

EdgeScience

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Current Research and Insights

**Baffling Physical
Phenomena
in Mediums**
By Erlendur Haraldsson

**Why Would a
Journalist Investigate
the Paranormal?**
By Leslie Kean

**Is Cryptozoology
Just a
Pseudoscience?**
By Paul LeBlond

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Why EdgeScience? Because, contrary to public perception, scientific knowledge is still full of unknowns. What remains to be discovered—what we don't know—very likely dwarfs what we do know. And what we think we know may not be entirely correct or fully understood. Anomalies, which researchers tend to sweep under the rug, should be actively pursued as clues to potential breakthroughs and new directions in science.

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The Society for Scientific Exploration (SSE) is a professional organization of scientists and scholars who study unusual and unexplained phenomena. The primary goal of the Society is to provide a professional forum for presentations, criticism, and debate concerning topics which are for various reasons ignored or studied inadequately within mainstream science. A secondary goal is to promote improved understanding of those factors that unnecessarily limit the scope of scientific inquiry, such as sociological constraints, restrictive world views, hidden theoretical assumptions, and the temptation to convert prevailing theory into prevailing dogma. Topics under investigation cover a wide spectrum. At one end are apparent anomalies in well established disciplines. At the other, we find paradoxical phenomena that belong to no established discipline and therefore may offer the greatest potential for scientific advance and the expansion of human knowledge. The SSE was founded in 1982 and has approximately 800 members in 45 countries worldwide. The Society also publishes the peer-reviewed *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, and holds annual meetings in the U.S. and biennial meetings in Europe. Associate and student memberships are available to the public. To join the Society, or for more information, visit the website at scientificexploration.org.

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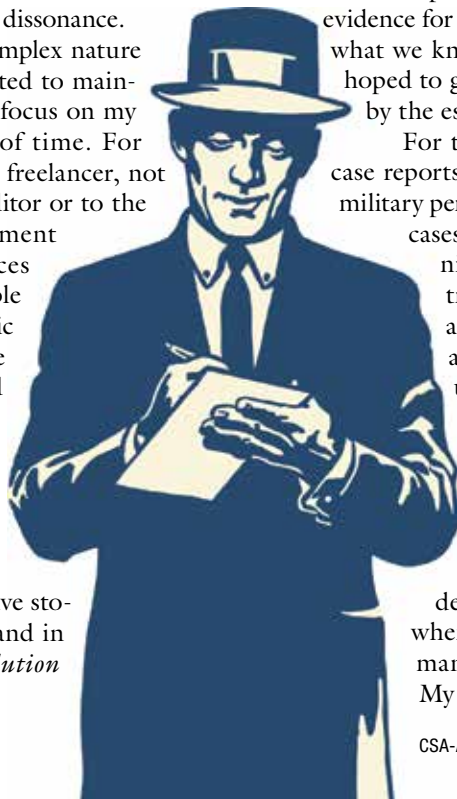
Leslie Kean

Why Would a Journalist Investigate the Paranormal?

As an investigative reporter, I like to focus on large mysteries that are well documented but remain unexplained. Sometimes labelled as “paranormal” or on the fringe (which I have come to see are misnomers), they can be controversial. The research that most fascinates me challenges, or even threatens, the established scientific world view. But oddly enough, this is one of the reasons I find it compelling. Can we get to the bottom of these issues? If not, can we at least sort out fact from fiction and offer the public clear, uncontaminated results that leave conspiracy theories, denials of real phenomena, and personal belief systems out of it? For me, the larger questions about reality offer more payoff than coverage of the day-to-day struggles of humanity, which are vitally important but are handled beautifully by hordes of other reporters.

It is generally not known that there are qualified scientists who have documented phenomena that are not supposed to be “real,” phenomena that some of their contemporary colleagues claim are literally impossible based on our understanding of space travel or physics. The problem is that the phenomena are actually very real, and there is no way around that. When you have witnessed such “impossible” events yourself, as I have, these denials from skeptics are especially difficult to ignore. It goes without saying that genuine, open-minded skepticism is certainly positive, and all research must be scrutinized and debated. But I’m talking about closed-minded, irrational dismissals that create a strange sort of cognitive dissonance.

Given the extraordinary and complex nature of these topics, I have been committed to maintaining a rigorous and one-pointed focus on my areas of study over a long period of time. For about twenty years, I have been a freelancer, not beholden to assignments from an editor or to the limiting attitudes of the establishment media. Due to supplemental sources of income, it was logistically possible for me to stop working for the public radio station that employed me in the 1990s. During this earlier time, I had reported on a range of “normal” topics both in mainstream print media and while producing and hosting a daily investigative news show. For example, I developed an expertise on Burma’s struggle for democracy, traveling there to return with exclusive stories, which were widely published, and in 1994 I co-authored *Burma’s Revolution of the Spirit*.¹



Unidentified Aerial Phenomena

But in 1999 everything changed. I received a copy of a 90-page study by retired Generals, space experts, and scientists in France about unidentified aerial phenomena—objects in the sky that displayed technology we don’t have and that behaved as if under intelligent control. These distinguished authors presented their “extraterrestrial hypothesis” as a rational and viable explanation for the officially documented phenomena. This was unprecedented coming from such a group. I thought it was a big news story and felt that I had a scoop, having received an advance copy before its public release. In 2000, I wrote a lengthy news analysis piece based on the French report for the Sunday *Boston Globe*,² where I had previously published articles on Burma and other issues, and it was well received. At this point, there was no turning back.

But soon I would learn about the systemic resistance among American policy makers, which profoundly affects the attitudes of scientists, to taking this subject seriously enough to pursue official investigations. Even the very best cases, involving aviation personnel or police officers concerned about potential safety issues, are ignored. When pressured, the FAA provides bogus explanations (note the case at O’Hare Airport in 2006 as an example³). This contrasted with the approach in France and other countries. And where does scientific curiosity enter the picture? Thus began my in-depth investigation into evidence for the existence of UFOs, with the goal of clarifying what we know and what we don’t know about them. I also hoped to gain an understanding of why the data is shunned by the establishment.

For the next decade, I reviewed hundreds of official case reports and government documents; interviewed pilots, military personnel, and government officials; and investigated cases. I published stories in mainstream media, organized large press conferences in Washington, contributed to documentaries, and was the plaintiff in a landmark Freedom of Information Act lawsuit against NASA concerning the 1965 crash of an unidentified object in Pennsylvania.⁴

Like the French experts who initially piqued my interest, as well as government agencies in other countries that investigate credible reports, I was able to conclude that there is solid evidence for the existence of remarkable unknown physical objects in our skies. We have not yet determined what they are, why they are here, or where they come from, but the reality of *something* manifesting for more than 70 years is indisputable. My work culminated in the 2010 publication of *UFOs*:

Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on the Record,⁵ a *New York Times* bestseller. Understandably, scientists find UFOs difficult to study for a host of reasons, and more hard data is needed, as they point out. But the data we do have are worthy of serious consideration, and it is unfortunate that UFOs have been so marginalized, especially by those searching for signs of extraterrestrial life.

Why would I want to risk my reputation taking this on? The disregard for compelling evidence of something of this magnitude, and the distaste it has generated within the scientific world, actually fueled my reporting—it gave me more impetus to inform the official world about the facts. And because of my serious and rational approach as a journalist, my reputation has only grown. I believe the entrenched avoidance and denials from the establishment border on the absurd, although fear of the implications of unknown objects operating beyond our control is understandable. (Unfortunately, UFO enthusiasts are their own worst enemies due to their unprovable conspiracy theories and other claims about “ET” that push the topic to the fringe, making it easier for the very people they want to influence to reject it out of hand.)

This time I witnessed the impossible with my own eyes and didn't have to rely only on reports from other observers.

Survival of consciousness

The question of the survival of consciousness after bodily death has also been a longtime interest, percolating in the background while I worked on UFOs. In 2007 I became an associate producer for a documentary on this topic, which offered me exposure to some outstanding cases and a range of experts in the United States and abroad. I traveled to Glasgow, Scotland, to meet with the family of a boy named Cameron who, when he was two and a half, began talking about a past life on an island called “Barra” where he said planes landed on the beach. He described the house he lived in with his siblings, his black and white dog, and numerous details about the location. Cameron’s memories became an obsession, generating much longing for his “Barra Mum.” His mother Norma, who had never been to Barra and could not explain how her son knew anything about it, contacted psychiatrist Jim Tucker, an expert on child reincarnation cases at the University of Virginia. Eventually they took Cameron to Barra, a remote island off the coast of Scotland, and with the help of a local historian, were able to find what they determined was his “previous house.” Cameron’s strong emotional reaction at the home was captured on film.⁶ It seemed as if the small boy was actually remembering a life lived before this one, and this aroused my curiosity, especially after meeting the family and talking to them myself.

