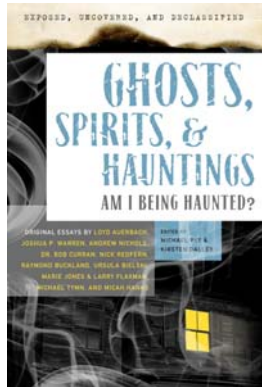


GHOSTS, SPIRITS & HAUNTINGS

By Dr. Robert Curran

BOOK SUMMARY

Who's That Knocking? – The Problems with Poltergeists



Imagine you're in a room which is lit not by electricity but by lamp or candlelight. It's night and you're settling down in front of the fire. Suddenly from somewhere in the room there's a low, echoing knocking, like someone rapping their knuckles on a plank of wood. The coals move on the open fire, one falls onto the hearth, and gradually the light starts to move, the lamp or candle rising from its place as if lifted by an unseen hand. Or imagine that you're alone working late in the office with all the lights on. Suddenly, the phone rings but when you lift the receiver there's nobody there. No sound at all. Then several of the filing cabinet drawers open and close of their own volition whilst in a corner, the photocopier suddenly springs to life. From somewhere beyond the office door comes a faint, hollow, knocking sound. And overhead, the lights slowly start to go out one by one.

Different scenarios but the same type of ghost. Over the years, from lonely candlelit rooms to bustling modern offices, the poltergeist has followed humans wherever they are. It has rattled windows, moved things around and put out candles and lamps, it has made its presence known by shaking and breaking things and throwing items around or by just being a nuisance.

But what is a poltergeist? The word itself comes from two German words – *poltern* <meaning to rumble or make noise> and *geist* <meaning spirit> - in other words, a noisy ghost. But is it a ghost – the spirit of a dead person – or is it something else? Is it perhaps the physical manifestation of some form of energy that we don't quite understand yet, an energy which is potentially destructive and undirected? And there's a further consideration for the poltergeist often does not seem to obviously haunt a *place* but rather a *person*, specifically younger people. In many cases, it seems to attach itself to young girls who are entering puberty or who is perhaps experiencing some sort of emotional problems. So is something connected with that period in a young female's life? Some sort of subconscious activity which shows itself in strange and volatile activity? Nor does it seem to remain attached to the person for long and as soon as they approach a certain age it disappears. So is it really a *ghost*?

And yet there are those who say that it is. They point to the fact that sometimes these disembodied forces can actually behave in an intelligent manner and can even answer rudimentary questions which are put to them by observers. Some, it is said, can actually *speak*.

The question of poltergeists, then, is more complex than might first appear and poses problems on many levels. Researchers have in the past, however, tended to concentrate on each individual case without really considering the phenomenon as a whole. Are there linkages, for example, between many of these cases?

In an article in the book *Ghosts and Hauntings*, Dr. Bob Curran considers three separate cases of poltergeist activity, all from different parts of the world and all concerning young girls and tries to establish connections between them. Is it really some part of the human brain which unconsciously produces such phenomena or is there something else at work? Why not read it and decide for yourself?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Robert Curran



DR. BOB CURRAN was born and raised in a remote mountain area of the County Down in Northern Ireland. Leaving school at 14, he worked in a number of jobs including gravedigger, lorry driver, professional musician, journalist and even a scripter of comics. He traveled extensively in many countries before returning home to settle down and begin working in the Civil Service. Later, he went to college where he obtained degrees in education, history and educational psychology, graduating as a teacher.

Although he still teaches much of his work now concerns community development within Northern Ireland. In this capacity he acts as a consultant to a number of cultural bodies within the Province. He deals with cross-boarder matters with the Irish Republic, working for the Office of the First and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland.

Sitting on a number of cultural committees, Curran has worked directly as a governmental advisor and as a consultant to several bodies which have been set up by other governments. He also acts as a consultant to a number of tourism companies, giving lectures and conducting tours on many topics of local and national Irish history.

As a writer, Curran has been extremely prolific and has approximately 38 books to his name, mainly on the subjects of history and culture. In addition, he has a number of works published in other languages including Japanese, Italian, French, Portuguese (Brazil), Spanish (Spain and Mexico), German, Urdu and Latvian. He has also served as a contributor and consultant to various radio and television programs both for private companies and national networks.

Married and with a young family, Curran continues to live in Northern Ireland on the picturesque North Derry coast, not far from the celebrated Giant's Causeway.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Ghosts, Spirits & Hauntings

By Dr. Robert Curran

- What is a poltergeist?
- Are poltergeists really *ghosts* in the way that we understand?
- Why do you think these phenomena attack only young people – especially young girls?
- Do you think that poltergeists possess any form of intelligence on their own account?
- Do you think that what we call poltergeists are simply forms of undirected energy?
- If so are they produced by an area of our brains that we don't really know about?
- Do you know of any instances where a poltergeist has actually *spoken*?
- Why do poltergeists tend to be so destructive?
- Can a poltergeist attach itself to a site in a way that a ghost sometimes can?
- Have you, yourself, ever had any experience of poltergeist activity?