



exploring the
extraordinary

4th Conference

21st-23rd September, 2012

Holiday Inn, York

BIOGRAPHIES

Nadia Bartolini has a degree in Geography from the University of Ottawa, Canada, and has recently completed her PhD in Geography at the Open University. Her research interests include heritage and urban memory, literary representations of the city, and the supernatural in popular culture. She is currently a Research Associate for the Open Space Research Centre at the Open University.

Zoë Brân is a Core Shamanic practitioner, writer, speaker and educator. Chair of the Health Education Group of The Terrence Higgins Trust and a member of the Trust's Steering committee from 1987-1989, Zoë was the first woman in Britain to be involved in managing a national AIDS organisation. Her PhD explored the relationship between society, culture and AIDS. Zoë has written three books on sex and sexuality and worked as a university lecturer in Writing and in Creative Thinking. She is a former Fellow of the Royal Literary Fund and Writer in Residence at the University of the Arts, London. As a writer of travel literature and journalism she travelled extensively, focussing her work on troubled areas of the world such as Vietnam, Burma and Bosnia. Her most recent travel narrative, 'Enduring Cuba', is a 2012 text book at West Point Military Academy. Her shamanic work has been filmed and written about. She is currently working on her next book, *'The Shamanic Journey: Ancient Techniques for the Modern World'*. Zoë lives in London with her lurcher, Arlu.

Madeleine Castro has a BA (Hons) in Psychology and Sociology from Liverpool Hope University, an MA from Goldsmiths University of London and PhD in Sociology from the University of York. Her doctoral project looked at individual accounts of transcendent experiences. In 2007, she and her colleague Hannah Gilbert set up the Exploring the Extraordinary network. She is currently a visiting lecturer in Psychology at Leeds Metropolitan University

Callum Cooper obtained his BSc in psychology from the University of Northampton and has an MRes in psychological research methods, from Sheffield Hallam University. He has published on a wide variety of issues in psychology and parapsychology (including *Telephone Calls from the Dead* (2012, Tricorn Books)), and has received the Eileen J. Garrett Scholarship (2009, Parapsychology Foundation), and twice been the recipient of the Alex Tanous Scholarship Award (2011 & 2012, Alex Tanous Foundation for Scientific Research). He features in the media as a representative for parapsychology with TV and radio work, and is co-host of Ghost Chronicles International radio show. At present, he is studying for a PhD in Psychology at the University of Northampton.

Charles Emmons is a sociologist at Gettysburg College. His books include *Science and Spirit: Exploring the Limits of Consciousness* (2012), *Chinese Ghosts and ESP*, *At the Threshold* (on UFOs), and *Guided by Spirit*. He appears on the "Ghosts of Gettysburg" TV shows and is a member of The Society for Scientific Exploration, and Exploring the Extraordinary. The website for him and his wife Penelope Emmons is <http://www.scienceandnewage.com/>

Jonathan Ferguson has a BA in Archaeology from Exeter, and a postgraduate diploma in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester. He took up the post of Curator of Firearms at the Royal Armouries in 2009. Based at the National Firearms Centre, his research interests are in the area of use and effect of firearms (on zombies or otherwise), and gun-related mythology and folklore. He studies aspects of the paranormal in his spare time, but has combined his professional and amateur interests in a definitive study on the subject of vampire killing kits, including a paper presented at EtE in 2011, and an article in *Fortean Times* this year. He recently acquired an example of a kit for the Armouries collection. As a sceptic, he is not expecting the zombie apocalypse, but he is certainly prepared, having been a zombie fan since a late-night viewing as a teenager of George Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead'.

Hannah Gilbert has a BA (Hons) in Anthropology from Durham University, and a PhD in Sociology from the University of York. Her doctoral thesis looked at experiences of spirit in British spirit mediumship. She and her colleague Madeleine Castro set up the research network Exploring the Extraordinary in 2007, and Gilbert also directs Compassionate Wellbeing, an events company that promotes compassionate approaches to health and wellbeing. She is currently a visiting lecturer in Asian Religions at York St John University.

Rachael Hayward is currently entering her third year as a part-time postgraduate research student at the University of York. She has an MA Management Studies from the University of Aberdeen. Following on from over five years continuous involvement, volunteering, working and interacting with amateur paranormal research groups, Rachael intends to bring a sociological perspective to the study of this popular cultural phenomenon. Interested primarily in collective rather than individual experiences, her research focuses on the interactions that occurs between members of a group during an anomalous experience. Rachael, intends to remove the question of the validity of paranormal experiences from her research, and focus on the sociological dimensions of group interaction within this setting, contributing to a new perspective of enquiry within this field.

