photos. Submitting your articles for consideration is easy. Just send an inquiry or the completed work to [soulsearchers@spheresoflight.com.au](mailto:soulsearchers@spheresoflight.com.au).

Janine Donnellan



# Halloween Down Under





As the northern hemisphere is gearing up for Halloween, Australia is slowly starting to catch on to this scary annual festival of the dead. Of course those that are not into Halloween will complain about its commercialism and the inconvenience of children walking around the streets knocking on people's doors asking for tricks or treats.



So the question is what have we got against this deliciously wicked, thrillingly dark time of year festival? Well actually here in Australia it is not the dark time of the year, it is spring and we have daylight saving.

Halloween or Samhain which is the traditional Celtic name is an autumn seasonal festival held when the days get shorter and the darkness increases.

In Australia our seasons are offset by 6 months from those in the northern hemisphere and April/May is autumn in the southern hemisphere and would really be the most appropriate time of the year for this festival.

The northern hemisphere's date of 31st October has become so wrapped up with the commercial hype of Halloween that most people don't have a clue about its origins and the rationale behind this dark time of the year festival.

In Celtic times Samhain was a time for saying farewell to the old year and welcoming in the new. It was a time to honour our ancestors and acknowledge that without death, there can be no

rebirth. It was a time of reverence and an ideal time to have contact with the dead. It was also a time to reap the crops that they had sown in the year prior and to prepare for the "dark night of winter



Samhain was and is a time for reflection on the previous year and what you have achieved with your life. It is a time of great magick and mystery and an opportunity to communicate with "other side." It is considered the time when the "veil between the worlds" is at its thinnest and the dead can-and do-walk among us. In older times, extra places were set at the dinner table or food and drink were set outside on the doorstep for the returning spirits.

Because "the veil" between dimensions was said to be thinner at this time, it allowed the living to have increased intuition and psychic abilities. It was a night for scrying and looking into the future. Many people still perform divination rituals on Samhain to gain knowledge of the coming year; crystal balls and fires are gazed into, tarot cards are spread and runes are cast and interpreted.

Halloween is loved by so many people, not just because it is an opportunity to dress up in costume, but because it speaks to something inside of us that we have lost touch with. It speaks to that part of us that desires a re-connection with Spirit; a communion with that which seems hidden from us. Perhaps we are searching for the mystery of spiritual connection that we have lost in this world of commercialism.





## Camperdown Cemetery

As a teenager I spent many a Sunday afternoon wandering around the graves at Camperdown Cemetery. It wasn't the history of the cemetery that attracted me but the silence, cut off from the real world by high stone walls I found myself in a different space a place beyond time.

The cemetery is quite old and dates from January 1849. It was established by a private corporation called the Sydney Church of England Cemetery Company, formed in 1848 in response to the need for additional burial sites as Sydney's then main general cemetery, the Sydney Burial Ground (Elizabeth and Devonshire Streets - where present day Central Railway station stands) was reaching capacity, especially the oldest section, the Anglican portion.

The cemetery is contained within an area of 4 acres (1.6 ha), which forms part of the grounds of St Stephen's Anglican Church, Newtown, built 1871-1874, however the cemetery

originally occupied an area of more than 12 acres (4.8 ha), bounded by Church, Federation, Australia and Lennox Streets, Newtown.

The Cemetery is significant in being the burial place of the important people in Colonial Sydney in many fields.

Among those buried at Camperdown are:

- Lt. Col. Sir Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor General of NSW, 1828-1855, who made many interesting observations about native vegetation during his explorations of NSW.





- Members of the family of Alexander Macleay, first Speaker of NSW Parliament, and naturalist.
- Isaac Nathan (1790-1864), Australia's first composer. He was the first person to study and transcribe Aboriginal music.
- The remains of the victims of the wreck of the "Dunbar".
- Eliza Emily Donnithorne, who may have provided the inspiration for Charles Dickens' Miss Havisham. Photo of grave below.



In January 1868 burials ceased at Camperdown, save for those who already had plots. At the same time the Company was wound up and the cemetery passed to a trust.

In 1871 a grand new church was built inside the grounds. Designed by Edmund Blacket, the Gothic Revival sandstone St Stephens's church is considered one of Sydney's finest. Placed close to the entry gates, the Church suited the site well and has the appearance of having always been there.



## Murder in the Cemetery

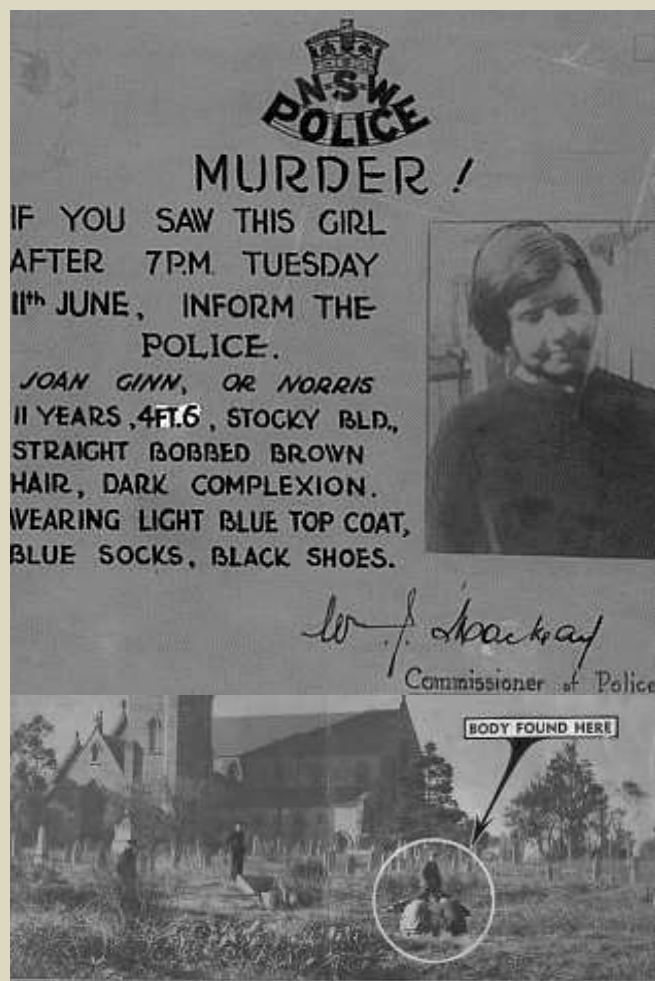
Camperdown Cemetery made headlines in 1946 when the body of missing schoolgirl Joan Norma Ginn was discovered on June 12.

The 11-year-old had been sent out by her mother to buy some bread but never returned.

The body was recovered the next day, with Joan's yellow cardigan reversed to look like a straitjacket. There was evidence of sexual assault.

Three men confessed to the murder in November of the same year but police dismissed these confessions and the murder remained unsolved.

The murder prompted a rethink on the layout of the cemetery with four acres sectioned off for the cemetery and the turned in to Camperdown Memorial Rest Park.



## Ghosts of Camperdown Cemetery

Camperdown Cemetery has one undisputed "ghost" as a permanent resident- Bathsheba

Ghost, the second Matron of the Sydney General Hospital. However there are those who claim that she is not simply a ghost in name alone, but has been seen attending the sick in St Stephen's Rectory.

The figure of a curious old man in a brown frock coat has often said to have been sighted sitting on the grave of William Ebbetts, watching people weeding the native grasses or tending the rose bushes. Children have claimed to have talked to him. He disappears when adults approach him.

It has also been claimed that on moonless nights a man in early 19th century military uniform views the stars with a telescope near the grave of Major Mitchell.

The most sensational ghost story, and one that developed rapidly in form from the time of its first telling in the mid-1990s, is the story of Hannah Watson and her lover. Hannah, the wife of Captain Thomas Watson, the Harbour Master of Port Jackson, according to the legend, was having an affair with Captain John Steane of the Royal Navy. Thomas Watson, on discovering his wife's infidelity, cursed the lovers. Hannah wrote to Steane, begging him not to return to Sydney, but it was too late. Hannah Watson died and was buried in the cemetery. John Steane outlived Hannah by only a few days.



The ship in which he was returning to the arms of his beloved was the ill-fated Dunbar. John Steane's body was one of the few that was recovered intact. It is buried in a separate grave near the Dunbar Tomb, and only a few

metres from the plot where Thomas Watson had recently buried his wife. It is claimed that Hannah Watson has been seen emerging from her tomb in the form of a ghostly grey lady. She is said to drift slowly to the grave of her erstwhile lover. Although the tale has been told many times, and has been used as the basis for a work of fiction, no investigation into the possibility of a love-affair between Hannah Watson and Captain John Steane has yet been made. John Steane's descendants continue to live in the vicinity of Newtown.



Tours of Camperdown Cemetery are held on the first Sunday of the month (except January). The cost is \$10 per person. Booking is not required. Tours meet at 11.30am at the fig tree within the grounds of St Stephen's Anglican Church in Church Street, Newtown, Sydney.

## References

<http://www.marrickville.nsw.gov.au/Documents/Marrickville%20Assets/camperdowncemeterystorationstrategy2007-2011.pdf>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camperdown\\_Cemetery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camperdown_Cemetery)  
<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/inner-west/one-of-sydneys-oldest-cemeteries-reveals-the-fascinating-secrets-buried-in-the-citys-past/story-fngr8h4f-1226933131612>  
Camperdown Cemetery Ghosts



**FRIDAY**  
**THE**  
**13<sup>TH</sup>**

**PARANORMAL  
INVESTIGATION**

Investigate the haunted

**FAIRFIELD MUSEUM AND GALLERY**

to see if the tales they tell of Friday 13th are true.

WHEN: Friday 13 November, 2015

TIME: 7:30pm - 10:30pm

COST: \$65

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





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## An Investigation discussing Similarities in the Near Death Experience

### By Kerry Valkyrie Baldock Kelly

***“The disembodied soul seems to pause for a time, observing the scene below, before either returning to the body or embarking on its journey to the light.”***

**Colm Keane**

***“What is intriguing about childhood death experiences is the undoubted credibility of those involved. Most are too young to have acquired knowledge or opinions about the afterlife or death. Their descriptions, therefore, are unlikely to be tarnished or influenced by personal views.”***

**Colm Keane**

#### Introduction

In New Testament theology it is stated that an everlasting afterlife is promised to those who live righteously according to the will of God;

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

(John 3:16)

This complements the Old Testament belief in Sheol whereby the conscious self continues to exist after death. The scriptures of the Old Testament form part of all Mosaic religions; Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The New Testament, the section of the Bible utilised by Christians only, concerns itself with judgement. Jesus taught that judgement is based on the leading of a good life in which each person's aim should be to love others as him or herself, loving your neighbour as you love yourself. Judgement occurs after death whereby sinners are sent into purgatory, whilst the good rest in happiness with their Heavenly Father.

Buddhists have a slightly different approach, but again it reflects the idea of judgement. Individuals are reincarnated into a life according to their deeds in a previous life with the aim of achieving enlightenment to allow spiritual progression and release from an Earthly form. Buddhists, like Christians, believe in an ethereal realm in which other beings already reside, such as angels or in



Buddhist terms; Demi-gods. There are references in the Bible to the seven heavens, particularly in the apocalyptic scripture 'The Revelations.' Similarly Buddhists recognise several realms outside of the Earthly including the realm of the hungry ghosts in which the souls of those attached to Earthly possession suffer in a state akin to purgatory.

These Mosaic and Buddhist belief structures both therefore propose that there is an afterlife and judgement is experienced after death with consequences to those dead for their actions on Earth, further both belief systems recognise pre-existing spiritual bodies that remain within those ethereal realms.

