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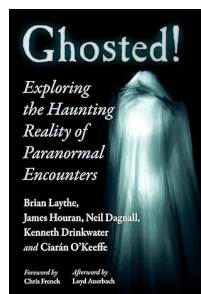
Ghosted! Exploring the Haunting Reality of Paranormal Encounters

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It is with a sense of adventure, genuine curiosity, and true skepticism (in the spirit of William James) that the authors of the text (“the Ghost Gang”) investigate the deeply human experience of ghosts. Throughout the text, the authors portray a refreshing approach of “adversarial collaboration” toward the study of ghosts. This particular collaboration dates back to 2017 and culminates in this publication. Here, they seek to bracket their individual beliefs and positioning regarding paranormal phenomena, in order to systematically and more deeply explore ghost experiences. As Professor Chris French points out in his foreword to the text, it is all too easy to be swayed by one’s pre-existing beliefs and disbeliefs, and that “to be human is to be biased”. He admires the fresh perspective adopted in this text as it is both effortful and rewarding to challenge oneself and embrace one’s blind-spots. This collaborative approach makes space to facilitate new insights into a very human experience. In addition, the authors advocate a participatory approach toward research that simultaneously seeks to educate and *work with* a range of individuals and groups with interests in ghosts. Participatory research approaches are at the heart of transpersonal and community-based research. They are aligned with postmodern and postcolonial approaches that seek to equalize the research playing field (there are valuable contributions from all members of a team, including the researcher him or herself) and can remove stale academic hierarchies. Adversarial collaboration has the potential to stimulate new, well-designed studies, drawing from different perspectives and expertise and assembling good-quality data and knowledge.

The introductory chapter highlights the global nature of the “Ghost gang” collaboration, which seeks to explore all aspects of ghost experiences without falling into pitfalls of “dogmatic perspectives that these experiences either are “entirely or never” paranormal. It is simply more productive to acknowledge what we confidently know about these occurrences versus not” (p. 7). This is in stark contrast to many academic explorations of these phenomena and succeeds in going back to the experiences themselves. The introductory chapter leads us into an accessible, conversational, yet academic discussion that rests on a *systems* perspective toward understanding ghosts. The authors present their theory of Haunted People Syndrome (HP-S) that understands ghost phenomena from psychological, social, and environmental perspectives. The general stance is critical yet open-minded; of ruling out the plethora of normal explanations before considering parapsychological ones. This is the ideal approach for science as it is clear that the authors seek to keep the door open for explanations that are more anomalous in their balanced and nuanced perspective (that is deeply refreshing).

The book is organized into a series of chapters that break down the concept of HP-S into its constituent parts. We begin with a chapter titled “*Spectral Signs or Symptoms*”, in which the authors explore the concept of a ghost by introducing the idea of a Haunt



Hierarchy. They articulate how a “ghost” is inferred via various anomalous phenomena that includes a collection of increasingly anomalous objective (O) and subjective (S) anomalies. Objective anomalies refer to events that occur externally that can often be measured (for example, cold areas and the strange behavior of mechanical equipment, among others). Subjective anomalies refer to psychological events that a person might report (for example, negative feelings, perceiving an invisible presence, anomalous sensations in the body, among others). Intriguingly, subjective and objective anomalies tend to co-occur, are fundamentally intertwined, and are not statistically separate. As such, ghost experiences emerge as psychological interactions *with* the physical environment. Intriguingly, the haunt hierarchy reflects one statistical factor that plays out as a *thermometer* of gradually increasing haunting intensity. Anomalous phenomena that are more common and probable are depicted at the bottom of the thermometer (low intensity), while anomalous phenomena that are less likely and more anomalous are depicted at the top of the thermometer (high intensity). In turn, the authors describe how a haunting experience can increase in intensity as it develops and that ghost phenomena reflect an intriguing recipe of interacting components. The haunt hierarchy plays out differently for spontaneous experiences in comparison to those emerging in other scenarios. For example, for groups who are primed toward paranormal explanations, expectations, and prior schemata interact with the ways in which these interactions play out and are interpreted (the framework plays a key role). The authors unpack this more systematically later in the book as they elaborate on their model.

