

# PSYPIONEER JOURNAL

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### Please Note:

Leslie Price retired from his previous work on March 25, and began work on April 2 as Archivist at the College of Psychic Studies in London. He will continue to be reachable on [leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:leslie.price@blueyonder.co.uk) Please check the e-mail addresses you have for him and delete any care of London Fire.

# WHO'S AFRAID OF THE OUIJA-BOARD?

Maxine Meilleur is a member of the SNUi and the Church of the Living Spirit in Lily Dale, New York. A frequent student at the Arthur Findlay College<sup>1</sup> and summer resident of Lily Dale (the World's longest continually run Spiritualist summer camp in the world), she practices mediumship during non-summer months remotely from her home in the Middle East. She wrote *Khadija: The First Lady of Islam*,<sup>2</sup> an historical novel on the first wife of the Prophet Mohammed, in part by remote viewing her life and era. Already a Harvard alumna, she aspires to return to that prestigious university as the only Spiritualist ever admitted to Harvard Divinity School.<sup>3</sup>

## A review of *Voices in the Void* by Hester (Dowden) Travers Smith

By Maxine Meilleur

Written in 1919, and now available as a free download,<sup>4</sup> *Voices in the Void* by Hester (Dowden) Travers Smith should be read all mediums.<sup>5</sup> At only 84 pages, this book is highly readable as Hester's literary style is very down-to-earth and devoid of the flowery language and lengthy sentence structure otherwise common in books of that era.

What makes *Voices in the Void* stand out though is Hester's intelligent, yet humble, exploration of her mediumship as well as the fact that Hester Dowden is one of the finest of the lesser known mediums in Modern Spiritualism. She isn't widely known because her mediumship involved what is now widely shunned and was also downplayed in Hester's day – automatism through the Ouija-board! She starts the work of *Voices in the Void* with an apology that she (page 11):



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<sup>1</sup> The ArthurFindlayCollege:—<http://www.arthurfindlaycollege.org/intro/aboutuk.html>

<sup>2</sup> Book: *Khadija, The First Lady of Islam* Khadija, *The First Lady of Islam: An Interview with Maxine Meilleur*:—<http://www.altmuslimah.com/b/b/4614>

<sup>3</sup> Contact Maxine Meilleur:—[maxine.meilleur@post.harvard.edu](mailto:maxine.meilleur@post.harvard.edu)

<sup>4</sup> *Voices from the Void Six Years' Experience in Automatic Communications*, by Hester Travers Smith: With an Introduction by Professor Sir W. F. Barrett, F.R.S:—<http://www.transcommunication.org/images/pdf/FILES/VOICES%20FROM%20THE%20VOID.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> After her marriage, Miss Hester Dowden became Mrs Hester Travers Smith, but after her divorce, she reverted to her original name.

[has] not even the excuse that I have anything exciting or sensational to tell; I have never attended a séance for materialization; I have never seen a ghost. Nearly all my experiences have come to me through automatism, and, such as they are, I venture to bring them into the light on the chance that they may be interesting to the student of these matters ...

Have we become so fixated on the more popular forms of phenomena and so prejudiced against the Ouija-board that we limit ourselves in reading only about mental or physical mediums? I hope not. For Hester explains in clear, rational terms the dilemma which continues to perplex mediums and researchers alike. And that is whether ‘controls’ are a part of the medium’s subconscious. She began with the notion that her automatism was a way of studying herself but later wrote (pages 12-13):

I must confess [...] that for some time past I have been quite clear and decided on one point – in feeling that the subliminal self accounts for much and many things, but not for everything. I am convinced, in fact, that external influences of some nature work through us, using our senses, eyes, ears, brains, etc., their messages, however, being highly colored by the personalities of their mediums.<sup>6</sup> I feel sure that hardly any of the communications I have had are *entirely* [her emphasis] due to subconsciousness.

This statement is typical of Hester’s healthily skeptical nature and dogged determination over seven years of researching her mediumship from which she produced ample material that formed the book. The short duration of her research can be viewed as a shortcoming of the book as the reader occasionally longs for her complete and mature reflection that might have come after many years of thoughtful study. However, *Far Horizon: A Biography of Hester Dowden* by Edmund Bentley is also available as a free download and it offers more of an objective look at Hester’s entire life and career as a medium.<sup>7</sup>

Hester was a cultured, erudite woman, the daughter of a famous university professor, who thoughtfully and patiently pursued what was tedious and often frustrating work. Many times, she felt inclined to give up this apparently hopeless pursuit because of the patience required for the “few grains of gold one finds in the huge dust heaps of disappointment and dullness” in her form of mediumship. But once results came, she noted (page 15-18):

[those] who try the Ouija board, will, if they have any psychic power, soon be amazed at the rapidity with which the traveler flies from letter to letter [...] the cooperation of two [blindfolded] automatists seems best; three seems to create confusion [...] communications were [...] recorded in silence by a friend, who was obliged to take them down in shorthand, such was the rapidity with which the traveler moved from letter to letter.

For those who might scoff at the Ouija consider the case of “The Pearl Tie-Pin Case.” Hester was sitting at the Ouija board with friend and fellow medium Geraldine Cummins. The name of Cummins’ cousin, an army officer killed in France a month earlier, was unexpectedly spelled out on the board and then the message came: “Tell mother to give my pearl tie-pin to the girl I was going to marry, I think she ought to have it.” As Cummins was unaware that her

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<sup>6</sup> The reader will note that the American edition is here cited, with American spelling.

<sup>7</sup> Far Horizon - Edmund Bentley (Biography):—<http://www.freewebs.com/hesterdowden/FarHorizon.txt>

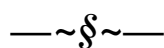
cousin had intended to marry and did not know the name of the woman, she asked that the name and address of the woman be given. The full Christian and surname was given on the board along with an address in London. Either the address was not accurately communicated or was taken down wrong, as a letter sent to that address was returned. Cummins checked with other family members and none was aware that the cousin had been engaged nor knew the fiancée named. Several months later, the family of the young officer received his personal effects from the War Office. They included a pearl tie-pin along with a will naming the fiancée as his next of kin. Both the Christian and surname were exactly as given to Cummins, who would later develop into a world-famous medium and author.

After hearing the story from Hester, Sir William Barrett, a pioneering psychical researcher, confirmed the facts, including that the message was recorded at the time and not written from memory. “Here there could be no explanation of the facts by subliminal memory, or telepathy, or collusion,” Barrett wrote, “and the evidence points unmistakably to a telepathic message from the deceased officer.”<sup>8</sup>

One last criticism of *Voices in the Void* is the fact that some of her findings appear to contradict the findings of other mediums. Concerning the afterlife, Hester notes (page 28):

a period of darkness is described as occurring almost immediately after death. This darkness appears to be a penance or purgatory for the soul left thus in lonely and silent meditation, and it is evidently a period of considerable suffering. Yet during this time of darkness the spirit seems to be permitted to speak to those on earth if such opportunity be offered it. This state does not seem to last long, not more than a week or ten days, so far as I can judge from communicators who come repeatedly and speak of their present condition.

However, no study of mediumship would be complete without a reading of ‘talking-table’ or Ouija-board mediums like Hester. Today, Spiritualism would benefit from a ‘bigger tent’ approach and to occasionally move the spotlight off of mental mediumship and review the lesser known mediums in Modern Spiritualism – of which Hester Dowden is among the best.



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<sup>8</sup> Note by Psypioneer. Quote taken from: *On the Threshold of the Unseen*, 1917, by Sir William Barrett. The pearl Tie-Pin pages 184-186.

# Beyond the ‘ectoplasmic humerus’:

## The life and legacy of healer William Lilley

By Maxine Meilleur



William Henry Lilley can rightly be called one of the finest healing mediums of the 20th Century. Because of Arthur Desmond and Lilley’s son, (Dr. David Lilley – himself a renowned homeopathic and osteopathic doctor currently practicing in South Africa), William Lilley’s life, which was totally dedicated to spiritual healing, is well chronicled and so available to us.

William Lilley was born into a Spiritualist family in 1914 and owes much of his early training to his mother who had been a practising medium for thirty years, and a healer for ten of them. At the age of 10, he was taken by his mother to his first séance where he was controlled for over an hour and a half by a spirit guide

who gave his name as White Hawk. At his second circle, he was so frightened that no contact was made. In subsequent circles, he was entranced by a Hindu Dr Letari and an Egyptian Ramesoye who urged Lilley’s mother not to bring him to further circles but rather develop at home (Desmond, 1949: 11).

So by age 15, Lilley had become a perfect trance medium after training almost every night. He strengthened his relationship with the spirit world, perfected clairaudient diagnosis through psychometry, and was soon sought out as a healer. By age 22, he was married, working in a factory by day, and gathering herbs and doing healing by night for which he never requested payment (Desmond, 1949: 14). His bride initially wanted Lilley to abandon his healing but gradually became involved in it herself.

