

**ALL THOSE
TERRIFYING HISTORIES SERIES**

Kenneth Cavalcanti (ed.)

**Alternative Echoes of
Our Lives: The Strangest
Cases of Doppelgänger
and Poltergeist**

feat. Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, Edmond Dantès, Aleister Crowley, Glenlucé Devil, Old Jeffrey, Bell Witch of Tennessee, Gef the Talking Mongoose, Tina Resch, Drummer of Tedworth and Other Fascinating Characters

Horror Stories

You Don't Want to Read About

INTEGRAL

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#8

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A Ballad about A Strange Supernatural Intruder and Other Ghostlore Stories: *Poltergeist*

*It started late on a Sunday night,
The sudden rattle of pans,
With nobody in the kitchen then,
'What's happening, Dianne? '
Dianne went pale and she looked at me
'You'd better go down and see,
Maybe we have an intruder there,
Just keep him away from me.'*

*I went, but nobody there of course,
I didn't think there was,
But two large knives on the cupboard were
Arranged in a sort of cross,
'Didn't you put the knives away, '
I called, but she was there,
Looking over my shoulder and
I saw that she was scared.*

*'But I haven't used those knives for days,
There's something going on,
Somebody must have sneaked in here,
I tell you, this is wrong! '
I turned and I tried to comfort her,
'There's no-one in here now,
Just someone playing a crazy trick,
I'll catch them out, somehow.'*

*But late that night, in the early hours
The bed began to shake,
Dianne woke up and she grabbed at me,
'I think it's a real earthquake.'
I tumbled onto the floor at that,
But the floor was still and sound,
Only the bed was shaking, quaking,
Just above the ground.*

*And that was only the start of it,
Strange things went on for weeks,
For things would fly off the table and
Plates off the mantelpiece.
A carving knife pinned me to the wall
By the collar of my shirt,
'I don't think somebody likes you, ' said
Dianne, 'you might get hurt.'*

Dianne had an ancient father who

*Was mean as the day was young,
He hated me, and I used to say,
'How did he stay unhung? '
We rarely went off to visit him
As he acted like a skunk,
But Dianne dragged me along at times
To show a united front.*

*Doors were slamming and windows cracking
So Dianne had to shout,
'We have to visit my father, Dean,
It's time that we went out.'
I ventured cautiously through his room
And called the old boy's name,
But it was quieter than the tomb
And Dianne said the same.*

*We found him out in the laundry then,
He'd fallen in the tub,
Had gone a couple of spin cycles,
Oh yes, and here's the rub,
One bony arm and a hand were out
And pointed, looking mean,
We knew then who was the poltergeist,
But boy, his bones were clean.*

David Lewis Paget

In ghostlore, a poltergeist (German for “noisy ghost” or “noisy spirit”) is a type of ghost or spirit that is responsible for physical disturbances, such as loud noises and objects being moved or destroyed. They are purportedly capable of pinching, biting, hitting, and tripping people. Most accounts of poltergeists describe the movement or levitation of objects such as furniture and cutlery, or noises such as knocking on doors.

They have traditionally been described as troublesome spirits who haunt a particular person instead of a specific location. Such alleged poltergeist manifestations have been reported in many cultures and countries including the United States, India, Japan, Brazil, Australia, and most European nations. Early claims of spirits that supposedly harass and torment their victims date back to the 1st century, but references to poltergeists became more common in the early 1600s.

The overwhelming consensus of science is that poltergeists do not exist and there is generally a rational explanation for people's experiences. Misinterpretation is most likely to occur when people believe a place is haunted and they are looking for evidence to confirm this. In this way, a lot of poltergeist activity can actually be attributed to inaccurate perception of natural phenomenon.

The word *poltergeist* comes from the German language words *poltern* (“to make sound” and “to rumble”) and *Geist* (“ghost” and “spirit”), and the term itself translates as “noisy ghost”, “rumble-ghost” or a “loud spirit”. A synonym coined by René Sudre is *thorybism*, from Greek *thorybein* (“to make noise or uproar; throw into confusion”).

Many claimed poltergeist events have proved on investigation to be hoaxes.

Psychical researcher Frank Podmore proposed the ‘naughty little girl’ theory for poltergeist cases (many of which have seemed to centre on an adolescent, usually a girl). He found that the centre of

the disturbance was often a child who was throwing objects around to fool or scare people for attention. Skeptical investigator Joe Nickell says that claimed poltergeist incidents typically originate from “an individual who is motivated to cause mischief”. According to Nickell: “In the typical poltergeist outbreak, small objects are hurled through the air by unseen forces, furniture is overturned, or other disturbances occur—usually just what could be accomplished by a juvenile trickster determined to plague credulous adults.”

Nickell writes that reports are often exaggerated by credulous witnesses. They can also kill people because they can move objects around including a knife.

“Time and again in other “poltergeist” outbreaks, witnesses have reported an object leaping from its resting place supposedly on its own, when it is likely that the perpetrator had secretly obtained the object sometime earlier and waited for an opportunity to fling it, even from outside the room—thus supposedly proving he or she was innocent.”