As the first chapter progresses, the authors challenge the oft-cited difference between hauntings and poltergeists via statistical modeling. Their research suggests that these phenomena can both be understood according to the haunt hierarchy but that the order in which anomalies occur are a little different. They move to fuse these superficially distinct phenomena into one category reflective of “ghostly episodes”. This makes a lot of sense, given that many haunting experiences include physical phenomena but do not always include apparitions (Alvarado & Zingrone, 1995). In addition, there are a subset of poltergeist cases that break the usual mold of a living-agent induced RSPK explanation (Roll, 1977). Ghostly episodes actually seem to comprise a family tree of anomalies that shift according to social, religious, cultural, and situational contexts in which these phenomena play out.

The psychological ingredients (symptoms) of a ghost are further unpacked by linking ghost experiences to other human experiences. Related experiences include mass psychogenic illness, imaginary friends that seem to come

alive, and group stalking. Although these seem to be superficially distinct, they actually share common features with ghost phenomena and can be successfully mapped according to the haunt hierarchy. As such, the “syndrome model” may not always be associated with a paranormal interpretation and may sometimes occur “incognito”. Traits common across these related experiences include increased sensitivity to environmental factors, tendencies to focus on body-based symptoms, attributions of events to an external agent (psychogenic illness); very strong imaginary tendencies such that imagined others take on life-like qualities, perceived agency (imaginary friends), and feelings of surveillance and persecution by an unseen other (group stalking). The syndrome model, therefore reflects a set of predictable “symptoms” that work together as a core phenomenon that causes observable symptoms. The authors are careful to point out that they are not seeking to pathologize ghost experiences, but given the connotations of the term “symptoms”, I wonder if a different term might be adopted that can allow for the same set of interweaving S and O phenomena.

In Chapter 2, we take a deep dive into the individual differences and correlates of ghost experiences with a particular focus on the transliminality variable, which is at the core of HP-S. These “liminal dwellers” exhibit an enhanced sensitivity toward subliminal aspects of the mind and subtle information that is present in the physical environment. The current definition for transliminality is a “hypersensitivity to psychological material originating in (a) the unconscious, and/or (b), the external environment”. This is understood to reflect neuroplasticity, or the tendency to make physiological and psychological connections. Transliminal individuals are hard-wired to be sensitive and for different sources of information to mesh together in syncretic forms, including eidetic imagery, physiognomic perception, and synesthesia (stronger imagery for memories, perceptions, and fusions between senses and concepts). Transliminal individuals exhibit a number of tendencies that render them more likely to experience anomalous phenomena, including sensitivity, creativity, hallucination proneness, and the perception of stimuli amid randomness (among others). They also have a number of more negative tendencies, including stress, depression, somatic focus, substance use, hostility in relationships, memory aberrations, mood swings, poor attention to rules, and sensation seeking.

Transliminal people have been consistently found to have a greater likelihood of experiencing ghost and poltergeist phenomena and are, therefore those who are more likely to exhibit HP-S. These individuals are active participants in the construction of ghost experiences rather than being passive witnesses. The transliminal

model can predict who has haunt-type experiences generally (macro phenomenology) in addition to the general patterns within these experiences (always a mixture of S and O events). Other factors outside of transliminality contribute to the microphenomenology (or the specific *flavor*) of a given haunt experience. These allow for the meaning-making components which are inspired by one's beliefs in the paranormal, one's religious ideology, one's ideological practices, social desirability, and setting. Essentially, the way in which one believes (or disbelieves) in the paranormal or the extent to which one identifies with a particular ideology about haunt phenomena can influence which factors one attends to or does not attend to in the context of a haunting experience. Beliefs and ideologies can also drive how one makes sense of anomalous experiences that arise in the context of a haunting.

The authors also remind us of the social context of the haunting experience and that people are often aware of the social acceptability (or lack thereof) of certain explanations in the context of a haunting (with regard to who else is present). The set and setting of the haunting experience also contribute to the overall experience, as *liminal people* may be more likely to experience haunt-type phenomena in *liminal settings*. Such settings are those which may be more likely to create feelings of *dis-ease*, which takes a central role in the HP-S model and rests on states of dissonance. In essence, the authors propose that haunted locations are particularly likely to elicit S and O events. There is then an active construction of the ghost by recourse to personal beliefs and world-views and existing cultural narratives concerning ghosts.

