

## THEORIES OF HAUNTING: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

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by

Peter A. McCue

### ABSTRACT

The term 'haunting' is generally applied to cases involving recurrent phenomena, of a supposedly paranormal nature, that are associated with particular places. Approaches to understanding hauntings can be divided into two categories: those that attempt to explain the manifestations 'naturalistically' (e.g. in terms of the misinterpretation of normal sounds or the effects underground water), and those that employ concepts such as telepathy or the laying down of a 'psychic trace' in the haunted location. Some psi-based theories posit discarnate agency. 'Naturalistic' and psi-based theories are reviewed, and suggestions are made regarding possible directions for future research in this area.

### INTRODUCTION

In this article, I shall review various proposals, old and new, that have been advanced to explain hauntings. For brevity, I shall refer to these ideas as *theories*, even though some of them, while interesting, are little more than tentative hypotheses. Indeed, to the best of my knowledge there are no comprehensive, systematically elaborated, and well-substantiated theories dealing with this area. Moreover, there are problems with definition and categorization, since 'haunting' is a traditional term rather than a precise label for a clearly defined set of phenomena known to involve common mechanisms and a single type of agency.

Psychical researchers generally apply the term 'haunting' to spontaneous cases featuring recurrent manifestations, of an apparently paranormal nature, that seem to be linked with particular places rather than specific people. The case of Abbey House, Cambridge (Gauld, 1972; MacKenzie, 1982), appears to fall into this category, since apparitions and other phenomena were reportedly experienced there by various witnesses over a lengthy period, perhaps exceeding a hundred years.

However, as a recent case involving a semi-detached council house in the east of Scotland illustrates, it is not always entirely clear whether the phenomena are 'place-

linked'. The householder, a widow, wrote to me about the events in question in 1999, indicating, for example, that 'light switches and plug switches [had gone] off by themselves' and that she had heard footsteps when no one else was in the house. During visits to her home, I spoke to her and to her two sons, and I also obtained a written statement from a young man who had stayed there overnight on occasions. The evidence was not perfect, e.g. the widow's reported recollections were not completely concordant with those of her two sons, but all four witnesses described unusual experiences. From the widow's account, it appears that the phenomena began around the end of 1990, several months after her husband's death, and *apropos* of switches being turned off, it is interesting to note that he had a 'pet hate' about people leaving switches on unnecessarily. (However, the widow informed me that on occasions a kettle switch had gone *on* mysteriously.) The occurrence of phenomena did not seem to depend on the presence in the house of a particular member of the family; and given that the reported manifestations apparently occurred over a period of more than nine years, this was clearly not a typical poltergeist case.<sup>1</sup> It may have been a place-centred haunting, although it is possible that the phenomena were family-centred, e.g. the manifestations might have depended on the presence of a member of the family or of someone associated with the family. (The elder son described two experiences, which might have been paranormal, that he had out of the house shortly after his father's death; and his mother told me of an unusual experience that she and her late husband had in their previous house. Possibly, then, members of the family had a predisposition to experience 'psychic' events.) The widow and her younger son are still living in the house. If they moved out and subsequent occupants experienced phenomena there, one could assert with greater confidence that it was indeed a place-centred haunting. However, the manifestations may have run their course: during a telephone conversation in February 2001, the widow told me that things were 'all quiet'.

Romer (1996) discusses another case of interest in this context: that of a Gloucestershire hotel which had supposedly been haunted for at least twenty years, the manifestations including poltergeist-type phenomena and apparitions. All of the staff and residents had changed at least twice over the period in question, which at first sight seems to suggest that the phenomena were place-linked. However, evidence suggested that phenomena reported from the late 1980s were dubious, with the then licensee drawing on events from an 'outbreak' in 1971 in the hope of gaining publicity. The post-1991 manifestations were different from the 1971 events, and in both periods the manifestations seemed to occur in the vicinity of someone who claimed to have psychic abilities. Romer concludes that 'what started out as appearing to be a case of continual "haunting" stretching over twenty-five years...turned out to comprise two distinct periods in which claims were made' (p. 163).

To complicate matters, it appears that phenomena of the haunting type might occasionally follow a person or family from one location to another. Sidgwick (1885), discussing various cases of haunting, presents a report by Frank Podmore concerning a

family that had leased a house for seven years. At times, an apparition was seen (whether it was the same figure that was seen on each occasion is not entirely clear), and auditory phenomena (footsteps, sighing, etc.) were also experienced. The family then moved to another house in the locality, and about eighteen months later the principal percipient heard footsteps and sighs as before, although the sounds were fainter than previously. But the noises increased in intensity, and eventually the whole household experienced auditory phenomena, although the character of the sounds had changed somewhat. There were also apparitional experiences. Given that the phenomena reportedly followed the family from one house to another, one might conjecture that this was a person-centred or family-centred case rather than a place-centred haunting. However, although Podmore does not adduce clear-cut evidence for the proposition that the first house was haunted before and after the family's tenancy, his comments imply that it might have been.<sup>2</sup>

If the manifestations in a 'place-linked' case are hallucinatory, only certain potential witnesses may be able to experience them, since not everyone may be of capable 'seeing a ghost' or 'hearing' hallucinatory sounds. Even if the phenomena have some objective reality, e.g. if ghostly footsteps actually involve sound waves and can be tape-recorded, a living person of a suitable physiological or psychological constitution may need to be present in order to 'catalyse' the manifestations. If the requisite physiological or psychological characteristics occur widely in the general population, phenomena could continue despite a change of occupancy of, say, a haunted house, since the new household might contain one or more persons of the necessary type. However, to take speculation a little further, it could be conjectured that if the place-linked 'energy' (assuming there is such a thing) behind a haunting were very strong, almost anyone would be able to experience phenomena at the site, irrespective of the presence of 'catalytic' persons.

### **THE PHENOMENA OF HAUNTING**

The popular idea of a haunting entails 'seeing a ghost', and visual experiences, whether real or hallucinatory, often feature in case reports, although more than one type of apparition may be described. For example, in a nineteenth century case, that of the Mill House at Willington Quay, near Wallsend (see Gauld, 1979; MacKenzie, 1982), numerous apparitions were allegedly experienced, including a transparent figure at a window, a man with light or grey hair, and a monkey!

Auditory phenomena seem to be more common than visual experiences. They include footsteps, voices, knockings, sounds of doors opening and closing, music, and sounds of furniture being moved. Other phenomena include feelings of cold, cold breezes, a sense of presence, disturbance of bedclothes, the appearance of lights, and the opening of doors. Pet animals sometimes show signs of distress. Although manifestations reportedly occur during the day, they are typically more frequent at night.