Other than word of mouth, there had been no publicity about Lilley until a Spiritualist newspaper the “Greater World” put him in the headlines in May, 1938. Afterward, requests for healing poured in as did a request by a wealthy businessman to meet Lilley. Arthur Richards, a metal merchant from Leeds, devised a test for Lilley for diagnosing distant patients merely from an article supplied by them. Accompanied with two orthodox doctors with their own diagnoses in sealed envelopes not previously seen by the medium nor his guide, Richards compared Lilley’s diagnoses with those in the envelopes (Desmond, 1949: 16). Lilley’s diagnoses not only matched up with those of the earth doctors but exceeded them! This prompted Arthur Richards to begin training under Lilley and sponsoring him to the point where Lilley could quit the factory job and build his first healing sanctuary in a modest upper room at Richards’ metal works.

Ever since his healing work first began, Lilley made it clear to his patients that his healing involved direct assistance from the spirit world, perhaps through spirit visitation in the case of absent healing, and this healing is accompanied by a spiritual upliftment with each cure, bringing the patient an increased consciousness of their spirituality. Patients were never

charged for treatment but were encouraged to express their sense of appreciation only in the direction of helping others less fortunate than themselves (Desmond, 1949: 46).

As Lilley's healing powers and uncanny diagnoses became widely known, he turned down an offer to work a London hospital at more than 10 times the very basic salary Arthur Richards provided (Desmond, 1949: 52). Before the outbreak of World War II, Lilley opened a second healing sanctuary. But with the onset of war, conscription threatened Lilley's full-time healing ministry and so he initially requested a non-combatant role then appealed for an unconditional exemption from military service. The tribunal which heard his appeal in 1941 directly questioned Lilley about the nature of his healing practice. While under the control of Dr Letari, Lilley clearly explained spiritual healing to the court and Arthur Richards gave evidence about the numbers of patients treated. Within two minutes, the tribunal granted Lilley unconditional exception (Desmond, 1949: 34) and in so doing officially recognized spiritual healing and the role of spirit in spiritual healing. This was at a time when the Church of England and orthodox medicine were denying spiritual healing.

His second sanctuary was destroyed in an air raid but was rebuilt in a week. Further publicity in "Psychic News" brought in more patients both in person and by post. According to Desmond (1949: 34), Lilley diagnosed and sent herbal or homeopathic remedies to patients by post, sent absent healing twice daily, treated patients in person and occasionally used ectoplasm to promote the growth of living tissue and then gradually dematerialize.

In 1949, Lilley left the United Kingdom for South Africa with his wife and son, David, where he continued his spiritual healing. However, his reception in South Africa was quite different than in the United Kingdom. According to Dr David Lilley, the son of William Lilley, his father had had three court cases brought against him in South Africa. He was charged with practicing medicine unlawfully. He won his last case against the state; this became a precedent for professional homeopaths to practice their profession in South Africa without contravening the law (email between the author and David Lilley, February 2013).

Now, William Lilley's life and ministry would be truly remarkable up until this point, but there is still one absolutely phenomenal moment in modern mediumship yet to be told – that of the 'ectoplasmic humerus.' Before a large crowd of witnesses, many of whom wrote sworn statements to what they saw, an entranced William Lilley removed a diseased humerus bone from a patient and replaced it with ectoplasm which materialized into a new bone. Yet, this act of selfless service to his fellow man landed Lilley in court. William's son, Dr David Lilley in an email to the author writes:

"Desmond Jackson was the young man from whom the humerus was removed. The disease was tubercular osteomyelitis not cancer. The bone was indeed replaced by ectoplasm and was completely functional, enabling Desmond to participate in sports. The bone which was removed has been preserved and is still in my possession. Desmond and his mother appeared in defense of my father in the second of his court cases and testified in court regarding the remarkable healing. The records of the court proceedings are available. The case was reported in *The Pretoria News* and *The Star*. *The Psychic News* [London] carried a full page account of the healing in 1953. The references are listed in my book [Homeopathy: Healing the Soul]."

William Lilley's life and legacy continues to educate and inspire countless spiritual healers across the globe. Although Desmond's *The Gift of Healing: The Story of Lilley the Healer* is now out-of-print and a very difficult book to find, we are fortunate to await David Lilley's *Homeopathy: Healing the Soul* which will be available in November, 2013 through Saltire Books. The story of William Lilley should be known to, and studied by, every spiritual healer today.

### **Sources:**

Desmond, A. (1949). *The Gift of Healing: The Story of William Henry Lilley the Healer*. 6th Impress. London: Spiritualist Press.

Lilley, D. (Available November 2013). *Homeopathy: Healing the Soul*. Glasgow: Saltire Books.

Email between the author and Dr David Lilley, son of William Lilley, February, 2013.

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### **Paul J. Gaunt comments:**

Since the early days of the Spiritualist movement in this country, mediums were plagued by unfair, outdated laws that made it difficult to practice mediumship legally. The first mediums to fall under the hammer of such laws, were Henry Slade, shortly followed by Francis Ward Monck, known as Dr Monck. Both were charged in 1876 under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, with Monck serving a prison sentence. Within a few months in January 1877, the British National Association of Spiritualists (BNAS), under its President Mr Alexander Calder were the first of many to start the fight for a change in the law – the first Secretary of State to be contacted was the Right Honourable R. A. Cross who declined to receive a Deputation.

Later, in 1928 the Secretary of the London Spiritualist Alliance, Miss Mercy Phillimore, was charged with aiding and abetting a serving medium to the Alliance, Clair Cantlon under the Vagrancy Act. The case would cost the LSA over £800.00 in costs; Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle spoke for the defence at the Westminster Police Court. The magistrate neither convicted nor acquitted the women, a decision that amounted to finding them guilty, and dealt with them under the First Offenders' Act, whereby, although discharged, they were condemned to pay the costs of the case.

In 1944, Helen Duncan and her associates were charged and found guilty under the Witchcraft Act, 1735, the first Spiritualists to be charged under this act.

What is not so widely known is after Duncan's conviction, there was a case involving William Henry Lilley who was booked to give a trance address at a church in Altrincham, near Manchester. The meeting it is claimed, was banned under the Witchcraft Act – as the meeting constituted conjuration!

# **POLICE BAN A SPIRITUALIST MEETING**

## **IT WOULD BREAK THE WITCHCRAFT ACT!**

*Psychic News:—*<sup>9</sup>

THE police, for the first time, have banned a Spiritualist meeting in England. The reason for the ban is the Witchcraft Act.

Thus the menace to Spiritualism, which began with Helen Duncan's prosecution, has grown in a few months. From attacking mediums on the ground that they pretend to conjure up spirits, the offensive is now being launched against the whole Spiritualist movement.

The meeting was to be held next Sunday at Stamford Hall, Altrincham, near Manchester. It was to be a trance address by Dr Letari, spirit guide of W. H. Lilley, the famous healer. He was announced to speak through his medium on "The Science of Spiritual Healing."

On Sunday, June 4, 1944, Dr Letari, in the same hall, gave an address on "The Gift of Healing." Both meetings were promoted by the Ravenswood Spiritualist Society, Altrincham.

To advertise next Sunday's meeting posters were displayed on L.N.E.R. stations in the locality. These were almost identical with those announcing the meeting four months ago.

A few days ago, R. S. Corbett, secretary of the Ravenswood Spiritualist Society, was telephoned by Mr. Walker, advertising manager of the L.N.E.R., Manchester, who said he had received a letter from someone in Timperley, Cheshire, to say that the subject matter in the posters was of a controversial nature. He added that the writer mentioned that he had also informed Superintendent F. J. Morris of the Altrincham police.

### **POSTERS REMOVED**

The name of the writer was not disclosed by the advertising manager.

Corbett was told that, because of this communication, the railway company had removed the posters which had been displayed for some weeks.

The next move was that Corbett telephoned Superintendent Morris, referred to the message he had received from the railway official, and asked what action, if any, did the police propose to take.

The superintendent replied that he was going to take action, but he would not disclose its nature.

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<sup>9</sup>*Psychic News* October 7th 1944 – Front page.



Corbett reminded him that there had been no difficulty about the previous meeting, held on June 4. The superintendent answered that the meetings were not similar because the wording on the posters was different.

Actually, the only substantial difference are the subjects of the trance addresses and the disposal of the proceeds. The first meeting was “in aid of the Mayor’s Appeal for £500 to purchase Orthopaedic Operating Table and Binocular Microscope for Pathological Department of Altrincham General Hospital.”

## **CONJURATION!**

The October 8 meeting was in aid of the Altrincham General Hospital and the Ravenswood Spiritualist Society’s building fund.

Then came the staggering announcement by the superintendent that this meeting constituted conjuration! He also contended that money was being paid by those who attended the meeting.

Superintendent Morris told a Manchester newspaper: “Inquiries have been made and we find that if this meeting were held it would be illegal.”

The facts are, as stated in the announcements, that there were some reserved seats at 2s. 6d., otherwise admission would be free, with a silver collection.

Then Corbett received a telephone call from W. G. Bosworth, of the Altrincham Corporation, to whom the Stamford Hall belongs. As the meeting was to be held on a Sunday, permission for its use had to be obtained from the local magistrates.

Bosworth told Corbett that the Altrincham Corporation had decided to withdraw their permission to hold the meeting.

Then last Monday Bosworth telephoned again to read to Corbett this letter that was being sent by the Corporation:

“The town clerk has been informed this morning by the superintendent of the police that with reference to your application to the magistrates on August 28, 1944, for permission to open the Stamford Hall on Sunday, October 8, 1944, for the purpose of a lecture on Spiritualism, the court held at Altrincham today has cancelled their previous permission for the hall to be open on that date.

