The Ghostly Experiences
Of non-Indigenous
Australians

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Statement of Originality

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My interest in paranormal phenomena began over ten years ago as a journey of self discovery. The journey started in my undergraduate years and was encouraged by Dr. Marguerite Johnson, my principal supervisor, who continued to ‘walk beside’ me as I did my Honours and now, again, as I work my way through a Master of Philosophy. Her encouragement, assistance, and infinite patience have made the task easier to bear – and for this I thank her. I would also like to thank Professor John McDowell who was bestowed the task of supervising me when my other supervisors went on leave. Professor McDowell, like Dr. Johnson, has shown incredible patience and insight – without his support I doubt if I would have had the confidence to finish the task. I would also like to thank Dr. Colin Wilks who supervised me in the initial stages of my research. His understanding of philosophy aided the development of many of my arguments.

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to James Harold Walsh – my father, my mentor, my guardian angel; Rest in Peace, Dad.

There is no such thing as death,
In nature, nothing dies:
From each sad moment of decay
Some forms of life arise.¹

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Glossary
Abstract

The question for man most momentous of all is whether or no he has an immortal soul; or – to avoid the word immortal, which belongs to the realm of infinities – whether or no his personality involves any element which can survive bodily death.
Frederick W.H. Myers

This thesis demonstrates the need for an interdisciplinary approach to research concerning non-Indigenous Australian ghostly phenomena. An analytical discussion focusing on the role of such experiences in relation to Australia’s multicultural society, explores suitable avenues for further research regarding the connection between experiences of such phenomena and beliefs pertaining to survival after bodily death and an afterlife.

In most societies around the world, paranormal phenomena in general and ghostly phenomena in particular are evinced in beliefs and rituals pertaining to death and an afterlife; as well as being displayed in artefacts and extant texts from humanity’s earliest days to the present. Some of these tales show that, while ‘ghosts’ may haunt the living, not all are manifestations of deceased individuals. Although Australian experiences of these phenomena mirror those from elsewhere in the world, many stories of these experiences contain events that reflect Australia’s convict past and its continuing effect on that society, even into the twenty-first century. Similar to the Indigenous population, non-Indigenous Australians have a sense of Australia’s inspired earth; since not all their ghost stories are connected to murder nor are all their ghosts connected to death. This sense of inspired earth has, on occasion, resulted in the destruction of buildings, or sites, in the hope of expunging the ‘ghosts’ from Australia’s convict era. Yet not all tales recount the horror of a convict past or events surrounding an untimely death. One tale at least tells of the joy felt by an entire town after the reported sighting of a ghost confirmed the death of a despised colonial leader.

The multicultural nature of Australian society has resulted in an eclectic mix of beliefs; some of which concern ghostly phenomena as well as rituals surrounding death and burial, the appeasement of a decedent’s soul/spirit, the possibility of survival after bodily death, and an afterlife. While this ‘mix’ is, in part, responsible for Australia’s vibrant and colourful society, it has also resulted in some individuals experiencing emotional conflict, especially when a family’s traditional cultural beliefs regarding death and an afterlife are ignored in favour of the ‘mixed’ cultural beliefs of the adopted country.

Although research into ghostly, paranormal and, particularly, psi phenomena has been conducted by some Australian scholars (such as those from the Sciences, especially the various branches of Psychology), this thesis contends that research that includes disciplines from the Humanities and Social Sciences – for example, Religious Studies, Folklore, English, Literary Studies, History, Sociology and Linguistics – would enable a greater understanding of the role these phenomena, and the beliefs they engender, play within Australia’s multicultural society.

Introduction

To understand apparitions and hauntings we must delve into the chronicles of those who had firsthand experiences with them. D. Scott Rogo³

Australia, like most countries around the world, has its share of reported ghostly experiences. From the Aboriginal Dreamtime⁴ to the present day, tales have been told of visits from the ghosts of those who have died. In the mid nineteenth century books and articles chronicling Australia’s ghost stories began appearing both in Australia and overseas.⁵ Although these early stories were popular, it was not until nearly a century later that new tales were added. The mid twentieth century not only witnessed an increase in the number of new tales, but also a growth in publications of Australia’s ghost stories⁶ – especially anthologies professing to be “authentic reports”⁷ and eyewitness accounts of ghostly phenomena.⁸

The burgeoning interest in ghostly phenomena resulted in an escalation of theories and research dealing with the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts;⁹ phenomenon that are often linked to survival hypotheses. Nevertheless, the many books and journals containing philosophical and scientific debates focusing on ghostly phenomena and survival hypotheses (either for or against some form of personal continuation after

⁹ Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 357-358.
bodily death) relate to phenomena outside Australia; predominantly North America, Europe and, in particular, the United Kingdom. While the increase in research has added to the overall understanding of theoretical survival after bodily death, the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts remain under-researched, particularly regarding Australian experiences and phenomena; as Harvey J. Irwin observes in ‘The End: A View from Parapsychology:’

Notwithstanding the occasional empirical study, [such as J. Campbell’s 1987 thesis; ‘Cognition and the Apparitional Experience: An Exploratory Study’], there has been no sustained parapsychological investigation of apparitional experiences in Australia.

One consequence of the lack of “sustained parapsychological investigation” is exhibited in mainstream researchers’ unfamiliarity with the terminology used in parapsychology. Hannah Jenkins contends in her dissertation ‘Beyond Beliefs’ that this unfamiliarity is exacerbated by the fact that “the words that describe [paranormal] phenomena … have changed over time and new words have been coined as theories about the phenomena developed.” Michael A. Thalbourne, for example, ‘created’ the term “Psychopraxia” to identify a theory he established regarding issues surrounding “paranormal

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13 Hannah Blanch Jenkins, "Beyond Beliefs: A Philosophical Examination of Anomalous Phenomena and Explanation Theory," Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation, University of Tasmania, 2007. 2. *Note*: In this instance, the generalised term ‘paranormal’ has been substituted for Jenkins’ chosen term ‘psi’ due to the use of this quote as an example of why mainstream researchers are unfamiliar with terms used in Parapsychology.
process[es]" such as; “the nature of the self, the so-called pro attitude, and the necessary conditions that must be present to allow psi effect to occur.” Despite the concerns of other parapsychologists regarding the fields’ already “overburdened” vocabulary, Thalbourne maintains while “[p]arapsychologists have never shrunk from adopting new terms to describe new techniques and new phenomena … the onus is on the neologist to justify [their] introduction.” While acknowledging mainstream researchers’ unfamiliarity with some parapsychological terms, this thesis will use the terminology associated with Parapsychology – the main field of study concerned with ghostly phenomena. As such, Thalbourne’s book A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology will be used as a recognised source for definitions.

Although this thesis endeavours to maintain conformity with the terminology used in Parapsychology, there are some minor deviations. For example; the preferred parapsychological term used to denote the visual manifestation of “someone known to have died” is ‘apparition.’ However, the popular term ‘ghost’ will be used in this thesis as it is commonly understood to specifically relate to “the apparition of a deceased person.” This variation was decided upon to maintain continuity with individual tales of paranormal experiences in which the colloquial term ‘ghost’ is used more frequently than the preferred parapsychological term of ‘apparition.’ Furthermore, when referring to people who have experienced ghostly phenomena, the term

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16 Thalbourne, "The Theory of Psychopraxia: A Paradigm for the Future?." Adrian Parker, for example, feels that the vocabulary of parapsychology was already “overburdened”.
18 A Glossary has been provided at the end of this thesis for terms that may need further clarification than those supplied in the body of this thesis.
‘experient’ will be used in place of ‘percipient.’ Although both these terms apply equally to those who have experienced paranormal phenomena there is a slight difference that played a part in governing the choice of term used in this thesis. Thalbourne defines an ‘experient’ as someone who was the “subject of a spontaneous experience;” that is, a “paranormal occurrence which takes place in the real-life situation – naturally, and often unanticipated.”\(^2^1\) On the other hand, a ‘percipient’ is someone who not only has similar “unanticipated” experiences but also “one who is tested” for psi abilities, especially for “ESP ability.”\(^2^2\) Bearing these definitions in mind, ‘experient’ was deemed the better term as the purpose of this thesis is to explore tales of “unanticipated” experiences of ghostly phenomena by those who were not being ‘tested’ at the time of their experience.