The manifestations reported in cases of alleged haunting often seem to occur without leaving a discernible physical trace, which accords with the notion that the phenomena are hallucinatory. For example, a witness in a London-based case was in her bedroom when she reportedly heard noises downstairs, including bangs and crashes. Expecting to be greeted with a scene of ‘total destruction’ when she went downstairs in the morning, she was surprised to find nothing out of place (MacKenzie, 1982, pp.198-199). But whether or not the sounds were hallucinatory, some of the phenomena in this case appeared to be physical. For example, the aforementioned percipient entered a room to find that a box containing some beads had disappeared. She left the room, but found the box back in position when returned five minutes later. And her father witnessed an incident in which five bedroom doors, one after another, banged shut (MacKenzie, *op. cit.*, p. 199). In another case discussed by MacKenzie, there were apparitions, noises, cool breezes, cold sensations and displacements of objects; and a witness reported that the side of a bed had been pressed down, as if it had been sat on (*op. cit.*, pp. 200-204).<sup>3</sup> Gauld (1979), who also cites cases that appeared to include physical effects, contends that the phenomena of hauntings are for the most part objective.

Of 532 haunting and poltergeist cases that he regarded as sufficiently well documented for statistical consideration, Bozzano (1929) classed 374 as ‘hauntings properly so-called’, and in the majority there was a connection with a death in the haunted location.<sup>4</sup> In many cases, the death was tragic, although Sidgwick (1885), discussing cases that had come to the attention of the SPR, took the view that ‘the evidence connecting [haunting apparitions] with some crime or tragedy is extremely slight’ (p. 142).

#### **THE RELATION BETWEEN HAUNTINGS AND POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA**

Poltergeist cases entail phenomena such as the breakage of glass and crockery, rapping and knocking sounds, and the movement of objects. The manifestations tend to be relatively short-lived. Roll (1977) discusses 116 cases; in respect of 98, where the duration was recorded, the average was 5.1 months, with a median of two months. However, although he refers to the 116 cases as ‘poltergeists’ (p. 383), he subsequently indicates that three of them were ‘haunting-type cases’ (p. 399).

Regarded as instances of ‘recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis’ (RSPK), poltergeist effects are often attributed to a living agent, a ‘poltergeist focus’ (if such an individual can be identified, which is not always the case), and it is sometimes assumed that the manifestations reflect some form of psychological tension within that person, or changes associated with puberty. Roll (1977) suggests that RSPK may be linked with central nervous system (CNS) ‘eruptions’, whether or not epileptic symptoms also result. However, Stevenson (1972) cautions against dismissing the possibility that some poltergeist cases entail discarnate agency, and Martínez-Taboas (1984) questions the assumed link between psychopathology and RSPK agents, and criticizes the notion that such individuals tend to have CNS disturbances.

As noted, physical phenomena reportedly occur in some cases classed as hauntings; and Roll (1977) indicates that apparitions were seen in 27 of the 116 (predominantly poltergeist) cases he discusses. Gauld (1979, pp. 208-223) discusses a number of 'intermediate cases', e.g. cases featuring phenomena of *both* the poltergeist *and* haunting type. Given this overlap, one might ask whether the two classes of phenomena are fundamentally different. Gauld (1979, pp.224-240) addressed this question by applying a group of statistical techniques, known as *cluster analysis*, to a sample of 500 cases, taken from printed sources, involving phenomena of the poltergeist and haunting type. He found some evidence to support the traditional differentiation, but noted that his analysis placed certain well-known cases, which had previously been spoken of as poltergeist cases (e.g. that of the Mill House at Willington Quay), in with the hauntings. However, he suggested that the two categories could be composite rather than unitary.

Gauld's statistical approach obviously represents a step forward, but it should be borne in mind that *published* cases may not be entirely typical of the class or classes to which they belong. For example, cases of short duration may be less likely to come to the attention of investigators and may therefore be less likely to be mentioned in print. Based on their reading of published case collections, students of the subject could therefore get a mistaken impression of the duration of an 'average haunting'. Conceivably, this could lead to cases of very short duration being excluded from consideration as legitimate hauntings.

## **THEORIES**

A satisfactory theory of haunting should specify whether the phenomena are objective or hallucinatory, and should propose one or more plausible mechanisms by which the manifestations occur. If an 'agent' is posited, the theory should indicate whether that person or entity is incarnate or discarnate, and whether the agent is conscious of his or her (or its?) involvement in the phenomena. However, if (as seems likely) there are different types of haunting, with different causes and mechanisms, no single theory may be able to account adequately for all cases.

An initial distinction can be made between (a) theories that attempt to account for the phenomena in purely normal terms, and (b) theories that require a paranormal element (e.g. telepathy or the laying down of some sort of 'psychic trace' in the haunted place). For convenience, I have labelled theories of the first type as 'naturalistic', and theories of the second type as 'psi-based' (see Table 1), although I do not mean to imply that psi phenomena, if they occur, are not part of the natural order. Psi-based theories can, in the main, be divided into two sub-categories: those positing discarnate agency (e.g. Tyrrell, 1973), and those that do not require the notion of post-mortem survival as it is generally understood (e.g. Price, 1938-9).

**TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF THEORIES OF HAUNTING**

<b><u>'Naturalistic' theories</u></b>	<b><u>Psi-based theories</u></b>	
<p>Misinterpretation of prosaic normal phenomena (e.g. misperception of normal sounds)</p> <p>Effects of subterranean water + secondary psychological effects (e.g. misinterpretation of sounds)</p> <p>Acoustic and vibrational effects of seismic activity + secondary psychological effects (e.g. misinterpretation of sounds)</p> <p>Electromagnetic effects on brain functioning*</p> <p>Effects of standing waves of infrasound</p>	<i>Discarnate agency involved</i>	<i>Discarnate agency not involved</i>
	Traditional spiritualist view	Carington's association theory
	Telepathically-engendered hallucinations (the theories of Bozzano and Tyrrell)	'Trace' theories
		Budden's 'electro-staging hypothesis'
	<b>Agency not clearly specified</b>	
Movement in multi-dimensional space		

\* In addition to electromagnetic radiation, magnetic and electric fields may be significant influences.