This investigation will examine, through case studies of modern day Near Death experiences, in light of religious belief, the common factors found in experience and understanding of the afterlife.

The religious beliefs outlined above compare favourably to Dr P.M.H Atwater's current studies of Near Death Experiences. For example Atwater (2013 <http://ndestories.org/pmh-atwater/>) notes that "One of the common aspects" is a Life review in which the experient perceives their entire life and experiences their positive and negative behaviours understanding the impact of the latter on others. This is a form of judgement and understanding erroneous behaviour and the impact on others through empathic examination and reflection.

The term Near Death Experience depicts the audio visual effects envisaged by patients between loss of life and resuscitation. As such research into this area is phenomenological and provides qualitative data based upon personal recall and description. The data can be quantified by comparing common elements occurring across individual testimonies. The purpose of this investigation is to demonstrate that there are similarities across NDE case studies that support the key Mosaic and Buddhist ideas of; The Soul, An Afterlife, Judgement, Divine entities and Purgatory. It will be further demonstrated that these similarities range not only across these cases but support further the findings of previous similar studies. The Literary Review will allow some discussion of the findings of previous studies which support common features of the

NDE and in doing so suggest validity of the experience.

The second part of the study concerns cross referencing the list of recurring factors with Buddhist and Christian theories of the passage to death and the first stage of the afterlife using depictions given in The Bible and in The Tripitaka focusing on primary sources as opposed to analytical secondary sources that may not be objective. The texts will be read and passages relating to the afterlife highlighted, analysed and key elements listed and compared. These will then be cross referenced with the recurring factors in NDEs to identify similarities. The findings will be summarised and discussed to provide an insight into the possible immediate experience of the conscious following death.

## **Review of Literature**

The purpose of this literary review is to identify how research to date in NDEs provides insight into life after death thus supporting evidence for the ongoing existence of the consciousness outside of the body. David Fontana (2005) explains that with modern medical technology patients can be resuscitated after death, even after brain death, suggesting that a period of oblivion in the gap between physical death and resuscitation would do nothing to support the notion of an afterlife or the existence of a soul or consciousness, this period is called "Eternal Oblivion" (Agrawal 2013 <http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-slideshow/seekers/mysticism/what-happens-after-death-is-there-any-reincarnation/63838>) by those researching NDEs. However, testimonies from patients offer no support of a period of oblivion. Instead they indicate that their senses remained not only acute, but heightened after death and such patients were able to recount events between death and resuscitation. This Fontana implies that this is promising for those who consider survival is a possibility.

The NDE is not a new phenomenon. In the 4th century BCE Plato told of the experience of a soldier called Er who apparently died in battle, but was revived on the funeral pyre. Er claims to have experienced his soul leaving his body and reuniting in a strange country where each comrade was allowed to choose his next life



and once chosen acquired amnesia. This gives some support to the Buddhist notion of reincarnation as Buddhists and indeed Hindus both believe in reincarnation. The story of Er supports not only the notion of reincarnation, but also the Buddhist idea of Karma; that the state of the next life will be based on actions in this one;

“For he said that it was a sight worth seeing to observe how the several souls selected their lives. He said it was a strange, pitiful, and ridiculous spectacle, as the choice was determined for the most part by the habits of their former lives.”

(Chou (ed) 2003

<http://www.wisdomportal.com/Technology/Plato-MythOfEr.html>)

Fontana explains that a modern case akin to the case described by Plato was experienced by one Dr Wiltse in 1899 after enduring 30 minutes respiratory failure due to typhoid. Dr Wiltse describes being separated from his body as a blue hued soul. He was then lifted onto a road with a barrier, but told by other beings to return to Earth as his Earthly work was not yet complete. He was halted by a small black cloud and as soon as it touched his head he found himself returned to his body.

Both stories, over 2000 years apart, demonstrate an ongoing consciousness and the transportation of that consciousness to another location. Dannion Brinkley (Brinkley and Perry 1994) had an NDE after being struck by lightning. Brinkley found himself not only detached physically from his body, but also detached from all Earthly interests and engulfed by peace and tranquillity thereafter he found himself transported through a tunnel and was met by a being of light. This being persuaded him, like Dr Wiltse, to return to his body as he had more Earthly work to do. Brinkley (2014) describes how the experience positively affected him;

“Truly, my life and spirituality have come full circle..... Life is the greatest and most precious gift we could ever be given; I urge you not to take it for granted for a single moment.”

(<http://www.dannion.com/dannion-brinkley-near-death-experience/>)

Fontana reports that people's experience of being sent back to their body's to complete an Earthly work is a common occurrence in reported NDEs as is references to meeting with either deceased relatives or beings of light. In terms of Religious ideology Jesus returned to Earth following crucifixion to give the apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit. This enabled the apostles to carry the teachings of Jesus across new lands. Sometimes these missions to return to Earth are optional and at other times pre-determined by the other being, for example the experient Eadie (1995) believes that she knew that she had to come back as he was compelled by a mission of Earthly work.

One of the earliest medics to carry out research into the field of NDEs was Dr Martin Sabom (1982) whose position as a cardiologist working in resuscitation gave him a wide range of case studies but was concerned about the fine line between clinical death and near death. For his studies he opted to examine the testimonies of those whose death would result from trauma that could be expected to result in irreversible biological death. Sabom contacted all such patients, except those suffering psychiatric illness, from two Florida hospitals asking if they had an NDE and if they were willing to discuss it.

Sabom interviewed 78 patients of which 34 stated they had a NDE. Interestingly he noted that there were no recognisable differences in the NDEs of those of a religious background and those without a religious background indicating that the NDE was not a vision born from social or cultural conditioning. Sabom had expected some degree of contrast between the cases which would reduce the experience to medical visions, however this was not to be the case. All of the 34 patients reported an awareness that death had occurred. They were further aware and conscious of a physical separation from their bodies.

In Sabom's study (figures extrapolated from Williams, 2014 <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/experts07.html>)

54% reported being transported to another location and a sense of paradise within that location. 28% of cases stated that they had met with a bright light and 48% claimed to



have met with other beings, whilst 23% reported a void or tunnel as in the case of Brinkley. All patients reported being aware of returning to their bodies, and this was often reported to be against their wishes as in Eadie's case. Following the NDE 77% of patients interviewed reported a greater belief in an afterlife with no correlation to a pre-existing faith indicating that the NDE itself induced a belief or stronger belief in an afterlife.

Kenneth Ring (1984) examined the effects and aftermath of the NDE carrying out in depth interviews with 111 experiencers and identified similar and compatible after effects across all interviewees. He noted that all fear of death had been removed and that goals and values were redirected towards love and compassion. The development of spiritual values without the dogmatism of organised religion was also noted. He further noted that some of his cases developed psychic intuition after the experience. Ankerberg and Weldon (2004) having examined Ring's research state that, "Ring views psychic development as a natural outgrowth of the NDE" ([http://www.jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Life\\_After\\_Death\\_-\\_Part\\_4](http://www.jashow.org/wiki/index.php/Life_After_Death_-_Part_4)).

Ring then directed his attentions to cases whereby the patients had been born blind. He wanted to know if their NDEs allowed visual sensory experience to demonstrate that the surviving consciousness of the experiencer existed outside of the confines of the physical body. Ring and Cooper (1991) worked alongside 11 American Blind Associations and identified 21 suitable candidates who were blind and had a NDE. Of the 10 candidates born blind he found that 5 experienced sight in their NDE. The other 5 were unsure as to whether they had sight or not. 10 of the total sample reported having seen their own bodies and it was found that the experiences of the tunnel, the feeling of peace, the void, the bright light, a life review and meeting with other beings were experienced the same as those who had sight. Two experiencers were able to describe the brilliant colours of the paradise of the afterlife. The blind experiencers reported that the experience was unlike a dream and Ring's earlier study found that the poor sighted experienced significant improvement in vision during their NDE. (Information extrapolated from Williams (2014))

<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/evidence03.html>)

Morse and Perry (1990) carried out a study of NDEs in 12 young children, NDEs were not directly discussed or raised to prevent manipulation of recollection the children were asked two questions; Do you remember being unconscious? What do you think happens when we die? 8 of the 12 reported leaving their bodies and travelling in a manner comparative to the testimonies of adults. They experienced a detachment from their body but retained a sense of awareness. Morse ran a control group of medicated child patients who were sick and under the influence of drugs to confirm that the NDEs were not drug induced hallucinations and found that not one of the 121 children in the control group experienced an NDE (information extrapolated from Morse (2011))

[http://spiritualscientific.com/dr\\_morses\\_article\\_papers](http://spiritualscientific.com/dr_morses_article_papers)). This indicates that the experiences were not triggered by pharmaceuticals. Ten years after conducting his research Morse carried out follow up interviews with the subjects and found them to have humbling maturity and wisdom just as the adult experiencers redirected their lives towards love and compassion. The philosopher Schopenhauer was one of the earliest western academics to study Buddhism and he concluded that moral goodness come from 'Unselfish compassion for others' (Sprigge T L S 1995 pg.144).

The existing literature demonstrates that the common elements of the NDE include the presuppositions of Buddhist and Mosaic texts; that there exists a soul, that there is an afterlife, that a form of judgement occurs and that beings exist within that afterlife. Other common elements include; the idea of a tunnel, a bright light and the existence of other beings. The purpose of this study is to examine four case studies in detail to identify these elements as a common theme within those case studies and in the context of Mosaic and Eastern beliefs and further that they support the findings of Morse and Perry, Sabom and Ring.

## Findings



The first two sources selected as case studies come from; *Transformed by the Light* (Morse with Perry 1992) and *Light After Death* (Wilson 1997) Morse cites the experience of Barbara's sister told to Barbara during her Fourteen-year battle with leukaemia. Barbara herself is not an experient, but her sister disclosed details of an NDE which occurred during surgery. Barbara's sister citing Barbara concedes that the experience did take place at a moment when her sister almost died. She further implies that she could tell through non-verbal communication that her sister was sincere in her account. The experient in this case described feeling conscious of being drawn upwards whilst on the operating table. This movement started slowly but accelerated until she found herself in a black tunnel.

At the event horizon was a light which gained intensity with her proximity. The light was deemed beautiful and indescribable. As she neared the light her movement decelerated until the light was engulfing her. The light triggered emotions of love, joy and calm. She recalled wanting to remain in the light forever. This moment of perfect serenity could be compared to Heaven. This was followed by a life review in which everything she had done flashed before her. The review was interrupted by a feeling of falling back through the tunnel into her own body. On reflection she felt that the light was Jesus and thereafter she had a different attitude towards her illness putting others at ease by assuring them that death was not the end.

The case of Howard Storm, a Professor from Cincinnati, is told from the first person (Wilson) in great detail after collapsing whilst touring Paris in 1985. Storm states that his first moment of awareness after death was standing from an external loci watching his own body and his wife breaking down. He tried to draw the attention of the attendants, but they failed to acknowledge him, however at this point he felt dissociated from his body and unwilling to return to it. Storm found that his senses were heightened and he knew it was neither a dream nor a hallucination by comparison to past experiences of these states.

Storm became aware of other beings calling to him and perceived their silhouettes which beckoned him into a mist. The beings were depicted as malignant leading him into a

darkness in which they tormented him through physical discomfort and he felt full of hopelessness. This is much like the hungry ghosts of Buddhism. Subsequently he prayed and during prayer the beings backed away until none were left, but he was left in bleakness until he called to Jesus to save him. At that point a light appeared in the darkness and expanded rapidly towards him until he was surrounded by it and realised that the light was a loving being, much like the light that engulfed Barbara's sister.