I also assisted with interviews of two physical mediums—those who facilitate the manifestation of extraordinary physical phenomena while in a trance state that they say is generated by forces coming from the “spirit world.” Their phenomena included the creation of moving lights, levitated objects, materialized “living” and moving hands, unusual images on factory-sealed photographic film, and detailed information ostensibly provided from deceased relatives. More than 500 sessions, known as the Scole Experiments, included hundreds of witnesses between 1993 and 1998 in the village of Scole, England, and in six other countries. With a stated purpose of demonstrating the reality of life after death, the sessions were scrutinized for three years by three qualified outside investigators from the Society for Psychical Research in the UK who were experienced in exposing fraud. They conducted and controlled many experiments at the Scole sittings themselves and documented the events as genuine in a lengthy, scholarly report.⁷ The mediums I met seemed absolutely credible. Yet this was so difficult to fathom that I became determined to experience these or similar astonishing phenomena myself someday.

And that time came. Beginning in 2012, I was finally able to focus exclusively on an investigation into evidence suggestive of survival past death. Approached with the same rigor as UFOs, my new book, *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence of an Afterlife*,⁸ examines evidence suggesting the possibility of survival through another puzzling and often disregarded body of research. Yet this investigation offered me something new: an ability to test some of the phenomena through personal engagement with them. This time, I witnessed the impossible with my own eyes and didn’t have to rely only on reports from other observers. And I knew I could trust myself as the best source possible! I therefore became even more motivated to meet the challenge of those who claim that what I and so many others have seen aren’t real. This is simply an assault on the truth and a denial of the existence of powerful forces within Nature that are not yet understood. And a journalist’s job is to tell the truth, no matter how difficult the investigation may be.

I do not have the space here to describe adequately what the remarkable phenomena are which I witnessed or experienced directly (they are covered in my book), and the various explanations for them which I explore. My purpose here is to address why I write about these topics at all. But, some brief examples follow. I was directly exposed to people capable of perception that seemed to transcend the limitations of the physical brain. I was present when unexplainable forces, acting with apparent intelligence, were able to move objects at a distance. I received obscure and accurate details from possible discarnate beings communicating through people unknown to them, under conditions eliminating any possibility of fraud or cold readings.

My research was illuminating as well. I learned about clinically dead patients with no brain function who could “hear and see” while experiencing themselves as outside their bodies during cardiac arrest or under anesthesia, and who reported journeys to a sublime afterlife dimension. Numerous studies have been published in which no single explanation has been found

to explain the many facets of these life-changing near-death experiences. In addition, skeptical scientists have documented genuine phenomena such as materializations, independent voices, and levitations while working in the light with physical mediums under tightly controlled conditions in which fraud or misinterpretation were ruled out.

My explorations of these and other remarkable phenomena gave rise to many questions. For example, how can it be that an apparition returns a wave from a human observer? And, I witnessed the materialization of a “living” hand during sessions with British physical medium Stewart Alexander. I also touched this hand and held it in mine, on multiple occasions. (No, it could not have been hoaxed, as I address in my book.) How could this be possible, and by what mechanism does it occur? And what about a two-year-old American boy, born in 1998, remembering numerous specific names and facts about a previous life as a World War II pilot, along with specialized knowledge of airplanes from that period, which were later verified as accurate to the life of the person he claimed to have been? Without a doubt, whether one wants to accept survival after death or not, human beings have demonstrated the use of extraordinary psychic functioning, which I have witnessed myself on many occasions under a variety of circumstances. And I am not the only one to have done so.

Yet, there are vocal skeptics who still claim that none of this can happen and therefore doesn't. As a journalist who knows differently as a matter of *fact*, what is the best response to such ignorance?

It can't happen and therefore it doesn't happen

Take, for example, Sean M. Carroll, a theoretical physicist with a PhD from Harvard who is a professor at the California Institute of Technology. I became curious about his rather extreme perspective after watching a 2014 video of him debating the question of whether death is final, with Steven Novella, the president and co-founder of the New England Skeptical Society, as his partner.⁹ (These two materialists were up against NDE experts Eben Alexander and Raymond Moody.) I explored Carroll's blog¹⁰ and discovered repeated statements that what I have actually witnessed myself can't happen and therefore doesn't happen. We already know what the four forces are in nature (gravitation, electromagnetism, and the strong and weak nuclear forces), he says, and none of them can explain ESP or the independent movement of physical objects. “If parapsychologists followed the methodology of scientific inquiry, they would look at what we know about the laws of physics, realize that their purported subject of study had already been ruled out, and within thirty seconds would declare themselves finished,” he states. Is this really the methodology of scientific inquiry? Don't investigate anything that appears to contradict what we already know?

Like other skeptics, Carroll believes that any and all studies of psychokinesis or telepathy are “pseudoscience” because we already know everything about all long-range forces able to influence macroscopic objects. “There is no room there for telekinesis etc. So, in the real world, it's not science,” he writes.

Electromagnetism doesn't bend spoons, he observes, because it would be detected. Well, it may not be electromagnetism, but there is indeed some force that can bend these implements. Is Carroll curious to find out what it is? He posits that there is no way for a human brain to send out a signal that could read a mind or bend a spoon... Really? I too doubted such things were possible, as any reasonable person would trained to think this way. But, I have witnessed the “paranormal” bending of forks—or perhaps “mangling” would be a better description—and I assume he hasn't.

At a conference in 2015, I gathered with a small group of friends early one evening, including an outstanding medium whom I had known previously. I watched her rub her fingers back and forth against four forks while she seemed to both focus and relax at the same time, chatting happily as if nothing unusual were going on. Trickery? No. I retrieved the dinner forks myself from our hotel dining room, which were the



Fork bending witnessed by the author.

only ones used, and they were significantly thicker and stronger than average. I watched the process carefully and made videos of multiple bendings. The forks appeared to become like putty, allowing for easy manipulation. Two severely bent forks remain in my possession; I wonder if a laboratory would be interested in examining them for any molecular affects. The medium does not really understand how she does this, so maybe science could attempt to find out and explain what forces are in operation here.

But wait! “There are no new particles or forces relevant to your everyday life that science hasn’t found yet,” Carroll proclaims. He also states, as if it were fact, that the human mind cannot move objects without touching them. Yet I have seen the levitation of a small table in the light with no one touching it at all, which then turned upside down in the air and returned to the ground on its back, to cite only one example of the macro PK I’ve been fortunate to witness. Well, maybe it’s not the human mind that’s involved, as he says. But then what is it? Ironically, by denying the possibility that human consciousness or psi is at play here, Carroll may be opening the door to unknown forces *coming from some other dimension* in which the laws of physics don’t apply. The mediums who facilitate these extraordinary phenomena—and yes, genuine mental and physical mediums with real abilities *do* exist—are convinced that the forces involved in their phenomena are created by discarnate beings working with and through them. (This explanation does not apply to fork-bending or many other human-generated psychic phenomena.) If we accept that the more spectacular psychokinetic manifestations cannot possibly be caused by humans, as Carroll rules out, then maybe the mediums are right. It sounds as if the force *could* be coming from some kind of “other side” because it can’t be of this physical earth.

Dr. Julie Beischel and her colleagues at the Windbridge Institute, a research facility in Arizona, have established a methodology for testing mental mediumship, which, through quintuple-blind protocols, eliminates any possibility of fraud, cold reading, or rater bias. Some mediums have passed these rigorous tests and delivered accurate information for unknown sitters not even present, as shown in detailed peer-reviewed, published papers. But Carroll dismisses this too. “You don’t need to set up elaborate double-blind protocols to pass judgment on the abilities of purported psychics,” he declares. “Our knowledge of the laws of physics rules them out. Speculations to the contrary are not the provenance of bold visionaries, they are the dreams of crackpots.” Well, I guess William James, Sir William Crookes, Charles Richet, Sir Oliver Lodge, Gustave Geley, among our earliest investigators—and the many other highly qualified thinkers and skeptical scientists who have conducted rigorous studies documenting genuine mediumship under controlled conditions eliminating any possibility of fraud—are also part of the dreaming crackpot club. Speculations? Not in the published papers and detailed reports that have I read.

While researching mediumship for my book, I received a reading from an Irish medium over Skype who didn’t know my name, location, or anything whatsoever about me, as I describe in my book. I used a fake name, new email address, and provided absolutely no information she could use to identify me. We never spoke before the reading. Yet she delivered stunningly accurate, personal information that seemed to come from two deceased people I was close to who died in recent years. (I list the statements in my book.) These communicators demonstrated character traits that fit their very different personalities. How does one explain this? The approach of denying the very existence of psychic ability simply doesn’t work.

We can’t ignore data, no matter how bizarre or even threatening it may be.