Although transliminality plays a central role in ghost experiences, the authors are careful to note that under the right circumstances, people who are not transliminal can also experience haunt-type phenomena. This occurs in the context of rituals, contexts, and practices that result in *dissociative* experiences. In addition, anyone who walks into a dark and spooky haunted house might experience states of *dis-ease*, which are implicated in the etiology of anomalous experiences.

Chapter 3 explores the role that social influences and social facts (propagated culturally) take in the etiology of ghost experiences. For example, there are certain social facts concerning paranormal phenomena that can have strong effects in terms of how people behave. The chapter outlines the VAPUS model that essentially argues that ghost narratives are versatile (spanning diverse genres), adaptable (shift according to social changes), participatory (invite interaction), universal (applying to many contexts), and scalable (engage people at the individual level and at different social levels, including propagation via media and social media). Breaking this down, the authors

convincingly argue that ghost narratives are a cultural construct that acts as memes that are strongly prevalent, pervasive, contagious, and subject to mutations as they evolve (like their biological counterpart, the gene). The model argues that narratives regarding hauntings are highly intriguing and apply to lots of areas of human concern. In addition, ghost narratives are something that humans participate in (e.g., via paranormal tourism or investigation). Ghost narratives also *evolve* in response to people's direct experiences, which can alter the nature of a given haunting story.

Ghost narratives are also discussed as *Trickster*-like since they are fundamentally liminal, and often occur at the intersection between reality and imagination and between darkness and light. The authors also discuss how ghost experiences can be understood in terms of gaslighting, where people might begin to second guess themselves about what actually happened and revise their interpretation post hoc. Such gaslighting can occur negatively or positively. Negative occurrences occur where a paranormal experience is questioned, undone, and subjected to a more skeptical reinterpretation, while positive occurrences occur when a paranormal interpretation is pushed towards a more definite or extreme version of that interpretation.

Ultimately, we learn that ghost experiences should not be taken at face value, but rather must be understood as stories that are told with S and O anomalies as ingredients that are then meaningfully interpreted and pulled into a narrative. This is at the heart of narrative psychology, where it is clear that experiences are often told in a *storied* format. The authors compare the process of meaning-making inherent in ghost narratives to the Rorschach projective test, whereby people observe a set of ink blots and draw from the dots to create a story that derives from their own social backgrounds, beliefs, contexts, and individual differences in sensitivity and attention to different elements.

The authors also remind the reader that researchers play a significant role within the construction of ghost narratives, and that everyone has biases regarding the best ways to approach and make sense of the evidence. The authors discuss three social groups: parapsychologists, debunkers, and ghost hunters, who each have different "competing voices" regarding the investigation and interpretation of ghost phenomena. Each group certainly has its own blind-spots that might be ameliorated by collaboration. Unfortunately, the authors hold some assumptions that "parapsychologists" may be more prone to believing claims of the paranormal. This is a misunderstanding regarding parapsychology, which is about studying subjective paranormal experiences from a crit-

ical, yet balanced perspective, rather than setting out to prove the existence of psi phenomena (in alignment with the perspective articulated in *Ghosted*). Of course, the key intention of the authors is to check one's blind-spots, which is a valuable reminder for any research endeavor. The take-home message is that there is "a solid foundation for productive research collaborations", which is both exciting and timely and a call to arms for "citizen science". In order to stimulate good quality research across different approaches, the authors note that research methods might also display qualities of the VAPUS model - they need to be versatile, adaptable, participatory, universal, and scalable. As noted earlier, the participatory turn is at the heart of transpersonal and community research approaches in psychology. I think that this is a valuable and potentially highly fruitful way forward for research into these multifaceted experiences.

Chapter 4 dives into "spooky settings and structures" or *liminal settings* and unpacks six ambient factors that contribute to the recipe for ghost experiences. These factors that are often found at "haunted houses" include embedded cues (that prime certain types of experiences), lighting levels (shadows), air quality (causing location-based illness or perceptual anomalies), temperature (cold and warm spots), infrasound (very low-frequency sound that is not consciously perceived) and electromagnetic fields (that may inspire hallucinatory phenomena). The authors propose that some of these features contribute to the liminal nature of haunted sites and interact with transliminality in terms of both S and O events and, in turn, to the construction of a ghost or poltergeist narrative. This chapter digs more deeply into the syndrome model with regards to why some places may be haunted (whilst others are not).