### ***'Naturalistic' theories***

The paranormal status of the manifestations in cases of the haunting type has often been questioned. Misinterpretation and failure to recognize the causes of normal phenomena may account for many. In 1957, for example, Cornell (Gauld & Cornell, 1979, pp. 249-250) investigated a case in which the occupants of a house were disturbed by eerie thudding noises. It transpired that rats had come upon apples stored in the loft. 'They would roll a small apple to the edge of the loft and push it down the hollow of a cavity wall. At the bottom they made off with it or disposed of it. The falling of the apples had produced the spooky sounds.' In another case that came to the notice of Cornell, 'a house had acquired the reputation of being haunted because an escaped convict was living there and switching the lights on and off from time to time' (*op. cit.*, p.251).

Psychological factors, such as credulousness, suggestibility, and the holding of certain beliefs, might predispose individuals to deem as paranormal what others would interpret in mundane terms; and some cases might be explicable in terms of mental illness (e.g. schizophrenia), although the presence of a mental disorder does not, of course, exclude the possibility that paranormal phenomena could be occurring. In other cases, there might be poorly conducted investigation, sloppy reporting, deliberate exaggeration, or outright trickery. Indeed, in respect of two well-known British cases, Borley Rectory in Essex and Ballechin House in Perthshire, the conduct of the leading investigators, Harry Price and Ada Goodrich Freer respectively, was called into question (see, for example, Banks, 1996; Dingwall, Goldney & Hall, 1955; Hall, 1968; Hastings, 1969).

#### Lambert's physical theory of poltergeist phenomena <sup>6</sup>

Lambert (1955) discussed 54 cases that he regarded as representative of poltergeist phenomena, although some of them, e.g. Hinton Ampner, might be better classed as hauntings. He noted that the 54 cases exhibited an interesting geographical pattern, with nearly half being located within about three miles of tidal water. (Cornell and Gauld [1961], in a critical appraisal of Lambert's assertions, question the significance of this, pointing out 'that towns tend to grow up along rivers and coastlines' [p. 143]. In an appended reply, Lambert, while not denying a correlation between poltergeist phenomena and population, contends that 'the coastal strip seems to produce an undue number of cases' [p. 150].) In respect of 33 cases, Lambert was able to ascertain the month in which the disturbances began, and in 27 it was 'in the wet and wintry half of the year' (p.51). Looking for a force that would be able to tilt a house sufficiently to spill crockery, make furniture move about, and so on, Lambert suggested that the culprit was hydraulic pressure from flood water moving in a subterranean stream beneath the afflicted building. He states that 'subterranean rivers discharge water into the sea at or below sea level' and that 'if [the outlet] is... "blocked" either by a high tide, or,...by sand or shingle washed into the mouth by tidal scour or very rough weather at sea, a spate of fresh water coming down from the land can exert very great hydraulic pressure on the walls of the channel' (p. 51). Applying this line of argument to disturbances at a chateau in Normandy, he proposed, for example, that noises might have been generated 'by air imprisoned and compressed by a sudden rise in the river level inside a series of caverns of very unequal height, and then released when the tide went down' (p.55).

Lambert also suggests that, 'If underneath the impervious bed which carries the sea, there is a pervious bed sloping upwards inland and fully charged with water, the weight of a high tide must depress the sea floor and pump water back along the whole coast line'; and he speculates that, 'Some such tidal mechanisms, assisted, perhaps, by a flood from the land, might explain the rare cases of disturbance of coffins in vaults, not due to flooding of the vault itself' (*op. cit.*, p.56).

In a subsequent publication, focusing on the London area, Lambert (1960) adduced further evidence for his theory by looking at the geographical distribution of haunting and poltergeist cases in relation to rivers and streams, and patterns of rainfall.

Lambert (1955) states that ‘prolonged fear and mystification can cause otherwise quite normal persons to see hallucinatory persons and animals which are believed in some way to be connected with the phenomena which have induced them’ (p.62). Leaving aside the accuracy or otherwise of this assertion, it should be noted that in many cases of haunting (e.g. the Cheltenham ghost), footsteps are heard and apparitions are seen more or less from the outset, and not after a lengthy prelude characterized by anxiety-provoking noises and vibrations. Accordingly, while Lambert’s theory may have some explanatory power with regard to cases restricted to noises, vibrations, and object movements, or to cases entailing noises, vibrations, and object movements *followed* by apparitional experiences, his proposals do not constitute a comprehensive theory of the phenomena subsumed under the traditional term ‘haunting’.

Dingwall and Hall (1958, p.106) contend that Lambert’s theory (broadened to include other natural causes for the movement of buildings) is ‘well founded’ only in relation to the auditory phenomena experienced in some so-called haunted houses, and, sometimes, in respect of *small* displacements and shaking of objects. It cannot, in Dingwall and Hall’s view, account for the full range of poltergeist phenomena. They state that their experience leads them to suspect that if the movement of a house could be violent enough to produce spectacular poltergeist effects, the building would almost certainly be wrecked during the outbreak. In 1961, Cornell arranged some ‘house-shaking’ experiments, which ‘were efficacious in demonstrating...that vibrations of and sudden jolts to a house would cause serious structural damage and probably collapse well before object-movements anything like those reported in classic poltergeist cases took place, and that such vibrations and joltings would be immediately evident to persons inside the house well before the point of serious structural damage was reached’ (Gauld & Cornell, 1979, p. 337).

#### Seismic and electromagnetic effects

During the alleged haunting of Ballechin House in Perthshire in the late nineteenth century, various types of loud noise were heard, such as clanging sounds, bangs, explosions and crashes. Dingwall and Hall (1958) point out that much seismic activity had been noted in Comrie, only about 20 miles south of Ballechin House.<sup>7</sup> Possibly, then, some of the sounds heard at Ballechin House were due to seismic activity, although Dingwall and Hall (*op. cit.*, p.20) concede that those sounds that were described as footsteps seem less easy to explain.