Storm felt that the light elevated him from the darkness through space until other lights joined them. The lights explained that they could adopt human form and were omnipresent and telepathic and able to feel our emotions. Storm describes feeling unworthy. He then experienced a life review in which the beings were not concerned with personal achievement, but with how he had interacted with others rejoicing at the moments of love and compassion. The life's review is shown as challenging but the therapy to assist came from the love of the others and whilst undergoing this experience he felt that the slate was being cleansed. Storm was then told he had to return and shown that inanimate objects; religious objects mean nothing concluding that loving people and living with people is what's really important. This is just as Jesus had taught in the New Testament.

Indeed during Storm's experience he reported engaging in discourse with Jesus and Angels and during this meeting he asked questions about the nature of the afterlife and existence. Laurence (2010) describes one such encounter;

"The angels that Howard Storm saw while on the other side answered many questions that he posed. When he asked where creation came from they answered that there was never time, matter or space before God. God created universes which became proactive, and there are countless intelligent beings in the universe."

<http://www.examiner.com/article/predictions-from-jesus-given-to-howard-storm-after-he-died>)

This report suggests that God is the source of the universe. A similar proposal is made in Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* a scripture from an Eastern philosopher in which God is seen as

the eternal source. Although not a Buddhist text the Tao Te Ching is held in Buddhist monasteries.

George Rodonia's experience is told in the first person at <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/evidence10.html> and is taken from Berman's (1998) *The Journey Home*. Rodonia's case is exceptional in that he was deemed dead for three days and his experience is detailed and prolonged. Following the experience Rodonia became a Minister.

Rodonia found himself surrounded by darkness and only attracted the light through positive thinking. The light's brilliance is depicted as painful initially, but becomes warm and comforting and Rodonia states that he underwent a life review. Through the light he gained an understanding of the unity of the universe with all of the molecules coming together in perfect symmetry in "timeless unity." (Williams (2014) <http://www.near-death.com/experiences/evidence10.html>) He shows detachment from feelings experienced in his mortal life and describes an almost omnipotent ability to experience and understand everything Earthly when the mind is open to it by choosing to experience points in time and space. During his encounters he states that he attempted to communicate with past figures, but was unable to do so although some sensed his presence.

On resuscitation Rodonia felt changed through his new belief that God is more than the light, he is everything in light and darkness and that organised religion fails to define God because God is indescribable and he now believes in God of the Universe. Rodonia (2013) describes his changed perceptions of God as follows;

"All I can say is that I now believe in the God of the universe. Unlike many other people, however, I have never called God the light, because God is beyond our comprehension. God, I believe, is even more than the light, because God is also darkness. God is everything that exists, everything"

(<http://www.near-death.com/experiences/evidence10.html>)

The final case comes from the research site [http://www.nderf.org/NDERF/NDE\\_Experiences/frank\\_g\\_fde.htm](http://www.nderf.org/NDERF/NDE_Experiences/frank_g_fde.htm) and is attributed to Frank G (2013) who experienced his NDE following

a rock climbing accident in Britain. Frank's immediate feeling was that time had stood still and he was engulfed in darkness, but felt content and happy. This feeling preceded access to universal knowledge, much like Rodonia's, and a connection with everything and that the connection gave him a sense of security and warmth akin to being loved and safe in the maternal womb, floating in real love, not the mortal equivalent.

During his experience Frank describes a floating sensation whilst surrounded by bouncing light balls and the compassion and love of all the people he had known. Frank then perceived beautiful natural scenery and other beings, but in amongst these positive experiences there was a ball of dark light with grasping hands that repelled Frank finally a "tidal wave"

([http://www.nderf.org/NDERF/NDE\\_Experiences/frank\\_g\\_fde.htm](http://www.nderf.org/NDERF/NDE_Experiences/frank_g_fde.htm)) came over him and everything "vanished" as he came back to life.

The Bible and The Tripitaka do not describe the experiences of individual's close to death, but reflect the teachings of spiritual masters on the nature of the afterlife. Both texts are extremely expansive and subsequently only a handful of teachings will be discussed for the purpose of this study focusing on the afterlife. The most prevalent point Jesus makes throughout his sayings and parables is that Humans should love God and each other unconditionally and that, as in the parable of the prodigal son, there is always a chance for the redemption of sinners as God loves those who return to him. There is, according to the New Testament, an afterlife in which individuals are judged by God and Jesus can be called upon as an advocate.

"I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak," (Matthew 12:36)

For those who are unable to repent purgatory is described;

"Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels'"

(Matthew 25:41)

Those who act in goodness have a special place in the afterlife;



"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?"

(John 14:2)

God is depicted as the light that takes away the darkness;

"This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

(John 1:5)

In summary the New Testament tells readers that there is an afterlife in which the individual will be judged and then directed to Heaven or Purgatory following judgement. Purgatory is defined as the darkness, a Hell like dimension, whereas God is the light.

The implications of altruistic behaviour leading to a positive afterlife experience also appears in the Buddhist text The Tripitaka;

"Not even death can wipe out our good deed"

(Smolowe ed, 2013)

<http://www.greatthoughtstreasury.com/author/tripitaka-or-tipitaka?page=4>)

In Buddhism samsara relates to purgatory, or hell depending upon personal interpretation, where ongoing suffering is inevitable. Nirvana is reached through compassion and detachment which lead to enlightenment. Nirvana is the realm of heaven or escape from suffering.

Souls are trapped in an endless cycle of rebirth as they grasp for material gain and fail to practice compassionate detachment which would lead to enlightenment and Nirvana. Judgement exists in a form called karma in which past deeds result in present consequences and good deeds are rewarded whereas malignant deeds result in further suffering for the perpetrator. The suffering continues to allow personal growth. Perhaps this is why some experiencers are returned to their mortal body to complete their work or learning curve in that lifetime.

Hungry ghosts are souls reborn to suffer from their own vices as O' Brian (2014) writes

"Beings are reborn as hungry ghosts because of their greed, envy and jealousy"  
(<http://buddhism.about.com/od/buddhismqlosary/h/g/hungryghostdef.htm>) just as Catholics recognise a state of judgement or purgatory

where souls must be purified of their sins. These two descriptions may be comparable to the darkness endured by Rodonia. Slick (2014) describes the process of purification demonstrating the similarity to the Buddhist realm of the Hungry Ghosts whereby the soul suffers in accordance with its Earthly vices;

"According to Roman Catholic Doctrine, though a person may be in a state of grace, he may not enter heaven until he is purified from sins that were not dealt with on earth. Baptism remits sins committed up to that point, but prayers, indulgences, penance, absolution, and the Mass are means by which the sinner is able to expiate sins committed after baptism. If sins are not remitted, after death he must suffer the flames of purification until he is sufficiently cleansed and pure so as to enter into the presence of God."

(<http://carm.org/purgatory>)

Buddha deemed belief in God unnecessary to lead a good life and escape the cycle of rebirth, however light is associated with positive deeds and living in the light projected as the ideal state. Pym (2011) believes that there is an agreement between Christians and Buddhists through the ideas of light and love;

"The Buddha tells us the story of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, while the Christian Epistle of John states that, "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all". The obvious philosophical (theological? buddhalogical?) question that arises is; "Can there be two Infinite Lights?" As the answer is obviously "No", then it becomes clear that the Apostle John and the writers of the Pure Land scriptures are talking about the same thing, though using slightly different language. The Christian scriptures also state that "God is Love", and I have yet to meet a Buddhist who does not believe in Love."

(<http://www.buddhist-christian.org/articles/0704jp.html>)

## Results

The purpose of the results section of this study is to identify and summarise the key elements of each NDE and further to identify such elements in the Christian and Buddhist faiths. The first preternatural experience of Barbara's sister is that of her conscious being displaced away from her body suggesting that part of the

self continues to exist after death or alternatively that the body is vehicle to carry the soul or self through life. This aspect of the self, the conscious, has other names to identify it such as soul and spirit or atman. The self in Buddhism is part of a greater whole which supports Rodonia's understanding of universal unification. The concern here however is with detachment of the conscious from the physical body and for all intents and purposes that part of the consciousness will be deemed as the self or soul.

Barbara's sister cites being consciously perceptive outside of her body. This is described as a slow elevation leaving the body behind whereby her soul continued to exist without the body and detached from it.

The next element of Barbara's experience as a soul is rapid movement away from her point of origin and leads to the third element of the experience; the black tunnel which then leads to an intense light of serenity and love. Barbara's sister associates the light with Jesus and describes undergoing a life review. In simple terms she depicts six key elements: Detachment from the body, movement to another location, a tunnel, the beautiful loving light, a life review and possibly Jesus, a spiritual figure.

Storm also describes the detachment from his body and explains further that his senses were heightened. Initially Storm does not experience the light, but a tormenting darkness and malignant beings. He experiences the light after submitting to Jesus. At this point the light appears and expands until it engulfs him.

Once engaged with the light a life review occurs as does interaction with other beings of light that can take human form and advanced telepathy in which the beings of light show that they are capable of experiencing empathy and emotion for all living beings. Storm is made to understand that love and compassion are the most important factors in mortal life, so to summarise the key elements of Storm's experience are; detachment from the body, movement, a bleak realm, beings; mystical, possibly once human and malignant, the engulfing light, telepathy and an understanding of the importance of love.

Rodonia, like Storm, experiences a realm of darkness following displacement from the

body. After positive thinking Rodonia is engulfed by the light and reviews his life, but then his experience deviates from the two previous experiences in that he perceives the natural state of the universe, its unity and its timelessness and this part of the experience supports Buddhist doctrine that there is a oneness in the universe. In Christian terms the emphasis on loving one's neighbour as him/herself perhaps hints at a unity of all creation and ethereal existence?

Rodonia found himself able to witness and gain knowledge of any point in time or space almost omnipotently. Rodonia was transformed by his experience realising that God is God of the universe and indescribable in human terms. To conclude, the elements of Rodonia's experience include; displacement of the conscious, movement, a realm of darkness, the light, a life review, the unified nature of the universe, the ability to gain universal experiential knowledge and a greater awareness of the nature of God.

The final case study, Frank's story, begins as with the other case studies with displacement from the body and an engulfing darkness. In this darkness Frank feels content and happy. He also feels the love described by the other experiencers as part of the light. Although Frank does not experience the light he is aware of light balls that are bouncing around him. During his experience Frank feels a unity with everything and finds he has access to extensive knowledge which provides further comfort and access to the love of all who have known him. He then finds himself in a beautiful natural scene, but within this scene are unwelcome balls of darkness which hold what are deemed to be malignant beings. The elements of Frank's experience are; displacement from the body, darkness, love, light balls, scenery, access to knowledge and malignant darkness.

The results show that all experiencers were displaced from their bodies and all experienced movement or a change of scenery which is indicative of movement. Three of the experiencers went through a life review after being engulfed by a loving light. Three also experienced a malignant darkness. All four experiencers note an awareness of other beings either as the light, the universe or as light balls. Two cases find that they can access universal knowledge, but only one refers



specifically to telepathy and experiential viewing whilst all four refer to the love of or a better understanding of spiritual beings associated with God or Jesus. The common elements of the

NDE in these studies are; displacement of the soul, a light of love, life review, malignant darkness, access to knowledge, spiritual beings and unity.

The life review is perhaps the most significant factor when examining religious texts. This life review is akin to Christian judgement or Buddhist Karma in that one has to experience consequences for negative actions. The NDEs above suggest that this judgement occurs through analysis of actions and understanding and empathising with those who they have interacted with and caused pain. Equally positive actions are highlighted and rewarded as suggested in the Tripitaka. In Biblical terms a positive judgement opens the door to eternal life, where as in Buddhist terms a positive judgement results in a higher birth.

The realm of darkness could relate to the Christian depictions of purgatory and the light of serenity could be interpreted as heaven and being at one with God. Jesus certainly depicts God as the light that takes away the darkness and Buddhists find Nirvana through enlightenment. There is also a suggestion that God provides the unity of the universe and is a gateway to omnipotent knowledge.