Finally, when referring to people who research paranormal phenomena in general, and ghosts in particular, this thesis uses the term ‘parapsychologist’ in spite of the fact that some researchers question its use in this instance.\(^2^3\) Although the various arguments against the generalised use of this term are justified, most people today associate the term with someone who researches the many facets of paranormal phenomena, regardless of their academic qualifications (or lack thereof). Moreover, possible alternative terms, such as “psi researcher,”\(^2^4\) are often not well known or do not relate specifically to ghostly phenomena and, therefore, may cause some confusion. Consequently, in an endeavour to lessen any possible misunderstandings, the commonly accepted term of ‘parapsychologist’ was considered the better choice for this thesis.

\(^2^1\) Thalbourne, A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology, 39 and 118 respectively.
\(^2^2\) Thalbourne, A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology, 86.
\(^2^3\) For example; Jenkins’ opinion in “Beyond Beliefs,” which states: “academics who actively research psi are often called ‘parapsychologists’. However, because some academics who study psi are not psychologists and because some commentators on psi research are not academics and may include skeptics, I prefer the term ‘psi researcher’ to describe a person who has undertaken research into psi, regardless of their view.” 4.
\(^2^4\) Jenkins, "Beyond Beliefs." 4.
However, when referring to research conducted by both parapsychologists and mainstream researchers this thesis will use the term ‘researcher’ as it is understood to imply studies conducted by all researchers from all scholarly disciplines.

The Aim of this Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is not to prove or disprove the existence of ghosts – for as Paul Roland found: “for those who believe, no proof is necessary; for those who doubt, no proof is enough.”

Rather, the aim of this thesis is to present an analytical discussion that highlights academic disciplines suitable for future studies into non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena; thereby aiding a better understanding of these phenomena and experiences, especially in relation to Australia’s multicultural society. The exploration will also consider the role these experiences and their connection to afterlife beliefs play in Australian society. It will be shown that beliefs regarding death and an afterlife remain an under-researched aspect of that society, as is the literary genre of Australian ghost stories.

While acknowledging the fact that tales of ghostly phenomena form part of Aboriginal folklore, this thesis explores only non-Indigenous experiences. The decision to limit this thesis to these parameters was based on two factors: firstly, most research regarding Australian ghostly experiences and phenomena focuses on those of the Indigenous population. These studies are often conducted by sociologists and anthropologists as a means of better understanding the original inhabitants of Australia. However, there is no similar emphasis on the experiences of non-Indigenous Australians; therefore, this thesis aims to begin the process of resolving this

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imbalance. Secondly, as an Australian of European descent, my knowledge, and experience of Indigenous culture and beliefs is limited; however, it is understood that Indigenous Australians are very protective of their culture, particularly beliefs and ceremonies concerning the dead and an afterlife. It was, therefore, deemed inappropriate to analyse their beliefs and experiences regarding these aspects of their culture.

Some social researchers, such as those who explore Indigenous beliefs and experiences, acknowledge that ghost stories can tell a lot about a society. Although parapsychologists have contributed immensely to international knowledge regarding ghostly phenomena, they have added very little to the understanding of ghostly experiences from a uniquely Australian point of view – or even determined if there is one. However, current research of psi phenomena, which occasionally includes the study of ghosts, has shown that international variations surrounding such phenomena do occur. For example, in the final summation of her research into ‘The Nature Incidence and Impact of Parapsychological Phenomena,’ Rosemary Breen states:

... there were significant differences in the incidence of paranormal experiences reported by residents of the four major contributing countries, namely the United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. These national differences were highly significant ... for eight of the ten phenomena under review, suggesting there may be an ethnic element to the ability to experience psi.

This thesis maintains that although the “ethnic element” mentioned by Breen relates to four individual countries, including Australia, it should also be evinced within Australia’s multicultural society, which includes citizens from these four countries.

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assertion finds support in Peter Read’s book *Haunted Earth*, in which he observes how generational changes in beliefs within migrant groups, such as beliefs relating to specific burial rites to prevent the dead returning as ghosts, can have an adverse effect on family relationships as well as individual cultural identity. This is especially evident if one family member has discarded the family’s supernatural belief system in favour of one that does not allow for any supernatural connections, and/or diminishes the need to perform certain burial rites required for the appeasement of the deceased’s spirit/soul.\(^{29}\)

Furthermore, Ronald C. Finucane’s contention that “ghosts function primarily as a mechanism whereby beliefs about an afterlife are reinforced” and “as we and our cultures change, so do our ghosts;”\(^{30}\) highlights the important role ghostly experiences play in a society. By exploring how different ethnic groups within Australia relate to and interpret ghostly phenomena and experiences, researchers could determine not only their effect on individuals, families, and society in general (particularly Australia’s multicultural society) but also their role in the development of belief pertaining to death and an afterlife.

While this thesis focuses on non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena, it is also preparatory research for future studies into the ghostly experiences of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Although ghostly phenomena display significant cross-cultural experiences, this aspect of beliefs and/or experiences appears to have not been explored in relation to Australia’s multicultural society. Jenkins observed that many researchers note the lack of research into Australian ghostly phenomena, yet she found that few have attempted to redress the neglect outside supernatural belief systems.\(^{31}\)


\(^{31}\) Personal communiqué from Jenkins – received Monday 9 June 2008.
Although, in this instance, Jenkins’ use of the term ‘supernatural’ is correct, many mainstream researchers and individuals often incorrectly transpose the terms ‘supernatural’ and ‘paranormal’ when describing experiences, or phenomena that are inexplicable when measured against natural laws and phenomena.\(^{32}\) While this thesis contends that ‘supernatural belief systems’ depend on beings such as a God or gods; or skills such as magic and witchcraft; it is also aware of the tendency for some people to use the term ‘supernatural’ to describe what others consider as ‘paranormal.’ The Macquarie Encyclopedic Dictionary for example, takes this interchangeability even further by omitting a definition for ‘paranormal’ in favour of the term ‘supernatural,’ which it defines as:

1. being above or beyond what is natural; not explicable in terms of natural laws or phenomena.
2. of or relating to supernatural beings, as ghosts, spirits etc.
3. abnormal; extraordinary; unprecedented. …
4. supernatural forces, effects, and beings collectively.\(^{33}\)

On the other hand, The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary contains definitions for both terms:

**Paranormal:** beyond the scope of normal objective investigation or explanation.

**Supernatural:** attributed to or thought to reveal some force above the laws of nature; magical; mystical. … supernatural.\(^{34}\)

Although these definitions encapsulate what many understand each phenomenon to be, the apparent synonymy of the two terms, which is exhibited by the omission of the term


‘paranormal’ from the *Macquarie Encyclopedic Dictionary*, reflects the common opinion regarding unexplainable phenomena in general and ghosts in particular.

While the synonymous use of these two terms may satisfy some researchers, most parapsychologists prefer to use both terms as a means of identifying separate phenomena. For example; Thalbourne defines ‘paranormal’ phenomena as:

A phenomena [that] refers to hypothesized processes that in principle are physically impossible and outside the realm of human or animal capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists …; often used as a synonym for “psychic,” “parapsychological,” “attributable [sic.] to psi,” or even “miraculous” (though shorn of religious overtones).35

However, ‘supernatural,’ which has a separate listing in Thalbourne’s glossary, while it is linked to the term ‘paranormal,’ is defined as being indicative of disciplines that explore supernatural belief systems. Thalbourne goes on to provide an alternative term that explains the relationship between ‘supernatural’ and ‘paranormal’ as well as the reason why parapsychologists prefer to use the latter term:

**Supernatural**
A theological and folkloristic term for *paranormal*, generally avoided by parapsychologists because of its implication that *psi* is somehow “outside of” or “over and above” nature. See also *Supernormal*.