“I am, therefore, advising you officially that your booking of the Stamford Hall for October 8, 1944, has been cancelled as the corporation is quite unable to allow the hall to be used for any purpose on Sundays and certain other dates at times without the consent of the magistrates. I am enclosing a cheque for five guineas which you paid to the corporation in advance.”

## **ARREST EVERYBODY!**

The Ravenswood Spiritualist Society had decided to hold the meeting at their own premises, although naturally hundreds who expected to attend the large hall will have to be

disappointed. We advised Corbett to inform Superintendent Morris that the meeting would be held on their premises.

That throws the onus on the police of deciding whether to institute proceedings against the Spiritualist Society for pretending to exercise conjuration—the offence under the Witchcraft Act. The police would also have to decide whether they must arrest the medium, the officials of the society and, doubtless, the whole audience at the religious service!

The arrangements are being made for a large meeting in Altrincham to be addressed by Hannen Swaffer and Maurice Barbanell.

Now we are beginning to see the campaign against Spiritualism taking shape. You will remember that after Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, refused to see the deputation of Spiritualists who wanted the Vagrancy Act amended, he wrote that he could not introduce legislation in wartime which would meet the aspirations of Spiritualists and at the same time prevent fraud.<sup>10</sup>

He added: “I understand that it is the practice in some police forces in cases of this kind to institute proceedings only against persons whose activities have been the subject of complaint by members of the public, and where there is evidence that the person is an imposter and taking money or other valuable consideration.

“Although I have no power to issue any directions to the police as to the manner in which they should enforce the law, I have asked chief constables to consider the adoption of this practice in their forces.

“Further than this, I cannot go, but, if the practice I have described is generally adopted, persons *bona fide* engaged in the ministrations of the spiritualist churches and in psychical research should not find themselves hampered by the provisions of the law.”

The first fruits of his promise are that the police have banned a Spiritualist meeting where there is no suggestion that “the person is an imposter.” There has not been a breath of suspicion against Lilley, who has thousands of cures to his credit and who has frequently been consulted by the doctors when they had difficult cases.

When Sir Gerald Dodson, the Recorder at the Old Bailey, sentenced Helen Duncan, he said: “There is nothing in this prosecution directed against Spiritualism as such. In law there is no uncertainty at all about the position of Spiritualists, among whom there are many sincere and devoted persons. They are free to go their own way, and they are only responsible to the law when fraudulent practices are proved. In this respect they are no different from any other section of the community.”

Sir Gerald doubtless believed what he said, but events have proved him to be completely wrong. The Witchcraft Act is now being used to ban a Spiritualist meeting.

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<sup>10</sup> This is referring to the Spiritualists’ National Union deputation to the Home Office on July 27th 1943, the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison (1940-1945) was not in attendance, but was represented by the Under Secretary of State Mr Osbert Peake, M.P. See *Psypioneer* Volume 7 No 9 September 2011:—*Tom Brooks – Paul J. Gaunt & “M.P. for Spiritualism” passes on – The Two Worlds:—*  
<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.9September2011.pdf>

We said at the time of the Helen Duncan case that the invoking of the Witchcraft Act was the thin edge of the wedge. We foretold that other prosecutions would follow. We said that it constituted a grave menace to Spiritualism.

There are thousands of Spiritualists in the Services fighting for freedom, for the right to practise their religion. The action of the Altrincham police is a complete mockery of the Four Freedoms which President Roosevelt declared were our cardinal aims, and of the Atlantic Charter.

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This of course caused much concern within the Spiritualist movement. Questions were put to the Home Secretary, Herbert Morrison, by Dr. Sidney J. Peters, M.P., Thomas Brooks, M.P., Sir Ernest Bennett, M.P. and W. J. Brown, M.P. Sidney Peters was a well-known Spiritualist and psychic healer, Tom Brooks' input into the Spiritualist movement can be read in *Psypioneer* with comments from former SNU president Judith Seaman.<sup>11</sup> Peters and Brooks had been part of the SNU deputation to the Home Office on July 27th 1943; Morrison giving some tentative assurances to the SNU following the deputation:<sup>12</sup>

### **REPLY FROM THE HOME SECRETARY TO DR. SIDNEY J. PETERS, M.P.**

I have now given very careful consideration to the representations put forward by the deputation from the Spiritualists' National Union which was received by Mr. Peake on the 27th July.

As was recognised by the members of the deputation, there can be no question of introducing legislation in wartime to amend Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824. In any case I fear that it would prove extremely difficult to frame an amendment of the law which, while meeting the aspirations of spiritualists, would not open the door wide to frauds and grave abuses.

I have considered the suggestion that a committee should be appointed, consisting of representatives of the Home Office and of spiritualist and psychical research organisations, to consider this question, but I have come to the conclusion that the appointment of such a committee would not be an appropriate method of dealing with the problem.

I appreciate, however, the feelings of spiritualists on this subject, and I have made enquiries as to prosecutions under this Act. I understand that it is the practice in some police forces in cases of this kind to institute proceedings only against persons whose activities have been the subject of complaint by members of the public and where there is evidence that the person is an impostor and taking money or other valuable consideration. Although I have no power to issue any directions to the police as to the manner in which they should enforce the law, I have asked Chief Constables to consider the adoption of this practice in their forces. Further than this I cannot go, but, if the practice I have described is generally adopted persons bona fide engaged

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<sup>11</sup> Castleford National Spiritualist Church:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP7.9September2011.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Taken from the *Report of the Deputation*, published by the SNU, Manchester, 1944 page 16.

in the ministrations of the spiritualist churches and in psychical research should not find themselves hampered by the provisions of the law.

27th November, 1943.

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To make matters more unsettled, when Morrison was questioned at the House of Commons about the Altrincham affair, his replies were more like a joke causing laughter in the House. *Psychic News*' issue of November 4th 1944, opened with, "Herbert Morrison Treats our Demand for Religious Freedom as a Joke," and is published below:

## **Banned Meeting Causes Laughter In House**

HERBERT MORRISON, the Home Secretary, was in a needlessly truculent mood when he answered last week a question about the police ban on the Spiritualist meeting at Altrincham, where W. H. Lilley was to have given a trance address.

A question was asked by W. J. Brown (Rugby, Ind.) who knows a good deal about our subject. His wife is a leading figure at the South Croydon Spiritual Healing Centre.

Brown asked the Home Secretary whether his attention had been drawn to the action of the watch committee at Altrincham in banning a Spiritualist meeting, on the ground that the holding of it would violate the Witchcraft Act; and what steps he was taking to prevent the local police force denying freedom of worship to Spiritualists.

### **AGAINST PUBLIC INTEREST**

Morrison replied: "I have made inquiries and am informed that in August last, Altrincham town council agreed, subject to the consent of the justices, to let the Stamford Hall—which is owned by the corporation—for the purpose of a lecture on Spiritualism on the 8th October, and that the justices gave their consent to the opening of the hall on Sunday for this purpose.

"Subsequently posters were displayed in the district which indicated that at the meeting an address would be given at or about 3 p.m. by the spirit of a dead person, and that the audience would be invited to contribute to a collection. (Laughter.)

"The police received a letter from a member of the public suggesting that the organisers of the meeting would be guilty of an offence under the Witchcraft Act, 1735—(laughter)—and that in view of the grief and mourning caused by war casualties the meeting was most inadvisable in the public interest. (Cheers.)

"The police thought it right to bring the letter to the notice of the town council, who decided in the circumstances to cancel the agreement for the letting of the hall. It will be seen that there is no question of this meeting having been banned either by the watch committee—there is, in fact, no watch committee at Altrincham—or by the police."

## **PROTECTION FOR MINORITY**

Brown followed this reply with a supplementary: “Whether one agrees with the Spiritualist view or not, does not the Home Secretary recognise that séances are a normal feature of Spiritualist services? Are they not allowed to hold services on the ground that those services may be an offence against a 210-years-old Act?”

Brown asked whether the Home Secretary could protect this minority from this sort of thing?

To this Morrison replied: “I think I should be taking on a great responsibility if I undertook to say whether each particular meeting is to be held or not, or whether the owners of a hall are to let it or not.”

This led Alderman T. J. Brooks (Rothwell, Lab) to ask another supplementary: “Would it not be better if the police attended to the suppression of crime, and left the religious bodies to continue their work of educating the people on higher moral and spiritual standards; and, further, is not religious freedom one of the great principles for which the Allied Nations are fighting—”

Unfortunately, Brooks read his question instead of asking it spontaneously and this disregard of Parliamentary procedure brought cries of “Order” from M.P.s.

It is hard to understand why Morrison and some M.P.s should treat our demand for religious freedom, in the sixth year of war for world freedom, as a subject for laughter. Neither do we see anything humorous in the fact that a collection was to be taken after a trance address.

## **SON OF A POLICEMAN**

We are also puzzled by the fact that Morrison, with his long record as a champion of liberty, should take the side of a common informer who was undoubtedly actuated by sectarian malice—especially when there is no provision in the Witchcraft Act, as in the Vagrancy Act, for the police to take notice of common informers.

