

such a rude expression as 'mindless' if the seemingly dull behavior of apparitions is equally explicable by the severe limitations in their capacity to manifest themselves and communicate in our particular space-time reality.

MacKenzie also takes a forward look. His last chapter contains many useful hints about what more could be done, not only concerning the nitty-gritty of specific research techniques, but also the broad outlook:

When I first started writing about apparitions I made the mistake of studying them in isolation, rather than as a part of the structure of psychological research as a whole. Through reading the works of G. N. M. Tyrrell, and talking over the subject with Rosalind Heywood, particularly during the last year of her life, my outlook gradually changed. I eventually realized that instead of asking, 'What is an apparition?' I should be asking, 'What is man?' It was as if we were discussing the nature of shadows instead of the nature of who or what casts the shadow. (p. 224)

What a wonderful contrast to the reductionists! Because of this outlook, this book evidences no compulsion to grind everything down to ESP-PK or nothingness, although it does maintain a critical and careful approach.

In conclusion, *Hauntings and Apparitions* is a well-tempered overview of the incomparable magnitude and quality of the Society's work. I congratulate all who helped organize the publication of this series: with this first volume, the Society has indeed put its best foot forward.

KARLIS OSIS

*Chester F. Carlson Research Laboratory
American Society for Psychological Research
5 West 73rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10023*

THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH: A HISTORY 1882-1982. By Renée Haynes. Macdonald, London, 1982. 240 pp. £7.95.

The title of this book may mislead. One could imagine a history of the Society that would trace its changing fortunes down the years and discuss such questions as why it suffered a decline in prestige since its heyday before the First World War. Whether such a book would command much of a sale is another matter, but it would be a history of the Society. The closest that the present volumes comes to that is its lengthy appendix of some fifty odd pages which consists of brief biographies of each of the successive presidents. Otherwise, what we have here is a history of psychical research in this country which is a history of the Society only in the sense in which a history of British science could be called a history of the Royal Society, on the grounds that every major protagonist either was or in due course became a Fellow of that august body.

Even the word 'history' may suggest something rather more ponderous than is the case. Perhaps it could best be described, in the author's own fine figure of speech, as 'scampering up and down the stairs of time'. What we get, in effect, is an account of some of the more colourful episodes from the annals of psychical research as seen from a very personal point of view. I say this because the author makes no attempt to conceal her own strong likes and dislikes which she

expresses in her characteristically crisp and forceful style. It soon becomes clear, for example, that her real interests lie with the manifestations of the paranormal in people's lives. She can muster little enthusiasm for that whole experimental-statistical-laboratory approach that came in with J. B. Rhine and she is particularly scornful of those who cannot express themselves in plain English but take refuge in an abstruse technical vocabulary.

One of the author's more endearing traits is her sense of humour and she resolutely refuses to treat psychical research with the solemnity that it sometimes evokes. It was once said about Eleanor Sidgwick (as we learn here) by her good friend Helen Verrall (Mrs. W. H. Salter): 'I never remember hearing her make anything that could be called a joke'. Of Renée Haynes it might well be said that she never stops joking. There is an endless stream of funny stories, sharp witticisms, comic asides and so forth. Among her many felicitous expressions, my own favourite is her 'boggle threshold'. It is so apt that one wonders how we could ever have managed without it.

But a sense of humour has its dangers and my one serious complaint is the author's unwillingness to try and understand the sceptic's point of view. I suspect that she regards sceptics as a tiresome and rather silly breed of person whom we have to put up with but whom we need not take too seriously. One of the topics she discusses in a lively chapter entitled 'Fact, Fraud and Furor Scholasticus' is the notorious Soal affair. She cannot believe that Soal could have been guilty of deliberate deception and resents bitterly the posthumous analyses of his data that appears to point to this conclusion. 'He was tried by computer and found guilty of fraud' is how she puts it. Now, admittedly, fraud was utterly out of character and the mystery of why he did it or even how he did it still remains. Nevertheless, the late George Medhurst was passionately concerned to get at the truth and earnestly hoped, as did Betty Markwick who followed him, that his analysis would serve to exonerate Soal. In the event, the evidence went the other way with the result that Soal's reputation was destroyed—irrevocably, as far as one can ever tell. Considering that Dr. Soal was a former president of the Society and was, internationally, perhaps the best known experimental parapsychologist which this country has yet produced, his débâcle was nothing less than a catastrophe for the Society and a disaster for the cause of psychical research everywhere. To try, at this late stage, to gloss over these facts with a few gibes about computers is simply frivolous. Of course, if we now had independent evidence that either Basil Shackleton or Gloria Stewart were capable of scoring when Soal was not involved, the situation today would look quite different. But we have no such evidence and the moral that we should draw from this wretched business is that if one finds an outstanding subject never monopolize him or her otherwise one is bound to incur suspicion. If, despite everything, Soal was innocent he could be said to have brought about his own downfall.

A number of small but irritating errors have unfortunately crept into the text. I shall give three examples. Two books by the late Robert Crookall are here attributed to Richard Sheargold. The Île Roubaud, famous as the place where Richet investigated Palladino, is mentioned twice appearing the first time as 'Rouband' and the second time as 'Rombaut'. It was not Francis of Assisi who is known to history as the 'angelic doctor' but Thomas Aquinas (a curious mistake on the part of someone of the author's persuasion). But these are minor

blemishes and do not detract from the author's achievement in carrying through a daunting task with skill and bravura. The result is a fitting tribute to the Society which she served so long and faithfully as its editor and a timely contribution to its centenary year. I certainly learnt a lot from reading this book and I would recommend every member of the Society to acquire a copy.