**Supernormal**
Coined by Frederic Myers, an older term for *paranormal*, the latter being preferred by parapsychologists on the grounds that it does not convey overtones of the *supernatural* or of superiority, but merely denotes that the phenomena so referred to are different and not currently congruent with known forms of causation.36

Although parapsychologists have a clear understanding of the differences between what constitute supernatural and paranormal phenomena, it is apparent that some mainstream researchers and everyday individuals do not. Despite this thesis highlighting an inherent problem regarding terminology used in parapsychology, it is also understood that unfamiliarity with parapsychological terms is not confined to mainstream researchers. Evidence of this is reflected in a few of the quotes used throughout this thesis. Regardless of whether an individual’s usage of each term is ‘correct’ or not, the manners in which the terms are used often reveal the beliefs and opinions of not only those to whom the quote is attributed but also their society/culture in general.

By confining the exploration of ghostly phenomena to events that are purportedly connected to, or evidence of, supernatural belief systems, researchers not only reinforce the general opinion that ‘paranormal’ and ‘supernatural’ phenomena are synonymous they also appear to have disregarded other avenues that could provide a better explanation of such phenomena. Furthermore, they have failed to take into account the experiences of those who claim they do not hold to any supernatural belief system. This thesis argues that research parameters that overlook some aspects of ghostly phenomena; such as the terms used to describe ostensibly paranormal experiences/phenomena; not only provide incomplete data, they also hinder a complete understanding of the effect such phenomena have on a society in general, and especially in relation to issues regarding changes in afterlife beliefs that occur as each generation moves further away from their familial origins.

Methodology
After nearly a decade investigating ghostly phenomena, it became apparent there was a scarcity of research focusing specifically on Australian paranormal phenomena –
particularly research into Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena. Although, over the years, anthologies of these experiences and phenomena have increased, they have primarily been viewed as entertainment. As such, this thesis has, from its inception, been designed to pinpoint areas of research that would advance knowledge concerning Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena and the possible role multiculturalism plays in the continual development of beliefs and rituals linked to these experiences.

The ensuing discussion employs an interdisciplinary approach that encompasses various fields of research pertaining to ghostly phenomena; including Religious Studies, Philosophy, History, Science, Psychology, and Parapsychology. The non-fiction literature examined for this thesis not only includes texts and articles by scholars in these disciplines but also anthologies of Australian ghost stories, as well as newspaper and magazine articles. In addition, word-of-mouth accounts were recorded, while the utilisation of email enabled contact to be made with people around Australia who are currently researching paranormal phenomena. The latter sources not only aided the compilation of up-to-date information regarding research into ghostly phenomena in general and more specifically in Australia, they further confirmed initial observations that ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians remain an under-researched aspect of that society.

The scarcity of research into these experiences, which is evinced by the limited number of non-fiction books and academic articles focusing on the ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians, has meant, at times, that non-fiction literature and research relating to other cultures has been utilised – particularly in the development of various arguments concerning the role ghostly experiences play in the formation of beliefs regarding death and an afterlife. To aid the determination of current Australian attitudes and beliefs, Internet sites devoted to ghostly phenomena have been examined.
However, it is understood that both research methods have inherent difficulties regarding the accuracy of comments attributed to the various experients.

An example of similar difficulties encountered through the use of literary material as a means of determining beliefs/attitudes, can be found in Martin Seligman’s book *Learned Optimism*, in which he observes that: “The quote it self may be inaccurate, [or] hyped by the reporter to make more exciting copy;” as well as an added problem in that the person “may not say what [they mean].”37 To overcome these difficulties, Seligman, a professor of Psychology, together with Chris Peterson, a Social Psychologist, developed a technique that determined a person’s explanatory style without the use of questionnaires – they labelled this technique CAVE; an acronym for “content analysis of verbatim explanations.” Seligman likens this technique to a “time machine” that could be used “not only on contemporary people who won’t take questionnaires, but on people who can’t take questionnaires, like the dead.”38 Although this thesis does not use Seligman’s CAVE technique, it does acknowledge that comments attributed to individuals may be altered, either intentionally or unintentionally, by authors or researchers chronicling experients’ accounts. Regardless, as Seligman found, this thesis maintains that literary accounts can supply “valid indicators” of personal beliefs and experiences.39

While comments posted on Internet sites are usually written by the individual concerned, Seligman’s observation regarding a person not saying what they mean, raises doubt about the beliefs or attitudes expressed on these sites. Furthermore, it is difficult to determine which comments posted on these sites are actually written by Australians.


39 Seligman, *Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life*, 157. Although Seligman’s research focused on predicting the win/lose scenario of a baseball team based on the players’ explanatory style, the use of literary sources to aid in his determination highlights the positive aspects of research based on this method.
Therefore, although the tales and comments are interesting, they cannot be considered reliable resources for research into Australian ghostly experiences, or beliefs, and, as such, have been used sparingly and cautiously.

**Thesis Structure**

This thesis is divided into three main parts. Part One, which follows the Introduction, presents a review of literature pertaining to the ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians. The literature review consists of two sections. The first section discusses non-fiction literature canvassed for this thesis; as it is a major source of information for a theoretical study of this kind. The second section, which also relies on non-fiction literature, explores scholarly research relevant to Australian ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena in general.

The non-fiction review begins with a summary of the history behind ghostly phenomena and beliefs pertaining to death and an afterlife; thereby reinforcing the general consensus that these phenomena and beliefs have been in existence since humankind’s earliest days. This is evinced in the many poems and stories that have been recorded throughout the centuries, as well as artefacts, which have been unearthed during archaeological expeditions, depicting scenes of spirits and an afterlife. The interest generated by such phenomena and their link to beliefs concerning death and an afterlife is further highlighted by the examination of non-fiction literature chronicling modern day Spiritualism; a movement that flourished in the mid nineteenth century both in Australia and elsewhere in the world. This movement aided the rise of scientific research into paranormal phenomena in general, and ghosts in particular.

Following the discussion of the general history behind ghostly phenomena, this thesis presents an overview of some ghost stories from Australia’s early days of
settlement – stories that told of significant events; some even making their way overseas.

Although it was found that these early tales exhibit European influences, they also display elements unique to Australia. This thesis then shows how those who conduct ghost tours in towns and cities around Australia utilise details recorded in these early stories to retell the history of an event or site. A study of some well known Australian ghost stories, from colonial times as well as contemporary Australia, will then be discussed. This section ends with an examination of non-fiction literature produced by those who profess to be able to communicate with the deceased – that is, psychics, mediums, and ghost hunters. Their accounts contain most of the elements and traditions connected to ghostly phenomena. However, the beliefs surrounding such phenomena not only gave rise to non-fiction literary accounts but also scholarly research; therefore, the second section of the literature review discusses current Australian research, and researchers, regarding ghostly phenomena.

Apart from general non-fiction literature, scholarly texts have been produced by those who conduct research into many aspects of paranormal phenomena, including ghostly phenomena. As such, the second section of the literature review, which highlights some of these publications, presents an overview of people and institutions currently involved in the research of paranormal phenomena. It is understood that the researchers presented, are not the only researchers of Australian paranormal phenomena, merely the most recent and active ones.40 While there is no evidence that any of them have researched, or are currently researching, ghostly phenomena from a specifically non-Indigenous Australian perspective, their research into other areas of paranormal

40 This thesis acknowledges that there are many more Australian researchers of paranormal phenomena than just those mentioned in the section pertaining to ‘Current Australian Research.’ However, as the section title suggests the research parameters for this thesis was limited to ‘current’ researchers, which was determined after a comprehensive search that utilised the Internet and email. It should be noted that Harvey J. Irwin, a prolific Australian researcher of paranormal phenomena, was omitted from this thesis at his own request as he stated that he can no longer be considered a ‘current’ researcher due to his retirement from the world of academia. (Personal communiqué; 2008)
phenomena often utilises students from various Australian universities and does, occasionally, touch on ghostly phenomena in general, albeit in a cursory manner.

The researchers discussed in this section are primarily from the Sciences; especially the many different branches within the discipline of Psychology. Although their studies add to the general understanding of ghostly and paranormal phenomena, the quantity of research concerning psychological aspects of these phenomena and associated beliefs has resulted in an imbalance in the type of data collected. This thesis argues that the involvement of scholars from the Humanities and Social Sciences would enable a more balanced approach and, therefore, a greater understanding of the role and affect such phenomena and experiences have on individuals, families, and societies in general.