Though he is the son of a policeman, surely he cannot support the use of the police as agents of religious spite?

The all too common informers who have made their complaints under the Vagrancy Act have usually been religious bigots, wreaking their hatred on Spiritualism.

Last year, after Morrison had refused to receive the deputation from the Spiritualists’ National Union which called to complain about the way mediums were persecuted under the Vagrancy Act, he made a “concession.” He advised the police throughout the country not to institute proceedings unless the person was an imposter taking money. His advice, he said, would ensure that Spiritualists and psychic researchers were not hampered by the law.

## RELIC OF DARK AGES

Since then, matters have become far worse by the introduction of the Witchcraft Act, a medieval statute that makes all mediumship illegal.

Despite Morrison's statement, the police were responsible for stopping the meeting. As they correctly pointed out, it would contravene the Witchcraft Act. By informing the Altrincham town council that the meeting would be an offence under the Act, the councillors were left with no alternative but to cancel the agreement for the letting of the hall. Had they not done so, they might have been parties to a charge of conspiracy under the Witchcraft Act.

Thus, it is patently clear, the meeting was banned because of the police action. For Morrison to suggest otherwise is to assert that words do not have the normal meaning attached to them. Anyway, the newspapers regarded it as a banned meeting, for that is how it was described by the "Times," the "Manchester Guardian" and the "Daily Mail," to give three examples.

Besides, the organiser of the Altrincham meeting was told beforehand by the police superintendent that he was "going to take action."

There was no suggestion of Lilley being an imposter who was taking money. He is a famous psychic healer, with thousands of cures to his credit, who was given unconditional exemption from military service by a Manchester tribunal, provided he went on with his healing.

Morrison's "concession" is shown to be a worthless scrap of paper.

Is it for the common informer to decide that a Spiritualist meeting is "most inadvisable in the public interest in view of the grief and mourning caused by war casualties"?

Does Morrison share that view? Is that the Government's official attitude towards Spiritualism? If so, there is no need to wait for "complaints" from common informers. It would be quite simple to pass another wartime regulation similar to 18B and imprison every medium and close down every Spiritualist church.

But why is Clement Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, silent? He gave us a pledge in 1935 that he was "in favour of freeing Spiritualists from restrictions on their liberty, and of repealing obsolete Acts."

Spiritualism is the only religion which has a message for those who grieve and mourn because of war casualties. Spiritualism proves that the "dead" survive.

That the public interest, especially among the bereaved, is being served by Spiritualism is proved by the thousands who flock to our public meetings and by the crowded attendances at Spiritualist churches. Orthodox churches, which have no real message for mourners, complain of their steadily emptying pews.

If the Government, or Morrison, believe that the practice of Spiritualism is not in the public interest, then Air Chief Marshal Lord Dowding, though he won the battle of Britain and thus helped to save civilisation, must be put behind prison bars as an enemy of the State.

He has toured the country, telling tens of thousands that some of the pilots who “died” in the Battle of Britain have returned to him. He believes it is the public interest to spread this knowledge. And so do the hundreds of thousands of Spiritualists who, having been comforted in their bereavement, are determined that this knowledge of Survival shall be made available to the growing ranks of wartime mourners.

## **OUTSIDE ATLANTIC CHARTER**

Mediumship is the foundation of the Spiritualist religion. By applying the Witchcraft Act to mediumship—there were no mediums in Britain until more than a century after the Witchcraft Act became law!—Spiritualists are being denied the right to practice their religion.

They are being placed outside the scope of Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms and the Atlantic Charter. If Spiritualists are not to have the religious freedom we insist on giving to conquered Germans and Italians, then our war aims are a mockery.

Further questions about the banned meeting and its implications have yet to be answered by the Home Secretary. If he is as truculent in his replies as he was in the House of Commons last week, then it is a waste of time asking him to receive another Spiritualist deputation. It will mean that the Government’s declaration that the United Nations are fighting this war for freedom is just one more worthless pledge.

On the same day that Morrison, who is an agnostic, joked in the House about the banned meeting, the Primate of All England passed on. Once Dr. Temple said: “The test of democracy is not whether the majority prevails but whether the minority is tolerated.” We commend these words to the Home Secretary. Whatever his views on Spiritualism may be—and frankly that should not matter—he must be in favour of the right of every Spiritualist freely to practise his religion.

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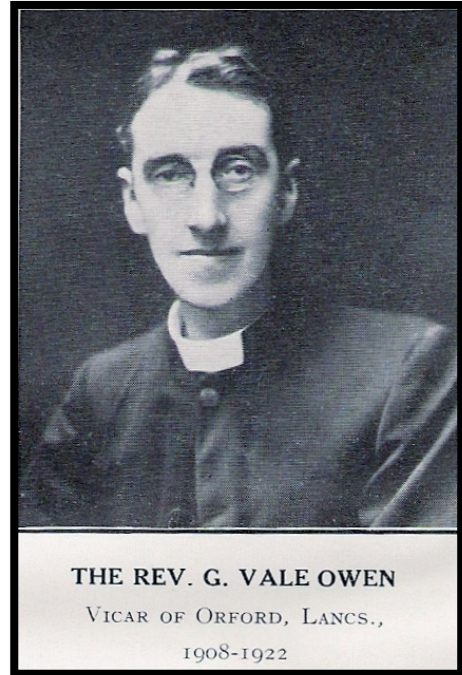
The long fight and campaign for legal freedom to practice Spiritualism within the law that began in 1876, would not be fulfilled until the passing of the Fraudulent Mediums Act in 1951.

Paul J. Gaunt.

# The Passing of the Rev. G. Vale Owen

*The National Spiritualist*.<sup>13</sup>

On Sunday, March 8th after a long illness, the Rev. George Vale Owen passed to the higher life at the comparatively early age of 61 years. By a strange coincidence he and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle made their last public platform appearance together at the Memorial Service in the Albert Hall, London, last year. They were great friends, each had travelled widely as Apostles of Spiritualism, and we may be sure that their passing out so soon after each other, that they will meet in joyful reunion, and maybe join forces for further joint efforts in the Cause they both loved so well.



Like other champions of Spiritualism, Mr. Vale Owen was not an easy convert. He tells us "it took a quarter of a century to convince me,—ten years that spirit communion was a fact, and fifteen that the fact was legitimate and good." Having come to a decision, he has been a faithful preacher of the new Gospel. He first preached on Spiritualism in his own parish Church at Orford, where he had laboured from the year 1900, until his resignation in 1922. That he should meet opposition from his fellow clergy was to be expected. His Bishop took the unusual step of coming to an adjoining parish to preach against Spiritualism. In such circumstances his resignation from his Church was inevitable,<sup>14</sup> though it is to be noted that he remained always a clergyman of the Church of England. With poignant memories of that struggle, Mr. Owen from his sick bed sent a message to the gathering of ministers who met at All Saints Church, Langham Place, London, recently to discuss Spiritualism. He warned his clerical brethren that if they pursued their enquiries it would mean dropping much of present day theological teaching. On the other hand it can hardly be doubted that he believed his mission in Spiritualism was to bring spiritualists nearer to the Church.

The most enduring monument to his work for Spiritualism will be the famous automatic scripts which first saw the light in the columns of the Weekly Dispatch beginning, Sunday February 1st and continuing weekly until September 26th, 1920. Their appearance created something of a sensation in the religious world. From some points of view it was a pity that this element of sensation was increased by the journalistic decision to publish them out of their chronological order of reception by Mr. Vale Owen. To many besides Spiritualists, this distortion of perspective detracted from the real value of the Scripts. In volume form the chronological sequence is restored, and the scripts are seen to proceed more naturally from simple messages from a mother in spirit trying to describe her new life to her son on earth,

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<sup>13</sup> *The National Spiritualist*, the first official journal of the Spiritualists' National Union. No. 82 Vol. VIII April, 1931, pages 56-57.

<sup>14</sup> Note by LP: The New Dictionary of National Biography entry for Vale Owen suggests he resigned to pursue other specifically psychic opportunities.



and onwards through other entities in an ascending scale of grandeur of description and teaching.

It is interesting to recall that the mother passed away in June 1909, and the scripts were begun some four years later, in September 1913. They came with irregular intervals during a period of five years and eight months, ending in April 1919. It is common knowledge that Mr. Vale Owen declined any monetary remuneration for the scripts, being ready to give freely the new message. In a responsive spirit of generosity, the late Lord Northcliffe caused the scripts to be published in French, Norwegian, Swedish, Danish, and Portuguese. It was also published in America. In this wide circulation the scripts can be truly said to have contributed to the awakening interest in Spiritualism throughout the world.

Apart from the mysticism and the Christology in which much of the message is enveloped and which probably owes its origin to the religious training of Mr. Vale Owen, there are many valuable hints of quiet homely character on the methods used by our spirit friends to communicate with those still on the earth life. One or two illustrations will reveal their helpfulness to the student who is interested in this practical aspect of developing mediumship. How far is the mind of the medium involved in the message? On this question the mother very aptly observes "Whatever we have been able to give you in these messages has been transmitted to you by means of impressing your mind with our thoughts and words. In doing this we take, and make use of, as much as we find there, so that we may the more easily get our own thoughts through." In other words a richly stored mind is no bar to the reception of a clear message. On the contrary, given the mediumistic faculty the contents and images of the well stored mind helps the perception and translation into the written or spoken word, of a more completely illuminating message.