JOHN BELOFF

Dept. of Psychology
University of Edinburgh
George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9JZ

PSYCHOKINESIS: A STUDY OF PARANORMAL FORCES THROUGH THE AGES. By John L. Randall. Souvenir Press, London, 1982. 256 pp. £8.95.

This scholarly review of historical and contemporary accounts of paranormal physical phenomena makes up for the relative neglect of this branch of the subject in many popular books about psychical research, which prefer to concentrate on the better known and more respectable-seeming evidence for ESP. Few readers will remain unimpressed by the persistence and frequency of the apparently well-evidenced claims here described. They can no longer be dismissed as unworthy of serious consideration.

Randall blames critics for taking on trust unreliable accounts by prejudiced sceptics. The unjustified credence given to a rumour about fraudulent collusion between the medium Florence Cook and William Crookes has distracted attention from Crookes' more important observations on D. D. Home. Failure to check the misguided criticisms put about by members of the Seybert Commission has led to an unfairly dismissive attitude towards the work of Zöllner with the medium Slade.

If sceptics often overstate their case, Randall also lays himself open now and then to criticism for putting an unduly optimistic gloss on claims by omitting embarrassing details or exaggerating the authoritativeness of witnesses. The references to Geller's willingness to be investigated (p. 169) hardly tallies with the experiences of SPR representatives who found him tantalisingly elusive. Those of us who have ever tried to collaborate with professional psychics such as Matthew Manning know the difficulties of trying to pin them down to an experimental protocol. Dr. Puharich is cited (p. 166) as a (presumably serious) parapsychologist who investigated Geller, but the book¹ he wrote about the experiences he allegedly shared with Geller, which is largely devoted to tape recorded communications from extra-terrestrial beings and encounters with UFOs, receives no mention at all. I am quoted (p. 147) as a 'psychiatrist and criminologist' commenting favourably on the evidence for PK, although I was in fact a medical student at the time the statement was written. The trial of the medium Helen Duncan is briefly mentioned (p. 155) with the comment that Harry Price, later accused of faking, was a witness for the prosecution, but no indication is given that his evidence formed a very small part of the case against her. The extraordinary description of a second long, two foot levitation from a crossed leg position by a Nepalese orderly, taken from the *SPR Journal*, May 1951, is quoted without reference to the long editorial discussion of the alleged jumping feats of Tibetan lamas.

¹ Andrija Puharich, *URI: The Original and Authorised Biography* (London, W. H. Allen, 1974).

The reasons why so much of the evidence that the author finds impressive fails to carry general conviction is not explored as fully as one might wish. He admits that the 'shyness' of the phenomena, the seeming abhorrence of set tests and performances to order, provides much ammunition for critics. He does not, however, emphasise nearly enough another important feature, the high incidence of fraud. Most of the mediums of the past who have produced effects that interested serious investigators were at some point found cheating. That does not prove they were always cheats, but the situation is different from ESP research where relatively few subjects have been known cheats. Then again, telekinesis has often been alleged to occur in combination with other more dubious effects, such as materialisations, about which Randall himself has doubts (p. 195), or 'direct voice'. In the last resort, however, what seems dubious among different but equally inexplicable phenomena is largely a matter of taste. The floating saints in Chapter Four happen to arouse this reviewer's incredulity, as they did that of the otherwise favourably disposed writer Aldous Huxley in the case of the levitations at Loudun.

Another difficulty with the evidence is that readers can never be quite sure that published accounts tell the full story. The performances of successful illusionists cease to seem remarkable once all the details are known. The Borley Rectory haunt, already suspect among well-informed investigators at the time, became much less impressive to the world at large when revelations about Price's unreliability were published after his death. Randall's postscript, in which he commends the phenomena produced in the (fish tank) minilab at Rolla, Missouri, is something of an embarrassment in view of the criticisms of that work presently under discussion.

Passive observations of spontaneous marvels are unlikely ever to yield substantial increases in knowledge. Replicability, and the understanding of the processes at work which should follow, is what is conspicuously lacking. Randall appreciates this and praises Hasted's use of the techniques of experimental science—'the only procedures which are likely to advance our knowledge'. He also wisely expresses reservations about phenomena he considers as yet 'unconfirmed', among which he includes animal PK, a topic on which he is a particular expert (p. 151). In the end, what Randall, or this reviewer, or anyone else is at the moment prepared to believe or disbelieve is of no particular consequence. The need is not for belief, but for further research, without which we shall all remain none the wiser.

The closing chapters present an original and lucid analysis of the possibilities of accommodating psi phenomena within the scope of modern theoretical physics. It is no mean tribute to the author's powers of exposition that this lay reviewer experienced a temporary illusion of understanding. On one point at least this important book carried complete conviction, namely the conclusion that the universe is more wonderful and mysterious than our senses are equipped to grasp. It seems no longer possible to rule out on *a priori* grounds the existence of any phenomenon, however miraculous.

D. J. WEST

32 Fen Road
Milton
Cambridge CB4 4AD