Despite this thesis’ concerns regarding the reliability of Internet sites as a resource, the exploration of current Australian research concludes with a list of some paranormal groups that display their findings and members comments on the World Wide Web. The content displayed on these sites reinforces this thesis’ contention that Australian ghostly phenomena and experiences are a neglected aspect of research into that society’s beliefs regarding death and an afterlife.

The manifesting element that some people believe could survive after bodily death is referred to by some of these people as a ‘ghost.’ In The Haunted, Owen Davies contends; “when someone known to have died appeared to the living” the person, or persons, who experienced the phenomenon made the “obvious deduction that the vision [must have been] a ghost.” While the psycho-logic leading to such a conclusion is easy enough to understand, it does not answer the question of ‘why’ they believe it was a ghost. In other words, what was it about the experience that convinced them it was not

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a hallucination, a lucid dream or some other visual anomaly? Therefore Part Two will explore ‘why’ people believe they’ve seen a ghost.

Most people who believe they have seen a ghost have formed some idea of what a ghost looks like before they have actually seen one. I argue that, although literary descriptions of ghosts, which may have influenced people’s ideas, have remained fairly consistent, visual representations have changed dramatically over the centuries; due, in part, to advancement in artistic skills combined with the implementation of technology. These factors are suggestive of preconditioning influences; for example, alongside these secular issues, George Karolyi’s observation that the “immortality of the “soul” is a fundamental tenet of most religions, present and past,”\textsuperscript{42} highlights the role religion plays in the development of belief regarding the possibility of survival after bodily death. Thus, Part Two begins with a discussion of preconditioning influences surrounding ghostly phenomena.

Despite this thesis maintaining there is an over-abundance of research into psychological aspects of paranormal phenomena and ghostly experiences; it is within these studies that preconditioning influences can be found. As such, there is some overlap between the two sections that form Part Two – in which the first explores preconditioning influences and the second discusses some psychological aspects of beliefs and experiences pertaining to ghostly and paranormal phenomena.

The growing number of eyewitness accounts has not only led to an escalation in theories concerning ghostly phenomena, it has also increased debate amongst the various groups researching such phenomena. The disagreements that fuel these debates often arise from questions regarding the psychological state of those who claim to have had ghostly experiences. Similarly, experients’ steadfast adherence to their claim/belief

\textsuperscript{42} George Karolyi, \textit{An Excursion into the Paranormal} (Upper Sturt, South Australia: The Paranormal Phenomena Research Foundation Inc., 2003). 213.
that what they saw was a ghost, has required philosophical debates about issues such as what exactly constitutes ‘seeing’ to be revisited. While these philosophical issues are important, this thesis will focus on debates pertaining to the psychology of the belief, which will be summarised in the second section of Part Two.

In *An Excursion into the Paranormal* Karolyi maintains that humankind’s belief “that an aspect of their being survives the death of the physical body” has existed “from time immemorial.”43 However, opinions regarding ‘what’ could survive are often vague or undecided. Nevertheless, survival theories and debates centring on these theories are exhibited in Australian opinions and beliefs. Therefore, to clarify some of the issues arising from these opinions and beliefs, Part Three will explore the question, ‘What’ do Australians believe survives after bodily death?

One answer is exhibited in Karolyi’s comment that “the term [‘survival,’ when used in relation to] paranormal phenomena, is inherently bound up with the mind-body duality principle.”44 Therefore, Part Three will begin the exploration of Australian beliefs with a survey of selected non-fiction literary sources that deal with survival theories centring on the mind/body problem – theories such as dualism, and the binary soul doctrine. The general overview presented in this section will aid the analysis of Australian beliefs regarding ‘what’ could survive after bodily death; such as the link between ghostly phenomena and a decedent’s45 residual energy, which will also be discussed. The following section will then discuss how non-Indigenous Australians have interpreted and utilised these survival theories in the development of their own beliefs/opinions regarding ghostly phenomena. It will be shown that despite an

43 Karolyi, *An Excursion into the Paranormal*, 213. Karolyi is a member of The Paranormal Phenomena Research Foundation Inc., which is based in South Australia.

44 Karolyi, *An Excursion into the Paranormal*, 213.

45 This term is used in many texts dealing with the paranormal phenomena of ghosts – especially those from North America where it is part of the legal vernacular. It comes from the Latin *decedere* meaning ‘die’ or ‘deceased’. Moore, ed., *The Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 358.
Australian flavour being added to the tales, the commonality of themes exhibited in the tales surrounding such phenomena, both in Australia and elsewhere in the world, raise doubt as to the likelihood that the variations evinced in Breen’s research into psi phenomena exist in relation to the manifestation of ghostly phenomena.⁴⁶

The ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians encompass many nationalities, religious backgrounds, and cultural beliefs or customs. Moreover, literature chronicling the ghostly experiences of Australia’s multicultural society tends to focus on tales from the memories of those who witnessed a ghostly phenomenon. The few texts that discuss sociological or scientific aspects of these experiences centre on the human brain as the sole source of these manifestations. While many literary texts present sincere studies of ghostly phenomena, a few, by their very content, appear to make a mockery of other more earnest works. Despite these concerns, all non-fiction literature dealing with such phenomena has something to offer in the study of belief, or disbelief, regarding life after bodily death. The study of non-fiction literature is an integral part of the research for ‘The Ghostly Experiences of non-Indigenous Australians;’ therefore, this thesis now turns to the review of non-fiction literature canvassed for this research.

⁴⁶ It should be noted; although Breen found international variations exhibited in her research, no details regarding these variations have been made available. However, research for this thesis has so far raised doubt as to whether any variations found in Australia’s tales/ experiences stem from a difference in beliefs/opinions or whether they are reflective of the language used to describe such phenomena.
Part One: Literature Review

People can … come to accept paranormal-related discourses as legitimate through exposure to these “truths” via mediums such as literature … Jeremy Northcote47

This thesis’ contention, that non-Indigenous Australian ghostly experiences remain an under-researched aspect of that society, developed after many years investigating ghostly phenomena in general. A large part of that research was spent scouring books (both fiction and non-fiction), academic texts, and articles in the media. As this thesis intends exploring ostensibly factual accounts of these ghostly experiences Part One will therefore present an overview of non-fiction literature as well as current research that exhibits features of, or places emphasis on, purportedly authentic Australian ghostly experiences. The overview will not only show the work already accomplished in this area but also highlight aspects of Australian ghostly phenomena suitable for future research by myself and others – especially those conversant with the various disciplinary fields this thesis maintains are required for a thorough understanding of these experiences and phenomena within Australia’s multicultural society.

The review begins with a discussion of non-fiction literature that focuses on the historical background relating to humanity’s belief in ghosts and an afterlife. An exploration of philosophical debates engendered by this belief will follow; especially those that emphasise the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death. In keeping with the historical nature of this review, a selection of early Australian ghost stories and their continuing influence within Australian society is explored. Although most ghost stories contain historical information, not all of them are recounted because of the history embedded within them. As such, some popular ghost stories that describe

experiences from colonial times as well as contemporary Australia will then be reviewed. This section concludes with a summary of non-fiction literature produced by Australian psychics – famous, infamous, and those who are relatively unknown.

While continuing the exploration of non-fiction literature, the review shifts the focus to current Australian researchers of paranormal phenomena. Although they have added considerably to the overall understanding of paranormal phenomena, it will be shown that few specifically explore Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena. This has resulted in the practice of using data from elsewhere in the world, especially the United Kingdom, when discussing Australian beliefs regarding death and an afterlife; a practice this thesis maintains has the potential to supply data of a contentious nature, which, in turn, could produce erroneous conclusions concerning ghostly experiences and beliefs pertaining to death and an afterlife in Australian society.