Sometimes the one in spirit realises its own limited powers of description and has to depend on the superior powers of the medium. Thus the mother goes on to say "frequently we have been obliged of necessity to call your spirit away from the earth surroundings, and give you a vision of the place we are describing, and you have written down what you saw (vol. 1. p. 140). Again, "we are not over anxious to explain the methods we employ in the transmission of these messages, because we can only make you understand imperfectly." There surely is the key, not only to all the mysteries and wonders of these particular volumes, but of the description of spirit life by whomsoever attempted. They have passed out of this life and are in a new environment, and meeting entirely new conditions of existence and manifestation. In trying to make us understand their new life they are speaking to those still bounded by the old experience, and who thus can only dimly apprehend a little of what is being unfolded.

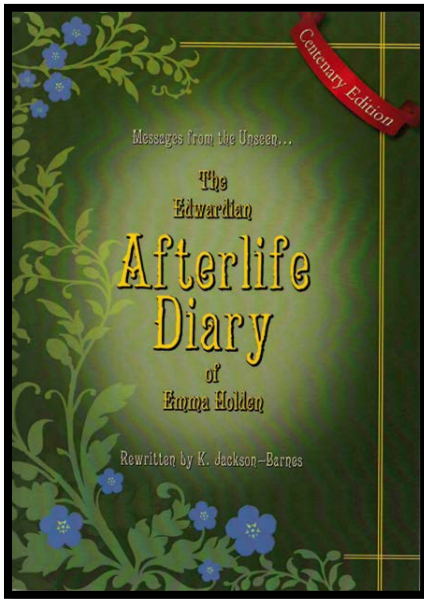
In the third volume, the communicating intelligence is not the mother, but by a spirit named Arnel. He deals more fully with the process of communications, but it is well to keep the reservation suggested in the mother's simpler explanation that so far as the earth dweller is concerned, "we can only understand imperfectly.

Says Arnel, "you will understand that the first grand necessity of communication is. . . that of a universal principle which bathes us all. . . . I speak of Spirit life and force and energy. . . . Secondly, as you proceed away from the earth upwards, there is no void between any two spheres. Each sphere as you progress is blended with the next kind of borderland nor is the borderline between two spheres a neutral land, it partakes of the qualities of both. There is therefore no void, but a real and continuous gradation all the way

. . . . then there is the method of continuous posting wherein those workers nearest you hand on messages and report to the spheres above, and they continue the operation until the message comes to its destination where it is appropriately dealt with. . . . Then there are those who have guides in the spheres for special work and guidance. These guides are not ever coming down to earth to be with their charges. They reach their charges by a kind of spirit telephony or telegraph. . . . sympathetic intercourse is continuous and sustained thereby, it is like the system of nerves between the body and the brain, it is always potentially operative whenever need arises of help to be given. . . .

GEO. F. BERRY, Dipl. S.N.U.

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## THE EDWARDIAN AFTERLIFE DIARY OF EMMA HOLDEN

K. Jackson –Barnes<sup>15</sup>

Edith Blackwell Holden,<sup>16</sup> (1871 - 1920) a well-known illustrator of children’s books, artist and teacher, made famous by the posthumous publication, in 1977, of her “Nature Notes for 1906” under the title *The Country Diary of an Edwardian Lady*. Behind the scenes there was a family secret, Edith and her sisters were Spirit Mediums who received messages from their mother Emma Holden. Their mother’s messages they received were published, written (anonymously) by Edith’s father Arthur Holden, as *Messages from the Unseen*. Author Karl Jackson-Barnes has updated and republished these communications under the title *The Edwardian Afterlife Diary of Emma Holden*.

On obtaining an original 1913 copy of the book, Karl remarks:

“As I flipped through the pages of the book, I found that most of the characters were identified only by their initials. There were a few place names and some first names, such as James, Effie and Arthur – but I discovered that “Mother” was actually named Emma. Then I spotted a surname – Holden. I had found my starting point!”

“I knew this book would interest some of my friends, but I wondered how it might be received, since the language was dated and some phrases were obsolete in the 21st century. I wanted to see the original in a clearer format, with all outdated words and sayings replaced with contemporary language, but it just wasn’t available to buy anywhere. So I made my decision and began to work on it myself.

“I took my worn original copy and manually scanned every page, then converted those images into a useful format. Using an 1845 dictionary and thesaurus, I then edited the entire book and 500 hours later, the first draft was complete...

“One year after receiving a parcel containing a frayed, 1913 copy of *Messages from the Unseen* – and being totally absorbed by it - the 2013 version is finished.”

It’s nicely researched with Karl Jackson-Barnes’ Research Notes retained in this new edition, illustrated with black and white photographs, indexed and contains the messages received from May 1904 – September 1909.

Paul J Gaunt.

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<sup>15</sup> Published by Psychic Book Club Publishing, contains 427 pages; including the Research Notes, Index, and Acknowledgements. Available at the Arthur Findlay College bookshop, the publishing site:—[www.psychicbookclub.com/books](http://www.psychicbookclub.com/books) Take a look inside the book option at Amazon UK:—<http://www.amazon.co.uk>

<sup>16</sup> Edith Blackwell Holden (1871 - 1920) see:—[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country\\_Diary\\_of\\_an\\_Edwardian\\_Lady](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_Diary_of_an_Edwardian_Lady) and also:—[http://philosopedia.org/index.php/Edith\\_Holden](http://philosopedia.org/index.php/Edith_Holden)

## Spirits of the Trade: Teleplasm, Ectoplasm, Psychoplasm, Ideoplasm<sup>17</sup>

**[Introductory Note:** The student of physical mediumship literature will quickly find there are a variety of terms for the same substance. On 17 February, Marc Demarest, on his blog “Chasing Down Emma” posted two illuminating comments about the origin of these words. He has kindly given permission for Psypioneer to publish below an edited version of his remarks. **LP]**

Let’s start with a snippet from A. Campbell Holms’ *The Fundamental Facts of Spiritualism* (Jamaica, NY: Occult Press, 1927, pp. 35-6), a book for which I have a soft spot, as Holms wrote it late in his life after years spent trying to make sense of Spiritualism:

It is not known exactly in what respect the organism of a medium differs from that of ordinary people, but it has been ascertained that the production of objective phenomena depends on their ability to emit a mysterious substance termed teleplasm, ectoplasm, psychoplasm or ideoplasm.

The fact that teleplasm is essential to the production of physical phenomena has long been known to spiritualists, for it was described in spirit communications as long ago as 1867 (see Kardec’s *Book of Mediums*, p. 91) and it has often been seen from that time to the present day. Recent experiments by eminent European scientists, working with exceptionally gifted mediums, have established its reality beyond dispute, for it has been observed at close quarters, handled and photographed by flashlight; and several scientific monographs have been written describing it in detail, with many photographs showing its various modes of manifestation, and the human-like forms it may assume.

The section of Kardec to which Holms refers is the communication from the spirit of St. Louis on the nature of the *perispirit*. I don’t know what precisely Holms is referring to (in the 1874 English edition, p. 91 is a bit off-point) but it may well be this (from pp. 87-8 of the 1874 Emma Wood English translation):

It has been said that the density of the perispirit, if one may so express it, varies according to the states of the world; it appears that it varies also in the same world according to individuals. Among the morally advanced spirits, it is more subtle, and approximates to that of the elevated spirits; among the inferior spirits, on the contrary, it approximates to matter, which is the reason these spirits of low state preserve so long the illusions of the terrestrial life; they think and act as if they were still living; they have the same desires, and we might almost say the same sensuality. This coarseness of the perispirit giving to it more affinity with matter, makes the inferior spirits more fitted for physical manifestations. It is for the same reason that a man of the world accustomed to the labor of intellect, whose body is frail and delicate, cannot carry a heavy burden like a porter. Matter, with him, is in a manner, as it were, less compact, the organs less resistant; he has less nervous fluid. The perispirit being to the spirit what the body is to the man, and its density being

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<sup>17</sup> Marc Demarest:—<http://ehbritten.blogspot.com.au/2013/02/spirits-of-trade-teleplasm-ectoplasm.html>

according to the degree of inferiority of the spirit, it takes the place of muscular force; that is to say, gives him, over the fluids necessary for manifestations, a greater power than those have whose nature is more ethereal. If an elevated spirit desires to produce such effects, he does what delicate people amongst us do; he has it done by a *spirit of the trade* [MD: emphasis original].

(For the moment, I have to walk past this metaphor, which is every bit as potent, revealing and damning as Freud's early use of *house* metaphors, complete with servants at the door, deciding what is admitted to consciousness. But we'll come back here some day).

These two snippets form the bookends of the problem at hand, as well as any might. From 1850 onward, we have various and sundry notions of a force (and the complex psychophysics behind that force) necessary to produce physical phenomena, from raps, tips and turns to (eventually) full-form spirit manifestations; from the 1870s onward, we have the (scientific?) motivation to separate this force from its controversial milieu and its (to many eyes, tawdry) productions (a motivation best expressed in the life and work of Serjeant Cox, I think), to name it, study it, bend it to the will of man, and the will of the market.