Jack Hunter is a PhD student in Social Anthropology at the University of Bristol, UK. His research looks at contemporary trance mediumship in Bristol, and focuses on themes of personhood, personality, altered states of consciousness and anomalous experience. He is the founder and editor of the peer-reviewed journal *Paranthropology: Journal of Anthropological Approaches to the Paranormal*. In 2010 he received the Eileen J. Garrett scholarship from the Parapsychology Foundation, and in 2011 received the Schmeidler award from the Parapsychological Association.

Christopher Laursen is a PhD candidate in the Department of History at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. For 15 years, he worked as a newspaper journalist, radio producer, and media administrator. He has been pursuing historical studies of how people have encountered and attempted to explain what has been deemed the supernatural in the twentieth century. In Ontario, Canada, he completed his BA History (2007) at both Carleton University and the University of Toronto, and his MA History at the University of Guelph (2009). His PhD dissertation looks at the interpretive shifts around poltergeist phenomena in the decades following the Second World War in the United States and Britain. He is currently living in Ubud, Bali, Indonesia.

Sara MacKian is a Senior Lecturer in Health and Wellbeing at The Open University, UK with a research interest in how people cope with the complex life challenges thrown their way. She completed her PhD with the University of Aberystwyth in 1995 where she explored people's experiences of living with the long-term condition M.E. She has published widely in academic journals on the theme of health and wellbeing and *'Everyday Spirituality: Social and Spatial Worlds of Enchantment'* (2012, Palgrave) is her first single-authored book.

Ben McDonald is presently a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne. He is near the end of the second year of his doctoral thesis, which considers representations of death, grief, and mourning in twentieth-century psychic and occult thought

Christel Mattheeuws is an Honorary Research Fellow in the department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen. She graduated in Eastern Philology and History (Sinology) at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium), where she also obtained a special diploma in Social and Cultural Anthropology. In December 1999 she started fieldwork in Madagascar, while initially a Ph.D. student in Leuven. She became a fulltime student in Aberdeen in 2007 and graduated in 2008. Her main fields of interests have always been religion, philosophy, development and ecology (with a strong attraction for islands and mountainous regions) that she gradually explored in her academic choices, in travelling (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan, Kenya, Guinea Conakry and Madagascar) and visits of development projects, international contacts, and practical trainings in both development and biological agriculture. Her recent academic career is much influenced by Tim Ingold's work, Goethean Science and her experiences in Madagascar. While she has been trained in a body-centred phenomenology of human beings, her new visions have become life-centric, exploring the "organic" relationships between human beings and all other worldly manifestations. She focuses on the relationship between perception, form-giving processes of both the material world and less substantial phenomena and different kinds of knowledge.

Simone Natale is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow of the Humboldt Foundation at the University of Cologne, Germany. His writings have been published in some of the leading journals of his fields of expertise, including *History of Photography*, *Media History*, *Early Popular Visual Culture*, and the *Canadian Journal of Communication*. He is presently working on a book manuscript titled "The Spectacular Supernatural: Spirituality and the Rise of Modern Show Business," based on his Ph.D. dissertation.

Steve Pile teaches Geography in the Faculty of Social Sciences at The Open University. He has published on issues concerning place and the politics of identity. He is author of *Real Cities: modernity, space and the phantasmagorias of city life* (2005) and *The Body and The City: psychoanalysis, subjectivity and space* (1996). He has also worked on many collaborative projects, including *Handbook of Cultural Geography* (2003) (with Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh and Nigel Thrift) and *Mapping the Subject* (1995) (with Nigel Thrift). He is currently working on early Freudian psychoanalysis and geographies of the body.

Adam Potts has a BA (Hons) in Philosophical Studies, an MA in Music, and is currently in the second year of a PhD in Music at Newcastle University. He is interested in the relationship between philosophy and music, particularly how the use of noise in music can help us think philosophically ideas of heterogeneity and difference. For his thesis, he is exploring how different interpretations of noise in Japanese culture, specifically in urban space, industrial film and noise music, help us understand ideas of passivity and impossibility as they are figured in the work of Maurice Blanchot.