This section concludes with a brief discussion of current Internet based research groups, which have purportedly been developed by Australians. Most of the Internet sites mentioned appear to have been established by amateur ‘ghost hunters’ with some created by professional psychics as well as a small group of scholars who have either a personal and/or professional interest in paranormal phenomena. Regardless of their source, these sites provide an insight into current opinions/beliefs through facilities where subscribers can share their experiences, beliefs, opinions and, occasionally, even photos. However, it is necessary to view any comments posted on these sites with caution – bearing in mind not only Seligman’s observations regarding people not saying what they mean, but also Jeremy Northcote’s findings concerning fluidity of belief amongst proponents of paranormal phenomena—an aspect of belief that will be

48 Some researchers presented in the section exploring ‘Current Australian Research’ do not use the term ‘paranormal phenomena’ preferring instead to use the term ‘psi’ or ‘anomalous phenomena.’ Refer to the Glossary for definitions.

discussed more fully in Part Three. This thesis will now turn to the discussion of non-fiction literature canvassed for the ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians.
Non-Fiction Literature

The study of beliefs is ultimately the study of subjective reports and personal stories as told through historical records, folklore, direct observation, books, and artistic expressions. James Houran & Rense Lange

Philosophers, scientists, parapsychologists, and psychics, are among the many individuals and groups worldwide who have, either personally or professionally, conducted research into ghostly phenomena. Research has been fuelled, in part, by the intent to prove there is some form of continued existence after bodily death. Obversely, there are those who aim to prove that death is the end of any form of existence or life. The combination of such polemical viewpoints with the diverse range of people and professions researching ghostly phenomena has resulted in a profusion of theories, as well as an abundance of books and articles covering almost every facet of ghostly phenomena. Regardless, as G.N.M. Tyrrell, a former President of the Society for Psychical Research observed, and subsequent research has shown, there are still areas that have either been overlooked or under-researched. Tyrrell further maintains that focusing on the statistical compilation of as many experiential examples as possible, whilst acceptable, does not give a complete picture of ghostly phenomena. Furthermore, despite statistical support, mainstream scientists still dispute the possible actuality of not only ghostly phenomena but also psi phenomena (such as ESP, telepathy and psychokinesis); as the following passage from Damien Broderick’s book, Outside the Gates of Science explains:

Decades of culminating laboratory evidence strongly suggest that real correlations exist between mental states and randomized events that are distant in space and time, some even in the future. The laboratory findings are generally weaker than those reported from the field and because of the experimental paradigms used, they are basically statistical in nature. In other words they need a large number of trials to reach statistical significance. What is worse is that it is difficult to replicate the phenomena even when allowing for their intrinsic statistical character. Because of the claimed transcendental nature of the phenomena the experimenter is an intrinsic part of the experiment and therefore replication from one experimenter to another is not expected to be easily accomplished. Replication by independent scientists is of course the requirement for a phenomenon to be considered objective and real. Therefore the controversy about the reality of these phenomena continues in spite of the cumulating evidence . . .

Disputes, such as these, continue despite control techniques used by some parapsychologists in the collection of data and formulation of results. For example; controlled experiments that utilise blind or double-blind\(^{55}\) techniques are considered to produce reliable results.\(^{56}\) Yet, Larry Dossey comments in the Foreword to John O’M Bockris’ book, *The New Paradigm*, that:

In a review of 1,548 papers submitted to high-status science journals, British biologist Rupert Sheldrake found that zero percent of papers in the physical sciences of physics and chemistry used blinded or double-blind research methods;

\(^{54}\) Damien Broderick, *Outside the Gates of Science* (New York: Thunder’s Mouth Press, 2007). From the frontispiece; a passage from Dick J. Bierman’s article: “On the Nature of Anomalous Phenomena” in *The Physical Nature of Consciousness*, ed. Philip van Loocke. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2001. \(^*\) Note: It is understood that this quote does not relate to the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts. However, the replication of experiments sought by mainstream scientists regarding psi phenomena is also expected in other areas of paranormal research; such as experiments/research involving ghostly phenomena – compilation of experiential evidence is not considered ‘acceptable.’

\(^{55}\) According to Larry Dossey: “In a typical double-blind, controlled medical experiment, … two groups of subjects are involved. One is given the treatment that is being evaluated – a new drug, say – while the other group, the “controls,” are not. In a blind study, the subjects are not aware of which group they are in; and in a double-blind experiment, neither the experimenter nor the subjects knows this information. The double-blind design prevents the researcher from inserting his or her bias into the experiment and seeing what s/he wants to see.” John O’M Bockris, *The New Paradigm: A Confrontation between Physics and the Paranormal Phenomena* (College Station, Texas: D&M Enterprises 2004). x.

in the biological sciences only 0.8 percent used such; in psychology and animal behavior, 4.9 percent did so; in the medical sciences, 24.2 percent used them and in parapsychology, 85.2 percent employed such. This is a telling rebuttal to the critics of parapsychology … Far from being a mythos-dominated field, its research standards are some of the most precise within all of science.\(^5^7\)

While some parapsychologists do adhere to strict experimental controls (such as blind and double-blind methods), others employ research parameters that tend towards biases that could leave results open to question and possible ridicule. For example; Tyrrell’s suggestion of “selecting the right subjects and forming the right investigating groups” could be considered as ‘stacking’ the odds in favour of a positive outcome\(^5^8\) – a technique also employed by some sceptics and those wishing to discredit any positive paranormal findings.\(^5^9\) Despite the development of controlled research methods, which have been designed to satisfy mainstream scientists, there are those who prefer to develop theories supporting the existence of ghosts, and therefore the possibility of life after death, based solely on the accumulation of experiential evidence – such as that displayed in various art, texts, and rituals from humankind’s earliest days to the present.

While the intent of this thesis is to neither prove nor disprove the existence of ghosts, it is prudent to acknowledge opposing scientific and philosophical opinions as well as explore the history behind, and stories connected to, ghostly phenomena as this will aid the interpretation of data used to support the diverse viewpoints expressed by those involved in the research of ghosts. As such, the review of non-fiction literature will begin with an examination of the historical background of ghostly phenomena.

\(^5^8\) Tyrrell, Apparitions, 161.
Historical Background

‘Since time immemorial’ – the parapsychological equivalent of ‘Once upon a time’ – doesn’t impart much in the way of information other than to emphasise the opinion that belief in a spirit world has existed for as long as humankind can remember. Anthropologist, Jack Goody, found evidence that a belief in life after bodily death developed as early as the Upper Palaeolithic Age. Goody arrived at this conclusion after examining Upper Palaeolithic burial sites and the apparent rituals associated with death and burial. The inclusion of grave goods buried with the bodies implied to Goody “continued use by the dead,” thus leading him to conclude that people from this period had developed “some idea of continuity after death.” 60 On the other hand, classical scholar, W.F. Jackson Knight contends that humanity’s “belief that death is not the end” stretched “far back into pre-palaeolithic [sic.] ages of man.”61

Grave-offerings have been found in graves at least 200,000 years old in East Africa. It is possible that finds twice as old, left by Neanderthal man and perhaps even by Sinanthropus far earlier still, may indicate a belief in survival not only for human beings but also for animals.62

While there is some evidence to support Knight’s claim regarding Neanderthal man, none exists for Sinanthropus. Rather, the opposite has been found – Sinanthropus, or Homo erectus, “had no art, no culture, no religion, no burial practices.”63 However, Knight’s conclusion that: “The dead have always become spirits at death, and so far as


we can make out have been seen as ghosts by some members of all peoples at all times,“ although a very broad statement, is indicative of the general opinion that is evinced in most non-fiction literature dealing with ghostly phenomena.

Jeanene Campbell suggests in her thesis ‘Cognition and the Apparitional Experience’ that this is due, in part, to the use of two dominant theories that, since the late nineteenth century, have formed the basis of most research into ghostly phenomena; the first being:

The traditional theory of apparitions[, which] was the spirit hypothesis, that is, an apparition is an aspect of the individual’s existence that survives bodily death; … it was in the context of the ‘survival hypothesis’ that apparitions attracted the early scientific research efforts.65

This theory was challenged by the second theory to gain dominance in parapsychological research; a theory that was based on research regarding “hallucinations experienced by people who were in good physical and mental health;”66 to this end:

… sometime in 1889 [Henry Sidgwick] suggested to the [Society for Psychical Research] … that they conduct a census covering the prevalence and nature of hallucinations. The project was approved and duly undertaken, the report being published in 1894 by Sidgwick and his committee and entitled the ‘Census of Hallucinations.’67

Campbell states that the aim of the Census was “not primarily to understand the process by which apparitions are produced, but rather to obtain proof of the occurrence of

64 Knight, Elysion: On Ancient Greek and Roman Beliefs Concerning a Life after Death. 23.
telepathy.” 68 The Census was initiated by Sidgwick and the Society for Psychical Research after it was determined that there was a need to expand on earlier research carried out by three of the Society’s members; Edmund Gurney, Frederic W.H. Myers and Frank Podmore. The findings from Gurney’s, Myers’, and Podmore’s study, which was also conducted in response to a request from the “Council of the Society for Psychical Research and [was] largely based on material which that Council” 69 already had in its possession, was published in 1886 under the title Phantasms of the Living. In the introduction, Myers wrote:

The subject of this book is one which a brief title is hardly sufficient to explain. For under our heading of “Phantasms of the Living,” we propose, in fact, to deal with all classes of cases where there is reason to suppose that the mind of one human being has affected the mind of another, without speech uttered, or word written, or sign made; – has affected it, that is to say, by other means than through the recognised channels of sense.