What might be said about the origin of word *ectoplasm*? This is the Richet coinage question. Did Charles Richet coin the term ectoplasm, and if so, when? The answer is usually "Yes in 1894". Often we're treated to a nice etymology in conjunction with the assertion.

Arguing about who first used a word – the first-use game – is largely a waste of time, particularly in a discipline where unique names for a common theoretical object allowed one to establish a commercial or academic precedence for one's self that translated into hard currency, or social currency (think, for example, about the number of -isms under which magnetic theory went, in the 1840s and after -- my favorite is Le Roy Sunderland's Pathetism. "No, no, it isn't magnetism –It's Pathetism. Only I have it, and it can be yours for three payments of...").

And we've known for quite some time -- nearly a hundred years -- that the canonical assertion "Richet coined the term *ectoplasm*" is false. Henry Holt, the publisher and Spiritualist, blew Richet's cover in an article entitled "A Review of Richet," which discusses Richet's *Traité Metapsychique*, in the *Journal of the ASPR* for 1922:

III. Ectoplasm On page 656 (of *Traité*) he [Richet] says that he devised (imaginé) the word ectoplasm. It was apparently an unconscious recollection -- and an unfortunate one. He has unwarrantably lifted the term from a permanent covering of certain protozoa on to an occasional exudation from the highest organism we know. Geley has suggested teleplasm, which fits in well with the rest of the teles and seems more suggestive than ecto. Richet defines his word as referring to "the formation of objects which in most cases seem to come out of the human body and take on the aspect of material reality (garments, veils, living bodies)." In this definition he leaves out the case of Crawford [MD: Crawford's "psychic rods," to explain telekinesis in the

Goligher circle, I believe]<sup>18</sup> and others where the exudation seems to serve as the vehicle for telekinesis, yet he often alludes to them elsewhere. M. Richet's absorption with ectoplasm leads him to say that ectoplasm is the basis of the whole subject of Metaphysics. Well, probably everything we know has a physical basis, nevertheless, it would seem rather queer to call Physics the basis of Metaphysics, and there are students of Metaphysics who will consider that placing ectoplasm at the bottom has not yielded as inspiring results from the Paris school as placing ostensible spirit communications -- or shall we say telepsychosis? -- at the bottom, as yielded from the London school. Such students will not find as much in this great book of Richet or in the great book of Schrenck-Notzing as they have found in the great book of [F. W. H.] Myers.

(In its multi-volume work on the Margery mediumship -- when I think of ectoplasm, I think of Mina Crandon. J. Malcolm Bird inserts a telling footnote, reading: "The original records of this period employ always the words ectoplasm, ectoplasmic. Inasmuch as the Society has abandoned this term, turning it over to orthodox biology in the interests of its long established use there in another connection, I have throughout substituted the newer and more expedient terminology." That newer and more expedient term: *teleplasm*).

Ah, well. This is why they call forgery **utterance**. Three minutes with Google books will suffice to convince anyone of the correctness of Henry Holt's point, and the incorrectness of his understanding of the prior use of ectoplasm, which was a term of art in microscopy and cell biology. [W. B. Carpenter](#) (yes, **our** W. B. Carpenter), used the term in **1881** in his book [The Microscope And Its Revelations](#).

Charles Richet did not coin the term *ectoplasm*; he traduced the term *ectoplasm* from cell biology, unconsciously or otherwise, while claiming the invention of the neologism in print. He was the first person, so far as we know, to use the term *ectoplasm* to describe the formation of the accouterment of materialization séances (the "garments, veils, living bodies" above).

OK, but we still have to give Richet his due for applying the term we use today to describe the gauze-, rubber- or jelly-like exudations from spirit mediums, right?

Nope. Richet used the term to explain **what it was** that Eusapia Palladino could produce (a phantasmal arm), not **what it was** that Mina Crandon exuded from her orifices.

I think we owe the broadening of the term *ectoplasm* to F. W. H. Myers, who used *ectoplasm* in his *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death* (1903) in that way:

Another and apparently more developed form of prolongation has been observed with Mr. Moses. These are phantom arms and hands, reproducing the arms of the medium, coat-sleeves, shirt-cuffs and all; and extended generally from the shoulder, straight out, and above the true arms. These supplementary or "counterpartal" arms (suspicious objects enough, until observed under good conditions) seem never to have been actually touched, but are swiftly retracted into the medium, or simply

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<sup>18</sup> Comment by Garth Willey: More likely Crawford's "psychic stuff" when referring to the substance itself, and as compared to "psychic energy"

vanish, if an attempt is made to grasp them. Nevertheless, the hands in which they terminate do appear to move objects.

Odd and unexpected as these phantasmal arms are, they are instructive in more than one respect. In the first place they supply in a certain way a missing link between mere phantasms and ectoplastic phenomena.<sup>19</sup> We know that as a rule phantasmal appearances exert no objective effect upon the material world; -- and we know also that to this rule there seem to be some few exceptions. It is through these shadowy, yet materially active, prolongations, -- collective hallucinations which yet can affect the solid world, -- that the line of continuity, if such there be, between purely subjective phantasm and firmly materialized hand or body may have to be drawn.

In the second place, these reproduced coat-sleeves stand apparently midway between two phenomena not obviously allied; -- viz., the appearance of dying persons as though draped in their habitual clothing, -- and the greater facility (attested by Mr. Moses' guides) of manufacturing a duplicate of some object already existing on earth, rather than a new and original object of their own devising.

Perhaps we may link the two by saying that everything which is not a purely earthly phenomenon must be for us mortals to some extent symbolical; and that the simplest form of symbolism depends on mere reminiscence; that this the line of least resistance for the **psychic force or telergic impulse** [MD: emphasis added] leads to the upbuilding of the ectoplastic fabric upon the basis of thoughts and images which are already fashioned and stored in the human spirit.

...In the classes of ectoplasms already enumerated, there has been at least an apparent continuous connection with the body of the sensitive; -- although, in the last mentioned case especially, that connection is of a very shadowy kind.

We now come to ectoplasms without apparent connection with the organism from which we still must suppose them in some way derived. Two incomplete forms of such isolated ectoplasm first present themselves; the one manifesting, so to say, definition without visibility; the other, visibility without definition.

As examples of a certain amount of definition without visibility, I take touches and imprints....

A commoner way in which the detached ectoplasm begins its development is with an appearance of cloud, or light, or luminous mist, surrounding some object which is presently moved, -- the stem of a flower broken, or a bell carried about the room. Such appearances, already mentioned under the heading of vital photogeny, are frequently recorded both with D. D. Home and with Mr. Moses....In describing these imperfectly aggregated ectoplasms we have already touched on the next class, that of quasi-organic detached ectoplasms. These are especially hands, sometimes with wrists or arms attached, but no with no mere shadowy or duplicated drapery, but a drapery which is their own, and for the time being is as tangible as themselves....These ectoplasms, moreover, when developed, may be recognisable; they may serve as indications of identity....Amongst these detached ectoplasms must

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<sup>19</sup> Comment by Garth Willey: Note Myers deliberately uses this word rather than 'ectoplastic'

be reckoned the phenomenon of “the direct voice.” Utterances may be referable to an ectoplasmic throat as distinctly as grip to ectoplasmic fingers; and may form of course an even higher manifestation, -- capable of manifesting more intelligence and giving more convincing indications of identity.... Nor is it desirable here to dwell at length upon the most advanced type of ectoplasm; -- when an apparently complete form seems to live for the time an independent life. This never occurred through Mr. Moses. Something like it occurred through D. D. Home several times; though the solidity of the form was not tested. No more, therefore, need here be said than that this complete development of the isolated and independent ectoplasm differs in no fundamental way from the types which we have already discussed.

It was Myers, I think, who takes Richet’s idea –labelled *ectoplasm*– and develops an entire model and vocabulary of ectoplasmicity, making variants of the term (noun, verb, adjective, to describe origin, manifestation and mechanism) stand both for the motive energy and the physical manifestations (and for a complete range of physical manifestations, as is obvious).

Myers, not Richet, made it possible for the term “ectoplasm” to be applied to the stuff that poured from mediums’ orifices, as it was just another of the phenomena in Myers’ typology (though whether “higher” than full-form manifestations, or not, I don’t know).

But Myers -- straddling -- also roots ectoplasm in both an energy, and in a collective hallucinatory experience shared by medium and sitters.

Now, for the other terms: *psychoplasm*, *teleplasm* and *ideoplasm*.

*Psychoplasm* is the oldest of the four terms we are looking at, I think, and its origin (according to W. T. Stead, anyway) is attributable to James Burns.

In *Borderland* for October of 1895, Stead writes a short piece called “Psychoplasm,” quoting Burns at length (though from what, he doesn’t say [see below] -- I am sure it’s somewhere in *The Medium & Daybreak*):

## “PSYCHOPLASM”

ONE of my correspondents in the United States sends me a copy of the *New York Sun* for August 18th, which contains an article on spirit pictures. After describing cases in which spirit photographs have been taken, the writer says:—

The connection between magnetic and spiritualistic phenomena has long been claimed. The photographer, the mediums say, has a guide, philosopher, and friend, a spirit-artist whose part it is to gather from the atmosphere certain rare and fine semi-luminous particles, of which he shapes a mask of the spirit sitter, much as a sculptor models in moist clay. This mask is then held up in such a fashion that the rays of it, invisible to everything but the sensitive plate, can imprint its image upon that surface. At least that is the explanation given to a New York Statesman by certain friends, who inform him that they have spent their mortal years upon the lost continent of Atlantis.