I wonder how many scientists have deduced that anomalous phenomena are incompatible with the laws of physics. It seems almost silly, because the phenomena *do* exist and the world of atoms and molecules has not self-imploded as a result. Our scientific laws remain intact as they apply to the physical world, while these mysterious forces do their own thing, as if they stand outside physicality and operate under separate laws. Perhaps the confusion lies with the rigid belief that consciousness is simply a result of physiological processes, a product of neurons and biology, and therefore must be subject to the same laws as the physical brain. “There are no particles or forces that contain the information in your brain after you die,” Carroll states, so therefore survival is not possible. How can he be so certain about this?

The disconnect between these unexplained phenomena and physical reality reinforces the hypothesis proposed by other scientists that consciousness stands apart from the physical body and therefore apart from the physical world. There is much data from a range of fields suggesting that mind is not a derivative of matter, and some investigators propose that consciousness may in fact be more fundamental than matter. Another possibility is that there are still undiscovered aspects of matter that are not yet incorporated into our current understanding of the physical world and the laws that govern it. How is the mind able to affect the force of gravity? If it’s not the mind, then something else is causing the levitations that I and so many others have witnessed.

I’m not a scientist, but I would think that if consciousness is nonlocal, as so many expert researchers have postulated, this would be a viable way to explain these occurrences. Non-physical realms, or other dimensions, would naturally exist outside the confines of the physical world, and perhaps consciousness provides a bridge between the material and the non-material. In any case, it is these sorts of questions that compel me to investigate research relating to the nature of consciousness, and to keep an open mind.

I believe that it would be of great benefit if more scientists would seriously consider data that is on the cutting edge of science, rather than dismissing out of hand anything that conflicts with the currently accepted world view. This is how science makes progress. We can’t ignore data, no matter how bizarre or even threatening it may be. In the meantime, maybe journalists can help make these facts known to the larger world so that we can all enjoy the awe and transcendence that such mysteries generate, and we can all be reminded that we don’t understand reality as well as we might think.

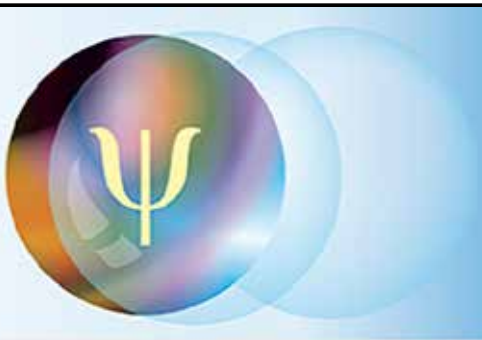
LESLIE KEAN is an independent investigative journalist. She has been published widely in dozens of newspapers and magazines here and abroad, such as the *Boston Globe*, *The Nation*, *The Globe and Mail*, the *International Herald Tribune*, and the *Journal of Scientific Exploration*. She currently contributes articles to the *Huffington Post*. She is the author of *Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence of an Afterlife* and the *UFOs: Generals, Pilots, and Government Officials Go on The Record*. Her website is survivingdeathkean.com.



ENDNOTES

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The Helene Reeder Memorial Fund for Research into Life after Death

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR GRANTS 2017

The Helene Reeder Fund is pleased to announce the availability of grants for small- and medium-sized scientific research projects concerning the question of Life after Death. Grants will be awarded in the range of EUR 500 – 5000 maximum. The topic **Research into Life after Death** should constitute the main objective of the project.

Applications in English to be submitted by email to the HRF, at edg.muller@comhem.se and should include:

- detailed description of the project, including the objectives of the project,
- methodology,
- cost budget,
- timetable,
- plans to publish the results in some scientific journals,
- CV of the applicant,
- how the applicant plans to report back to the HRF about progress and result,
- any other financing than from HRF.

Applications should be received not later than 1st of October 2017. It is the intention of the HRF to evaluate the applications and to make decision regarding the grants before the end of December. Applicants will be notified by email after the decision and the grants will be payable during December. *For further information, please apply to the above email address.*
Edgar E. Müller, Secretary of the Board, the Swedish Society for Parapsychological Research

Erlendur Haraldsson

Baffling Physical Phenomena: Differences in the Phenomenology of Some Famous Physical Mediums

The Spiritualist movement appeared around the middle of the nineteenth century, claiming that communication was possible with those who had died through specially gifted individuals that were called mediums. In the presence of some mediums physical phenomena also occurred that violated well-established laws of nature. Some daring scientists started to investigate the mediums, their claims, and phenomena. That was how psychical research started that has continued to the present day.

Mediums differed widely, some were only mental mediums, and others were primarily physical mediums. Even among the physical mediums there were great differences.

Particularly common were movements of objects, light and heavy, large and small, and over short and long distances. Also noted was the trembling of objects, pulling of curtains, and turning lights on and off, apparently without any normal physical forces being involved. Sometimes things were moved around by requests of those present. Fixation of objects was also observed—objects could not be moved or did not fall off a table when it was tilted.

D. D. Home and Indridi Indridason

Chemist and physicist Sir William Crooks, one of the early investigators, concluded after his investigation of Daniel Dunglas Home that we were dealing with a *new force*. The Scottish-American D. D. Home (1833–1886) was one of the early prominent physical mediums who soon became a celebrity on both sides of the Atlantic.

Objects not only moved in his presence. They often levitated into the air where they moved around, sometimes as if carried by an invisible hand, or having been thrown by great force. Musical instruments were played upon, even as they levitated and moved around in the air.

Not only objects were levitated. Mediums were sometimes lifted off their chair and into the air. There were claims of fraud. Unscrupulous individuals started to imitate and produce the phenomena fraudulently.



D. D. Home levitating

Light phenomena of many kinds—such as flashes of various colors, luminous clouds, pillars of lights—were observed with some mediums.

Sounds were commonly heard: raps and clicks, and knocks responding to sitters' questions. Human voices were heard away from the medium and recognized as of deceased persons. These voices could converse meaningfully with the sitters who recognized them. Even singing was heard, as in the case of the Icelandic medium Indridi Indridason (1883–1912). With Indridason sometimes a feminine voice of a trained opera singer sang a duet with a dim male bass, both evidently trained professional singers.



Indridi Indridason

Gusts of wind could blow through the séance room, some as if blown out of an invisible mouth.

Fragrances and other smells might suddenly be perceived, sometimes characteristic of a particular dead individual.

Materialization of human forms were seen, or parts of human figures. Sitters at séances were sometimes touched or pulled as if by invisible hands. Sometimes these hands could be touched.

A brief comparison of the characteristics of the mediumship of Indridi Indridason and D. D. Home indicates that:

- Control personalities played an important role in Indridason's mediumship, but little if any role with Home.
- Indridason's séances were held in darkness or near-darkness, although phenomena also occurred spontaneously in full light.
- Home's sittings were usually conducted in normal light. In this respect Home was unique among mediums.

- Indridason was always in trance during his sittings, and it usually took him a long time to wake up to full normal consciousness. Home was sometimes in trance but often not, or in a very light trance.
- Communications with deceased persons or spirits was much easier with Indridason, and mostly through trance speech, direct voice phenomena, or direct or automatic writing. With Home, communications or messages came primarily through the alphabet (planchette) or raps, seldom through trance speech and rarely through direct voice phenomena.
- With Home, communications or messages were short and telegram-like style. They were generally much longer with Indridason and played a greater role. Blank séances, when nothing happened, were infrequent with Indridason, and more common with Home.
- Home's arms sometimes became cataleptic or rigid but there is no mention of that with Indridason.
- There was a period of violent poltergeist assaults with Indridason, but nothing of this sort was reported with Home, although undesirable influences were sometimes mentioned.
- There were several cases of spirit controls speaking in foreign languages (xenoglossy) with Indridason, but none reported with Home.
- Indridason's mediumship lasted only five years (1904–1909). Home's mediumship lasted 25 years (1851–1876). Indridason had a short life and died at the age of 28, whereas Home was aged 53. Both died of tuberculosis, a widespread disease in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century.
- The majority of the phenomena occurring with Indridason also occurred with Home and vice versa.
- Some of Indridason's phenomena are not reported with Home, such as apports, the disappearance of his arm, and surgery-like operations.
- With Home there were phenomena that were never reported with Indridason. Most famous was the astounding earthquake effect (trembling of the floor and room), handling of burning coal, and strange heat radiating from Home's hands.
- In other ways these two physical mediums differed rather significantly. The many phenomena that appeared with each varied quite markedly in their frequency. To provide a better understanding, we took the 24 sittings described by Crookes in *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* and combined them with 24 sittings described by the Earl of Dunraven, by randomly selecting 24 of the 79 sittings in *Experiences in Spiritualism with D.D. Home*.
- In that way we obtained 48 Home séances to compare with Indridason's 47 séances reported in the minute books kept about his séances. Let us see what the analysis reveals.

Movements of objects were more common with Home. They took place at 81% of his séances, and only 55% of Indridason's séances. Most other kinds of physical phenomena also occurred more frequently with Home such as raps, gusts of air, odors, playing of musical instruments, touches by invisible hands, and more.