## Discussion

Before discussing the implications of this study some of the limitations of it must be considered. In terms of scientific research the data examined here would not be deemed scientifically relevant as only four studies were used. Technically the common elements could be considered quantitatively with displacement occurring 4/4 times, movement 4/4 times, the Light 3/4 times, other beings 4/4 times and unity and knowledge 2/4 times. However for quantitative data to be examined statistically a much greater number of cases would be required. At present the NDE Research Foundation holds over 3000 reported cases of NDEs and allows the experient to describe the experience qualitatively and then to answer such questions as 'Did you encounter other beings?' to provide statistically comparable responses.

The drawback of the subjective reports in both this study and the archives of the NDERF is that the data collected is based on subjective experiences and relies on the honesty of the subject. Very little tangible evidence is available. The NDERF recognises that some experients' cases are backed up by medical data in terms of loss of life and the experient providing details of incidences during the experience that they could not otherwise have known. To counter this there is Carl Jung's (cited in Gross 1990) theory of a collective unconscious in which we all share universal knowledge beneath the subconscious and the notion that in these cases the individual may have greater access to this information. However Wilson notes that in certain cases the brain has been dead during the experience and yet the experient has reported an awareness of events during the time of the brain's inactivity implying that a consciousness does exist outside of the parameters of the mortal body.

The various limitations suggest that a far greater study of NDEs is required to produce significant results and that the subject's medical history should be examined as part of that process as well as reports from those in the vicinity during the experience. With this borne in mind this discussion will examine some of the implications made in this study.

The most significant implication is that there is a soul or consciousness which can be culturally defined as the *Nous* (Greek) or *Atman* (Hindu) which contains the true self that is the personality, experiences, knowledge and character of the individual. This is indicated by the feeling that the soul has moved apart from the body, which as stated above appears to only be a vehicle or mechanism for allowing experience of mortal life. It is likely that during life this soul is connected to the brain as the brain is the bodily location for processing experiences and following the NDE subjects recalled their experiences using normal cognitive processes and communication. Perhaps there is some truth in the saying that the eyes are the windows to the soul. This implication provides a passageway to the afterlife as the soul must continue to exist somewhere.

The experients felt that they were being transported at speed to another location, towards the light. It is interesting now to note

parallels in modern physics. Stephen Hawking (2010) proposes that in space there are anomalies called wormholes that can transport objects from one place in the universe to another at great speed. He goes on to explain that these wormholes have been found in the fabric of our world but are only minute in size, however larger wormholes could safely exist in space.

To understand why this is significant we must briefly consider the nature of the form of other beings as proposed by the experiencers. The other beings are depicted as balls of light. Light is both a particle and wave that can travel at speed and can be refracted whilst having the capability to enter and travel through the tiniest spaces. In physical terms if the soul was somewhat like a light particle it could easily travel through immediate or other wormholes at speed without being damaged regardless of the size. It may be then that what we consider heaven is reached through wormholes as the spirit takes the form of light. This would also explain the Biblical description of Elijah being taken up in a chariot of fire and Jesus' ascension.

The NDEs described here differ from the urban legend of simply going towards the light due to the appearance of a realm of a malignant darkness comparable to purgatory. Two experiencers describe a fearful darkness and one goes as far to say that there were beings intentionally taunting him and causing him pain. This conforms to the Christian notion of the gnashing of teeth due to the sufferings experienced by sinners in the afterlife. Equally in Buddhism this could refer to the realm where Hungry Ghosts are trapped between the mortal and ethereal dimensions suffering due to past actions.

What is noteworthy is that faith in a positive power calls the light and repels the darkness. In New Testament theology Jesus explains that whether the individual must believe in the Holy Spirit, in other words man must believe in a positive force permeating the universe and reach to that force when in need; "ask and it will be given" (Matthew 7:7). In Storm's experience he asks for assistance in the darkness and the light saves him complementing the teaching in Matthew.

Once engulfed by the light experiencers describe feeling loved and even suggest that the light is God or Jesus and as such provides the

comfort required prior to the life review. The life review reflects the New Testament judgement and the individual has the harshest judge; the self. The judgement and suffering come from the heightened empathy and sensory awareness which allows the experient to feel the effects their actions have on others. This supports the Mosaic commandments and Jesus' teaching that people should love their neighbour and turn the other cheek on the negative actions of others (Matthew 5:39) loving unconditionally and compassionately just as Buddhists are taught compassion for all beings.

The light overcomes the darkness and repentance can occur after death "when the Kingdom of Heaven is close at hand" (Matthew 3:2) by believing, just as Storm found himself believing and was subsequently saved. The process of judgement is advocated by beings of light as depicted in John 2:1-11 with love and compassion and as well as a telepathic or empathic understanding of how our Earthly actions sadden or enrapture those beings.

Two of the experiencers found that they had access to universal knowledge and identified the universe and God as one unified whole whose nature could not be defined in words. In modern physics the term entanglement is used to explain how every part of the universe is connected on a molecular level and Carl Jung, who also experienced a Near Death Experience believed further in a collective unconscious or shared knowledge again indicating a universal connection.

This connection allows the experient to access and understand the universe as a whole both scientifically and socio-historically. The experiencers found God indescribable, a similar experience was attributed to St Thomas Aquinas who wrote some eight million words on theology but ceased to write after a religious experience because he felt he could not put God into words. On his death bed Aquinas explained (cited by Sanders, 2010)

"I adjure you by the living almighty God, and by the faith you have in our order, and by charity that you strictly promise me you will never reveal in my lifetime what I tell you. Everything that I have written seems like straw to me compared to those things that I have seen and have been revealed to me."



<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/scriptorium/2010/12/thomas-aquinas-big-pile-of-straw/>

These experiences and the feeling of love and the positive reflections of love in the life review indicate that the purpose of living is to love. In the words of Jesus;

“Do to others as you would have them do to you”

(Luke 6:31)

And in the words of the Buddha;

“Consider others as yourself”

Dhammapada 10:1 (Borg ed 1997).

## Summary and Conclusions

The subjective experiences used in this study certainly suggest that the conscious self is quite separate and can exist independently of the human body and can continue to exist after the demise of the body. This implies that the body is simply a vehicle for allowing the conscious to experience a mortal life. The conscious self or soul detaches from the body at death and continues to have experiences. When attached to the mortal body it is likely that there is some connection between the soul and the brain as events from the NDE are recalled on resuscitation. The NDEs described here also indicate that after death the soul is transported elsewhere.

There are no indications as to where this other plane of existence is located, except that one experient travelled upwards from her body suggesting movement away from the Earth and its gravitational pull. Frank experienced a blackness and Barbara's sister a dark tunnel, neither of which were deemed a threat, again suggesting travel elsewhere. In three cases an all engulfing light enveloped the experients and that light was deemed emotionally aware and had the conscious form of a spiritual being related to Jesus or to God. As such it seems that the spiritual self is quite separate from the body and another dimension exists after death. This dimension is deemed timeless.

Biblical and Karmic judgement occurs in the life review, a common feature of the NDE, and consists of reflecting upon positive and negative actions toward others in one's lifetime. The important message is that approval is given to those who can experience love towards other living beings. This supports

Jesus' mantra of loving one's neighbour as you love yourself and the Buddhist idea that positive actions receive positive rewards.

The experients felt that throughout the life review they were supported by loved ones or spiritual beings who did not judge as such, but empathised in a loving environment. The judgement is almost one of self-judgement as the individual reflects upon the suffering they have caused others and the good that they have done.

Two experients developed a realisation that there exists a unity in the universe and God permeates through that unity and after death found that they had access to worldly knowledge and a better understanding of the nature of God and the universe. This understanding cannot be put into words nor explained within an Earthly context. The love and contentment within the light could be defined as heaven or in Biblical terms My Father's House and the access to knowledge the Many Rooms described in the New Testament.

However, there is also the bleaker aspect of the unpleasant darkness which could be considered purgatory or in Buddhist terms the realm of the Hungry Ghosts. Escape from the darkness appears to depend upon faith and love and the message imparted by the experience that the love of other living beings is the greatest Earthly achievement.

The nature of purgatory is given in some detail with two references made to the darkness and one to the suffering and pain experienced in that darkness. The darkness itself appears to contain malevolent beings intent on causing misery to the experient and thrusting torture and mocking upon the there is a word missing here. Please supply. Frank does not actually enter the darkness but recognises that he is afraid of it whereas Storm suffers directly within the darkness and at the hands of spiteful beings.

Buddhist scripture refers to those trapped between realms as 'Hungry Ghosts' whose bad karma has forced them to step down from the mortal realm into a realm of suffering and desperation. The beings within this darkness could be deemed hungry ghosts or in Biblical terms demons or the fallen. The experience of Storm follows the Catholic ideology that souls can be prayed for and saved after death and

in this instance it is Storm's prayers that call upon the light to release him.

The key elements of the four NDE cases and the two religious traditions discussed are that the soul can exist after the demise of the body and that there is another plane of existence in which judgement occurs.

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## Wes Craven, Horror Maestro, Dies at 76

Wes Craven, the famed maestro of horror known for the Nightmare on Elm Street and Scream franchises, died Sunday August 30, 2015 after a battle with brain cancer. He was 76.

Craven, whose iconic Freddy Krueger character horrified viewers for years, died at his home in Los Angeles.

He was best known for creating the A Nightmare on Elm Street franchise featuring the Freddy Krueger character, directing the first instalment and Wes Craven's New Nightmare, and co-writing A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors with Bruce Wagner.

Craven also directed all four films in the Scream series, and co-created the Ghostface character. Some of his other films include The Hills Have Eyes, The Last House on the Left, The People Under the Stairs, Red Eye, The Serpent and the Rainbow, and Vampire in Brooklyn.

R.I.P Wes Craven we will miss you!



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# DOES RELIGION PLAY A PART IN GHOST RESEARCH ?

The answer is a resounding yes! Before you instinctively stop reading what you think will be someone preaching to you, take a moment to read on. I want to point out some things that may not be obvious to all of you without pushing a certain faith at you.

Religion plays a roll in the actions and reactions of the witness, the investigator and the spirit themselves. We all have our own belief system that we subscribe to and that is the same for the residents of a haunted home and, if the spirits are human, the spirits too.

Since each case is different and combinations are endless I will just elaborate on a few instances here and hope that you take away a new point of view on how religious views impact a haunting.

Let me start with good example from a case I worked on in New York City with John Zaffis. The resident was experiencing events that made the case seem like something extremely dark and negative was the source. This was not necessarily the case in this instance. The woman, a practicing Catholic, was living in a home that had been built on top of part of an old Jewish cemetery. Her next door neighbor had unearthed some old grave markers written in Hebrew in his backyard and they were dated in the mid-1800s. She had consulted with her church and she had hung up a crucifix, said certain prayers and blessed the house with holy water. All of these things only made the situation worse. Many people would jump to the conclusion that it was something demonic and try to escalate the actions that were being taken. That course of action would have probably had no effect and made the situation worse for the resident. The spirits that were in the home were most likely the residents of the cemetery which now had houses on top of it. Let me clarify that a bit. They were Jewish spirits who were buried in consecrated ground and were awaiting the final judgment so they were staying close to their physical bodies because they would be physically resurrected at that time. These Jewish spirits now had a Catholic household sitting on top of them and

practicing those beliefs on the spirit's holy ground and body. I know that would make me a pretty angry spirit. Instead of taking the typical course of action, in this case we had to go outside our own belief system and consider the spirit's. We instructed the resident to relocate a crucifix that was always being taken off the wall. We also told her not to use the holy water anymore. Instead of saying strictly Christian based prayers, we gave her prayers of protection based on Michael the Archangel. Michael is recognized as an archangel by Christians and Jews alike so these powerful prayers were not going to be inflammatory to the spirits. Short of tearing down the home and re-consecrating the ground, this was the next best solution. The negative activity stopped and while there was still activity in the home, this approach had enabled the resident to coexist with these spirits.