This bears a tolerable close resemblance to what “Julia” said as to making a mould by which these psychic pictures are procured. It is only in the adoption of the old doctrine of psychoplasm which is employed to explain the phenomena of spirit photography. Psychoplasm was explained by the late Mr. Burns in the Medium [& Daybreak?] as follows:—

Nature around us is a condensation into palpable forms of previously aerial and inscrutable forces. Man as an organic being is composed of these things. He holds them in suspension in his nervous system. We are all materialised spirits. The solid food we eat is condensed air. The life within us decomposes it again into gaseous form, rearranges its component elements, and uses the product to maintain the structure of the body, supply it with force, and the mind with means of feeling, thought, and expression. This fluid within man’s body is called *psychoplasm*, because it is so highly vitalized that the soul can mould it into organic form.

Burns didn’t originate the term; if he was the first traducer, and I can’t find a better candidate, Burns borrowed the term from (and this is a surprise) the dedicated anti-Spiritualist and theory of mind pioneer George Henry Lewes, who brought the term into currency in his 1874 work *Problems of Life and Mind*:

## PSYCHOSTATICS

6. Let us now pass from Life to Mind. The vital organism we have seen to be evolved from the Bioplasm, and we may now see how the psychical organism is evolved from what may be analogically called the Psychoplasm. The Bioplasm is characterised by a continuous and simultaneous movement of molecular composition and decomposition; and out of these arises the whole mechanism, which is also sustained and differentiated by them. If, instead of considering the whole vital organism, we consider solely its sensitive aspects, and confine ourselves to the Nervous System, we may represent the molecular movements of the Bioplasm by the neural tremors of the Psychoplasm: these tremors are what I term *neural units*: the raw material of Consciousness; the several *neural groups* formed by these units represent the organised elements of tissues, the tissues, and the combination of tissues into organs, and of organs into apparatus. The movements of the Bioplasm constitute Sensibility. The forces of the cosmical medium which are transformed in the physiological medium build up the organic structure, which in the various stages of its evolution reacts according to its statical conditions, themselves the results of preceding reactions. It is the same with what may be called the mental organism. ...

A couple of things worth noting about Stead’s note: he is **apparently unaware** of Richet’s use of the term *ectoplasm* (and Stead is very well read) -- what is current in the scientific literature on psychic phenomena is not, necessarily, current in the popular literature on psychic phenomena, because one of the effects of the professionalization of investigation by the SPR and later organizations is: a separation of what had theretofore been a unitary discourse, into two discourses, one more accessible than the other.

Also, we need to be clear that Burns is using *psychoplasm* to clothe the old-as-the-movement magnetic fluid theory of manifestations.

*Teleplasm* appears to belong, if to anyone, to von Schrenck Notzing (although he also appears to have traduced his term, this time from [pathology](#)) and Morelli uses “teleplasmic” in passing in *The Annals of Psychological Science* in 1908). In his *Phenomena of Materialization* (1914, in Fournier d’Albe’s English translation, 1920) VSN uses the term as follows:

...we may suppose that soft substances, such as the flowing dress of the medium, curtains hanging near, etc., can be of some advantage, and **may form conductors** [MD: emphasis mine] and reservoirs of power, from which the effects may take their origin, besides giving points of support for the materialized structures. Both for the materials of the furnishings of the cabinet, as well as for the dress of the medium (for which knitted fabrics are preferable), a black colour is to be recommended. For with a black background even the finest, hardly visible materialized fabrics can be seen. Besides, this colour increases the darkness of the cabinet, and thus contributes indirectly to the development of the phenomena. If care is taken that the medium has nothing white about her, the materialization structures, appearing grey or white on a black background, are very convincing. Thus darkness behind these structures appears to be a necessity for the development of the teleplasm. Yet these thoughts, which are the product of uniform observation of various mediums, are not to be a rigid rule, but only a hint. All observations made by the author concerning mediums agree in this, that a white light has a hindering and disturbing effect on the phenomena, and an unfavorable action on the development of the teleplasm.

Elsewhere, von Schrenck Notzing is a little more specific about what he means by *teleplasm*, calling it “the fundamental substance of materialization” and that’s consistent with his working model of the origin and energy involved in the production of phenomena, which is the old magnetic fluid/conductive model, like that of Burns and the classical pre-SPR Spiritualist hypothesis more generally.

(It’s worth noting that von Schrenck Notzing describes sittings with Eva C. in which sitters convince Eva C. to produce what we might call ectoplasm from the orifices of her naked body; “At the beginning of the sitting Mme. Bisson persuaded the hypnotised medium to open the dressing-gown, and thus had, for the first time, an occasion to observe the emanation of the teleplasm from the bare body of the medium. It seemed to emerge primarily from the bodily orifices, mouth, teats, and genitals, and also from the hands and under the arm-pits. The emanation had a smoke-like or gaseous character, and formed clouds, from which structures, like veils and fabrics, and eventually all kinds of forms, resembling human limbs, developed.”)

Von Schrenck Notzing does not use either *ectoplasm* or *psychoplasm* but does use *ideoplasm* to refer to produced objects “closely connected with the psychic life of the medium, with her storage of memories, and with the intensity of dominant ideas.”

*Ideoplasm* seems to have been used, first, by Ochorowicz, in an article entitled “A New Mediumistic Phenomenon”, in *The Annals of Psychological Science* for 1909. He writes:

It is possible to create, between the medium’s hands, a sort of thread, possessing for some minutes a certain consistency, which diminishes and disappears with the putting apart of the hands. The formation of the mediumistic thread is accompanied by a sensation of chill. This thread, created by the unconscious imagination of the

medium, seems to present a case of objective material ideoplasm: the strong desire to raise a small object at a distance, brings by association the idea of a thread which would do this.

Doyle, who preferred the term *psychoplasm* I think, credited Geley with the coinage of *ideoplasm*, and Geley does use and define the term (“Ideoplastic=moulded by an idea”) in his *From the Unconscious to the Conscious* (1918, 1920), wherein he also distinguishes it from *teleplasm*: “That word is ‘ideoplasticity,’ to which has been added ‘teleplasticity’ to describe the same phenomenon when occurring at a distance from the decentralized or dematerialised organism”. And Geley makes ideoplasticity a force that arises “from the depths of a mysterious and impenetrable unconsciousness,” as well as the basis not only for psychic phenomena like materialization, but related phenomena like mental healing, and even mimetic phenomena in nature (chameleons unconsciously want to be green, or red, or mottled, and so they are). When Geley uses the word “ectoplasm” which he rarely does, he means only “a thing formed: the exteriorised substance” **which may in fact be the origin of our contemporary use of the term.**

The term “ideoplasm” doesn’t show up very often in the literature; but the term “ideoplastic” occurs about an order of magnitude more often in my databases than does “ideoplasm” “Ideoplastic” means just about what Myers meant by “ectoplastic,” as this snippet from Hamlin Garland’s *The Shadow World* (1908) demonstrates:

“The question with me is not, Do these forms exist? but, What produces them? I am describing this sitting to explain what I mean by the ideoplastic or teleplastic theory. If, for example, this psychic had known me well enough to have had a very definite picture of ‘E. A.,” he might have been able to model from the mind-stuff that he or the circle had thrown off, a luminous image of my friend, and aided by my subconscious self, might have united the presence and the musical thought of Ernest Alexander.”

“It won’t do!” exclaimed Miller. “It’s all too destructive, too preposterous!”

“I insist that the spirit hypothesis is simpler,” repeated Fowler.

“It isn’t a question of simplicity,” I retorted. “It’s a question of fact. If the observations of scientific experimentalists are of any value, the teleplastic theory is on the point of winning acceptance.”

Which brings us full circle, I think. Holms saw the four terms as interchangeable, from his amateur’s seat, and focused on a description of the “mysterious substance” that was related to mediumistic power.

Although Richet may have first used the term *ectoplasm* to refer to some aspect (energy source, mechanisms or products) of psychic manifestation, it was a term he borrowed from cell biology and microscopy; his borrowing was known and documented early on, and at least some scientific researchers in the field eschewed the term because of the borrowing, in favor of von Schrenck Notzing’s *steleplasm*, which described **objective physical phenomena**, and not source of energy or mechanism of production. F. W. H. Myers is really to be credited, either for elaborating the term *ectoplasm* or obscuring it, depending on your perspective, in *Human Personality*, but despite Myer’s elaborate superstructure, and comingling of source,

mechanism and effects, the term *ectoplasm* competed for years with *teleplasm* and to a lesser extent *ideoplasm*, none of which were used very precisely by anyone, including the best scientific minds working on the problem at any given time.

But none of this really matters, because in late 1919, the term **ectoplasm**, regardless of its history as a term of art in scientific investigations of Spiritualism, becomes (thanks largely to Conan Doyle's proselytizing) a part of the vocabulary of the secular culture, identifying the materiel coming out of mediums' orifices, forming physical objects, and moving things in the séance room.