The chapter includes some discussion of technical equipment (in particular EMF meters) that investigators often bring with them to a purportedly haunted location (to explore O events). Indeed, ghost investigations have become synonymous with such equipment in the eyes of the media. Technical equipment has come to symbolize scientific study as it allows for objective measurement of anomalies. However, in ghost hunting, there is often a conflation of correlation with causality; anomalous behavior of technical equipment is taken to indicate the presence of a "ghost". With that said, the authors note that there have been several examples of anomalous behavior of EMF meters, which needs to be systematically researched. In general, the authors argue for the simultaneous use of various objective measures, the importance of ascertaining the extent to which there are naturally occurring physical variables, and good quality hypothesis-testing research.

The chapter also describes the role of Gestalt influences which serve to integrate various environmental elements into an overarching holistic *impression* of a given location. Such influences include a combination of factors that people interact with. Sometimes, the interpretation of various aspects of a place may stimulate a type of threat-scanning exercise when people enter a purportedly haunted location. This may result in feelings of dis-ease, while at other times, there may be feelings of ease or comfort. When a person experiences dis-ease, this may induce feelings of creepiness, and in turn, this may influence the way in which one attends to and interprets the environment. Thus, when one is on edge, a breeze is no longer just a breeze, but rather a ghostly draft, and ghostly inferences have thus begun. Here, the authors discuss ambiguity tolerance and how some people are less able to sit with ambiguities or uncertainties than others. For some ghost experiencers, a lack of tolerance of ambiguity can lead to heightened feelings of *threat*, which leads to increases in paranormal beliefs and attributions (like a cycle). If one is essentially on high alert, one may be more likely to notice anything anomalous (e.g., body sensations) as being due to the presence of a ghost. This is proposed to occur via processes of cognitive dissonance, an uncomfortable experience that arises when there are conflicting aspects to one's reality - e.g., something is real and not real or pleasant and not pleasant *at the same time*. One way to resolve these conflicts is the inference of *agency* beyond the self (a ghost). Sometimes, the cycle can be more affirming, and associated with positive and even transformative experiences (which the authors unpack as *enchantment*). Enchantment may emerge in a 5-stage process (detection, absorption, consternation, impression formation, affirmation), contributing to the experience being labeled as a "pleasant surprise".

The way in which a ghost experience develops is understood to be similar to the temperature increases in the haunt hierarchy; in other words, *experiences influence and build on prior experiences*. The discussion on enchantment is truly fascinating and is a connection point to other literatures, including research in humanistic psychology, transpersonal psychology, and in the context of psychedelic experiences where experiences have the potential to be appraised negatively or positively. Ghost experiences ultimately emerge as interactions between liminal settings and those who visit them. Liminal people will experience more intense phenomena, but settings may foster anomalous experiences in those who are not transliminal.

Chapter 5 further fleshes out the theory of *haunted people syndrome (HP-S)*, integrating much of the prior discussion regarding transliminality, social factors, and environmental factors into an intriguing interactionist sys-

tems model that is highly persuasive. The model proposes a bidirectional interaction between people who are more transliminal and environmental settings (that include a range of stimuli as articulated in Chapter 4). The ensuing experiences are then constructed into a meaningful ghost narrative. The authors present a synopsis of the key features of systems theory, which proposes that the best way to understand a given phenomenon is via a set of interacting factors. In terms of ghost experiences, anomalous phenomena occur (that are often ambiguous in their nature), are perceived, interpreted, and may then lead to other actions and experiences that also have the potential to influence individual and social experiences within a given social and cultural context. Over time, these loops contribute to the development of a narrative concerning ghosts. The loop of interacting components can play out very differently for people with differing belief systems about ghost phenomena.