It has been suggested that localized energy effects, associated with tectonic strain in the earth’s crust, play a role in UFO sightings and in some cases of the poltergeist and haunting type. Persinger and Cameron (1986) contend that 0.01 to 100 Hz



electromagnetic components of what they call ‘tectonogenic forces’ (TFs) could induce currents within the brain, and that stimulation of the temporal lobe would permit access to memories and fantasy, and could also produce effects such as sensations of strangeness, ‘felt images’, ‘acute fear’, and disruption of sleep. In addition, they state that partial amnesia or confabulation enter as ‘confounding variables’, since the hippocampus would be involved. And they suggest that energy fields with unusual properties ‘can produce physical changes in matter’ (p. 49). They go on to describe their investigation of a ‘haunt/poltergeist-like episode’ involving a flat in Sudbury, Canada, in 1975, the phenomena being compatible with their theorizing about TFs. Occupants of, and visitors to, the flat, which was situated near earth faults, had reported phenomena such as cold feelings, visual impressions, and the breaking of a dish. It appeared that the phenomena had increased in intensity and frequency about 1-2 months before the city’s largest cluster of UFO reports in several decades, although Persinger and Cameron’s investigation took place after this, when the events in the flat seemed to be on the wane. Equipment capable of detecting vibrations and electromagnetic fields was set up in the flat and measurements were taken over 15 successive nights from approximately 11.30 p.m. to 8.30 a.m. After about 10 days with nothing remarkable being recorded, the equipment registered an intense signal of about 10 seconds’ duration. The authors state that, ‘On the basis of consequent analyses, the event was considered to be electromagnetic-like in nature and to have originated from [the room being used by Miss B., the percipient who had brought the case to Persinger’s attention]’ (p. 56). Almost immediately after this, as determined by recorded vibrations, Miss B. got out of bed. According to what she later reported, she suddenly felt intense fear and immediately left the flat. Three days later, around 2.00 a.m., two more signals, lasting about 5-10 seconds each and about 20 seconds apart, were recorded, but Miss B. reported that she had had an undisturbed night’s sleep on that occasion.

On the basis of the tectonogenic hypothesis, Persinger and Cameron (*op. cit.*, p. 70) suggest that in every decade there will be thousands of low-level poltergeist and haunting episodes in North America. By ‘low-level’, they are referring to cases where the phenomena are infrequent and not spectacular compared with classic cases. As they note, brief and intermittent recordings may not detect the manifestations of TFs, and they regard continuous recording with appropriate equipment essential. Presumably, then, it could prove very time-consuming and expensive to validate their proposals by obtaining adequate instrumental readings in a fair number of chosen sites (including control sites, i.e. places where phenomena had *not* been reported). Another approach would be to try to reproduce the supposed energy effects with subjects under laboratory conditions, although that could be difficult to achieve. Moreover, the psychological setting (which could be of crucial importance) would then be different.

Budden’s (1999) ‘electro-staging hypothesis’, which deals with UFO experiences, poltergeist disturbances, and related phenomena, overlaps with the views of Persinger and Cameron, but is discussed below, under the heading of psi-based theories, since it

incorporates extra-sensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK). Suffice it to say at this point that Budden also regards artificial (man-made) electromagnetic effects as important in the generation of the phenomena in question.

#### Infrasound as a cause of haunting-type phenomena

Tandy and Lawrence (1998) describe some experiences of the first author while he was working in a laboratory, about 10 feet wide and 30 feet long, made from two back-to-back garages. One night, while Tandy was sitting alone in the laboratory, he started to feel uncomfortable. After looking round and checking that gas bottles were not leaking, he obtained a cup of coffee and returned to his desk. While doing some writing, he got the feeling that he was being watched, and he saw a figure slowly emerging to his left. Although it was indistinct and on the periphery of his vision, it moved as he would have expected a person to do. The grey apparition made no sound and Tandy felt a distinct chill in the room, but the figure faded and disappeared when he turned to face it. The following day, Tandy went into the laboratory early to do some work on a foil blade in connection with a fencing competition. He used a vice to hold the blade. After going to look for some oil, he returned to see the free end of the blade ‘frantically vibrating up and down’. On the basis of investigation and calculation, Tandy inferred that a low frequency standing wave of about 19 Hz was responsible, with the maximum displacement of air particles occurring in the centre of the room. The source of the energy was a new fan in an extraction system in a room at the end of the laboratory.

Mentioning a NASA technical report that gives 18 Hz as a resonant frequency for the eye, Tandy and Lawrence (*op. cit.*, p. 363) point out that a vibrating eyeball would cause a ‘serious “smearing” of vision’, which could have caused the corner of Tandy’s spectacles to appear as dark shadowy forms. They refer to another NASA technical report, which mentions hyperventilation as a symptom (*effect* would be a better term than ‘symptom’) of whole body vibration, which could help to explain Tandy’s feelings of fear and panic when he saw the ‘ghost’.

Tandy (2000) discusses the results of tests carried out in a fourteenth century cellar beneath the Tourist Information Centre in Coventry, where visitors had reportedly had unusual experiences. For instance, a Canadian journalist felt as if a balloon were being pushed between his shoulder blades, and he had an intense feeling of a presence; he went on to report that a face of a woman seemed to be peering over his shoulder. Measuring equipment was brought into the cellar, and an analysis of ambient sounds revealed a peak in activity at a frequency of 19 Hz. Tandy notes that ‘witnesses...refer to the feeling of a presence being strongest at the threshold of the cellar’ (p. 135) and he states that, ‘The dimensions of the corridor leading to the cellar fit well with the assertion that it is resonating at [19 Hz] and contains a standing wave’(p. 137), although he reports that the source of the energy creating the standing wave is currently unknown.

Tandy's experiences involving a 19 Hz standing wave in the laboratory apparently occurred at a point in the room where there would have been a maximum movement of air particles. But, if he is right, a different situation obtained in respect of the second location: '19Hz is present and peaks in sound pressure level at the door according to the instrumentation' (personal communication). It is not clear to me how these seemingly *different* physical conditions (maximum particle movement and minimum sound pressure on the one hand, and minimum particle movement and maximum sound pressure on the other) would produce *very similar* experiences in the percipients.

The findings of Tandy and his colleagues may provide an explanation of other cases involving features such as a sense of presence, uncomfortable somatic sensations, and fleeting visual effects; and it is possible that 'secondary effects' of a more psychological nature could occur if percipients affected by standing waves misinterpreted their experiences in terms of some form of paranormal agency. But clearly we need to know whether standing waves of infrasound at 19 Hz are detectable in other 'haunted' locations, and whether they are more common in such places than in 'non-haunted' locations. However, it is unlikely that the theory could account for well-defined collectively perceived apparitions, collectively experienced auditory phenomena, or some of the physical phenomena reported in cases of haunting.