To such transmission of thoughts or feelings we have elsewhere given the name of telepathy; … 70

Although Myers goes on to state that all forms of apparition will continue to be explored, in this instance, as the title of their book indicates, the focus would be on apparitions of “all persons who are still living, as we know life, though they may be on the very brink and border of physical dissolution.” 71 Their decision marked a defining moment in research pertaining to paranormal phenomena; especially research of ghostly phenomena.

Prior to Phantasms of the Living, ghosts/apparitions were held responsible for all manners of occurrences; from poltergeist activity to telepathically received messages,

70 Gurney, Myers and Podmore, Phantasms of the Living (1886). xxxv.
71 Gurney, Myers and Podmore, Phantasms of the Living (1886). xxxv.
supposedly from those who had died. However, the emphasis of *Phantasms of the Living*, which was reinforced by “Gurney’s view … that apparitions were hallucinatory and were caused by telepathy,”72 divided future research of ghostly phenomena into two separate areas. ESP, telepathy and psychokinesis, which were once thought to be methods of communication reserved for those who had died, were now regarded as ‘hallucinatory’ phenomena, which were either intentional or unintentional forms of communication between the ‘living;’ communications that occasionally were accompanied by a visual form, that is, a ghost/apparition – a hallucination. Ghosts were relegated to a minor role in that they were considered responsible only for phenomena that could not be tested in a laboratory, or defied logical or scientific explanation. Another outcome of the research presented in both *Phantasms of the Living* and the Census was a change regarding what aspects of ghostly phenomena researchers explored. For example, Campbell found that:

Interest in apparitions gradually waned, particularly from the 1930s, as interest grew in experimental work on such hypotheses as telepathy, clairvoyance and precognition. To the extent that research was pursued, the focus of interest remained the subjectivity versus the objectivity of apparitions. However, changes in the concept of the telepathic process affected the interpretation of apparitions, and more modern researchers asked if the origin of the apparition could be solely in the unconscious mind of the experiencer, or if an external agency (living or dead) occasionally could be responsible.73

Due to the apparent division in research pertaining to ghosts/apparitions, B.P. Wiesner and R.H. Thouless proposed in 1942 that the word ‘psi’ be used as a “general blanket term” to denote these ‘hallucinatory’ phenomena. (Thalbourne notes that their choice came “[f]rom the Greek, psi, [which is the] twenty-third letter of the Greek

alphabet; [and] … psyche, the Greek [word] for “mind, soul”.”)  

While some researchers maintain that ghostly phenomena, which cannot be explained by theories concerning psi phenomena, provide evidence for some form of continuation of “human personality” after bodily death, the majority appear to support the ‘hallucination’ theory proposed by Gurney, and subsequently upheld in the Census.

Although Gurney and Myers collaborated on the exploration of the “theoretical and conceptual issues addressed in [Phantasms of the Living]” their views on the subject were not the same. Campbell notes that Myers “could never [fully] support [Gurney’s] view:’’

He believed that some apparitions, while not really material beings, still occupy space and retain self-consciousness. Of all the founders of the SPR, it was Myers who was most concerned with finding proof of personal survival of physical death, and by adopting the position that ‘phantoms’ represent conscious, self-aware beings, Myers could use their existence to support the survival hypothesis.

Campbell states that the main “point of controversy, particularly between Gurney and Myers, was whether apparitions are subjective or objective.” While the arguments surrounding this “point” are important, for now it is sufficient to note that the Census, like Phantasms of the Living, did not focus on the “process by which apparitions [were] produced, but rather … proof of the occurrence of telepathy.” The preference of many past and present researchers to confine studies to similar theoretical parameters has meant that other aspects of ghostly phenomena, such as visual sightings by more than one person of someone who has died, remain relatively unexplored. Another question

74 Thalbourne, A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology. 92.

75 Campbell, "Cognition and the Apparitional Experience: An Exploratory Study," 8.


78 Campbell, "Cognition and the Apparitional Experience: An Exploratory Study," 5.

that remains unanswered by such research is why humankind is fascinated with death and the possibility of some form of survival after death?

In *Death and the Afterlife* Brian Innes proposes that this fascination arose not from ghostly encounters but from puzzlement as to why people die: “Is death an inevitable end to life or is it some kind of punishment?”\(^8^0\) However, just as there is no evidence to suggest that belief in life after bodily death resulted from an encounter with a ghost, opinions regarding belief in life after death in pre-literate societies can only be based on conjecture; as Innes argues:

> We have no way of knowing what people believed before they began to leave documentary records – inscribed clay tablets or funerary monuments – or passed on gradually garbled verbal accounts from generation to generation, to be untangled during the past two centuries by anthropologists.\(^8^1\)

Innes further maintains that although the tales passed on via these records and accounts showed “similarities between myths from widely separated cultures … there are also striking differences.”\(^8^2\)

The differences mentioned by Innes, centre on the varying reasons given for the arrival of death:

> In some myths it comes as the result of an error, a message misunderstood. In others, it is sent as a punishment for disobedience, ingratitude or stupidity (as in the Judaeo-Christian story of Adam and Eve). And yet, in other myths, death is the result of an agreement, either between the gods or between the first men and women.\(^8^3\)

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\(^8^1\) Innes, *Death and the Afterlife*, 161-162. A book that highlights the need for caution regarding ancient rituals and beliefs in pre-literate societies is David Macaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1979). This book presents a humorous tale about erroneous conclusions that can occur in the field of archaeology, especially when there is no extant textual evidence.

\(^8^2\) Innes, *Death and the Afterlife*. 25.

\(^8^3\) Innes, *Death and the Afterlife*. 25.
Despite the reasons given for humanity’s loss of immortality, Innes concludes that many myths blame the loss on an “unhappy accident” that prevented humankind from obtaining the ability to “renew their lives over and over again.” While mythological differences focus on the cessation of life, the similarities suggest how humankind has overcome the complete annihilation of ‘self’ caused by death.

Innes suggests that one similarity in “[m]ost myths about the origin of death” was the assumption that “humankind was originally created immortal, and death came as an intruder.” An example of an ancient ‘documentary record’ displaying this assumption is The Epic of Gilgamesh. Written by the ancient Babylonians in 2,300 B.C.E it is humanity’s oldest extant textual evidence for the belief in life after bodily death. This text “explains why, in Babylonian belief, men live on after death as spirits or shades in the Netherworld.” Displayed in this epic is their belief that life after bodily death was possible due to the “divine element in mankind’s creation.” The Babylonians reasoned, if the gods could not die then the ‘divine element’ bestowed by the gods on humankind meant that an element within them also could not die.

Although archaeological and extant textual evidence supports the theory that belief in life after bodily death has persisted for thousands of years and through many cultures, Geddes MacGregor contends in Images of Afterlife that: “The earliest forms of belief about [life after death were] vague. … They seem to be instinctive convictions that something in a person survives death.” Acceptance of this ‘conviction’ spawned not only religious rituals and beliefs regarding death and the afterlife, but also secular opinions and theories concerning many aspects of what survival after bodily death

84 Innes, Death and the Afterlife, 25.
85 Innes, Death and the Afterlife, 25.
would entail. While some may argue that belief in survival after bodily death is in itself religious, MacGregor’s hypothesis, regarding “instinctive convictions,” which simply requires that the idea that something within a human being survives after bodily death came first, followed by the rituals surrounding death and burial, appears to support theories advocating cultural influences. Regardless, these rituals gradually became a part of the religious fabric of society. Furthermore, Irwin’s theory that belief in survival after bodily death could be “bidirectional or circular, with beliefs encouraging involvement, and with involvement serving to reinforce beliefs”88 strengthens not only MacGregor’s hypothesis but also Innes argument regarding the inherent difficulty in determining the developmental path of beliefs and rituals in pre-literate societies.