There are, however, two major exceptions. Direct voice phenomena are the most common phenomenon with

	Indridason	D.D. Home
Raps or knocks	38%	67%
Gusts of air	9	23
Movements of objects	55	81
Playing of musical instruments	6	44
Levitation of medium	26	8
Light phenomena	28	31
Materializations	15	46
Touches/pulls as if from invisible hands	36	60
Direct voice phenomena	77	8

Table 1. Comparison of the frequency (percentage of sittings) of various major phenomena occurring at Indridi Indridason's 47 séances and Daniel Dunglas Home's 48 séances.

Indridason, as they occur at 77% of the sittings. With Home direct voice is relatively rare; it occurs at 8% of the sittings but sounds of other kinds occur at 33% of his séances. Levitations of the medium are also more common with Indridason, reported at 26% of his sittings but at only 8% with Home. The appearance of lights was similar, observed 28% of the time at Indridason's sittings and 31% at Home's.

These are the physical phenomena. The mental phenomena are much harder to assess in a qualitative manner. We did not attempt such an assessment. However, there is little of this sort with Home. In that respect, Indridason was a more versatile medium.

We recall that philologist and physical researcher F.W.H. Myers placed communicators in three groups: people recently deceased, people belonging to generations more remote and generally of some distinction in their day, and spirits referred to by such names such as Rector, Doctor, Theophilous, and above all, Emperor. With Indridason we find the first two categories, with the third category missing or rarely mentioned. In Home's mediumship the third category is completely missing, and so are distinct personages from a previous generation. With Home the physical phenomena are prominent.

Rudi Schneider and Einer Nielsen

Home was meticulously investigated by Sir William Crookes. Indridason was just as thoroughly investigated by another highly respected scientist, Dr. Gudmundur Hannesson. He tested and investigated Indridason in numerous sittings through a whole winter. However, before we get to that, let us compare Indridi Indridason with two other famous mediums: the Austrian Rudi Schneider (1908–1957) and the Danish Einer Nielsen (1894–1965). Like Indridason, and unlike Home, both had active control personalities and held séances in darkness or in semi-darkness.

Ectoplasm played a great role in the mediumship of Rudi Schneider and Einer Nielsen but was not observed with Indridason and Home. Ectoplasm was mysterious in the way that it extruded from the mediums' bodily orifices, and from



Rudi Schneider (left) with Harry Price (right)

it partial or full human figures were formed. Shortly after its manifestation, this mysterious substance vanished without a trace.

Rudi Schneider's mediumship started at an early age after his older brother Willi Schneider (1903–1971) had already become a medium. Rudi was thoroughly tested by investigators such as Dr. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929) in Munich, Dr. Eugene Osty (1874–1938) in Paris, and Harry Price (1881–1948) in London, and all imposed strict controls. During some of those investigations, instrumental recordings were made of interference from an “invisible substance” that broke infrared beams projected around objects that were paranormally moved. The interruption of the infrared rays

coincided with the announcement from Olga (Rudi Schneider's control) that “she was going into the ray.” In that way, instrumental verification was obtained about paranormal effects and movements of objects, similar to Crookes' instrumental verification of movements at the sittings with Home. Hundreds of records exist of Rudi Schneider's séances. The German-born British psychologist and psychical researcher Anita Gregory (1925–1984) made detailed analyses of four different phenomena that took place at Schneider's sittings (1968, 1985).

In Table 2 we compare the frequency of the four phenomena that Anita Gregory lists for Rudi Schneider and the same phenomena occurring with Indridason and Home. By the time Schrenck-Notzing investigated Schneider, his abilities had started to fade. We therefore include the last column showing earlier sittings that took place at his home. Movements were most common with Schneider, visible materializations with Schneider and Home, levitations of the medium with Indridason, and experiences of touch with Home. These four phenomena were common to all these mediums. With Schneider, Anita Gregory does not mention the phenomenon of direct voice that was so prevalent with Indridason.

Einer Nielsen is the best known Scandinavian physical medium, and his mediumship started when he was a young man, as it did with Home and Rudi Schneider. With Einer Nielsen, human figures were formed from ectoplasm that extruded from his nose and mouth. Movements and levitations of objects were also observed, as well as levitations of his body. He was investigated by experienced researchers, such as Schrenck-Notzing in 1921 and very thoroughly by the engineer Fritz Grunewald, professor Christian Winther, and K. H. Krabbe later that same year (Grunewald, 1922).

Before the beginning of the séances, Nielsen was fully undressed. Both before and after the séance, all bodily orifices including his rectum, were examined. He was then dressed in a tricot; his hands and head were also covered with semi-transparent material that was sown to his tricot. Nielsen was then placed in a closed, transparent box-like structure (cabinet). In spite of all these precautions, ectoplasmic forms were produced both inside and outside the cabinet. The conclusion by both teams was that the phenomena were genuine.

A University Committee in Oslo attempted to investigate Nielsen in 1922. They treated him harshly, observed no phenomena, and concluded that previously observed phenomena

Séances with:	Indridi Indridason	Daniel Dunglas Home	Rudi Schneider	Rudi Schneider
	Minute Books	Crookes / Dunraven	Schrenck- Notzing	Sittings at his home
	N = 47	N = 48	N = 84	N = 173
	%	%	%	%
No phenomena	0	Many	25	7
Movement of objects	55	81	74	89
Visible materializations	10	58	37	52
Levitation of medium	26	13	4	22
Sitters touched	36	67	8	25

Table 2. The frequency of four different phenomena taking place at the séances of Indridi Indridason, Daniel Dunglas Home and Rudi Schneider.



Einer Nielsen levitating in a séance

were fraudulently produced (Universitetskomiteen i Kristiania, 1922). Parallel to this investigation there was a Norwegian Society for Psychical Research investigation that was also extremely critical (Norsk selskab for psykisk forskning, 1922). Here, as in the Grunewald investigation, Nielsen had to change clothes, all bodily orifices were examined, and nothing was found. In the first three séances, ectoplasmic human-like forms appeared, but none in the fourth séance. In that last séance, some smell of feces was perceived, and Einer did not want his rectum examined, but his anus was later examined. When his tricot was examined after the last séance, a 12 mm wide and 6 to 8 mm long hole was found near where his head cover was sown to his tricot. Traces of feces were found on Einer's hand and at his anus along with a 3 cm long thread. When his rectum was examined, nothing was found. This committee concluded that Einer Nielsen must have been able to free his hand from the tricot, take some material from his rectum, get it through the tiny hole, portray it as an ectoplasmic form, and then swallow it. None of this was directly observed but assumed to have taken place and is therefore a highly dubious conclusion. On this assumption, the committee concluded that the phenomena were not genuine. The world press announced Einer Nielsen as a fraud.

Anthropologist and psychical researcher Eric Dingwall (1890–1986) wrote in the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* (1922, pp. 327–328): "...it is difficult to accept the committee's findings as to fraud on part of the medium. There is really very little evidence to indicate that the medium acted as the committee allege."

Einer Nielsen was invited on three occasions to Iceland, first in 1924 when he held 22 séances of which we have detailed reports (Kvaran, 1924). In light of the Oslo investigations, extraordinary precautions were taken and Nielsen was thoroughly tested. The meetings were held at the home of Einar H. Kvaran, President of the Icelandic Society for Psychical Research. Einer Nielsen also stayed with Kvaran during his visit.

The conditions at the séances were as follows: One corner of the room where the sittings were held was converted into a cabinet with two curtains down to the floor and a slip in the middle so that the cabinet could be opened and made visible. The sitters sat on 12 chairs in one row in front of the cabinet. They held hands during the séance and the harmonium was placed some distance behind them. On it was a red lamp that could emit variable light depending on the wishes of the medium or his controls. The light was always bright enough for the sitters to see each other.

Nielsen was given several sittings to get used to the new environment in which various phenomena were observed, but there were also a few sittings with no phenomena. Then tighter controls were imposed. The investigating committee consisted of two physicians, one Supreme Court judge, and two other persons. First the room was carefully examined, and then Einer was brought in and undressed until he was naked. His clothes were carefully examined piece by piece by each member of the committee; his nose and mouth were examined; and he was brought into the cabinet where his rectum was inspected. Nothing suspicious was found. Then his clothes were given back to him except for the jacket and his tie. (A more detailed description is available from the senior author and published in *Dansk Tidsskrift for Psykisk Forskning* (Haraldsson, 2010).)

After this, other sitters were invited into the séance room; those sitting close to the medium were also inspected. After the séance started, a whitish figure appeared through the opening of the curtains. She was clearly visible with a headscarf, and her skirt was wide and half-length. She disappeared, and then the lower part of the skirt became visible. She appeared again, but her face was unclear. At one time the curtains were opened, and the medium was seen in his chair with ectoplasm from his chest down to his knees, wide at his chest but becoming narrower further down. It was not like a flat piece of cloth or scarf but a thick, shining white mass. Then the curtain was closed again.