We can't get away from it, though we can try. In order to have a coherent and internally-consistent (never mind correct and testable) theory of physical manifestations, we have to have (a) a source of energy, (b) a mechanism for (dare I say it?) transmutation of that energy via the medium (who is the primal, fixed element of the model, though Myers would like it to be otherwise), and (c) a way of explaining the resulting physicality of the manifestations as a result of that...transmutation. And no one I have looked at, to date, **ever produced such a theory** (coherent and internally consistent, that is) without recourse, ultimately, to an unknown input variable, or a prior model (some form of magnetism, usually). Some people tried for coherency and consistency -- I think of Serjeant Cox again -- but many picked a force from here, and a mechanism-of-transmutation from there: add bad chemistry to odylic force, pass it through one ductless organ of the body or other, and get apportation. Most (including several of the august scientific names I've invoked herein) became ensnared by the manifestations, which were...wonderful and mysterious to behold, to the exclusion of both completeness and coherency.

But if we don't adopt Myers' model, if we say that there is a fundamental difference between **communicative** manifestations (Mrs. Hayden facilitating Dr. Ashburner's communication with his departed father) and **demonstrative** communications (a sitter, touched by a spirit hand during a Davenport Brothers' cabinet séance) that offer themselves as proof of spirit life, but do not carry any substantive informational content, then we have to account for the development of demonstrative manifestations as a distinct class of manifestations.

There are a lot of different kinds of **demonstrative** manifestations, and indeed if we wind our way back to Rochester, the first knocks in the Fox household were purely demonstrative: it took some number of minutes, hours or days for them to become communicative, and initially only crudely so. The same can be said of early table tipping (which was initially demonstrative of a mysterious force, but communicated no information), and for pendulum diversion, and for hat and table turning (which latter three were never translated from demonstrative manifestations into communicative ones, as far as I know, although I think my planchette-collecting colleagues have evidence of talking boards that used pendula).

In any case, I'd argue that in the main demonstrative manifestations of the sort we are really interested -- large-scale movement of objects, apportation, direct voice, partial - and full-form materialization of spirit bodies -- required a precursor development in the repertoire of Spiritualism: the dark séance. That's an innovation that belongs, if it belongs to anyone, to Jonathan Koons, of Ohio,: it dates to 1853 (the first time we find Koons

acknowledging that he does it in the dark), if not earlier, and it's a commonly understood and available part of the repertoire by 1856.

Koons' dark séances included direct-voice manifestations, movement of objects and the playing of musical instruments, but only limited form manifestations

I am aware The Davenport Brothers get, I think, credit for melding the cabinet with the dark séance, and you could argue with some backing that they are also the first mediums to produce partial-form manifestations.

In P. B. Randolph's history of the Davenport Brothers, he has them producing partial form materializations in private séances in their home (or in Ira Davenport Sr.'s Spirit Hall -- it isn't clear) well prior to their adoption of the cabinet:

Presently the boys were lifted and carried from the table to the windows, and held up in front of one of them, clear of the floor. "We distinctly saw," says an eye-witness of the thrilling scene, "two gigantic hands, attached to about three-fifths of a monster arm; and those hands grasped the ankles of the two boys, like an iron vice, and they thus held the lads, heels up and head downward, before the window, now raising, now lowering them, till their heads bade fair to make acquaintance with the carpet on the floor, they all the while yelling like so many young elves, not from any pain they were undergoing, but from the novel and quite undignified position occupied for the time being."

If we define "partial-form materialization" to mean "a hand, arm, face, leg or other body part, seen in the séance by sitters" (not felt or sensed, but seen) and "full-form materialization" to mean "a complete human form, in three dimensions, seen in the séance by sitters," (not felt or sensed but seen) then I think we have several candidates for "first production".

The earliest dated eyewitness instance of partial-form materialization that I have found concerns the Davenport Boys (not yet Brothers), at whose séance of mid-September 1857 spirit hands were seen outside their cabinet, according to a letter in *The Banner of Light* of October 3, 1857.

For full-form materializations, the matter is a bit trickier. In May of 1876, in *The Banner of Light*, we find:

At last, as a crowning evidence of spirit action, the fully materialized form, hitherto a rare occurrence, has been revealed to us and made common in a way to satisfy the senses and common sense of every patient, clear-headed, persevering investigator. This phenomena is but the legitimate sequel to the spirit hand, so common ever since the modern phenomena began. If a hand can be materialized, why not an arm? And if an arm, why not a face? and if a face, why not the whole person? and if a whole person, why not appropriate clothing for the person? Obviously, the first phenomenon involves and implies the possibility of the larger and more complex; and what we inferred might, and ought to take place, has taken place. The phenomenon of the full-form materialization -- however skeptics may rail and rave, and however some half-way Spiritualists may sneer and carp -- is not a fact just as well established as the minor marvel of the spirit hand.

OK, done and dusted. But how did we get to the “established fact”? Emma first wrote about full-form materializations in *The Banner of Light*, in her series “Spiritual Gifts,” in October of 1875. William and Horatio Eddy were demonstrating the phenomena in May of 1874, and perhaps earlier. Annie Fairlamb (Mellon) and Catherine Elizabeth Wood, working together and apart, in England, are also producing full-form materializations in 1874, I think. Testimony at the London Dialectical Society hearings in 1873 discussed full-form materializations, as did James Burns when he debated Charles Bradlaugh in 1873. And Florence Cook had been caught by Volckman outside the cabinet, masquerading as Katie King, in December of 1873; Katie had been appearing at Cook’s séances since April of 1872, although in partial form more often than not.

It may be suggested that first medium to present full-form manifestations was Florence Cook, sometime in late 1872 or 1873.

I have not yet found any earlier eyewitness accounts. But that’s a provisional answer, and I expect one or more readers to correct me.<sup>20</sup>

There’s a big problem, of course, with trying to do this kind of time-lining. Because of the significant -- dominating, I’d say -- value placed on partial- and full-form materializations in the 1870s and after, many mediums whose operating heyday was earlier, but whose “life and experiences” were published later (by themselves or others) claimed -- ex post facto as it were -- that partial- - or full-form materializations had been produced in their presence. As such, we have to discount everything we read in a text like P. B. Randolph’s book on the Davenports, and prejudicially favor claims made in periodical literature, where the accounts follow hard on witnesses’ experience of the manifestations. This will infuriate people who want to give precedence to earlier mediums’ work – for example D. D. Home.

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<sup>20</sup> “We are grateful to Lis Warwood who in particular drew our attention to referring to your article. Pyspioneer Volume 6, No 11: November 2010 “The Beginnings of Full Form Materialisations”

## BOOKS WE HAVE REVIEWED

*If you have any problems locating a copy we can contact the author*

**An Extraordinary Journey:—The Memoirs of a Physical Medium**, by Stewart Alexander, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England, 2010. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9557050-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 294-296:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP6.11November2010.pdf>

**Helen Duncan The Mystery Show Trial**, by Robert Hartley published by H Pr (Publishing), London 2007. Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9553420-8-0. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 244-247:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.11November07..pdf>

**Aquarian Evangelist: The Age of Aquarius as It Dawned in the Mind of Levi Dowling**, by John Benedict Buescher Theosophical History Volume XI available at:—then—Occasional Papers. Psypioneer references by Leslie Price page 7:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08.pdf>

**Dead Men's Embers**, by Gerald O'Hara, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2006. Large Paperback ISBN:—978-0-9514534-6-9, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 1-2:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP3.1January07..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift' - a Celebration of 75 Years of the Edinburgh College of Parapsychology formerly Edinburgh Psychic College & Library**, by Gerald O'Hara & Ann Harrison, published by Saturday Night Press Publications, England 2007. Paperback ISBN: 978-0-951-4534-9-0, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 1-4:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP4.1January08..pdf>

**Mrs Miller's Gift CD:—Helen Duncan Séance, Ernest Oaten and Harry Edwards**, Written and produced by Gerald O'Hara B.Sc. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 106-107:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.4April09.pdf>

**The Indescribable Phenomena – The Life and Mysteries of Anna Eva Fay**, by Barry H. Wiley published by Hermetic Press, Inc., Seattle Washington 2005. ISBN: 0-945296-50-9, available at:—[http://www.hermeticpress.com/product\\_info.php?products\\_id=45](http://www.hermeticpress.com/product_info.php?products_id=45)Psypioneer references by Leslie Price pages 39-42:—<http://www.woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.2February09.pdf>

**Immortal Longings – FWH Myers and the Victorian Search for Life After Death**, by Trevor Hamilton published by Imprint Academic in Exeter, U.K (also VA, U.S.A) 2009. ISBN: 9-781845- 401238 H.B, 9-781845-402488 PB, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Leslie Price pages 157-148:—<http://woodlandway.org/PDF/PP5.6June09.pdf>

**Talking to the Dead – Kate and Maggie Fox and the Rise of Spiritualism**, by Barbara Weisberg published by HarperSanFrancisco New York 2004. Hardback ISBN: 0-06-056667-1, available at Amazon. Psypioneer review, by Paul J. Gaunt pages 9-10:—[http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie\\_Price\\_PP2.pdf](http://woodlandway.org/PDF/Leslie_Price_PP2.pdf)

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