Throughout the ages, regardless of the many conflicting issues surrounding survival after bodily death, poets and authors have been inspired to write poems and tales of what they believe an afterlife would be like; some of which told of ghostly visitations and deeds. Ancient Greek and Latin authors, for example, such as Homer, Plautus, and Pliny, wrote of the supernatural89 manifestations of those who had died, usually violently; while in the mid sixteenth century C.E Shakespeare also wrote of ghosts and hauntings.90 Although there is no evidence to suggest that these or any other, authors/poets believed in the existence of ghosts, some did wonder at the reality of


89 It was noted in ‘The Aim of this Thesis’ that the term ‘supernatural’ is understood as referring to “belief systems that depend on supernatural beings such as a God or gods;” (14) it should also be noted that ancient societies ascribed to the gods all phenomena and occurrences that were considered beyond the control of humankind. Ghosts would therefore have been the result of supernatural influences.

ghostly phenomena. In a letter published between C.E 100 and 109, Pliny inquires of his friend, Sura:

“I should very much like to know whether you think there are such things as ghosts, and whether they have their own shapes and some divine existence, or whether they are unreal images that take their forms from our own anxieties.”

Over the ensuing centuries, queries such as Pliny’s generated many philosophical and scientific debates concerning life after bodily death – debates that increasingly centred on the supposed duality of humankind.

The most basic definition of the dualistic concept, which was developed by ancient Greek philosophers during the latter half of the fifth century B.C.E, subscribed to the belief that humankind was composed not only of a physical body, but also an incorporeal body known as a ‘soul.’ Proponents of this concept maintained that at death the body and soul disconnect – the body to burial or cremation, the soul to continued ‘life’ in some other unknown realm. However, as J.M.C. Toynbee observes, not all ancient people believed in the duality of humankind or in life after death; noting in Death and Burial in the Roman World, the sceptical attitudes of the Epicureans and Stoics. Graham Speake states in the Penguin Dictionary of Ancient History that the Epicureans’ and Stoics’ sceptical stance arose from their acceptance of Leucippus’ and Democritus’ “atomic theory,” which argued that the body and soul both consisted of atomic particles that disintegrated on death. Although sceptical attitudes are evinced in text and literature since at least the fourth century B.C.E, Toynbee concludes that, in the ancient world at least, “negative sentiments are, … by and large, exceptional.”

91 Felton, Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity. 62.
94 Toynbee, Death and Burial in the Roman World, 34.
Whilst interest in ghostly phenomena is exhibited in literature dating back over four thousand years, and theories concerning survival after bodily death, which were based on the duality of body and soul, appeared nearly two and a half thousand years ago, many parapsychologists claim that it was not until the mid nineteenth century C.E\textsuperscript{95} that books and articles purporting to be scientific exposés into ghostly phenomena began to appear. They maintain that these exposés were, in part, the result of a movement that enabled people to seriously contemplate the existence of ghosts – that movement was, and is, known as Spiritualism.

The Influence of Spiritualism

Since the mid nineteenth century there has been an increase in interest both in Australia and elsewhere regarding the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts. General consensus asserts that the escalation in scientific literature focusing on the paranormal, and more specifically the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts, was partly due to the influence of the Spiritualist movement.\textsuperscript{96} This movement arose in the early eighteenth century after people became dissatisfied with seventeenth century Enlightenment’s preference for “scientific rationality,”\textsuperscript{97} which took precedence over the “irrationality and superstition that supposedly characterized the Middle Ages.”\textsuperscript{98} In \textit{Soul Searching} Nicholas Humphrey argues that despite the Enlightenment and later findings put forward by scientific rationalists, one reason why there was a resurgence in “alternative beliefs,” such as those that supported belief in supernatural and/or paranormal phenomena, was,

\parbox{0.95\textwidth}{\textsuperscript{95} Any further mention of time frames in the Common Era will no longer have the prefix C.E added. However, dates Before the Common Era will continue to be assigned the suffix B.C.E.

\textsuperscript{96} For example; Northcote, \textit{The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth: A Sociological Account}. 45-46. Northcote states that: The Theosophical Society, which sought “a unity between religion …, Spiritualism and scientific perspectives,” was one group that grew out of the Spiritualist movement of the nineteenth century; while the Society for Psychical Research was another.


\textsuperscript{98} Ted Honderich, ed., \textit{The Oxford Companion to Philosophy} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). 236.}
in part, due to the fact that: “Scientific materialism [was] regarded by many, even by some of its own prophets, as deeply unsatisfying: scary, bewildering, insulting, demeaning, dispiriting, [and] confining.”99 By the mid nineteenth century discontent with ever increasing scientific discoveries that weakened the divine aspect of humankind, such as Charles Darwin’s ‘Origin of the Species,’ further aided the revival of Spiritualism. Modern-day Spiritualism, which evolved from the paranormal experiences of the Fox sisters at Hydesville in North America in March 1848, spread to Europe and the United Kingdom before finally making its way to Australia, “mainly through the gold rush migration of the 1850s.”100

While the experiences of the Fox sisters enabled people of the nineteenth century to seriously contemplate the idea that such phenomena might actually exist, and subsequently aided the increase of scientific exposés, it was not the original impetus behind research or non-fiction literature dealing with paranormal phenomena – it merely re-invigorated explorations into such occurrences. In his book Fifty Years of Psychical Research, Harry Price argues that literature purporting to be scientific studies of ghosts and other paranormal phenomena were being published as early as the sixteenth century:

Probably the first book in the English language to discuss the subject of ‘survival,’ as we understand it today, was a translation of De Spectris, by Ludwig Lavater (1527-86), published at Zurich in 1570. … The English edition was published in London in 1572.101

99 Humphrey, Soul Searching. 7.
“To prove [his] argument that the serious recording of psychical phenomena is not modern,” Price cites various treatises dealing with paranormal phenomena that date from the mid to late seventeenth century. As additional refutation of the common perception regarding the influence of Spiritualism, Price further contends that the “typical spiritualist séance” did not start in America in 1848, asking instead: “[W]hen was the typical spiritualist séance technique first practised in England?” In answer to his own question, Price argues:

The spiritualists themselves believe that ‘modern spiritualism’ began with the Fox sisters in America in 1848, that it spread to England and Europe during the following years, and that the Fox girls ‘invented’ the séance. As a matter of fact, they did nothing of the sort. The séance, as we know it to-day [sic.], was invented by a naughty little girl[, Elizabeth Parsons, from Smithfield, England,] as long ago as 1762.

Although Price’s findings display the need for caution in statements concerning the foundation of scientific research into paranormal phenomena as well as spiritualistic practices, it would be acceptable to contend that an escalation in scientific research and exposés during the nineteenth century did occur partially as a result of the Fox sisters’ experiences. Furthermore, while Price’s historical corrections are important, especially regarding the need for accuracy in parapsychological research that provide timelines of belief and experiences, his comments highlight an inherent difference between research into paranormal phenomena in Australia compared to elsewhere in the world. The ‘difference’ is the ability to more accurately determine the arrival of external influences,

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102 Price, Fifty Years of Psychical Research: A Critical Survey. 6. Price published his book in 1939, so it would be fairly safe to assume that his interpretation of “modern” could be deemed to relate to a period from the late nineteenth century through to the early years of the twentieth century – a period that saw an escalation in scientific exposés of paranormal phenomena.

103 Price, Fifty Years of Psychical Research: A Critical Survey. 9-10. Price states that this information was supplied by Oliver Goldsmith in his brochure The Mystery Revealed: Containing a Series of Transactions and Authentic Testimonials, respecting the supposed Cock-Lane Ghost, which was published in London in 1762. 10; fn. 1.
such as Spiritualism, as well as establishing realistic timelines regarding the development of Australian research into paranormal phenomena.