Later in the sitting the curtain was lifted at the wall and the sitters nearby saw the medium with ectoplasm from his chest up over his face and above his head. They found no indications of fraud, and there was no smell or trace of feces in any of the Icelandic sittings. All its members signed the report of the committee.

Einer Nielsen also conducted telekinetic sittings where he sat in the middle of a circle with both of his hands held by sitters at his side. Objects on a table and on the organ were lifted and moved around, sometimes touching the sitters. Three times he levitated at such sittings so that those holding his hands had to stretch their hands as high up as they could.

In summary, the sitters made the following observations regarding the forms that appeared: The human forms were of various sizes, tall and short; the hands were also of various sizes, including the hands of small children. Sometimes the lower part of a figure was seen but not the upper, and vice versa. The figures had veils of varying length and sizes. Some of the figures could be seen distinctly, others were nebulous and dark. On a few occasions, the medium was seen with a figure at its side and once with one on each side.

Direct voice phenomena, so common with Indridason, were not observed with Einer Nielsen or Rudi Schneider, nor were the lights of various forms and colors that were common with Indridason. In this way, these mediums differed significantly. In fact, all four mediums, Indridi Indridason, Home, Schneider and Nielsen had their particular characteristics, one type of phenomena occurring with one of them and not or to a lesser extent with the others.

What all of them had in common were inexplicable movements of objects around them, and most important for all of them was contact with those who had died. Spirit communication was central to the Spiritualist movement, in which these mediums played an important role in their native countries and internationally.

What is the State of Physical Mediumship Today?

The Spiritualist movement has become a part of our history, and physical mediums have become rare species. Just two contemporary mediums come to mind.

Kai Mugge in Germany claimed to be a physical medium who seemed to be genuine in the beginning. He was investigated by two competent investigators, biologist Michael Nahm and philosopher Stephen Braude. Both started their investigations on a positive note. But in the end Michael Nahm concluded that all the phenomena he produced were fraudulent; Braude seems to think that there is, or may be, some residual of genuine phenomena along with the fraud. All in all, a sad case.

Stewart Alexander in the United Kingdom has a reputation for being genuine but has refused to be investigated.

It should also be mentioned that competent researchers interested in physical mediumship are rare, and few seem interested in actively following up potential leads. Furthermore, hostile “skeptics” (pseudo-skeptics or deniers) have become very vocal, and that may have lead some researchers to stay away from potential studies of physical mediumship. These arguments, however, may be more excuses than real reasons for the state of physical mediumship today.

But this dire state can be no indication that the phenomena of the past were not genuine. Some of the physical mediums of the past like Daniel Dunglas Home, Indridi Indridason, Rudi Schneider and Einer Nielsen were so thoroughly investigated, that there can be no question about their genuineness.

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Shannon Taggart

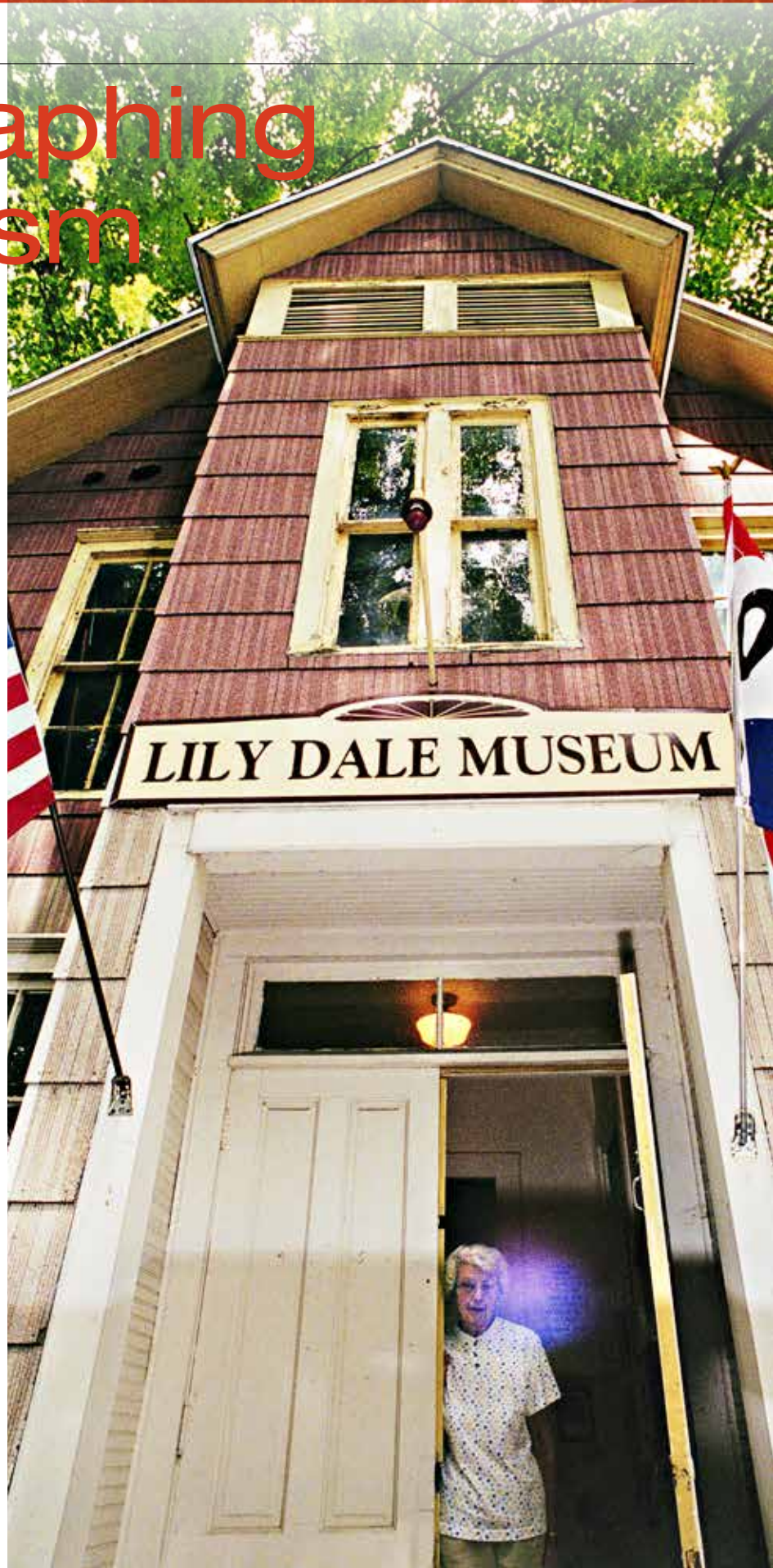
Photographing Spiritualism

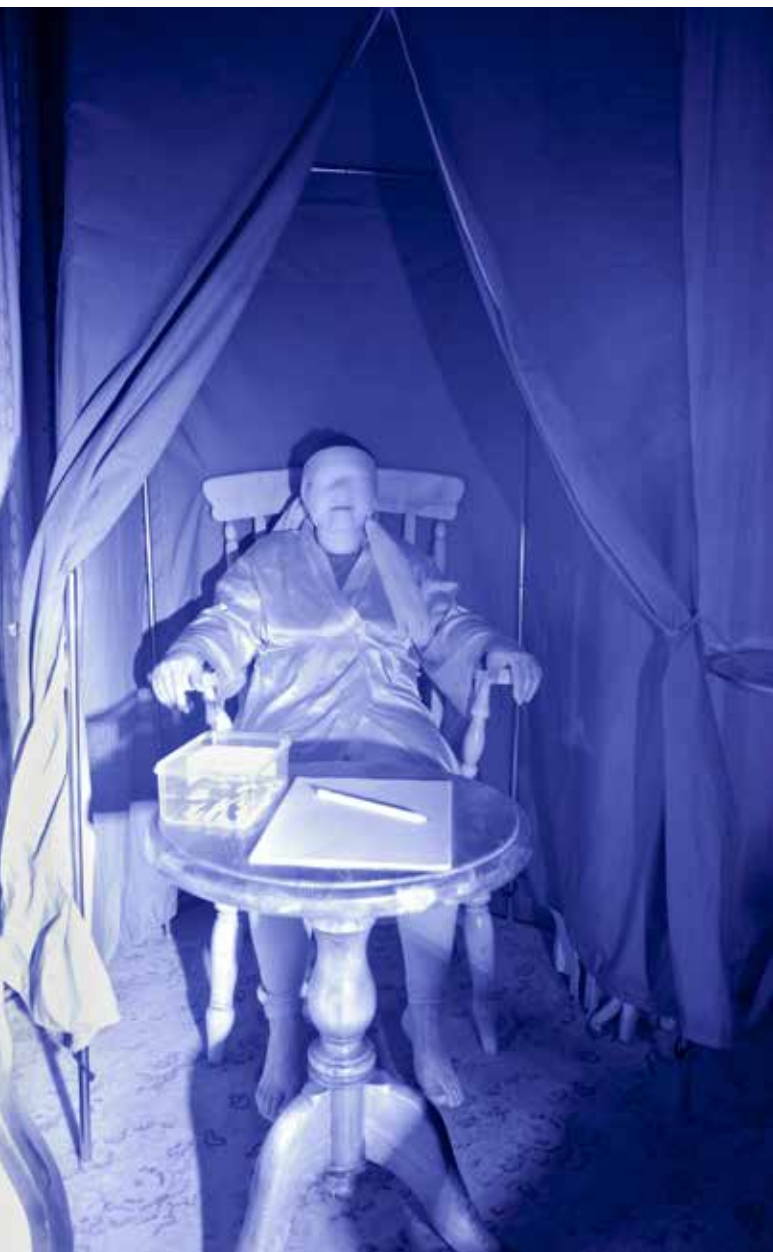
I first became aware of Spiritualism as a teenager, after my cousin received a reading from a medium who revealed a secret about my grandfather's death that proved to be true. Since then, I have been deeply curious about how a total stranger could have learned something my family had kept confidential.