According to research in anomalistic psychology, claims of poltergeist activity can be explained by psychological factors such as illusion, memory lapses, and wishful thinking. A study (Lange and Houran, 1998) wrote that poltergeist experiences are delusions “resulting from the affective and cognitive dynamics of peripients’ interpretation of ambiguous stimuli”. Psychologist Donovan Rawcliffe has written that almost all poltergeist cases that have been investigated turned out to be based on trickery, whilst the rest are attributable to psychological factors such as hallucinations.

Attempts have also been made to scientifically explain poltergeist disturbances that have not been traced to fraud or psychological factors. Skeptic and magician Milbourne Christopher found that some cases of poltergeist activity can be attributed to unusual air currents, such as a 1957 case on Cape Cod where downdrafts from an uncovered chimney became strong enough to blow a mirror off of a wall, overturn chairs and knock things off shelves.

In the 1950s, Guy William Lambert proposed that reported poltergeist phenomena could be explained by the movement of underground water causing stress on houses. He suggested that water turbulence could cause strange sounds or structural movement of the property, possibly causing the house to vibrate and move objects. Later researchers, such as Alan Gauld and Tony Cornell, tested Lambert’s hypothesis by placing specific objects in different rooms and subjecting the house to strong mechanical vibrations. They discovered that although the structure of the building had been damaged, only a few of the objects moved a very short distance. The skeptic Trevor H. Hall criticized the hypothesis claiming if it was true “the building would almost certainly fall into ruins”. According to Richard Wiseman the hypothesis has not held up to scrutiny.

Michael Persinger has theorized that seismic activity could cause poltergeist phenomena. However, Persinger’s claims regarding the effects of environmental geomagnetic activity on paranormal experiences have not been independently replicated and, like his findings regarding the God helmet, may simply be explained by the suggestibility of participants.

David Turner, a retired physical chemist, suggested that ball lightning might cause the “spooky movement of objects blamed on poltergeists”.

Parapsychologists Nandor Fodor and William G. Roll suggested that poltergeist activity can be explained by psychokinesis.

Poltergeist activity has often been believed to be the work of malicious spirits by spiritualists. According to Allan Kardec, the founder of Spiritism, poltergeists are manifestations of disembodied spirits of low level, belonging to the sixth class of the third order. Under this explanation, they are believed to be closely associated with the elements (fire, air, water, earth).

Psychoanalyst Carl Gustav Jung was interested in the concept of poltergeists and the occult in general. Jung believed that a female cousin’s trance states were responsible for a dining table splitting in two and his later discovery of a broken bread knife. Jung also believed that when a bookcase gave an

explosive cracking sound during a meeting with Sigmund Freud in 1909, he correctly predicted there would be a second sound, speculating that such phenomena was caused by 'exteriorization' of his subconscious mind. Freud disagreed, and concluded there was some natural cause. Freud biographers maintain the sounds were likely caused by the wood of the bookcase contracting as it dried out.

George Sinclair (d. 1696) was a Scottish mathematician, engineer and demonologist. The first Professor of Mathematics at the University of Glasgow, he is known for *Satan's Invisible World Discovered*, (c. 1685), a work on witchcraft. He wrote in all three areas of his interests, including an account of the "Glenluce Devil", a poltergeist case from c. 1654, in a 1672 book mainly on hydrostatics and dealing also with coal.

He was probably from the East Lothian area. He became a professor of the University of Glasgow, 18 April 1654, initially in a philosophy chair, then in a chair founded for mathematics. In 1655 he made descents in a diving bell off the Isle of Mull, to look at the wreck of a ship from the Spanish Armada there.

He was deprived of his university post in 1666, as a Presbyterian. He then worked as a mineral surveyor and engineer, and was employed in particular by Sir James Hope. He was brought in by the magistrates of Edinburgh, about 1670, to oversee piping of water from Comiston into the city.

On March 3, 1691, University of Edinburgh appointed him again to the professorship of mathematics, which had been vacant. Sinclair invented an early example of a perpetual motion machine based on the principle of the siphon. He first proposed this in a Latin work on pneumatics in 1669.

In his book *Satan's Invisible World Discovered* (1685), Sinclair described an alleged poltergeist incident known as the Devil of Glenluce. Sinclair described the incident as having a "usefulness for refuting atheism".

The incident is described as having taken place at the house of weaver Gilbert Campbell in Glenluce during October, 1654. A beggar named Alexander Agnew was refused a handout by Campbell. Agnew had promised to cause the family harm and over the next two years strange phenomena were alleged to have occurred at the house. This included the mysterious cutting of warp thread, demonic voices, strange whistling noises and stones being thrown. The poltergeist claims have been dismissed by researchers as a hoax. Magic historian Thomas Frost suggested that the phenomena was the result of conjuring trickery. The story was given to Sinclair by Campbell's son Thomas, a philosophy student from a college in Glasgow who was living at the household. Folklorist Andrew Lang suggested that Thomas had produced the phenomena fraudulently.