This is a more dramatic case than most and we had the benefit of lots of background information but the main thing we did was to keep an open mind and not force a solution onto a situation. We found a solution based on the situation. There are no cookie cutter solutions to helping people in haunted homes. When investigators only approach a case with their belief system and refuse to adapt to the residents and the spirit's beliefs, there is unnecessary friction caused.

Researchers should always ask and consider the beliefs of the residents of a home. While you may firmly believe that only your method will help, you have to be willing to bend and adapt to the situation. In many cases in which the spirits are annoying or negative, it requires the resident to continue doing certain things after the researcher leaves in order to keep the spirits from returning or continuing their negative activity. If you do something that the residents don't really believe in or is against their beliefs, they will not continue to do what is necessary to keep the spirits away and you'll be back at the house right back where you started. I am not saying betray your beliefs or forget them all together. There may be certain cases where a researchers beliefs clash with a resident and in those cases the residents are better served by looking elsewhere for help. I have had people criticize me for the actions taken in the case I mention above but I did nothing to go against my beliefs. I am Christian

and even though I told them to say different prayers and geared the solution to the Jewish spirits, I did not disregard my beliefs. Jesus and the 12 apostles were all Jewish after all. Successful researchers will work with any major religion in order to help the living and the dead if that is what it takes.

Let's look at this from the spirit's point of view. Many people believe that when you die you go to heaven. So what does the spirit, who in life fervently believed this, do when they find themselves still here in a spirit form? They may have no idea what to do and hang around this plane for awhile but this doesn't mean they are earth bound and can be sent on easily. Their whole belief system has been challenged and it will take varying degrees of time for them to adjust. Some religions believe that they will go to sleep and be reawakened at a later time. Are they surprised when they find themselves in spirit form? I would be a little confused I think. It's easy to see how the living could easily mistake the intentions of a spirit they find in their home. Contrary to popular belief, not all haunted houses were sights of a murder or suicide.

Residents of haunted homes are often confused too. They will see the spirit of a deceased relative and assume that this person has some unfinished business and is earthbound in need of rescue. It's more likely that the relative is just stopping by for a visit but it also could be that they had a different belief system than their living relations. Many families are split religion-wise today. For example, the spirit of dead Uncle Al is seen by his niece when she moves into his old house. She is afraid of him and wants him to go away. Uncle Al was told he would go straight to heaven or hell. Since he isn't in either, he is going to wait things out in his home. He sees his niece and tries to ask her for some answers but she is too afraid because her belief system tells her that any spirits that appear are from the devil. These are all real situations and beliefs. It's easy to see how inexperienced or closed minded researchers could go into this case and make it worse by trying to force in a third belief system.

As a researcher your beliefs are very important but you have to give plenty of weight to the beliefs of the residents of the home and the



spirits if that can be determined. Many times the way to come to a livable solution for a resident of a haunted home is to customize a solution for that particular case and not force a

pre-fab solution onto it.- See more at: <http://www.paranormalsocieties.com/articles/does-religion-play-a-part.cfm#sthash.0Z7g3Hlf.dpuf>



## Tea and Spirit Events at The Carrington Hotel

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## Paranormal Research by Michael Kundu

Psychical or paranormal research - the pursuit of evidence to validate the existence of psychic, supernatural, or preternatural phenomena using scientifically rigorous methodologies - has come to a crossroads in contemporary society. Mainstream, amateur 'ghost-hunting' activities appear to have upstaged institutional, science-driven, psychical research efforts, and the advent and application of innovative and objective methodologies and experiments in the field continues to languish and diminish. Consequently, the field now increasingly presents a paradox of purpose for its participants, both the tenured and the neophyte.

Parapsychology, as an acceptable scientific pursuit, first received authentication in the late 18th-century when two established organizations, the U.K.-based Society for Psychical Research (SPR), and the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) [1.], rose to bring claims of spiritualistic and supernatural phenomena to the same level of critical analysis applied by many distinguished researchers and academic institutions during that era.

In 1882, the world was in the midst of intense and rapid intellectual acceleration; in London, England, Henry Sidgwick, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge University, collaborated with Trinity College Dons Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney to establish the SPR. Over the next half century, the society, chartered to investigate paranormal phenomena in a scientific and unbiased way, would see endorsement and support from prominent persons such as

Alfred Lord Tennyson, Joseph Banks Rhine, Mark Twain, Carl Jung, and Arthur Conan Doyle, among others.

Through the 1950s, the SPR, and subsequently other reputable groups established after the charters built by the SPR, conducted rigorous research in various paranormal arenas: telepathy, reincarnation, remote viewing, clairvoyance and precognition, psychokinesis, and even the existence of apparitions and ghosts.

Continuing into the 1970s, leading universities in the United States and abroad. Stanford, UCLA, Duke, Princeton, the Universities of Amsterdam, Edinburgh, Derby, etc., continued to seek evidence of quantifiable paranormal activities. In time, government agencies across the world would also promulgate and fund research into paranormal studies (U.S. CIA/Air Force's Stargate Project [2.], U.K. Remote Viewing Research [3.] and their Ministry of Defense Remote Viewing Project [4.]) . Even the major religious denominations, (i.e., the Vatican's Pontifical Academy of Sciences) began conducting investigations and producing essays and reports on subjects directly and indirectly related to 'paranormal' subject matter [5.]

Inevitably, over time, the realization of an emergent absence of quantifiable evidence has largely resulted in the modern reduction of most public institutional funding and continuing research in the field [6.]. In 1996, renowned stage magician and paranormal skeptic James Randi announced a \$1-million dollar reward to anyone who could provide evidence of supernatural capabilities while

under strict scientific testing criteria [7.], a challenge that, to this date, no single individual has successfully undertaken.

While some scientifically rigorous research does still continue in a few U.S. institutions (Universities of Virginia Department of Psychiatric Medicine and Arizona's Veritas Laboratory) and in the United Kingdom (Universities of Cambridge, Liverpool Hope, Edinburgh, Northampton) , along with other privately funded scientific institutions and agencies across the globe, most established institutions have ceased, or greatly reduced, their funding for research in the arena - the prevailing opinion by many academic governing bodies and research leaders is that paranormal research has (as of yet) , failed to show any quantifiable or scientifically verifiable evidence of its existence. [8.]

Clearly, since the early 1900s, the study of parapsychology has experienced a historical ebb and flow in mainstream cultural acceptance. During the last two decades however, following the emerging popularity of the phenomena of reality-based media programs, the increasingly mainstream popularity of paranormal research appeared to have reached a new height, while simultaneously maintaining its inherent merit to some as a legitimate scientific field of pursuit. A broadly diversified playfield, providing the opportunity for amateur 'mediumship' or 'sensitive' activities, and novice ghost-hunting expeditions and investigations, has increasingly buried authentic paranormal research under a new, populist disguise - one that often pits mockery against rigour, entertainment value against believability. Unfortunately in most cases, this ambiguity has worked to the detriment of the continuing, genuinely promulgated research being conducted in the field.

Certainly, on a positive note, the mainstreaming of paranormal research has effectively helped to publicise, and to increase the fields' visibility to a larger scope of the public - of that, there is no doubt. New American and European broadcasts of popular televised ghost-hunting series have built a large cult following on both continents; previously esoteric paranormal research terms and equipment; (i.e., electro-voice

phenomena [EVP], 'matrixing', electro-magnetic field [EMF] detectors, etc.) , now appear as household items and common language. Publicity for the field, also, has encouraged those who might suspect paranormal activity on their properties or in their lives, to seek out 'expert' opinions and to invite investigations and thus more locations across the country and globe have been 'opened up' to paranormal research and visits from sensitives or psychics.

And consequently, thousands of individuals, hereby charmed, empowered, or inspired by pop-cultural recognition opportunities provided by this 'neo-clairvoyant' movement, now profess to know how to sense spirits, to conduct 'clearings', or how to 'channel' entities and communicate with the departed. While the vast majority of these emerging clairvoyants are certainly untested or unproven in their capabilities, the prospect of some individuals to be more sensitive, emphatic, or attuned, to the character/ residual history/energies present in a location or site does seem intuitively possible, and it should be noted that there are hundreds of historical and contemporary accounts (albeit not yet scientifically validated) of individuals who may indeed possess such capabilities.

### **Inadvertently Supporting the Skeptics**

The underlying dilemma is the question about the level of actual progress afforded the entire paranormal movement by the work of the amateur, mainstream ghost-hunting groups, along with those lavishly funded, televised teams, which continue to glamorize and profit from the field.

Particularly problematic in the mainstreaming of paranormal research is that, with no universally accepted parameters, checks, balances or quality controls governing the many amateur paranormal researchers or sensitives active in the populist arena, the field is becoming increasingly dismissed as 'pseudo-science' and accordingly, some legitimate research being conducted by groups applying quantifiable scientific methodologies (SPR, the Institute of Noetic Sciences, Society for Scientific Exploration, etc.) , are judged 'guilty by association', and also met with greater degrees of skepticism



and scorn. Moreover, popular televised field investigations - and almost every investigation conducted by amateur ghost hunting groups operating in the United States and abroad - are conducted using the same repetitive, ostensibly ineffectual methodologies and application of equipment, which, while certainly creating excellent visuals for broadcast media, simply perpetuate the myth that paranormal activity can be definitively validated by the application of such devices and questionable techniques.

With the continual application of such poor or sensationalised methodologies, institutional support and funding for legitimate or unique, evidence-based research studies may also be increasingly judged and rejected, as the growing umbrella of amateur and charlatan groups, and media-hungry investigation teams continue to impugn the integrity of the field of paranormal research overall.

It should be understood that televised productions involving paranormal investigations are produced for two primary purposes: 1) for their prime value as highly viewed, pop-culture entertainment, leading to... 2) for their ability to generate significant levels of revenue for their production companies. As such, these programs should never be considered as objective or documentary programming. Pop-culture television series (such as *Paranormal World*, *Scariest Places on Earth*, *Ghost Hunters International* [GHI], etc.) , while maintaining a degree of entertainment value, are, at best, only capable of perpetuating the myths associated with psychical research. In fact, one of the most popular amateur ghost hunting groups engaged in such 'pulp parapsychology', the Atlantic Paranormal Society (TAPS) , has been substantively accused of faking broadcast 'evidence' [9.] It has also been widely reported that many of these television shows refuse to release raw, unedited stock footage from their investigations to researchers in order for them to examine the material for evidence of fraudulent activities. Despite such groups' popularity with their audiences, controversies, such as what TAPS and some other groups generate, tend to set back, and diminish the overall integrity of the field.

The incorrect use of devices such as infrared (IR) thermometers and electro-magnetic field (EMF) detectors is also common on such shows. Conclusions are persuasively presented by investigation leaders, based on subjective assessments of recordings or videotapes and personal interpretations, and without legitimately established baseline data or the application of genuinely scientific methodologies; tools are used without any precise understanding of how, or even if, their application has been established to prove the existence of apparitions, or the paranormal in general (assumptions such as 'increases in magnetic fields or drops in temperature are always associated with the manifestation of an entity', etc.), seemingly intentional misrepresentations or events added to the application of artificial and sensational drama are also commonplace. While these are certainly valid theatrical techniques for increasing viewership interest and publicity ratings, they do serve to, again, diminish the integrity of the field and, in the long run, weaken the public's belief in, and support for, more rigorous and defined psychical research efforts.