### ***Psi-based theories***

As noted, poltergeist phenomena are often attributed to living (i.e. incarnate) human agents, although Stevenson (1972), for one, suggests that discarnate agency may be involved in some cases. Similarly, it has been suggested that hauntings involve human agency, either incarnate or discarnate. In respect of poltergeist-type effects involving living agents, the assumption seems to be that such individuals produce the phenomena unconsciously. However, this may not always be so. Stevenson (1972) discusses the case of woman called Radhika, who was reportedly able to steal food by paranormal means, this ability (whether or not it entailed the assistance of a discarnate entity) apparently being under voluntary control. With regard to the presumed role of discarnate agents in hauntings, spiritualist accounts ascribe a fair degree of self-consciousness and volition to them, while other approaches imply that the agent may be unaware of his or her role in producing ghostly phenomena. Table 2 depicts these different possibilities, although it should be borne in mind that there could be degrees of awareness and volition on the part of agents. Moreover, it is possible that psi manifestations can be instigated by a conscious wish on the part of an agent and then continue outside that person's awareness.

**TABLE 2: POSSIBLE AGENCY IN HAUNTINGS AND POLTERGEIST CASES**

	<b>Agent <i>conscious</i> of his or her role</b>	<b>Agent <i>unconscious</i> of his or her role</b>
<b>Incarnate agent</b>	Case of Radhika (Stevenson, 1972)	Poltergeist agents as generally conceived by modern parapsychologists
<b>Discarnate agent</b>	Spiritualist view (e.g. Denning, 1996)	Agents of telepathically-engendered haunting apparitions (Bozzano, 1929; Tyrrell, 1973)

### The spiritualist view

Spiritualists tend to attribute hauntings to discarnate spirits who, for one reason or another, have failed to make a satisfactory transition from their earthly life to the presumed afterlife. Denning (1996) cites various cases that, if true, accord with this contention. For example, she relates (pp.65-66) the case of a young man and his wife who heard knockings and footsteps in their home, with the wife also seeing an apparition of a woman whose description seemed to fit her husband's recently deceased mother. Denning visited the couple with Gertrude, a psychically gifted associate of hers, who allegedly contacted the deceased mother, the latter indicating that she was very unhappy about being 'earthbound'. According to the report, the bereaved son had thought of his mother so often and with so much grief, that 'the energy' had held her to him, and she had tried very hard to demonstrate that she was still a living spirit. Two weeks after Gertrude's mediation, Denning contacted the couple and was informed that there had been no further manifestations. Unfortunately, though, we are not told *how* the deceased agent produced the phenomena, and it not clear whether the apparition of the deceased mother was hallucinatory or was in some sense objective.

Judging from Denning's accounts, the motivation of deceased agents is not always as benign as in the foregoing example. In another case that Gertrude reportedly helped to elucidate and resolve quickly, phenomena (including physical effects) occurred when a former (deceased) occupant of a house took exception to changes being made at her

former earthly home (pp.45-48). Again, though, we are not told *how* the manifestations were produced.

Denning (*op. cit.*) suggests that some cases, which she calls *psuedo-hauntings*, do not entail the active intervention of spirit entities, but rather an ‘energy form created by traumatic events [that] seems to be charged with a powerful energy that continues to exist...for a considerable length of time’ (p. 128). (The idea that hauntings involve some sort of localized trace or impression is discussed below.)

Among the hauntings discussed by MacKenzie (1982), is an unusual and complicated case in which apparitions, apparently of deceased persons, communicated coherently with a percipient, providing information that was subsequently verified, and giving detailed instructions, which the percipient carried out (pp. 102-113). If the events occurred as reported, this case could be seen as lending credence to the spiritualist standpoint. Moreover, taken at face value, the case suggests that the deceased may have some capacity to direct and/or foretell the course of future events in the lives of the living!

#### Telepathically-engendered hallucinations

There are differing views on the nature of apparitions (see, for example, Hart *et al.*, 1956; Tyrrell, 1973), with some theorists granting them a degree of objective existence, e.g. as ‘etheric objects’, while others regard them as telepathically-engendered hallucinations.

Bozzano (1929) contended that in normal life, many ideas, mostly started by the physical senses, compete for supremacy, but that after death the surviving mind can be much more preoccupied with a single idea. He argued that, through telepathy, this could affect people in a location previously associated with the deceased person, causing them to hallucinate that individual.

In an influential theoretical analysis, Tyrrell (1973) discusses *ghosts* (haunting apparitions) as well as *crisis apparitions* (e.g. cases where someone ‘sees’ an apparition of a family member around the time that the latter is fatally injured), *post-mortem* cases (which feature non-haunting apparitions of people who have been dead for an appreciable time), and *experimental cases* (in which agents make apparitions, usually of themselves, appear to others).

In Tyrrell’s view, an apparition is a perceptual expression of an idea. He argues that ‘The work of constructing the [apparitional] drama is done in certain regions of the personality which lie below the conscious level’ (p. 101), and he contends that it involves ‘something between the two extremes of consciousness and mechanism...which is to a certain extent *like* an idea, and...to a certain extent *like* a pattern’ (p. 102). He calls this an

*idea-pattern*. It ‘is the dramatic production of the agent’s idea; while the apparition itself is the sensory expression of the idea-pattern’ (p. 102). The subconscious telepathic interaction can involve more than one percipient, and Tyrrell argues ‘that the explanation of collective percipience of apparitions lies not in the “metetherial” presence of a figure in space, as [Frederic] Myers thought, nor in the “infectious” propagation of the telepathic impulse from one percipient to another, as [Edmund] Gurney thought, but in the fact that spectators, by their physical presence, become *relevant* to the theme of the apparitional idea-pattern and, because relevant, are drawn into it’ (p.110).

Discussing the ‘Morton ghost’,<sup>8</sup> Tyrrell states that he can see no plausible agent other than the surviving self or personality of the woman whose appearance and habits the apparition reproduced, and Tyrrell suggests that the ‘ghostly theme’ in a case such as the Morton ghost is one of ‘brooding reminiscence’, with the ‘ghostly drama’ being ‘that of the agent’s figure performing long familiar actions in a familiar place’ (p.143). But in discussing another case with haunting-type phenomena, he suggests that the agent was a living person, a cook, whose departure from the afflicted household was followed by a cessation of the phenomena. He writes: ‘I think in a case like this one must suppose an idea-pattern to have formed itself in the cook’s personality uninformed by any intelligent idea, but...only by some dissociated fragment’ (pp.144-145). Noting that even in the Morton case ‘unintelligent noises developed during its peak period’, Tyrrell suggests that ‘it may be that some cases of haunting are complex, being partly the reminiscent type of ghost of a deceased person and partly the poltergeistic type originated by some living person on the spot’; and he speculates that, ‘Possibly the one type stimulates the other in some way’ (p. 145). These assertions may be true, but their vagueness highlights the limited explanatory power of the theory.