In 2001, I began photographing at the place where my grandfather's message was received: Lily Dale, New York, home of the world's largest Spiritualist community. I quickly immersed myself in Lily Dale's world, always with my camera at hand. I expected to spend one summer figuring out the tricks of the Spiritualist trade. Instead, Spiritualism's mysterious processes, earnest practitioners, surprising cultural history, and bizarre photographic past became a resource and an inspiration for my own work. I began a 16-year quest to document contemporary Spiritualism and to find and photograph "ectoplasm"—the elusive substance that is said to be both spiritual and material.

Photographing Spiritualism presents a unique challenge: how do you photograph the invisible? Sitting in the charged atmospheres of the séance rooms I encountered, I wondered how to approach the exchange between a veiled presence and a visible body? Technical mistakes led me to explore the inherent imperfections within the photographic process. Unpredictable elements (blur, abstraction, motion, flare) seemed to insinuate, or refer to, the unseen. I began to use conventions that are considered wrong, messy, or "tricky." I crossed the boundary of what is commonly considered unprofessional in the practice of photography: I invited anomaly. In playing with the process, the invisible was automated. My camera rendered some striking synchronicities. The resulting images display the conjuring power of photography itself.

Anomaly—Dorothy with a purple orb that she interprets as her deceased husband Bob's presence, Lily Dale, New York, 2001.





Medium Sylvia Howarth creates spirit art in the dark, Reeth, England, 2013.



Physical medium Gordon Garforth with enlarged hand, Arthur Findlay College, Stansted, England, 2013.



Cover: Physical Medium Warren Caylor displays ectoplasm, Cassadaga, New York, 2016.

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Paul LeBlond

Is Cryptozoology Just a Pseudoscience?



Bernard Heuvelmans (1916–2001), the Father of Cryptozoology, photo courtesy of the Musée de Zoologie, Lausanne

Cryptozoology, as defined by Bernard Heuvelmans, its major proponent, is simply “the science of *hidden* animals” or, more precisely, of “animals undescribed by science” because of the lack of sufficient material evidence (Heuvelmans 1982). Cryptozoology addresses the problematic existence of “sea (or lake) monsters”: Nessie in Loch Ness or Caddy in the northeast Pacific, or elusive hominoid creatures: The Yeti in the Himalayas, the Sasquatch in the Pacific Northwest. It also seeks evidence for the existence of less charismatic but equally elusive animals, often known to local people but without official recognition for lack of a specimen. For example, the presence of the olinguito (*Bassaricyon neblina*), a small South America arboreal mammal, was confirmed in 2013 by Smithsonian scientists alerted to its possible existence by field reports and overlooked museum specimens (*Smithsonian Insider*, 2013).

So, is cryptozoology a pseudoscience? Some outlandish theory based on imagination but clothed in scientific language? One of the voodoo sciences described by Robert Park (Park, 2000)? Wikipedia claims that “Cryptozoology is a pseudoscience...because it relies on anecdotal evidence, stories and alleged sightings.”

It might be wise first to reflect on what is meant by “science” before speaking of pseudo-science. Greek philosopher Thales of Miletus (~ 600 BC) is reputed to have been the first to insist that natural events must be due to natural causes rather than to the actions of the gods. He is revered as the Father of Science. The meaning of the term has broadened over the years to include organized knowledge about almost any field (e.g. political science). What is of interest here is “natural science,” the study of natural objects and their relationships.

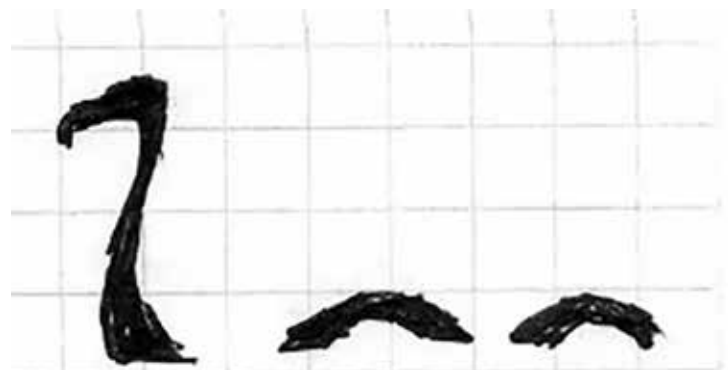
One can think of natural science as an activity consisting of a hierarchy of levels. At the bottom, there is discovery: nature reveals itself, most reliably through direct observation. Objects and their relationships are detected through our senses and their extensions: microscopes, telescopes, Geiger counters, etc.

Next comes classification: natural entities are arranged in categories according to their observed properties; information is organized by type (taxonomy), location in space (geography) and time (dating). Scientific activity at that level is fundamental even if, in the arrogant words of physicist Ernest Rutherford, it amounts to no more than “stamp collecting.”

Discovery is certainly the most challenging and exciting part of science. Cryptozoology is mostly about discovery, and it is not surprising to find its practitioners so enthusiastic in their search for mysterious animals. There is no doubt that cryptozoology, as long as it follows a careful and critical observational methodology and establishes clear categories, can be considered a scientifically-based activity at that level. Is that enough however to recognize it as “science”?

This takes us to the next step in the scientific hierarchy.

Careful examination of observations and their relationships reveals patterns that suggest deeper connections and



Cadborosaurus, aka Caddy, still a cryptid, as sketched by Lisa Lake following a sighting in Active Pass, British Columbia in 2000.

stimulate the imagination. Darwin's train of thought from Galapagos finches to the publication of *On the Origin of Species* is a striking example of the epiphany that takes a science to the next level: suddenly, here's an idea that makes sense of everything! Plate Tectonics has had a similar impact on geology.

The grand unifying idea may also simply be the realization that the results and concepts of some other field of science provide the basis for understanding observations: after Rutherford's discoveries, chemistry became the physics of interactions of outer electrons. The impact on chemistry was such that in 1908 Rutherford was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry, not physics!

Assiduous stamp collecting thus sets the stage for the third level: a unifying qualitative framework with powerful explanatory power. Without data collection and classification, there is no higher science.

How about cryptozoology then? Is there a qualitative framework that helps to make sense of the observations, much like Darwinian evolution has done for zoology? The central idea of cryptozoology is that cryptids—animals observed but whose existence, for lack of solid enough evidence, is still in doubt—are worthy of scientific attention. The analysis of cryptid observations may provide clues as to their nature and help gather additional evidence. Is there a next stage?

Does the idea that “cryptids are mostly found in poorly explored areas,” evident as it is from the observations as well as from common sense, provide that deep revealing insight? Not really.

Is there any other idea that could create a unifying view of the observations from a deeper perspective? I can't think of any except for “evolution”!

The next stage for cryptozoology is thus identical to that of mainstream zoology...of which cryptozoology is then obviously a specialty, like herpetology, or ecology.

As a junior branch of zoology, cryptozoology is not an independent science, with its own special set of rules. It is governed by the universal logic of data evaluation and interpretation that apply to all branches of science. It also benefits from the deeper insights of mainstream zoology. That some practitioners of cryptozoology may fail to be logical or systematic is deplorable, but it is of no relevance to the basic nature of the activity. To dismiss the subject as “Abominable Science” (Loxton and Prothero, 2013), lumping the worst with the best, is an unfair characterization.

It's not so long ago that the main object of zoology was discovering and cataloging the world's fauna: cryptozoology has venerable antecedents. All kinds of hearsay oddities appeared in early bestiaries, but criteria for scientific recognition have since been highly refined. Stories and eyewitness accounts are not enough: a specimen must be available for inspection. New animals continue to be seen, captured, and classified, especially in the oceans, and there are still surprises. Sometimes, in spite of a series of observations, no specimen is available for a long time: this is where cryptozoology thrives. John Bindernagel (2010) has examined in some detail the particularly protracted epistemological process associated with discovering the Sasquatch.