Historian David Damrosch has noted that Alexander Agnew commonly called the "Jock of Broad Scotland" was the first person in Scottish history to publicly deny the existence of God. He was hanged at Dumfries for blasphemy on May 21, 1656.

James Gregory, then a professor at the University of St Andrews, attacked Sinclair in a 1672 pamphlet *The New and Great Art of Weighing Vanity*, under the name of Patrick Mather or Mathers, archbeadle of the University of St Andrews. Gregory was both a Cartesian and an Episcopalian, and self-consciously invoked the Hobbes-Wallis controversy in aiming at the non-conformist Sinclair. An appendix to the work, *Tentamina de motu penduli et projectorum*, was a more important essay on dynamics, regarded by D. T. Whiteside as a probable source of Isaac Newton's theory of resisted motion. Sinclair wrote an answer to Gregory, but it remained unpublished.

In 1684 he published as his own a work *Truth's Victory over Error*. It was in fact an English translation by Sinclair of the Latin inaugural dissertation given by David Dickson, who became Professor of Divinity, Glasgow in 1640, on the occasion in 1650 when he moved to Edinburgh. This was pointed out in short order.

The Drummer of Tedworth is a case of an alleged poltergeist manifestation in the West Country of England by Joseph Glanvill, from his book *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681).

Early accounts reported that in 1661 a local landowner, John Mompesson, owner of a house in the town of Tedworth (now called Tidworth, in Wiltshire), had brought a lawsuit against an unlicensed vagrant drummer William Drury, whom he accused of collecting money by false pretences. After he had won judgment against the drummer, the drum was turned over to Mompesson by the local bailiff. Mompesson then found his house plagued by nocturnal drumming noises. It was alleged that the drummer had brought these plagues of noise upon Mompesson's head by witchcraft. Drury was said to have been associated with a band of gypsies. Glanvill, who visited the house in 1663, had claimed to have heard strange scratching noises under a bed in the children's room.

On Christmas Day 1667, Samuel Pepys, in his diary, records his wife, Elizabeth, reading the story to him. He found it to be "a strange story of spirits and worth reading indeed".

In 1668, Glanvill published one of the earlier versions of *Saducismus Triumphatus*, his *A Blow at Modern Sadducism...* To which is added, *The Relation of the Fam'd Disturbance by the Drummer, in the House of Mr. John Mompesson*.

In Volume III of *The Works of the Reverend John Wesley* there is a reference to the Drummer at Tedworth. The famous instance of this, which has been spread far and wide, was the drumming in Mr Mompesson's house at Tedworth; who, it was said, acknowledged, "'It was all a trick, and that he had found out the whole contrivance.' Not so, my eldest brother, then at Christ Church, Oxon, inquired of Mr Mompesson, his fellow collegian, 'Whether his father had acknowledged this or not.' He answered, 'The resort of gentlemen to my father's house was so great, he could not bear the expense. He therefore took no pains to confute the report, that he had found out the cheat: although he and I, and all the family knew the account which was published, to be punctually true'".

Charles Mackay, in his *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* (1841), considered the phenomena to be undoubtedly fraudulent produced by confederates of the drummer and suggested Mompesson was easily deceived. Amos Norton Craft (1881) also suggested that the phenomena were the result of trickery: "We are to remember also, that the house of Mr. Mompesson contained several servants who doubtless possessed a good degree of human nature; Mr. Mompesson had caused the arrest and imprisonment of a member of a band of gypsies, who were intensely enraged at him on that account that the disturbance ceased as soon as the gypsy was transported beyond the sea and his associates had no farther hope of his release; that these manifestations began again as soon as the gypsy returned from transportation; that the gypsy professed to be the cause of the disturbance, and that the excited imagination would naturally add to the manifestations which the enraged trickster really produced".

Addington Bruce (1908) has argued that the phenomenon was fraudulently manufactured by Mompesson's own children, especially his oldest daughter, a girl of ten. Bruce wrote that the noises and movement of objects were reminiscent of pranks and often occurred in the children's bedroom. Bruce noted that Glanvill "passed only one night in the haunted house, and of his several experiences there is none that cannot be set down to fraud plus imagination, with the children the active agents". Andrew Lang of the Society for Psychical Research wrote that "the Drummer was suspected, but, consciously or not, the children were probably the agents".

Auchencairn is a village in the historical county of Kirkcudbrightshire in the Dumfries and Galloway region of Scotland. It is located on the coast of the Solway Firth at the head of Auchencairn Bay and lies on the A711 road between the town of Dalbeattie to the east and Kirkcudbright to the west.

According to a pamphlet first published by local minister Alexander Telfair in 1696, a farm called The Ring-Croft of Stocking inhabited by the family of stonemason and farmer Andrew MacKie was the site of mysterious occurrences such as stones being thrown, cattle being moved, buildings set on fire,