

BOOK REVIEW

Telephone Calls from The Dead: A Revised Look at the Phenomenon Thirty Years On by Callum E. Cooper. Tricorn Books, 2012. 193 pp. £8.99. \$18. ISBN 978-0956759726.

Telephone Calls from the Dead deals with a topic rarely touched upon since Rogo and Bayless published their classic *Phone Calls from the Dead* (1979). This book gives a review of how this field has developed, presents a number of old and new cases, and deals at length with various explanations of the phenomenon and its technical aspect. And it is very readable.

The book reviews collections of case reports of spontaneous phone calls from the dead, primarily Bayless and Rogo's 50 cases suggestive of anomalous communication that were collected in the 1960s. They divided the cases into a few categories, such as simple calls where the dead caller says only a few words and is unresponsive to questions, which brings the call to an end. Second, prolonged calls that involve a conversation, and third, answer calls where living persons make a call to someone they do not know has died and yet they get an answer. There are also cases involving disconnected telephones. This fascinating anecdotal material has undergone considerable investigation and scrutiny.

During the 1980s, some 40 Italian cases were collected by Massimo Biondi. After interviewing the receivers of the calls and additional witnesses, Biondi concluded that 20 of these cases still appeared to be inexplicable.

The author describes attempts to construct equipment (*psychophones*) to communicate with the dead. This was mostly done by persons long forgotten by our generation, such as Francis Grierson and F. R. Melton. Among them was no less a person than the great inventor Thomas Edison. Many of the researchers involved in telephonic communication with the dead believed that the dead were somehow able to manipulate the electrons down the telephone line to produce the calls. Hence it was essential for investigators to compile an instrument made of extremely sensitive components.

The subject of electronic voice phenomena (EVP) and instrumental transcommunication is mentioned and the contributions of Friedrich Jurgensen and Konstantin Raudive briefly described. The author argues for keeping the phone call phenomenon and the electronic voice phenomenon apart and he treats them as separate anomalies. There were also mixed cases, and inexplicable malfunctions of telephones or telephone systems

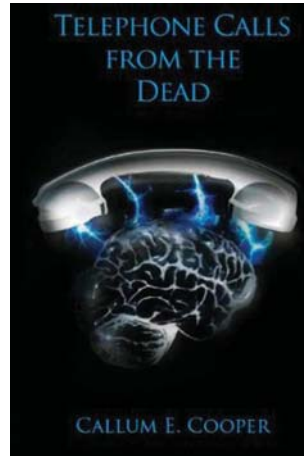
that border on poltergeist (such as in Bender's Rosenheim case, which is not mentioned). The author also takes up the more recent subject of anomalous voicemail and text messages which he finds closely related to the electronic voice phenomena.

The bulk of the book deals with the phone call phenomena and gives various analyses of the characteristics of the cases. It is very interesting to note that most of the people who had these experiences had never heard about such a thing as phone calls from the dead.

One chapter looks at the question of whether psychological factors can explain the phenomena, and also at the obvious weaknesses of these cases and various potential sources for errors. Still, some residua of cases seem to remain inexplicable.

Cases of contacts with the dead can take many forms. Apparitional forms are the most common, as shown in my recent book *The Departed among the Living: An Investigative Study of Afterlife Encounters* (2012). Cooper's book brings to our attention another and more rare form (telephone contact). He should be complimented for taking up this almost forgotten subject in a thoughtful and thorough manner.

Cases of this kind appear to be extremely rare. Hopefully the readers of this Journal will bear with me if I end this review with a few words about a case that happened in my family. One day the phone rang and my wife went to the phone. It was a call from a relative in Copenhagen who had recently died in his nineties, and whom both of us had visited on several occasions. He greeted her in his usual affectionate way and started to say something, but then his voice slowly faded away. There could be no mistake about his voice, my wife told me. His voice was so easy to recognize. I remember that for days after this incident my wife brought it up again and again. She was so deeply impressed by this extraordinary phone call.



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