This chapter discusses two competing perspectives concerning whether experiences lead to beliefs (Experiential Source Theory, or EST) or whether beliefs lead to experiences (Cultural Source Hypothesis or CSH). Given the interactionist nature of ghost narratives, the authors propose that both EST and CSH are *both correct* and are working in tandem! This makes a lot of sense. The argument rests on the way in which one believes in paranormal phenomena, given that there are two different subscales of the paranormal beliefs scale; one pertains more toward cultural ideas regarding paranormal phenomena, while the other pertains to anomalous experiences. In addition, the authors propose that ESH may be applied to O events, while CHS might play a stronger role for S events, including the feeling of being watched.

Essentially, liminal people are more likely to experience anomalous phenomena that are interpreted according to certain attentional and perceptual biases. These are further bolstered by liminal settings, and in turn, phenomena are explained and reinforced by understanding them to be caused by an external agency that is paranormal. The attribution of the phenomena as a ghost can serve as an anxiety-reducing coping mechanism when faced with stressful or ambiguous situations. In other words, for many people, deciding that something anomalous is a ghost can lend a sense of relief and reduce anxiety. However, when a person is already highly anxious, the feedback loop may go awry and spin the anxiety out of control. For those who are higher in transliminality, the enhanced sensitivity to internal and external stimuli and other cognitive and perceptual biases and tendencies to focus on emotional rather than rational reasoning further contributes to the ghost narrative. As such, transliminal people essentially create more anomalous experiences

from existing ones - the haunt hierarchy builds upon itself and becomes more intense. Once the attribution is made, confirmation bias may come into play in terms of the best explanation for anomalous phenomena. Outside of the individual, ideas and experiences can spread like germs (contagion) among others present at the scene. Indeed, the authors discuss research findings that provide support for the idea that anomalous experiences spread via social contagion in the context of haunted locations and experiences. Given differences in the different roles of culturally held beliefs on experiences, the authors note that it is possible to reduce the distress associated with HP-S by working with people's belief systems. For example, an exorcism might work well for those with religious beliefs who are distressed by their anomalous experiences. Another way could be to seek to work with clients to alter the cognitive, perceptual biases that oftentimes accompany transliminality.

Although the authors discuss some of the different ways in which one might believe in paranormal phenomena, I would like to have seen more discussion on possible differences between healthy versus less healthy transliminality. Research with the related construct of positive schizotypy indicates that there is strong evidence for healthy and less healthy forms that exhibit different responses to stress (e.g., Grant & Hennig, 2020). The authors do discuss different ways in which one can be a highly sensitive person (HSP) and that there are certain highly sensitive people who are more prone to flourishing (Orchids) than others (Dandelions). A key ingredient in terms of whether experiences will be associated with distress is the activation of the threat detection system, which may be more likely when anomalous phenomena occur spontaneously, are physical, and occur in close proximity to the experiencer. This is fleshed out in more detail in a later chapter in which the authors map out an "encounter matrix".

Chapter 6 explores various parapsychological explanations for ghost-type experiences. The chapter begins with a discussion of the loaded term "paranormal". The authors explore several definitions and note that the term "paranormal" is rather problematic and often refers to phenomena that are negatively defined, rather than defined in their own right. They go on to suggest that a position of "I don't know" is better than "paranormal" or "supernatural". They note that some members of the ghost gang are persuaded by laboratory evidence for psi phenomena (implying, of course that some do not). This again reminds the reader that this is an interesting and innovative collaboration that is genuinely seeking to understand the phenomena at hand.

In the book, the authors note that there is currently

limited information about how psi might work, regardless of whether it comes from a living or a discarnate source. This is a valid but contentious point, as there are actually several intriguing models for psi phenomena in existence, despite the absence of one unifying model. They also suggest that competing explanatory models (the living agent psi (LAP) versus discarnate source debate) might relate more to ideological preferences. Next, they criticize the idea that paranormal phenomena fall outside of what is normal, given that many people regularly experience these phenomena, and for them, they are perfectly normal. In addition, they criticize the term “parapsychological” and note that it is not possible to label something as parapsychological if we do not know how psi works. Although I agree with the importance of separating a particular event or experience from the way it is interpreted, I am not sure “parapsychological” implies a particular interpretation, although the term may well suggest an explanation that falls outside of psychology.