Notwithstanding the fact that the field of paranormal research is intuitively ambiguous in its nature - and that the current lack of empirical evidence continues to dissuade many skeptics of the field's validity, it would behoove us to remember William Cowper's tenet that 'the absence of proof is not necessarily a proof of absence.'

Paranormal researchers should keep in mind the skeptic's tendency to use (inappropriately even) the argumentum ad ignorantiam: that 'a premise is false only because it has not been proven true'. In that light, it would behoove researchers and skeptics alike to extend the courtesy of the doubt to those who would claim clairvoyant capabilities, or those who claim to have accrued evidence of a genuine haunting: but that there must also, correspondingly, be the concession by these individuals to subject their evidence or capabilities to empirical tests or experiments, in order to establish and confirm validity.

## A Contemporary Critique

A point of concern is the relatively simplicity of establishing a paranormal investigation cohort. Most proponents - however well intentioned - simply establish a website or create a social networking site, then promote themselves to like-minded individuals or enthusiasts, and then reactively associate with most people that respond to their proposed meeting schedules or informational postings. Few of these groups proactively establish or advertise pre-requisite codes-of-conduct, or outline the kind of critical analysis processes, mission statement, or objectives that allow for potential new members to carefully consider their engagement, or ideological affiliation, with one group over another.

And subsequently in many cases, some groups actively engage only those initiates who are like-minded (i.e., not skeptical or analytical of those claiming sensitive or psychic capabilities within the group) , and then formulate a smaller, closed circle of specialists, shutting the door to individuals with new, different, or more productive skill-sets - it is often these sorts of groups that promote themselves as the 'premier' paranormal investigative group in a specific geographic focus area.

Ideally, the more credible paranormal research groups are capable of well-articulating their organizational objectives, methodologies, codes-of-conduct, and the more rigorous requirements of membership. Some of these groups will occasionally admit new initiates, and then engage them in an informal screening process, or require them to go on an informal training investigation before allowing them to join in on formal investigations. These more professional groups generally have a democratic leadership process and annual elections, regular meetings, a quantitative method (and willingness) to openly assess or routinely evaluate their use of psychics or sensitives who claim to possess paranormal or clairvoyant powers themselves, and produce professional post-investigative reports or analysis for all of their activities.

Professional groups also continually pursue advanced training in subjects such as

behavioural psychology, historical research and investigation tactics, technical (photography, audio, video, surveillance, etc.) , as well as privacy laws and regulations. A familiarity or understanding of personality disorders is also important, since issues related to substance abuse, domestic or sexual assault and abuse situations, dementia or other behavioural disorders, mental illness, or cognitive impairments could, in fact, be the underlying cause or contributing factors to the perceived paranormal activities reported. Reputable groups also commonly pursue formal recognition as a federally-registered organization, in order to adhere to the laws and expected codes of conduct - particularly since many of these groups are invited into private homes and properties in which personal liability, theft, and possible criminal activity can be a concern.

Professional groups will also work to prefer to seek affiliation with one of the existing scientific agencies engaged in paranormal research, i.e., the SPR, ASPR, the Parapsychological Association (P.A.) , the Rhine Research Center and Institute for Parapsychology, etc. Alternatively, most groups now try to affiliate with pop-culture groups (e.g., members of the TAPS family) , and, while certainly capturing their share of Hollywood fame, do not share nearly the same level of credibility, nor do they conduct as rigorous, peer-reviewed experiments as conducted within the more genuine institutional research groups.

Perhaps the most significant impediment to an advance of the field caused by many of the pop-culture associations is that many amateur groups refuse to collaborate and share data, techniques, or case history with others in the field. The central objective of psychical research involves a collective effort to prove that preternatural phenomena is authentic; this pursuit is universal, and the implications, if discovered, would have an effect on every single person that had ever lived. In an ideal environment, this shared objective should yield a playing field in which all groups would collaborate and share investigation opportunities, leads, and the associated body of accrued knowledge, effectively testing cooperatively, and critiquing each others' work or experiments in order to refine or improve on



methodologies, theories, and, most accordingly, to cross-check and interpret results. Not unlike the process of peer review in scientific research, the world of paranormal research - from amateur to institutional levels - would progress much faster if only the participants became more proactive in collaborating on projects, investigations, and experiments.

## Orbs

The presence of anomalous 'orbs' in visual imagery is perhaps the most definitive example of how controversial and, again, how subjective the interpretation of paranormal investigations can become. There is no verifiable evidence in paranormal research suggesting that orbs are any more than the blurred backscatter from a light source captured on film. Most orbs are simply a circular reflection of an air born particulate - usually outside of a camera's depth-of-field focus plain - and transmitted on either film or video. 'Matrixing', a term now commonly used in paranormal research, is defined as interpreting something familiar (facial features or apparition) out of a randomly occurring, often symmetrical form.

Not unlike the stir surrounding the historical, human face-like shadow seen on one of Mars' Cydonian Mesas, captured by the Viking 1 Martian Orbiter in July 1976[10], humans possess a natural tendency to try and classify or interpret random images in a familiar fashion. This is the most common explanation of perceived features seen by some inside orbs, including some orbs that might be made of crystalline particulates, which could be optically reflecting the facial features of the camera operator.

Artificial images containing orbs are easily created by blowing dust, or stirring up other suspended particulate in front of a camera or video lens. Lens flares, chromatic aberrations, moisture, or condensation also have the propensity to create spherical shapes on film or digital media.

Dark orbs are created when an illumination source is placed away from the lens opening, and a dust or dirt particulate floats in front of that illumination, resulting in a shadow falling

within the frame of the camera. In some cases, suspended particles (feathers, sawdust, etc.) may even have non-symmetrical forms, resulting in shadows, which are subject to supplementary matrixing by reviewers. Pursuant to the fact that no definite preternatural linkage has been established, orbs should not be considered as evidence of paranormal activity.

## EVPS

In 1968, Dr. Konstatin Raudive, a Latvian psychologist and one of the early proponents of modern EVP recording techniques, published his treatise entitled 'Unhörbares wird hörbar' ("What is inaudible becomes audible"). The book's contents accelerated an approach that, even today, is seen by many investigative groups as the underpinning strategy in most paranormal field investigations. The premise behind EVPs is that audible 'messages from the dead' require the least amount of energy to transmit, so that it would be most likely for spirits or apparitions to communicate in this form, rather than the more energy-requisite methods of physical apparition or the movement of solid objects.

Most contemporary paranormal groups have vast catalogues of EVP; while many of these EVP very likely represent examples of auditory pareidolia (interpreting random sounds as voices in our own language) or 'audio matrixing', some samples may present genuine paranormal phenomena. The challenge becomes how we might effectively identify a baseline which could characterise a successful, or even authentic, EVP.

Raudive and many others (Friedrich Jürgenson, Sarah Estep, Peter Bander, etc.) have provided compelling data to suggest that some audio recording devices may be capable of capturing audiotape from discarnate entities or the spirit world [11]. What has been noticeably absent in scientific discourse of natural explanations however, is discussion about the possible longevity of radio transmissions, and whether electronically transmitted sounds might possibly be perpetually captured in the ethereal void in a format that may be played back randomly - particularly when an individual human ear is making efforts to discern a specific 'voice' or

'message' originating from a distinct person or interest or departed relative. Specifically, each human presence on earth may leave a record of dialogue at some point in history: perhaps the earth itself, or magnetic field around the earth, or an alternative, heretofore unknown dimension, provides a vehicle suitable to audio-record human voices in the firmament somewhere, and when EVP devices are used to locate and isolate those communications, our selective hearing helps us to filter out the white noise and discern (or audio-matrix) voices that we seek to hear (pareidolia again).

The most important element to consider, however, is that the audio recorded from EVPs is often far too subjective to present any specific or definitive evidence of paranormal activity - while the techniques itself is relatively easy to apply, there does not seem to be any logical explanation that voices or sounds discernable on the same, real-time level, or frequencies audible to humans during the playback (without processing) should not have been simultaneously audible during the act of initial recording.

Arguably, we must acknowledge that our understanding of the full spectrum and breadth of our electronic media (and possibly the realms, dimensions, worlds, frequencies, realities, etc. that our broadcast radio and television waves might reach - and vice versa) has yet to be fully understood. We do know that humankind's use of electronic signals and recording instruments are sensitive and sophisticated enough to record, analyse, and transmit data collected from the outer planets of our solar system, or even from the ends of the known universe (NASA's COBE satellite) [12.], so it would be presumptuous and cavalier of us to ignore the possibility that these technologies might not have the ability to provide a conduit into other, heretofore undiscovered dimensions or realms.

## **EMF Detectors**

Electromagnetic fields are present around any object, which possesses an electrical charge. As one of the four fundamental forces of nature, EMFs are not necessarily preternatural by definition. The positive aspect of that premise is that EMFs and increases or decreases in measured milligauss readings

are, hereby, physically measurable. The conundrum however, is that, since EMFs are a scientifically proven, naturally occurring phenomena, can variations in EMF fields, thereby, truly be influenced by supernatural forces?

This would present another paradox in itself - the seemingly absurd notion that 'paranormal' activity would be observable, or quantifiable, through 'normal', or non-paranormal, technologies. This paradox itself may define the futility of the current investigative methodologies and tools applied by the contemporary paranormal investigator.

Somewhere in the evolution of psychical research, a theory was set forth that, paranormal apparitions, in the process of manifesting or passing through an area, would cause a variation in EMFs recorded at that site. It should be noted that this theory has never been quantifiably validated - that the theory continues to this day as simply that... a theory.

Far too many paranormal researchers assume that, when dynamic fluctuations in EMFs occur, and all known causes are ruled out, that the sole diagnosis remaining is that some form of paranormal cause can be validated. Some television programs (i.e., Paranormal State) place a singular focus on EMF increases as providing definitive proof that paranormal activity exists. Instead, EMF detectors should primarily be used to determine and rule out natural causes of suspected paranormal activity, instead of providing *prima facie* evidence of ghostly activity or the manifestation of an apparition. There are far too many natural occurring reasons why EMF fluctuations happen in the field, and there is still no body of scientific data to support the theory that ghostly manifestations generate EMF increases or 'spikes'.

Now accordingly, recognising that EMF detectors record fields that operate on level governed by quantum mechanics, and that quantum mechanics involve principles operating at the atomic level of matter (and further, that some of these principles appear to act against the expectations that we would expect natural systems to behave) , perhaps there is some heretofore unverified



relationship between the increase in milligauss readings, and the apparent dimension-shift or apparition of ghosts. While the possibility should remain open in our minds, we need to understand that, until a plausible connection has been established, that EMF increases, like orbs, should also not be considered as definite evidence of paranormal activity.

## **Psychics and Sensitives**

Professional groups should also understand that the underlying purpose of paranormal research is to obtain quantifiable evidence that scientifically proves the existence of phenomena or realms outside of the current body of knowledge. Very often, the impressions of sensitives, psychics, or others who claim the unverifiable ability to 'channel energies' or spirits, are given significant validity during an investigation - even when those abilities are reportedly 'validated' or 'verified' by other psychics or sensitives in a group, the value of such information is questionable at best, unless it can also be additionally validated using a quantifiable methodology, such as audio or videotaped evidence, historical research or client verification, official records, etc.

Frequently, sensitives or psychics in a group sometimes appear more interested in showcasing their own personalities, or building up a group identity to address their own individual psychological needs. Commonplace with those more established groups, sensitives begin with a team, then either branch out on their own as a result of group friction, or co-join with others who have collaborated or validated their impressions during investigations, and form macro-factions within, or ultimately, apart from the larger group. In many of the newer groups experiencing dynamic membership stages, there appear to be more stable cohorts of technical specialists (techs) , who tend to remain with one group longer than do the sensitives (perhaps due to the more dynamic or capricious nature of their personalities).