As a branch of zoology, cryptozoology enjoys the benefits of modern biology, which has now reached even higher levels of the scientific hierarchy. The chemistry of DNA and proteins has become the fundamental basis of organismal biology. Quantitative modeling brings with it a deeper understanding of complex ecological systems, as well as predictive ability (e.g. the NEMURO model developed by PICES collaborators in the North Pacific; NEMURO, 2006).

Clearly, cryptozoology can be as scientific as its practitioners make it. Heuvelmans certainly did not imagine it otherwise. What's the problem then? Is it the reliance on “anecdotal evidence, stories and alleged sightings,” i.e. observations by eyewitnesses? By its very nature, cryptozoology deals with unreliable and irreproducible information, which is not to be rejected *a priori*, but must be interpreted with care and remains suggestive rather than definitive. Eyewitness reports must be assessed for veracity and accuracy; interpretations must be taken critically.



The South American olinguito (*Bassaricyon neblina*) described in 2013.

Accumulation of reports and fragmentary information, as in the case of the olinguito, often provide clues that can lead to the capture of a specimen. It is not the instruments used that make a science; it's what's done with the data. As an instance of “citizen science,” cryptozoology may be compared to the work of amateur ornithologists in the annual North American Christmas bird-count, which provides useful data on bird populations.

Few professional or academic zoologists pay much attention to cryptozoology. They have much deeper problems to probe. Besides, some amateurs make outrageous claims and bring disrepute to the field. Better not associate with such people! However, scientific mysteries attract the public like flies to honey. They also attract professional scientists: curiosity is still the mainspring of science. When the pros can't provide a satisfactory explanation, the amateurs have a field day.

What to do?

Cryptozoologists, like amateur astronomers, can make useful contributions to science. They are the eyes of the public on the world's wild fauna. Their interest is fueled by recent discoveries of a plethora of new marine animals by the Census of Marine Life (Snelgrove, 2011) and by the occasional strandings of new species of whales (Welch, 2016). Claims made on the basis of curve-fitting by Mora et al. (2011), for example, that there are millions of animal species still to be discovered or, more modestly by Woodley et al. (2008), that there might be "as many as fifteen species of pinnipeds" possibly undiscovered, also provide encouragement to would-be discoverers.



The saola, or Vu Quang ox, officially recognized as *Pseudoryx nghetinhensis* in 1993.

While it seems less likely to find yet undiscovered animals on land, they still turn up. The saola, or Vu Quang ox, was well known to the natives of the Annamite mountains of Vietnam but remained officially undiscovered until the 1990s (Dung et al, 1993). It is rare and has already been declared endangered. The fascinating possibility of finding relic humanoids still co-inhabiting our planet continues to draw professionals as well as amateurs in the tracks of Sasquatches, Yetis, and other man-like cryptids (Meldrum, 2007; Coleman, 2003). Grison (2016) has presented an exhaustive worldwide bestiary of cryptids of current interest.

For the sake of discovery and for the mutual enjoyment of the search, amateurs and professionals need to work in harmony. The advice of academic zoologists is much more valuable than their criticism, and amateur cryptozoological groups would do well to cultivate friendly relationships with professionals. During its brief existence, the International Society of Cryptozoology (ISC) set an example for scientific cryptozoology, drawing in a roster of professionals to its editorial board, publishing a refereed journal, and organizing lively public meetings. Its leadership was followed by regional organizations, such as the British Columbia Scientific Cryptozoology Club (BCSCC) or the Association Belge Pour l'Etude et la Protection des Animaux Rares (ABEPAR). The recently (2016) launched successor and near-namesake International Cryptozoology Society (ICS) follows in the ISC's footsteps. A candid historical review of the relationship between amateurs

and professionals ("crackpots and eggheads") involved in Sasquatch research offers valuable lessons (Regal, 2011).

As a method for understanding the world, science is in principle so simple and logical that it belongs and resides in everyone and cannot be claimed by an elite priesthood of degree holders. There were no professional scientists in the days of Newton or Lavoisier. Great discoveries have been made by amateurs...and more should be expected. Whether searching for cryptids as a hobby, as I have for 40 years, or as part of one's professional zoological interest, cryptozoologists are engaging in scientific exploration. They are respected for that activity as long as they behave like scientists: improving their observational techniques, being critical and conservative in their interpretation of data, and remaining wary of unsubstantiated speculation. As the eminent French paleontologist Yves Coppens, co-discoverer of Lucy, the female *Australopithecus afarensis*, has so reasonably put it: "It [cryptozoology] is a perfectly respectable science...it coexists very well with zoology. Each year a number of creatures pass from the realm of cryptozoology to that of zoology.... All there is to it is that once fully documented, they go from one list to another" (Coppens, 2007).

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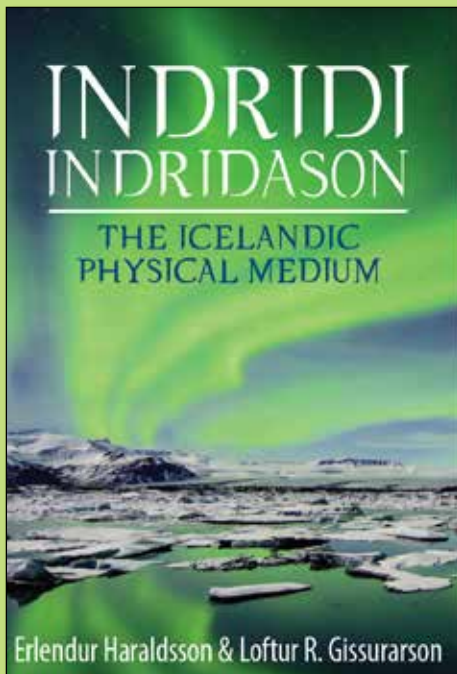
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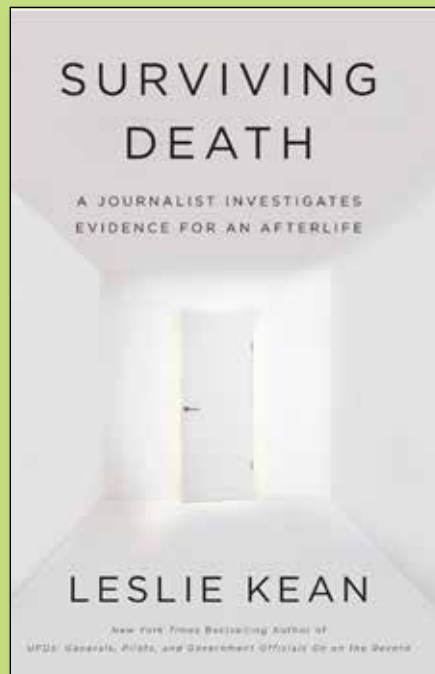
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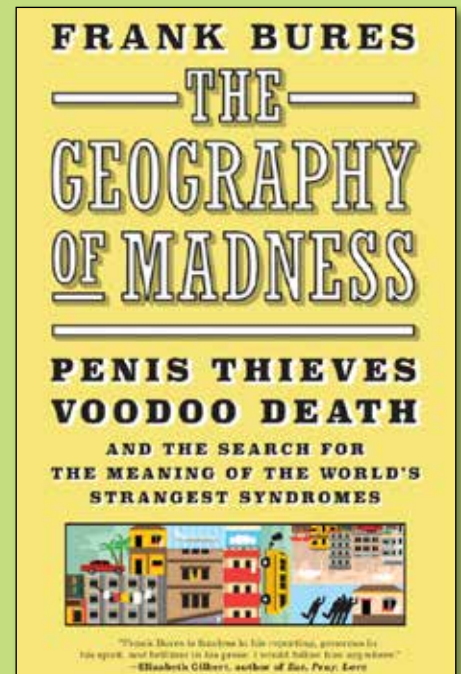
Indridi Indridason: The Icelandic Physical Medium

By Erlendur Haraldsson &
Loftur R. Gissurarson
(White Crow, 2015)



Surviving Death: A Journalist Investigates Evidence of an Afterlife

By Leslie Kean
(Crown Archetype, 2017)



The Geography of Madness: Penis Thieves, Voodoo Death and the Search for the Meaning of the World's Strangest Syndromes

By Frank Bures
(Melville House, 2017)

Book review by John Alexander

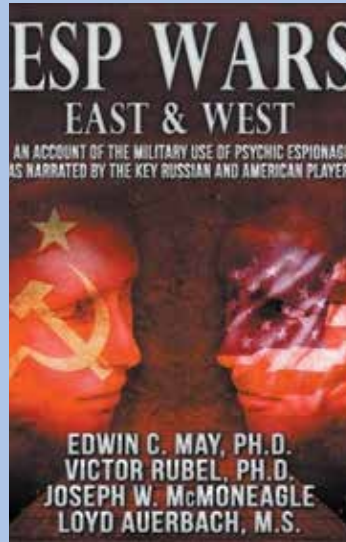
More Hype Than Reality: The Psi Race Between East and West

ESP Wars offers a unique perspective on the research, development, and application of psychic capabilities during the period of the Cold War. It is, however, quite controversial when it comes to details regarding the American side of these activities.