Despite the difficulties in determining the source of psi (LAP versus survival), the authors propose an extremely useful rating system for ascertaining the extent to which ghost-type experiences might be indicative of a more *genuine* anomaly, which is a really important element in the book, and which would certainly benefit from more public dissemination. The system was developed by Brian Laythe’s organization, ISRAE (Institute for the Study of Religious and Anomalous Experience). The system classifies anomalous phenomena into one of three tiers or classes of anomalous phenomena. The first reflects phenomena that are generally less likely to indicate genuinely anomalous processes and include vague noises, movements occurring in the corner of one’s eye, and many personal subjective experiences. The second includes more complex subjective experiences according to the haunt hierarchy, including experiences in which a person sees an apparition or is pushed or hears voices (but without an objective recording to support this). Sometimes, these phenomena may have more than one witness, but there is no objective data to complement these experiences. The third class includes only O events on the SSE questionnaire, which are more likely to be genuinely anomalous. Here, there is corroboration with instruments such as video or audio recordings, and some anomalies can include Psychokinetic effects, visual apparitions or light effects, and high-quality EVPs. Phenomena might be classed into this third category when it is clear that the anomalies are not caused by a hoax or other more normal explanations (this can be done using multiple recording devices). I would like to have seen the SSE questionnaire included as part of this text to help the reader make further sense of this discussion.

The final part of the chapter further unpacks the different ways in which one might understand anomalies that do suggest a more anomalous process. The authors discuss the strengths and limitations of a survivalist position in comparison to other parapsychological perspectives. This is a balanced and very grounded discussion, which seeks to explore all possibilities regarding anomalous phenomena. They also remind the reader that quantum aspects of reality might allow for some kind of continuation of consciousness following death, but that the jury is currently undecided in terms of how to understand the nature of consciousness. In addition, anomalous physical phenomena that occur in the context of hauntings can potentially be (better) explained by the psychic ability of the living, e.g., Roll’s RSPK understanding of poltergeist phenomena. Thus, even if it seems that there is an external agency, the cause may well be associated with the living (albeit unconsciously). Other ways to take ghost phenomena up from a psi of the living perspective is the idea that some experiences are influenced telepathically, and not via discarnate entities. For example, a person’s memories of a loved one could psychically influence the experiences of others present in a given location. Another explanation is that people access a shared field where memories associated with a given location might be located. These experiences may be externalized due to psychological traits associated with transliminality, including eidetic imagery. Throughout the discussion, it is clear that the authors consider that a psi explanation is a viable explanation when all normal explanations are ruled out, but that it is not clear exactly *what* this might suggest about reality.

To balance things out, the authors also discuss the idea that information might sometimes become connected to certain places and objects (as noted in the Stone Tape theory and the related idea of “place memories”). The discussion also considers the simulation hypothesis, which asserts that we are living in a computerized simulation of reality and that ghost-type phenomena are coded aspects of this simulation. This is a very intriguing idea, but it is not possible to falsify.

Chapter 6 concludes with the discussion of some neurological features that would influence a greater likelihood of perceiving anomalous phenomena that may or may not include psi. Discussion includes enhanced sensitivity to weak stimuli, dissociative tendencies, and temporal lobe lability. Their closing position statement notes that some genuine anomalies do exist, but more research is needed to fully explore different explanations. Intriguingly, the authors reiterate that the HP-S model can be applied to ghost experiences with mundane or more anomalous explanations.

Chapter 7 is a pivotal moment in the text, where the authors introduce some practical concepts with a view toward motivating new “citizen scientists” and undergraduate psychology students to think about how to approach a systematic investigation. Citizen scientists are defined as those who are ordinary people without specific training who collect and analyze data, often as part of a research team. The authors distinguish between those who want to have an intriguing experience and those who want to study ghost phenomena and that it is possible to combine both approaches in a meaningful investigation. In this chapter, the authors highlight the need for systematic investigation that includes controls and a need to evaluate S and O events in a critical and balanced way. It is important to be clear on what hypotheses are being explored in a given investigation and do some planning for such an investigation rather than diving into an open exploration of S and O anomalies. In fact, they argue that 50% of any investigation is about planning.