If Tyrrell is correct in suggesting that ‘brooding reminiscence’ by the surviving self of a deceased person can play a role in a haunting, could such a state of mind in a *living* person also help to create ghostly phenomena? This seems possible. Certainly, there have been reports of ‘ghosts of the living’. For example, Rogo (1990, pp. 59-60) refers to a case in which an apparition of a woman was reportedly seen in a Dr E.’s house in October 1886 and then again on two occasions several months later. In the summer of 1888, Dr E.’s son returned to England from Australia, accompanied by his wife, whom he had met on his travels. Having recently been ill, she was gaunt when she met the family, and she was not immediately linked with the former ghost. But several days later, when she appeared for dinner in good health, wearing a brown dress with a lace collar, she was recognized by a servant and a guest who had previously seen the apparition. During casual conversation, she remarked that during her illness in 1886 she had often tried to picture what the house of her new relatives looked like.

Carington (1945) advanced a theory of telepathy based on the well-known principle that ideas can become associated with one another. For example, we tend to associate the idea of ‘bread’ with ‘butter’, and ‘salt’ with ‘pepper’. Carington proposed that we share

a common unconscious mind and that an association formed between ideas in one person's mind can also operate in another person's mind. For example, take the case of two people, Bob and Sally, doing a telepathy experiment: Bob looks at a playing card and tries to convey its identity to Sally, who is in another room. If, say, the card is the two of spades, the idea of the 'two-of-spades' will be associated in Bob's mind with the 'idea-of-the-experiment'. Because the 'idea-of-the-experiment' will also be in Sally's mind, and because - according to Carington's theory - they share a common unconscious mind, Sally might then think of the two of spades. Extending this notion to hauntings, Carington suggested that the idea of the person or object depicted by the ghost is linked by the originating mind with the idea of the location (e.g. a building), and when the latter is presented to someone else's mind, images of the person or object can be evoked. However, Carington hypothesizes that an apparition will only be 'seen' or 'heard', as if it were an external object, if the percipient is capable of eidetic imagery, which, he states, is rare in adults. Arguably, though, a major problem with this formulation is that it would lead us to expect virtually every house to be haunted (provided one or more of the occupants or visitors had the capacity for eidetic imagery)!

The reader will note that the theories of Bozzano and Tyrrell, unlike Carington's, include the notion of discarnate agency. If I have understood it correctly, Tyrrell's theory (and perhaps Bozzano's) implies that the agent may be completely unaware that his or her mental activity causes people in the haunted locality to experience hallucinations. Arguably, though, a telepathic theory such as Tyrrell's makes more sense in cases where the agent knows the percipient and has at least some motivation or reason, conscious or otherwise, to communicate with the percipient. In 'experimental' cases, there is obviously an intention to influence the percipient; and in the case of a crisis apparition, 'The theme... is usually inspired by a desire on the agent's part to visit his friend, so the drama which is worked out is that of the agent in his friend's vicinity trying to communicate with him' (Tyrrell, 1973, p.143). But with regard to haunting apparitions, the percipient may never have known the presumed agent, and the appearance of the latter's apparition may fulfil no obvious purpose.

A problem with all three of the theories considered in this section is that their range of applicability is restricted by virtue of their inability to account for the physical phenomena reported in some cases of haunting.

### 'Trace' theories

Another approach to understanding hauntings is to suppose that events occurring in a particular place, such as a house, can leave a trace, impression or record that can influence subsequent occupants or visitors, causing them to experience the characteristic phenomena. From this perspective, experiencing a haunting is similar to watching a video-recording or listening to a tape-recording of past events, and arguably this approach could help to explain cases, such as the Cheltenham ghost (Collins, 1948; MacKenzie,

1982), in which apparitions act in a rather stereotyped way. Such a theory might also make sense of some of the auditory phenomena reported in cases of haunting. If, for example, furniture had been dragged about in a particular room at some point in the past, and if some sort of trace or record of that event had been made, occupants of the haunted building might be able to hear (either physically or via some other process) the sound of furniture being moved. If the laying down of the 'trace' is a hit-and-miss business, dependent at any given point on a concurrence of various physical and emotional factors, the 'playback' might yield a telescoped and disjointed sequence of sounds, perhaps giving the manifestations a bizarre and frightening character. But without some specification of a mechanism (or mechanisms) by which the 'recording' and 'playback' occur, much remains to be explained.

Price<sup>9</sup> (1938-9) suggested that, contrary to what is widely assumed, mental images, once formed, may have a degree of objective existence and a tendency to persist, independently of the originating mind. He proposed that they might have 'causal properties', a kind of 'telepathic charge', and that in certain special circumstances an image or group of such images, which originated in the mind of someone who formerly lived in a certain place, might become localized there. If someone enters the location and there is a 'telepathic affinity' between the contents of that person's mind and the persisting images, haunting-type phenomena might be experienced. (It should be noted, however, that Price confined his speculations to hauntings without physical effects.)

Regarding the interesting question of why so few localities are haunted, Price suggested that in any long-inhabited place there would be numerous persistent and localized images, with different telepathic charges. Given this amalgam, a percipient who might otherwise be capable of seeing ghosts would only be able to report that the place had a certain 'feel' about it. Or it could be that the telepathic charges of the various images cancel one another out, so that nothing can be felt or seen. (If these speculations are true, it would seem to follow that hauntings should be more common in *relatively new* houses, offices, factories, etc!).

Price recognized that his theory contained 'loose ends'. Although it involves the notion of telepathy, of a deferred kind, it is very much of the 'trace' type. I found Price's explication of his views somewhat rambling and hard to follow, and, as noted, the theory does not account for cases involving physical phenomena.

There are accounts of episodes in which people seem to have temporarily experienced their environment as if they had gone back in time (see, for example, Dobinson, 1998; MacKenzie, 1997). The nature of time is, of course, a matter of ongoing fascination and discussion, and, for all we know, the past may in some sense continue to exist and be 'visitabile'. However, retrocognitive experiences are open to alternative explanations, and some form of 'trace' theory is an obvious contender. While it may be true that some of the phenomena of haunting involve a 'replay' of past events, it seems unlikely that



experiencing ghostly happenings literally entails ‘going back in time’. From witnesses’ accounts, it appears that they are generally aware that they are in the present, notwithstanding the intrusive manifestations.