While examining the roots of the so-called ESP wars, the authors correctly note that the use of psychics is nearly as old as conflict itself. Mystics, oracles, and other religious leaders were often consulted before battles in attempts to divine the outcome and to seek advice from external sources regarding the advisability of engaging in war. Recounted are stories of the Oracle of Delphi asking Apollo for guidance, the efforts of King Cyrus, founder of the Persian Empire, and even biblical quotes detailing the use of psychics prior to combat. Russian traditions of use of psychics include employing shamans for support of operations, a methodology that continues among indigenous people to this day. Even the Nazi fascination with the occult is conveyed as this interesting section brings the reader up to date with a historical overview not generally known outside of mythologists and a few conspiracy theorists.

A significant problem that stands out in both East and West camps is that they often encountered bureaucratic nightmares. In all cases, support for the programs appears to have been personality-dependent; a door that swung both ways. That means that when high level officials supported the use of psychics, programs flourished. Under opponents, they died. While many readers may believe that participation in the remote viewing program, eventually known as StarGate, was alluring and fulfilling, the reality was often far different. There was a constant struggle for both organizational survival and acceptance. Legendary Remote Viewer 001, Joe McMoneagle, once described to me the work environment saying that every day was “like being in a f*****g knife fight in a phone booth.”

The Soviet/Russian participants experienced similar organizational issues. Referring to the Soviet era (1970s–1980s), it was noted that, “The lives of psychics and research parapsychologists were very difficult during those days.” They were allowed to conduct specific experiments but were warned of severe consequences if they exceeded their authorized limits.



ESP Wars East & West: An Account of the Military Use of Psychic Espionage as Narrated by the Key Russian and American Players by Edwin C. May, Victor Rubel, Lloyd Auerbach, and Joe McMoneagle, Crossroads, 2016.

As a control measure, the KGB kept tabs on their work.

One key difference in psi research efforts between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was their emphasis on the development of psychotronic weapons. These were hardware systems designed to influence or control minds and possibly adversely affect the target's health. It was hypothesized that the victim could be driven to suicide or accidental death. Interestingly, the book describes psychotronic devices as “non-lethal weaponry,” a term rarely used at that time, and not generally associated with psi research. The authors also indicate this research was done by secret institutes of the Soviet military and not by the KGB. They also note that an integrated ESP and psychotronic weapons program could not exist as the Central Committee of the Communist Party considered parapsychology to be “inconsistent with ideological dogma.” Worth remembering is that the U.S. did conduct some mind-altering experiments, such as those of MKUltra.

However, those were chemical in nature requiring direct ingestion of the drugs. While not successful, the Soviet psychotronic weapons approach entailed a remote capability, rather than physical contact with the victim.

It is later reported that large-scale testing for ESP was conducted in Russia. Professor Vyacheslav Zvonikov found that “about 1.5 percent of Russians possessed extrasensory abilities.” Having tested thousands of subjects, he also indicated that there were regions in Russia where the number of people with those capabilities were significantly higher. He also tested many psychotronic weapons and found most of them to be “pure rubbish.” He did not dismiss them totally but stated that he did not have time to test all of the ones provided.

Significantly, KGB Major General Nikolai Sham, himself a proponent for the study of psi phenomena, indicated that during the Soviet era “There was nothing comparable to the U.S. StarGate program.” That does suggest that much of the popular hype in the West was wrong. Many of us always thought this was an area of concentration. The popular book *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* did a lot to foster the notion of Soviet superiority in that area of research. Sham's pronouncement also runs counter to statements by KGB

defector Nikolai Khokhlov in which he claimed experiments had demonstrated a lethal capability in lab animals. Worth noting is that Khokhlov, who defected in 1954, based his information on secondhand sources but he was believed at the time. Another difference between the Russian and U.S. programs was proximity to targets. Based on nonlocal consciousness theory, American remote viewers usually operated from Ft. Meade. Surprising to the Americans, General Sham informs the reader that during the wars in Chechnya the Russians moved their psychics to the immediate area of combat operations. Sham too noted that Marxist–Leninist ideology constrained their efforts. For that reason the emphasis on psychotronic weapons was easier to research.

In his Foreword, General Sham raises a point rarely discussed relative to remote viewing. He states, “unique techniques of developing extraordinary human abilities and qualitatively increasing intellectual and *spiritual levels* [emphasis added] were developed and carefully tested in practice.” The concept of spiritual development is not common in any of the literature on remote viewing.

The book takes an unfortunate turn when the authors denigrate the efforts of the Army managers of the project. They state that involvement with StarGate was a “career-ender.” That was true in some cases, but not all, as presupposed by the comment. At least one of the managers went on to be promoted to full colonel in a later assignment. May generally blames the Army for the failures of the program and references “the overall poor management of the Ft. Meade Unit and the lax and mostly inappropriate protocols” as institutional shortcomings. He goes on to state that the unit suffered from the “assignment of uninterested or incompetent commanders.” Having discussed this issue with several people familiar with the situation, it is safe to state that that view is not universally held and considered to be quite biased.

Possibly more inflammatory are the comments regarding Ingo Swann and the remote viewers trained by him. Readers need to know that Ingo Swann, an accomplished artist from New York City, was one of the original remote viewers tested by Stanford Research Institute. He demonstrated a number of spectacular successes, including reporting the rings of Jupiter prior to their discovery when Pioneer 10 flew by the planet in 1973.

The book vociferously attacks the training method developed by Swann, claiming he did not understand the significance of operant conditioning or the power of nonverbal communication and clues. The authors note that, “Going the way Ingo proceeded makes it (the training) a major disaster.” They also state that with the development of Ingo’s methodology, “one can say this borders upon noncompliance of the contract at best and outright fraud at worst.” That is strong verbiage and significant to thousands of people who have been trained in a manner that is directly derived from Ingo’s protocols. Controversially, the book notes that, “Very few, if any, of the successes came from Ingo-trained people.” Addressing the negative credibility associated by some leaders of the Intelligence

Community, it is stated, “This attitude can be traced directly back to Swann and his unsupervised indoctrination of the Army and DIA personnel. The fault for this lies directly with the SRI management of the program.” This comment presumably targets Dr. Hal Puthoff, who initiated the program with laser physicist Russell Targ.

The technique Ingo Swann developed was known as Coordinate Remote Viewing, or CRV. There exists a substantial discussion as to whether or not remote viewing is a trainable skill, or if only those with innate capabilities can be successful. The debate about the scientific efficacy of CRV has also raged openly. In an online publication called *Eight Martinis: The State of the Art of Remote Viewing*, Issue 13 (October 2015), Dr. Puthoff addressed many of these issues. Regarding CRV, he stated: “For scientific evaluation, yes, strict double-blind protocols were used. Furthermore, in nearly all application of CRV to intelligence targets, I insisted on double-blind protocols so that if results were positive, there would be no gainsaying the result was based on the possibility of leakage of information to the remote viewer by anyone present.” (The entire interview can be seen at <http://www.eightmartinis.com/eight-martinis-issue-13>.) The material in that publication contradicts many of the comments and castigations in the book.

The demise of the American program is accurately covered in fair detail. During a period of declining budgets, there was great consternation about the viability and continuation of the remote viewing program publicly known as StarGate. Senior leaders of both the CIA and the DIA were lined up against the program while influential members of Congress supported the effort. It is reported that things got so bad that the commander of the DIA, a lieutenant general, was threatened with Contempt of Congress charges if he continued to fail to accept funding approved for the remote viewing project. That was followed by a decision to move the project to the CIA, but Director John Deutch was dead-set against acquiring responsibility. The approach, even though mandated by Congress, was a classic maneuver designed to kill any project; i.e. they would study it. Of course, the outcome of the study by the independent body was predetermined. It is noted that about 35 sealed boxes of remote viewing material were shipped to the CIA to support the study. The contractor’s findings were that the evidence did not warrant support of either the military or Intelligence Community. Rather than being a conscientious, independent effort, it was later learned that none of the boxes provided containing program records and results was ever opened. Clearly prejudice won out over science.

This book does offer a very interesting look into the background of the use of psychics in warfare. In the end, it appears that the rampant speculation about a psi race between East and West was more hype than reality. For most readers, it is worth perusing for historical information not generally available. It is a commendable effort to have both sides of a conflict reviewing their efforts. ■