The authors remind the reader of the importance of being mindful of one’s pre-existing belief systems and carefully documenting S and O events without jumping to interpretations about what the events imply; in other words, collecting good data. They note that people should be aware that unusual experiences often happen (regardless of their explanation). In addition, there are many features of a haunting investigation that are creepy and can be associated with anxiety and sometimes distress. In turn, given HP-S, this can contribute to more anomalous experiences. ISRAE has developed a good protocol for running an investigation. They dub the general approach the “Judge and jury” approach, which reflects a systematic approach that rules out various normal explanations that might explain a given anomaly. A three-stage process is then proposed by the authors. This includes case documentation in which the physical and environmental attributes of the location are documented, the psychological attributes of the recipients are documented, and a list of S/O anomalies that have previously been reported is assembled. The second is exploratory inspections, which include a site survey that documents S/O anomalies in real-time. The third is hypothesis testing, in which site visits might specifically test one or more possible causes or correlates with the S/O events. The authors advocate once again for different research groups to work together and to include academics on the team who are trained in research methodologies. The book also provides some simple research designs that can be applied to some haunting investigations (developed by ISRAE).

Chapter 8 goes into further details in terms of the three-part approach (case documentation, exploratory inspections, and hypothesis testing) that was introduced

in Chapter 7. The ghost gang essentially provides a sample *step-by-step* guide, which is incredibly useful for all budding ghost hunters or academics seriously interested in ghost phenomena. Detailed and practical suggestions are given for case documentation, exploratory inspections, and hypothesis testing. The authors discuss various aspects of engaging in the investigation, including how to work with and interview witnesses, awareness of clinical issues, ethical practices, doing some initial walkthroughs and planning, and detailed advice regarding the investigation itself. The “hotspot method” is presented, which is essentially where investigations are limited to smaller areas (which are named) in which anomalous phenomena have been reported in the past. The authors note that focusing on hotspots can allow for a more practical and time-efficient investigation (rather than investigating an entire building). Readers are also reminded of the importance of timestamping and good record keeping when conducting a systematic investigation of a haunted location in addition to systematically testing for normal explanations, including how the equipment being used might interact.

In terms of hypothesis testing, the authors advise citizen scientists to work with existing scientists to develop good testable hypotheses that can lead toward model building or theory formation. The authors go on to describe some excellent resources for investigative tactics that can be applied to ghosts, breaking the investigations down into stages as they did in this chapter.

This chapter would be complemented by a discussion and integration of Schmeidler’s systematic floor plan approach (e.g., Maher, 1999). This may be part of the hotspot method, as the authors note that a floorplan should be used. Essentially, Schmeidler’s approach divides the floorplan up into named sub-sections such that systematic exploration of S and O phenomena can be ascertained (and anomalies marked according to specific sub-locations).

Throughout the text, there is a lot of emphasis on O measurements as the better form of evidence (which also fits into the third tier of the proposed classification system). Although it makes sense that S events in isolation are less convincing in terms of a genuine anomaly, consideration of the *co-occurrence* of S and O events (factoring in whether S events are collective or individual and other attributes, including temporal and spatial considerations) might also provide intriguing evidence. This might provide additional evidence for HP-S, and allow for further understanding of the way(s) in which the O phenomena play out.

In addition, where there are demonstrable O events, it is not clear exactly what is being measured. This is in

alignment with the emphasis on exploring the ingredients of ghost experiences in and of themselves, but it is possible that an emphasis on what is *physically* measurable is limited. Here, some discussion on the use of random number generators in haunting investigations might add to the discussion and strength of investigations, given that these are intriguing correlates of consciousness in which there is evidence for increased order in randomness (Duggan, 2017). It is also the case that existing models for psi phenomena (including ghosts) have included *quasi*-physical components that would be difficult to measure with equipment that measures actual physical phenomena (e.g., Frederic Myers; see Hamilton, 2017). All of this echoes the authors' own standpoint that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

Chapter 9 instigates a call to action for people to take up the gauntlet and engage in systematic research on the syndrome model advocated in the *Ghosted* book. The chapter outlines some "unsettled questions" regarding the model and how they might be tested via systematic research. The authors invite others to systematically explore some of the core concepts within the syndrome model. They also articulate the need for further research in clinical support for experiencers. This is a really important component of this text, as ghost experiences can often be associated with distress (as well as enchantment). The authors note that the main reasons people reach out to other people for support relates to; 1. a need to understand S/O anomalies in terms of their reality status, 2. a need for emotional stability following experiences and 3., bigger existential questions regarding the meaning of S/O anomalies and the possible existence of "ghosts". These questions can often be connected with significant struggles and sometimes some more clinical ramifications.