In any event, the more successful groups manage to combine skilled technicians with a small number of sensitives, who most effectively deliver their skill-sets on a quieter level, and who do not use them to predispose

or 'telegraph' the tenor or cadence of investigations. Effective sensitives document their field observations privately, and then afterward use their skills to independently validate or elucidate data collected during the investigation, or during the investigation, they subtly suggest room, location, or area shifts where they are inclined to interpret that more productive data or possible audio-video evidence might be collected. Sensitive-collected data - due to the presently subjective or unverifiable nature of its credibility - should not be substantially included in any client out-brief or field report.

Paranormal researchers who do claim psychic capabilities should ultimately understand the importance of credibility, and they should not feel threatened nor challenged if requested to show evidence of a skill that, at best invalidated, can only be considered as a subjective 'impression' or 'interpretation' of a site or location. Groups utilizing sensitives or psychics among their investigation teams should also be willing to engage their sensitives to controlled (voluntary) Zener Card [13.] or Ganzfeld [14.] experimentation. In order to provide transparency and disclosure to clients, the results from those experiments might also be openly and willingly shared, if desired, with any subject for whom those sensitives or psychics might conduct future group investigations.

Due to the inherently sentient or spiritual nature of the human conditions, it would seem that the human mind (i.e., the senses of true psychic or sensitives) should provide the most objective analysis tool to determine whether something is of normal or paranormal origin. With the proper pre-screening controls, checks, and balances, the human mind (insomuch as we still do not understand its full potential and capabilities) may, in fact, provide the best medium to assess psychical events.

Notwithstanding my prior criticism of the use of sensitives as a tool for psychical research, I do believe that experiments exploring the inert capabilities of the human mind present one of the most promising (albeit unrevealed) prospects for definitive inter-dimensional contact. The operative notion is that sensitives, when used to facilitate such contact, must first be thoroughly vetted for

capability, competence, and credibility (and not accepted uncontested) , prior to their adoption as a viable investigative element on paranormal teams.

### **On Other Methodologies**

Oftentimes, paranormal investigations depicted on popular broadcast television shows present ghost hunting teams entering ethnically diverse locations (i.e. GHI's investigations of Banffy and Poienari Castles in Romania, Cachtice and Predjama Castles in Slovenia, etc.) , then conducting their communication or EVP sessions using the English language. Arguably, the transition into an otherworldly dimension does not come complete with universal translation services; if the intention were to communicate or provoke responses from disembodied entities, it would seem obvious that a familiar language (and even vernacular, if the era preceded contemporary times over a century or more) should be applied in the effort. Most amateur groups on television, however, storm into foreign investigation sites and proceed to announce their presence and engage the entities in the English language (e.g., GHI investigation of Karosta Prison in Latvia, and Borgvattnet Vicarage in Sweden), expecting to earn credible results.

Additionally, assumptions are commonly made that spirits or entities have the desire (if not the capacity) to respond to comments or questions asked from those remaining on the worldly plain. In the case where a perceived or research-supported historical rationale justifying 'interaction' (i.e., unexpected death, tragedy, remorse for deeds undone or done unjustly, etc.), the prospect might indeed be supported. Yet there seems to be an absurdity in the notion that individuals, having passed from the trappings of the mortal realm, into the afterworld (or even into some level of purgatory or interim state of being) would have the capability to transcend inter-dimensional boundaries, and create a coherent channel of communication with earthly audiences.

Contemporary understanding of the space-time continuum and the laws of physics supports the premise that linear time only moves forward, and that travel backward in time is not, in light of the current laws of

physics, possible. Hereby, it is valid to think that any spirit that had passed onward from our dimension, and who is continuing the existential journey forward through the theoretical space-time continuum, would be (in accord with of the laws of physics) unable to communicate backward into the past, to the chronological spot on the linear space-time continuum where the communicating paranormal researchers resides.

Notwithstanding that this hypothesis does not account for the possibility that future paranormal researchers might be able to develop methodologies to communicate forward along the linear space-time continuum, into the future, toward the direction in which the forward-passing spirit may be travelling. But it is safe to say that most, if not all, paranormal researchers are quite likely not aware of such a premise, and are thereby not inclined to even consider the prospect that spirits may not, according to the laws of physics, be able to interact with those remaining on the mortal plane, nor perhaps even recognize the fact that they now travel a different path than do those do here on the earthly realm.

The current, repetitive research methodologies applied by most amateur groups are not effective enough to produce definitive evidence of inter-dimensional response or communication. Accordingly, there is a consensus among behavioural psychologists that certain, powerful human emotions are more likely to solicit responses from other humans (including those passed, if, accordingly, they are still able to sense earthbound emotions) ; these emotions include sexual attraction/desire, anger, and/or distress. In order to move the field forward and explore more innovative methods, it might be suitable to apply this knowledge during paranormal investigations.

Experiments designed to create or influence preternatural responses might be more successful if such emotions, or circumstances involving such emotions, are used as triggers or perhaps even as lures. Some televised programs have shown paranormal researchers using taunts or other antagonistic attempts to provoke an angry response from



apparitions by using insults, challenges, mockery, and even profanity.

While considered distasteful or irreverent to some researchers, the act of provoking a response from a passed spirit, from a psychological standpoint, is a valid, albeit uncomfortable, methodology fitting for further exploration and experimentation under the appropriate conditions.

In the early 1970s, a cohort of the Toronto Society for Psychical Research (TSPR), lead by paranormal researcher Alan Owen, conducted an experiment in which they 'visualised' the existence of a historical mid-1600 character named 'Philip Aylesford' [15.] The intent of the experiment was to examine whether meditation and visualization (in this case, a group's effort to collectively image and manifest an artificial personality) could actually result in the manifestation, or apparition, of paranormal origin. The positive results of the controlled experiment (which included psychokinetic phenomena recorded on video and on live television) suggest that the collective subconscious of a group of focused individuals may have an effect on the outcome of paranormal or (in this case psychokinetic) investigations or experiments.

This prospect should also be taken into consideration during field investigations. Paranormal research teams - particularly the smaller, amateur groups commonly chartered in cities around the world, mostly seek to validate individually-held beliefs that the supernatural does exist. If evidence of manifestations occur as a result of a group's inherent desire (visualization) to see such activity, the evidence could certainly be characterized as paranormal, albeit anthropogenic (internal), versus non-anthropogenic, or preternatural (external) in origin.

## Summary

Contemporary psychical research methodologies have, as of yet, failed to produce sufficient proof that a paranormal world exists. Mainstream ghost-hunting activities conducted largely by amateur and casual paranormal groups continue to lack the scientific rigour, ingenuity or innovativeness to

move the field ahead and potentially bring new results, or definitive evidence, into existence. Participants in paranormal research efforts - both amateur and institutional, must continue to recognize that true progress in these arenas would best occur when ineffective methodologies are retired and new, scientifically defensible methods are conceived, implemented, and executed. Most importantly however, the current paranormal research community must adopt a willingness to cease sensationalizing the field and to vocally reject the ambiguity resulting from poorly conducted or disingenuous research.

Despite the current lack of emergent evidence, psychical research does still present a potential conduit into alternative dimensions and realities that we, as a collective, may not yet find universally plausible, nor in some cases, palatable. While some evidence does exist to suggest that some individuals may have actually experienced trace or fleeting glimpses into the realms of the paranormal or into alternate realities and/or dimensions, it is apparent that the majority of our culture would find the emergence of a metaphysical element to life as a shocking, unsettling occurrence.

Ironically, while the majority of sentient human beings are inherently spiritual in nature, the broadcast acceptance of paranormal phenomena continues to fluctuate, even as a vast majority of cultures continue to express devout and orthodox belief in the world's various religions, or in a higher deity, prayer and divine intervention. In fact, what is considered as prayer to some people may also simply be a manifestation of psychokinesis [16.]; what may be considered divine revelation to some could simply be evidence of telepathy, remote viewing, or 'thought-transference'. In this capacity, while there may be a distinct dichotomy in the conceptual approach between religion and a belief in the paranormal, the underlying importance of religion as a fundamental control mechanism governing societal behaviour, morality, laws and ethics, must not be undervalued.

Alternatively, while the pragmatic advantage that we, as a society, extract from a belief in the paranormal, may not yet be universally apparent nor outwardly beneficial as that of our collective embrace of religion, there are

still some very significant reasons for us to pursue paranormal research - even if a large segment of the scientific community still consider the field as a pseudoscience.

If we are able to effectively prove the existence of ghosts, we will, in essence, have been able to prove in the existence of the Goddess, the God of Christianity, the Islamic Allah, or other deities.

That, in itself, would be an inconceivable accomplishment for all of humankind, and, that prospect alone, perhaps, might underscore the prime purpose of why we, as a society, should continue pursuing, promoting, and promulgating more ambitious and evolutionary studies and explorations in the realm of psychical and paranormal research.

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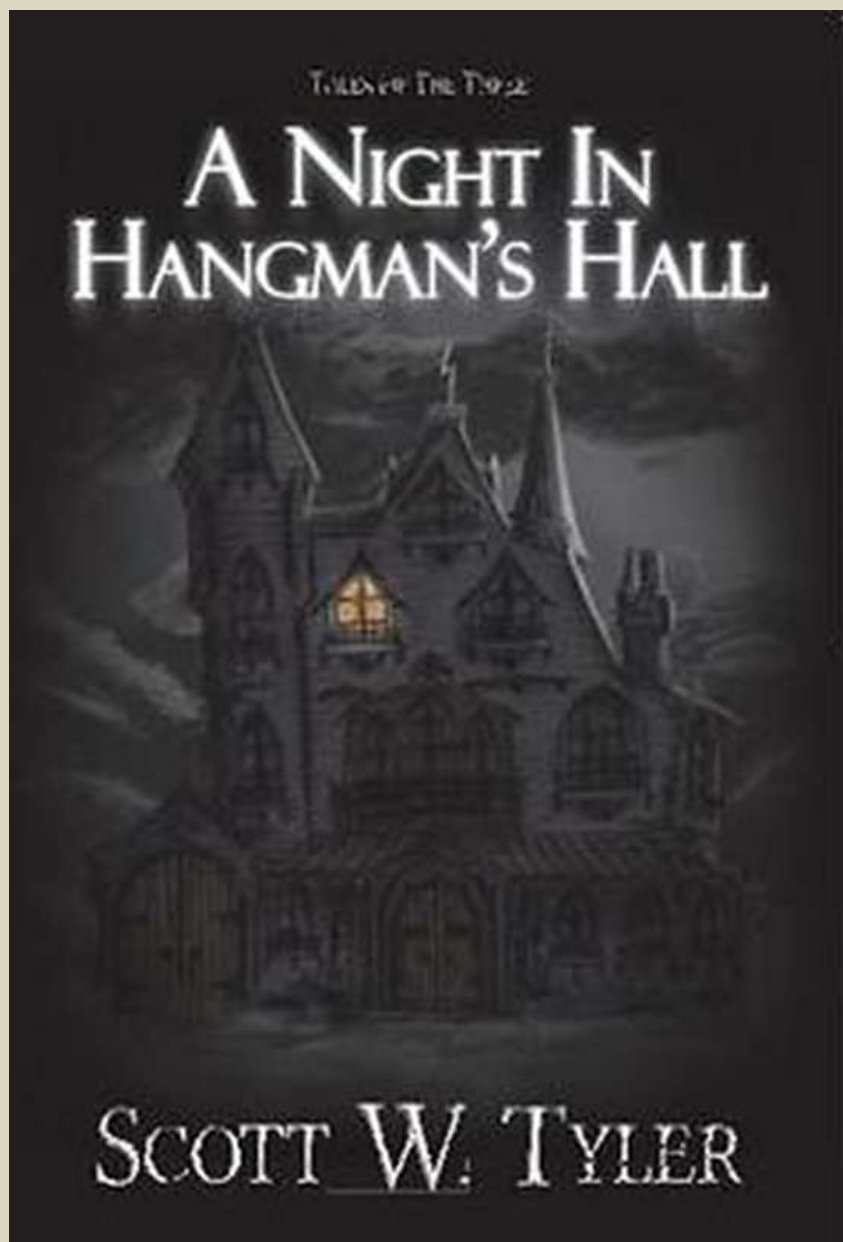
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About the Author: Michael Kundu became an associate member of the U.K. Society for Psychical Research in 1986; today he remains active with the Washington State Ghost Society (WSGS). A Canadian ex-patriot living in the United States, Kundu writes from his home in the Cascade Mountains of Washington State.