Paul Rogers is currently a senior lecturer in psychology at the University of Central Lancashire. Since 2004 he has run an undergraduate module on “The Psychology of the Paranormal” plus a postgraduate module entitled “Belief in the paranormal: Psychological Perspectives” He has published over 30 peer-reviewed articles, many on the psychology of paranormal belief, and regularly presents his work at international conferences. He has a penchant for “dark” music and, for his sins, is also a keen supporter of Charlton Athletic Football Club.

John Sabol is an archaeologist, cultural anthropologist, actor, and author of 14 books. He has conducted archaeological fieldwork in England, throughout the USA, and Mexico (where he also did ethnographic fieldwork). He has appeared in more than 35 films, TV programs, and documentaries. His current projects include the recovery of historical multi-tiered soundscapes at abandoned and/or “ruined” locations through space-specific performance practices. Recent fieldwork has been conducted on historic battlefields, abandoned prisons, former hotels and theatres, and historic military posts.

Andy Sharp runs English Heretic, a creative organisation dedicated to the exploration of our occult landscapes and the commemoration of tragic figures. Combining music and writing English Heretic draws influence from horror films, dystopian fiction, magic and surrealism. English Heretic have published numerous records and books since its inception in 2003, including studies of the disturbing coincidences surrounding the deaths of filmmaker Michael Reeves and pilot Joe Kennedy Senior, two books of speculative metafiction “*Wyrd Tales*”, and a psychohistorical report into the attempted assassination attempt of Princess Anne. Andy has also lectured on art and the occult. Outside his creative pursuits, he has recently completed his masters in Neuroscience.

Sarah Sparkes is an artist and curator who exhibits both in the UK and internationally. She leads the visual arts and creative research project GHost. She is currently an affiliated Fellow at the University of London where many of the GHost events have taken place. Her research at the University is centred on the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature. She has also been collecting and archiving ghost stories emanating from the Universities headquarters - Senate House - where her research was the inspiration for as a public artwork created for the 2011 Bloomsbury Festival. She has lectured widely about GHost and Harry Price most recently at New College Oxford, University of the Creative Arts Canterbury, The Ghost Club, Fortean London and Treadwells. She has contributed a chapter on the GHost project to *The Ashgate Research Companion to Sociocultural Studies of the Paranormal*, due to be published in 2014. The 2012 Vernacular Folk publication includes her essay on GHost’s participation in the Folkestone Triennial, 2011.

James Thompson is a PhD student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Bath. His current PhD research project uses qualitative methods to explore the different ways people make meaning of their experiences with magic (psilocybin) mushrooms. His research interests include psychedelic drug experiences, spiritual practices, anomalous experiences, and qualitative methodologies. James graduated from the University of Birmingham with a BSc (Hons) in Psychology in 2007 and from the University of Bath with a Master of Research in Psychology (MRes) in 2009

Angela Voss has a background in music and astrology. She taught for 10 years in the Theology and Religious Studies section at Kent, directing an MA programme and teaching undergraduate modules in the Cultural Study of Cosmology and Divination, and is currently teaching for the MA in Western Esotericism at the University of Exeter, and the Community Arts and Education programme at Canterbury Christ Church University where a new MA programme in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred is in the validation process for September 2013. Her research interests centre on the Western esoteric traditions and the symbolic imagination, and she has published extensively on the astrological music therapy of the Renaissance magus Marsilio Ficino. She also practises as an astrologer and tarot reader. Her website is <http://www.angelavoss.org>

Melvyn Willin has degrees from several British universities, including doctorates in Musicology at Sheffield and History at Bristol. He was closely associated with Bob Morris at Edinburgh University for several years. In 1971 he started teaching the guitar, and formed the world touring Essex Guitar Orchestra. Willin is the Honorary Archive Officer to the Society for Psychical Research, and was the Events Officer and Editor of the Ghost Club Magazine. In the last few years he has published several books including *Music, Witchcraft and the Paranormal* (Melrose Press, Ely) *Ghosts Caught on Film*, and *Paranormal Caught on Film* (David & Charles, Exeter). He also produced a triple CD collection of auditory anomalies in conjunction with the Frieburg Institute in Germany. Recent research includes Perrott-Warrick scholarships into the study of Near Death Experiences from the perspective of music and the efficacy of witchcraft spells in modern society. Currently he is researching alleged paranormal demonstrations within the martial arts.