### ‘Higher dimensions’

While the evidence of our senses tells us that our spatial world is three-dimensional, physicists and mathematicians have suggested that there could be more than three spatial dimensions (see, for example, Kaku, 1995). The concept of a fourth spatial dimension could help to explain some paranormal phenomena. Consider, by way of analogy, a sentient flatworm, Jack, living on a table top. Imagine that he has no concept of the third dimension and hence no idea of movement or extension in an *upward* or *downward* direction. If another flatworm, Jill, is lowered on to the table top and placed next to him, Jack will experience her arrival as mysterious; and if Jill is then lifted off the table, Jack will regard her disappearance as equally puzzling.<sup>10</sup> By the same token, the appearance and disappearance of phantasmal people, animals, or objects could, perhaps, be explained in terms of their moving, or being moved, in a fourth spatial dimension.

Randall (1982) points out that if space has four dimensions, a supposedly ‘closed’ room, from our three dimensional perspective, would still be open to the fourth dimension, which could be an explanation of apportation phenomena, in which objects mysteriously appear in, or disappear from, a closed space such as a box or a room. In fact, Randall (*op. cit.*, p 210) contends that nearly the whole range of psychokinetic phenomena can be encompassed within a few comparatively simple assumptions involving higher spatial and temporal dimensions. (By ‘higher dimensions’ he presumably means *additional* dimensions.) He suggests that we need at least four space-like and two time-like dimensions if our picture of reality is to include psi.

While speculations about multi-dimensional space may help to explain a range of paranormal phenomena, including some of those reported in cases of haunting, I am unaware of any publication that uses such concepts systematically to provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of the phenomena of haunting. With regard to agency, I have therefore entered ‘not clearly specified’ in Table 1.

### Budden’s ‘electro-staging hypothesis’

Budden (1999) contends that there is a link between haunting and poltergeist cases on the one hand and UFO-related experiences entailing alleged encounters with aliens on the other. His rather complicated theory proposes common underlying mechanisms, and it explicitly rejects the ‘extra-terrestrial hypothesis’ of UFO events. With its emphasis on the hallucinogenic effects of electromagnetic emissions and ambient fields, his theory has a ‘naturalistic’ flavour. However, it includes ESP and PK, although Budden appears to lean towards a physical interpretation of them.

In brief, Budden argues that exposure to certain types of electromagnetic radiation or ambient field can sensitize individuals to further such exposures and render them 'psychic'. According to Budden, these energy exposures tend to unleash the power of the unconscious (or 'unconscious intelligence', as he also calls it), leading to 'staged' hallucinatory experiences involving such things as aliens and ghosts. He further contends that PK, exhibited by these electro-sensitive persons, can help to give the staged entities a degree of objective reality, and that ESP can also occur, enabling the electro-sensitive/psychic witness to obtain information from investigators. Budden (p. 205) gives an example of the latter from the Enfield poltergeist case (Playfair, 1980), where the adolescent 'focus' exhibited knowledge of private information regarding Maurice Grosse, one of the investigators.<sup>11</sup>

Among the cases adduced as evidence by Budden is that of a man in Ossett, West Yorkshire, living over a fault-line, with a pylon carrying high-tension cables looming over his back garden. He had reportedly experienced a range of psychic phenomena in his house. One such incident involved his seeing a vision of an angel with well-defined features and very large wings. He called to his family, but before his young son joined him, the angel had gone, although the father and son witnessed an apparition of clouds rising up and forming a mushroom shape of the type that follows a nuclear explosion. Budden attributes the apocalyptic theme of the hallucination to an attempt, by 'the unconscious', to induce religious belief.

While elements of Budden's theory (such as his notion of an 'unconscious intelligence') might be deemed somewhat speculative or fanciful, his proposals are interesting and, along with Persinger's work, emphasize the role of external energy sources as possible triggers for various types of anomalous experience. By incorporating PK, Budden's theory has a wider range of applicability than, say, Tyrrell's formulations, although it is a rather 'broad brush' approach and would require a considerable degree of further specification – and, of course, empirical validation – before it could be regarded as a satisfactory theory of haunting.

## **DISCUSSION**

Are we edging towards a better understanding of hauntings and related phenomena? I think the answer to this question must be a guarded 'yes', given that we at least have a clearer picture of the range of possible 'naturalistic' causes of ghostly experiences. As noted by Dingwall and Hall (1958), and supported by a case they discuss (pp. 86-106), Lambert's (1955) speculations about the effects of underground water may be valid in regard to the auditory phenomena experienced in some 'haunted houses'. Laboratory studies and case reports (e.g. Persinger and Cameron, 1986) support the contention that electrical and magnetic influences from natural and man-made sources can engender anomalous experiences, and Tandy's findings regarding infrasound may help to explain a

good number of minor hauntings. However, these ‘naturalistic’ explanations do not appear to be capable of accounting for cases such as the Cheltenham ghost, where a well-formed apparition was seen on numerous occasions, by various witnesses, both within and outside the house concerned (see Collins, 1948; MacKenzie, 1982).

While the ‘naturalistic’ theories discussed above no doubt have some validity, the status of the psi-based theories is far less certain. To the extent that Gauld (1979, p.205) is right in regarding the phenomena of hauntings as predominantly objective and physical, psi-based theories that treat the manifestations as hallucinatory must be deemed limited in their explanatory scope, and a deeper understanding of hauntings might require further study of psychokinesis, physical mediumship, and poltergeist phenomena. Put another way, we may need to understand the poltergeist better before we can comprehend the ghost. However, if a sub-set of hauntings involves phenomena that are paranormal and yet wholly or mainly hallucinatory, the ideas of Bozzano, Tyrrell, etc., may still be of relevance.

With technological advances and increased availability of sophisticated electronic recording techniques (see Houran & Lange, 1998), it may become easier to determine whether the phenomena in spontaneous cases at least have some *physical* reality, although investigators should always bear in mind the possibility that they could unwittingly generate or transform phenomena themselves. (Spencer [1998] referred to occasions on which *new* phenomena had appeared in the course of case investigations.)

If the findings (physical, biographical, psychological, etc.) from competent in-depth investigations of hauntings were inputted, in a suitably standardized form, into computer databases, statistical analyses could be carried out, thereby enabling significant patterns and trends to be identified.