# Aussie Paranormal Book Corner

## A Night in Hangman's Hall



The old haunted house on the hill. Every town has one, but not every town was home to the Mad Mangler, a vicious killer who took the lives of numerous innocent men and women.

This was his home. Mark Garel, Claire Ors, and Alex Moore know all of the stories; they've spent their entire lives watching horror movies and learning all about the Mangler. Hangman's Hall has a fearsome reputation, but that's not going to stop them. The three friends are going to stay the night.

It seemed like a good idea at the time, stay the night in a haunted house to prove how brave they are. They counted on being afraid, but nothing could prepare them for the true horrors that lie within. The secrets they will uncover will change their lives forever. Could they be the ones who will finally undo the Mangler's evil? What chance do they have against all of the powers of the supernatural?

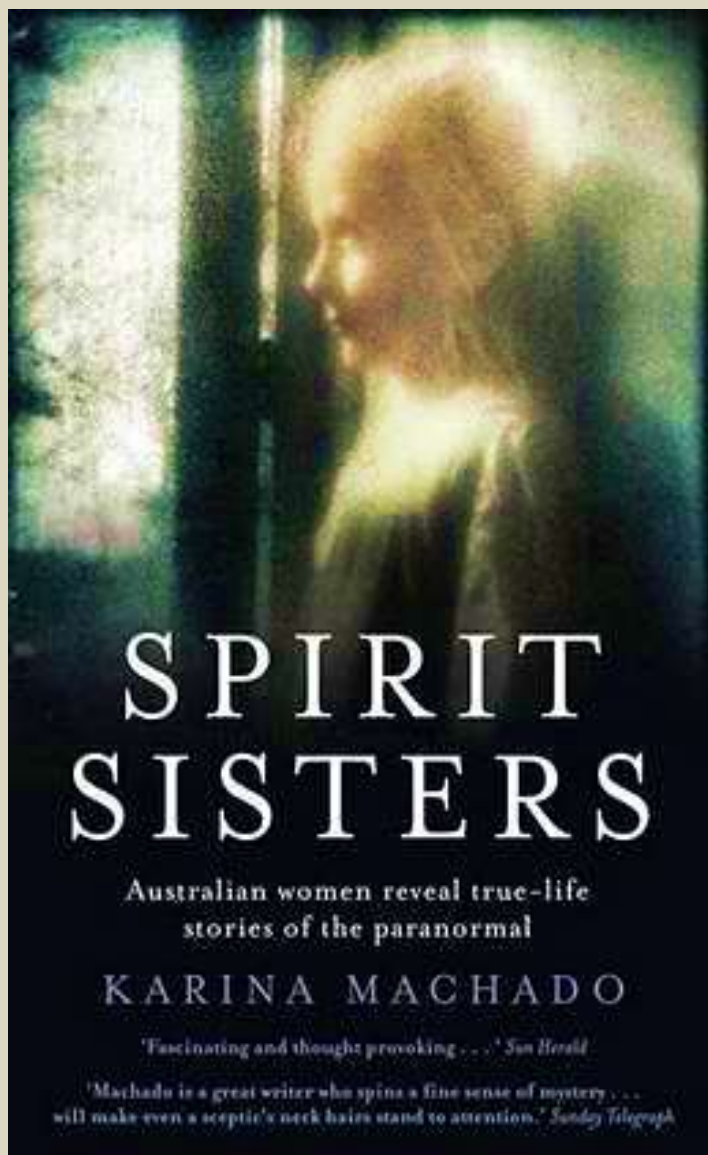
### About the Author

Scott Tyler has been interested in the paranormal since a young age and his love of horror stories and writing have only been fuelled by his experience with paranormal investigations. His series tales of the three is an idea that was born during his school years and has slowly evolved into a full fledged series.

# Spirit Sisters

## Australian Women Reveal True-Life Stories of the Paranormal

By: Karina Machado



A collection of true-life encounters with the supernatural based on the first-hand experiences of everyday Australian women from all walks of life.

SPIRIT SISTERS was inspired by the scores of women who would preface their story with 'I've hardly told anyone this, but...'. The journalist would scratch the surface and their story would tumble out; they'd given up the ghost, so to speak.

In SPIRIT SISTERS you'll meet Australian women of all ages who share their very personal encounters with the supernatural.

From a high-flying banking executive whose life changed for ever after a visit from a bizarre, winged entity, to a mother of seven who was held and soothed by her husband five days after she'd buried him, to the woman who lost most of her family in one car accident, this book is heart-breaking, inspiring, scary and comforting.

In an age when psychics are called the new therapists and buying your own high-tech ghost-hunting equipment is just a click away on eBay, this book is a celebration of the one thing that hasn't changed in hundreds of years.

When a friend draws close, lowers her voice and begins to tell you her ghost story, as her

eyes widen and her smile fades, as the very air around you seems to thicken and the back of your neck begins to tingle...isn't it delicious?

### About The Author

Karina Machado was born in Uruguay and moved to Sydney with her family as a toddler, where she grew up hearing stories of her mother's psychic gift, igniting a life-long curiosity about all matters supernatural. She began her career in journalism as editorial assistant at TIME magazine in 1994, and is now a senior editor at WHO magazine, where she's for ever pitching spooky stories. She's also obsessed with the Tudors of England, and has been known to dress up as Anne Boleyn, whose ghost she's sadly never seen.





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# SOuL.S.P.I. Parapsychology Certificate Course



This comprehensive course is ideal for those who would like an in-depth knowledge of the paranormal and would like to learn the necessary skills to become a Professional Paranormal Investigator.

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For detailed information about this course or a private investigation please refer to the website:

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or send an email to:  
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or contact Janine on 0408 025 268

SOuL Searchers  
Paranormal Investigations



SOuL.S.P.I.  
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Our mission is to investigate all logical explanations of environments that are associated with paranormal activity. We use a common sense scientific approach to all our investigations but also have an open mind to all theories & methodologies. Our SOuL S.P.I team is composed of individuals with a variety of talents both scientific and psychic, including sceptics and believers.

Each investigation is conducted in a professional manner, addressing any concerns such as privacy, safety and security. Adherence to the wishes of the client is paramount in every case study.

The SOuL S.P.I team conducts paranormal investigations, house-calls, space clearings and removal of unwanted entities and entity attachments mainly in Southern Sydney, Sutherland Shire, St George district, Illawarra and surrounding areas of NSW, Australia.





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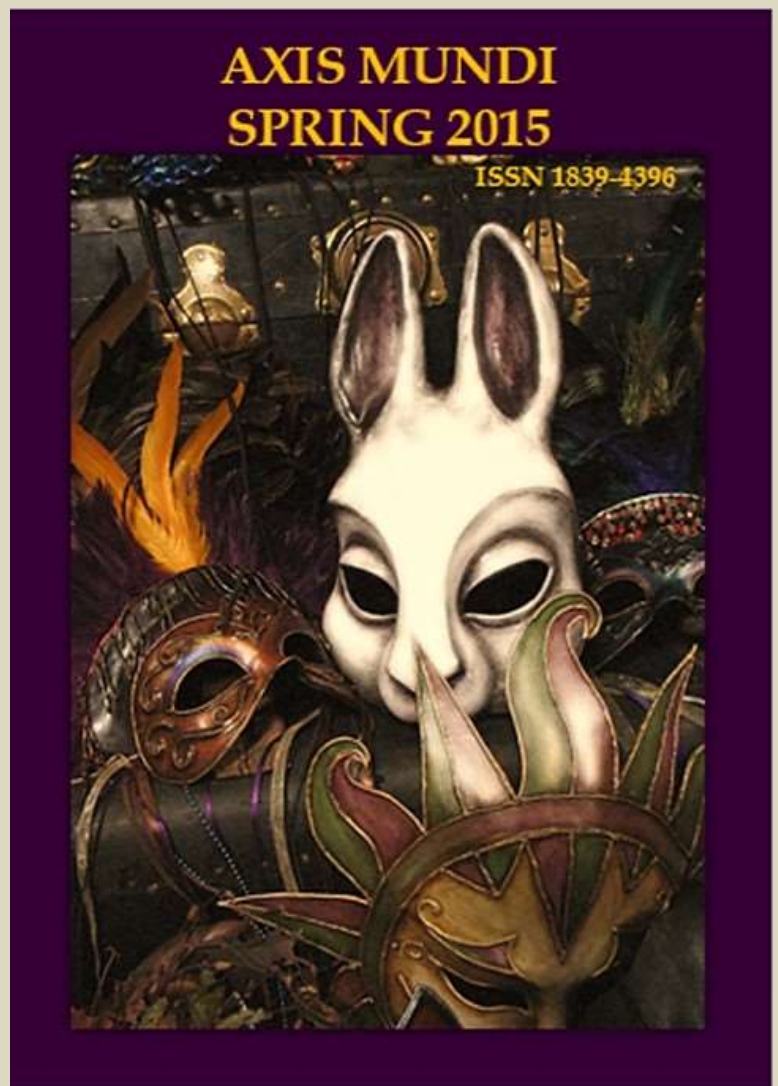
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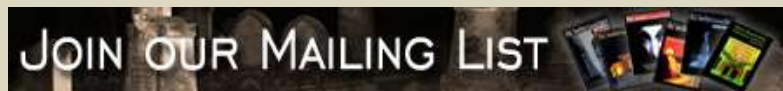
The Axis Mundi is a FREE online magazine, produced on a quarterly basis, which provides topical information to keep you up to date on news and developments in the Australian Pagan community. Subscribers are notified by email each quarter when a new edition is ready. In addition to our usual announcements on upcoming activities and events, the Axis Mundi contains articles and information that correspond to a seasonal theme and highlight the rhythms and cycles of the natural world and our lives. Your suggestions, comments and contributions are strongly encouraged. It is through your active participation that this online magazine will grow and develop into a publication that will empower you on your journey through all realms of possibilities personal, spiritual, and magical.

The Latin term, axis-mundi, literally means the axis of the world. Our logo expresses a shamanic point of connection between sky and earth where the four compass directions meet. At this point travel and correspondence is made between higher and lower realms and is reflected in the concept of 'as above so below'. In the context of our magazine it is meant to define a group that comes together from various ideologies and shares spiritual ideas, knowledge and experiences and is in a process of constant evolution.



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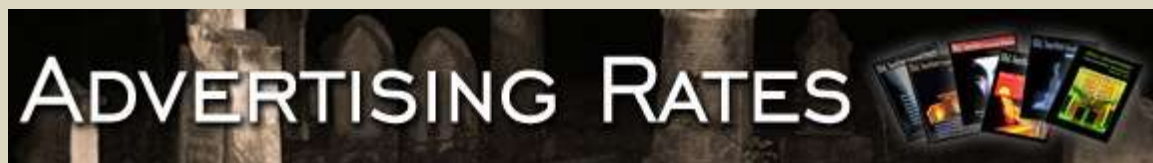




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