The authors then present a very useful map of different types of encounter experiences arising in the context of hauntings as an "encounter matrix". This maps the ingredients for the recipes for positive and negatively appraised experiences. Essentially, there are different levels of perceived threat or benevolence that emerge according to differences in the setting and the proximity of a given encounter and how anomalous experiences interact with translimentality. Negative experiences tend to occur more spontaneously (outside of expectations) and in very close proximity to the experiencer. On the other hand, positive experiences are more likely to emerge in circumstances in which there is expectation or priming, and/or the phenomena occur further away from the experiencer (for example, in the context of mirror gazing). Other factors, including social and other variables, can also contribute to the overall experience in terms of appraisal.

At the end of the chapter, several potential projects

are outlined, including various interesting ways for citizen scientists to get involved in research. As with the rest of the book, the authors succeed in adopting a strong yet balanced skeptical perspective that advocates for methodological excellence. This leaves the door open to the possibility of genuinely paranormal phenomena as they seek to sort out the "signal from the noise".

Chapter 10 provides a plethora of rich information for further study, including some resource materials. It is also a reminder that science is alive, and constantly evolving and that it is important to stay humble, keep an open mind, and be open to new educational experiences regarding the subject matter. The authors remind the reader that the systematic study of ghost experiences draws from various academic disciplines. They go on to describe a number of journals, books, podcasts, and introductory courses available to budding ghost researchers, with the caveat that journals can often be laden with jargon and are not accessible to the public (both in terms of technical language and actually having practical access to these journals). They provide some excellent suggestions for how to get access to journals without working at a university. A list of the key publications that contain parapsychological articles, including skeptical publications, are then presented. The authors reiterate their dedication to "proper skepticism" over debunking and advocate a critical reading of certain publications that express a more dogmatic perspective. Next, the authors list several must-have texts, followed by other resources for general education, including podcasts, general science resources, apps, courses on parapsychology, and how to conduct ghost investigations. In the latter section, they note the pitfalls and benefits of ghost-hunting organizations. Of particular relevance in this chapter is the inclusion of a range of useful resources from ISRAE. Throughout my reading of this book, I find myself continually impressed with the ghost gang's intentions to stimulate innovative and high-quality research and to truly facilitate collaborations among and between different groups with similar interests.

At the end of the text is an afterword by Lloyd Auerbach, who notes his position as a believer in a more paranormal interpretation of the phenomena. He unpacks this by describing himself as a situational skeptic, as he is fully aware that there are many plausible normal explanations at play in many haunting situations. With that said, he has experienced some interesting phenomena that have pushed him to accept that anomalous phenomena do happen that cannot be explained easily. Ghosts fascinate humans, and there are different types of paranormal groups out there that he defines as thrill seekers, hobbyists, amateurs, and citizen scientists. Citizen science

is strongly encouraged by Auerbach and the *Ghosted* authors as it involves more than simply exploring or measuring anomalies with technical equipment. I find myself agreeing strongly with this criticism and bias toward using technology. It often seems to be used pseudo-scientifically. All too often, a measurement anomaly is labeled as a “ghost” when this is a clear example of a conflation between correlation and causality. Auerbach strongly appreciates the focus in *Ghosted* on haunted *people* and agrees with the authors on the psychosocial nature of ghosts, bracketing whether there is any paranormality associated with them. This is an interesting bookend for this book as it seeks to move beyond traditional binaries in terms of one’s position on “the paranormal” and instead engage in adversarial collaboration that seeks to inspire systematic research.

At the very end of the text is a rather useful glossary of terms such that citizen scientists and university students will find useful for the various terminologies that are employed throughout the book. This book is a useful academic resource, a practical handbook, and list of inspiring unresolved questions that certainly whets the appetite for researchers to dig deeper into the study of ghost experiences. Its interdisciplinary nature and systems approach allow for different ways to understand these phenomena. I look forward to seeing how our understanding of ghost experiences and the extent to which HP-S can illuminate these experiences evolves.

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