Another way forward might be for researchers to try to create hauntings experimentally, with a view to comparing any phenomena thus produced with those occurring in spontaneous cases. For example, monitoring equipment of the type described by Houran and Lange (1998) could be set up in several rooms, one of which could be randomly selected as the venue for an ‘experimental haunting’. Experimenters taking on the role of ‘agent’ could then try to make apparitions of themselves (or, perhaps, a fictitious person) appear in the room. This could be attempted via self-conducted visualization or through guided imagery or hypnosis involving another experimenter or a tape-recording. From a purely scientific point of view, one might wish such an experiment to be conducted without the potential percipients knowing that an attempt was being made to create ghostly phenomena. However, since percipients could be alarmed by experiencing paranormal phenomena, the experiment might best be carried out with individuals (parapsychologists, say) giving informed consent, although without their being told which room was being targeted. Another approach would be for researchers to try to ‘haunt’ selected locations after their bodily death if they found

themselves surviving. However, all this presupposes that hauntings involve agency, which may not be the case, or at least not always. Moreover, to the extent that hauntings arise in settings of unhappiness or trauma, it might not be possible, within the scope of ethical practice, to reproduce all the necessary conditions occurring in spontaneous cases.

#### ADDENDUM

In the main body of this article, I briefly discussed Budden's 'electro-staging hypothesis' and referenced his book *Psychic Close Encounters*, published in 1999. However, the book was first published (under the title *Psychic Close Encounters: The Electromagnetic Indictment*) a few years before that. In another book, *Electric UFOs*, published in 1998 and reviewed in the *JSPR* by Evans (2001), Budden treats hauntings in greater depth. His theoretical position in this recent book reflects a move away from the 'electro-staging hypothesis' towards a more naturalistic interpretation of the phenomena. The book deserves close scrutiny by those with a serious interest in hauntings, poltergeist cases, and UFO-related phenomena.

Budden (1998) still places considerable emphasis on acquired electromagnetic hypersensitivity and the hallucinogenic effects of electromagnetic fields and radiation, but he attributes poltergeist-type phenomena not to PK, but to the 'Hutchison effect, named after a Canadian experimenter, who apparently discovered that it is possible to produce poltergeist-type manifestations by bringing together certain items of electrical equipment and applying a surprisingly low level of electrical power. All manner of materials can reportedly be levitated, and other reported phenomena include lighting effects in mid-air, and changes in the chemical composition of metals. Budden suggests that such effects can also occur outside the laboratory, at electromagnetic 'hot-spots'. If so, this could explain the co-presence of hallucinatory phenomena and poltergeist-type manifestations at 'haunted' places, the former being due to the action of fields or radiation on sensitive brain areas, and the latter being due to the Hutchison effect.

Budden (*op. cit.*, pp. 62-63) contends that "unusual intermodulation effects between...clashing fields and wave forms" are central in domestic poltergeist manifestations and aerial-light phenomena of the type described as UFOs. However, to the extent that the Hutchison effect is not fully understood, I think it would be premature to dismiss, as Budden (1998) seems to do, the possible involvement of PK in these phenomena. Moreover, given its rather mechanistic flavour, Budden's more recent theory might be less able than his earlier approach (the 'electro-staging hypothesis') to account for hauntings and poltergeist cases featuring manifestations that seem to reflect the operation of some form of intelligence.

In addition to positing that hallucinatory experiences can be induced by electromagnetic pollution, Budden (1998) suggests that the fabric of buildings, roads, hills, etc., might become imbued, electromagnetically, with 'place memories', and that these

might give rise to perceptual effects in individuals who are electromagnetically hypersensitive.

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*p.a.mccue@btinternet.com*

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## FOOTNOTES

1. The widow's elder son (who was aged about 30 when he told me of the matter) recalled two or three childhood experiences, which seemed very real, of someone coming into his room at night. However, he does not know whether he was dreaming. Obviously, the status of these experiences is uncertain, and, even if they were paranormal, they might have been unconnected with the events in the house many years later.

2. There appear to be weaknesses in this case report. Podmore's main, or only, informant was the younger sister of the principal percipient. A written account was prepared, and Podmore states that, '[It] has...been read through by [the principal percipient] herself, and though she declines to give us any further particulars, she admits that this account is "fairly correct"' (p. 133; emphasis added). 'Fairly correct' sounds less than a full endorsement, and one might wonder why she was unwilling to give 'further particulars'! Moreover, the report does not appear to be entirely consistent. In respect of the first of the two houses where phenomena were experienced, we are told that, 'Nothing remarkable occurred during the first 18 months...' (p.133); but later we are informed that, 'The most



unaccountable noises were heard all over the house *throughout the whole of these seven years* – most frequently in the autumn’ (p. 134; emphasis added).

3. This case is reminiscent of the Gloucestershire hotel case discussed by Romer (1996): the reported phenomena occurred in two periods, separated by a gap of approximately eleven years. During the first period, a mother of three children initially felt unhappy in the house and woke one night to see an apparition. The bedroom always felt cold. The second, more intensive phase, during which objects were displaced, began during the occupancy of a young couple who had two children. It is conceivable that the phenomena occurring during the two periods were unconnected and were person- or family-centred. Alternatively, there might have been an interaction between the percipients and ‘something’ in or about the house.

4. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be an English language version of Bozzano’s book. In discussing his findings and theoretical ideas about hauntings, I have drawn on Collins (1948, pp. 68-77).

5. This theory is considered here because it can be applied to some cases of the haunting type. There are numerical inconsistencies in Lambert’s (1955) article, so the details cited here might not be entirely accurate.

6. Cornell and Gauld (1961), citing a different source from the one mentioned by Dingwall and Hall (1958), claim that there was relatively little earthquake activity at Comrie ‘when the Ballechin haunt was flourishing’ (p. 141).

7. This is the Cheltenham case, which is discussed at length by Collins (1948) and MacKenzie (1982). The pseudonymous name ‘Morton’ was substituted for the real family name (Despard) in an account of the case published in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* (Morton, 1892). The apparition was reportedly seen on numerous occasions during the Despard’s tenancy and might have been that of a woman called Imogen Swinhoe, who had previously lived in the house concerned, although she did not die there.

8. This author is H. H. Price, not Harry Price (who was mentioned above in relation to Borley Rectory).

9. Edwin A. Abbott incorporated such ideas in his successful novel *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, which was first published in the nineteenth century (Abbott, 1984).

10. Budden reports that there were UFO sightings centred on High Barnet, adjoining Enfield, around the time of the Enfield poltergeist case.