While the relatively recent European settlement of Australia aids the determination of the arrival of external influences as well as the development of accurate timelines, it is necessary to remain aware of the historical background of belief in ghosts and their connection to survival after bodily death. Although modern day Spiritualism may have aided an increase in belief as well as the initiation of research concerning ghostly phenomena not only in Australia but elsewhere, the foundations of the belief were built long before. Those who have settled in Australia, for example, from the earliest days to the present, hold beliefs ingrained through centuries of reinforcement. Furthermore, while researchers can accurately determine the arrival of external influences, it should be understood that stories retelling the ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians, were (and are) told by people whose beliefs stem from ancient foundations.

**Australian Ghost Stories**

Around the same time the Spiritualist movement was gaining popularity in Australia, a new literary genre, known today as ‘Gothic,’ was beginning to be evinced in stories written by mid nineteenth century Australians. As with Spiritualism, the arrival of this new genre coincided with an influx of migrants from the United Kingdom and Europe. In *The Anthology of Colonial Australian Gothic Fiction* Ken Gelder and Rachael Weaver state:

> The Gothic had developed as a popular narrative form in Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century, specialising in an intense blend of the supernatural, family romance and gloomy atmospheres. ... [T]he genre flourished in the nineteenth century, spreading beyond its European sources to America – most notably, in the
The Gothic tales that influenced early Australian writers contained literary symbols that reflected the populace’s revolt against societal conventions created during the Enlightenment of the late seventeenth century. The inversion of the mores of the day exhibited in both the Spiritualist movement and Gothic literature would have appealed to a society, such as nineteenth century Australia, that was conscious of its unsavoury past and eager to either expunge or justify it in some way. Fred Botting suggests in his contribution to A Companion to the Gothic, that Gothic literature could have been seen as one way of achieving this, since:

‘Gothic’ functions as the mirror of eighteenth-century mores and values: a reconstruction of the past as the inverted, mirror image of the present, its darkness allows the reason and virtue of the present a brighter reflection.105

Although Gelder and Weaver maintain that some of Australia’s ghost stories are direct echoes of earlier tales published in Europe or North America, they also note that they contained an Australian flavour, as the stories “quickly developed a set of distinctive local characteristics.”106 This is not surprising given that, in this period, Australia was predominantly populated by people born in Europe and the United Kingdom, in particular. Furthermore, it is common for each society to weave details relating to their area and lives into their stories as it enables them to better identify with the tale being told.

104 Gelder and Weaver, eds., The Anthology of Colonial Australian Gothic Fiction, 2.
106 Gelder and Weaver, eds., The Anthology of Colonial Australian Gothic Fiction, 2.
Thirteen years prior to his determination that Australian ghost stories were part of the Gothic genre Gelder stated in *The Oxford Book of Australian Ghost Stories* that such tales belonged to a “marginal genre” known simply as “Australian ghost stories.” Regardless of the label used, in the mid-nineteenth century the earliest intimation of colonial ghostly phenomena recorded in the fledgling colony’s magazines and newspapers engendered the general opinion that such tales were either pure fabrications or not “of the correct type.” After all, Australia was “too new for that style of thing…” Furthermore, although the Gothic genre was popular overseas, the possibility of it ever gaining a foothold in the Australian literary scene was considered, by some, an unlikely occurrence. However, as with Spiritualism, nineteenth-century Australians were more than willing to accept the new genre.

While the symbolism reflected in Gothic tales appealed to a society that was struggling with its unsavoury convict past, Anne Bower Ingram observes in *Shudders and Shakes* that other factors such as the “Celtic inheritance” of many of Australia’s early settlers, combined with the “Australian love of a tall story,” could also have aided their acceptance. Despite their early acceptance, Gelder argues that Australian ghost stories, as a genre, generally remain “neglected,” even well into the twentieth century:

In this country, popular literatures such as crime fiction – to which the ghost story is often related – and science fiction have received a great deal of attention, from publishing houses that feature them in representative anthologies, universities that now offer courses on them, and other kinds of institutionalising structures such as genre-based bookshops, specialist journals, annual conventions, and so on. The Australian ghost story attracts none of these interests …

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As if to confirm Gelder’s argument, Nicholas Birns’ and Rebecca McNeer’s book A Companion to Australian Literature since 1900, which they state “celebrates Australian literature of the past century,” while devoting a full chapter to “Australian Science Fiction,” fails to mention even one ghost story nor their place in the Australian literary scene.112

Since Gelder’s comment regarding the neglect accorded Australian ghost stories, anthologies chronicling non-fiction accounts of Australian ghostly experiences have become slightly more prevalent. However, academic courses, and research, concerning these tales is still under-represented, not just in Australia but elsewhere in the world. Gillian Bennett, for example, is a folklorist “associated with the Centre for English Cultural Tradition and Language at the University of Sheffield.”113 In the introduction to her book Alas, Poor Ghost! Bennett states that “serious scholars remain very wary about studying supernatural folklore.”114 However, as this thesis also contends, Bennett maintains that ghostly experiences do effect individual beliefs and the narratives they engender and, as such, are worthy of study.115 Although Bennett’s use of the term ‘supernatural’ appears to confirm Thalbourne’s contention that folklorists use the term to denote what others consider to be paranormal phenomena, it also serves to reinforce Jenkins’ observation regarding a current trend amongst researchers who appear to

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113 Gillian Bennett, Alas, Poor Ghost! (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1999). Back Cover.

114 Bennett, Alas, Poor Ghost! 1.

115 Although this thesis argues that acceptance by academic institutions of scholars interested in studying paranormal phenomena would encourage more researchers from a variety of disciplines thereby leading to a greater understanding of these phenomena, it is understood that this may not necessarily be the case. However, acceptance would lift the current stigma attached to research regarding paranormal/psi phenomena, which could therefore, over time, result in an interdisciplinary approach that would better enable exploration of all facets of these phenomena.
confine study of ghostly phenomena to supernatural belief systems.\textsuperscript{116} However, in this instance, this is not the case.

In \textit{Alas, Poor Ghost!} Bennett presents the findings of her study into folk beliefs surrounding ghostly phenomena that she “collected from women [in Manchester during] the 1980s.”\textsuperscript{117} Although:

[o]riginally it had been [her] intention to encourage talk only about the possibility of interaction between the dead and the living, …in practice [she] found that this was far too intimidating, so [she] widened the scope of [her] research to include less alarming and delicate matters – extrasensory perception, omens, premonitions, fortune-telling and horoscopes, and the possibility of life after death. …Though it had not been [her] original intention to do any research in these areas, in the end [she] was very glad that [she] had done so, because [she] came to believe that all these subjects form a sort of background or context to more serious beliefs.\textsuperscript{118}

Therefore, while initially Bennett’s research parameters were to be confined to supernatural phenomena (that is, phenomena/experiences pertaining to life after death), other phenomena, which many parapsychologists prefer to classify as ‘paranormal,’ were included as a means of allowing research participants to better explain their beliefs and experiences. It is interesting to note that Bennett found the term ‘supernatural’ was, itself, problematic in that participants viewed “its connotations [as] wholly evil and taboo.”\textsuperscript{119} Nevertheless, as Bennett observed during her research, many people around the world remain fascinated by tales purporting to be ‘true’ accounts of both supernatural and paranormal phenomena. This is evinced in Australia, and elsewhere, by an increase in genre-based bookshops, especially over the past few decades; as well as

\textsuperscript{116} Thalbourne, \textit{A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology}, 121; and page 13 of this thesis, respectively. Personal communiqué from Jenkins – received Monday 9 June 2008.

\textsuperscript{117} Bennett, \textit{Alas, Poor Ghost!} 12.

\textsuperscript{118} Bennett, \textit{Alas, Poor Ghost!} 13.

\textsuperscript{119} Bennett, \textit{Alas, Poor Ghost!} 15.
the creation of an industry specialising in ghost tours – many of which are now conducted on a regular basis in cities and towns around the country.\textsuperscript{120} Despite this, Gelder maintains that many people still “doubted if there were any Australian ghost stories to be found.”\textsuperscript{121} This attitude is not solely the result of the genre being a ‘neglected’ one. Ingram suggests another reason for the difficulty in finding tales about Australia’s ghosts could be that “few ever achieve national fame;” moreover, the ghosts that do exist “haunt their own locality and their presence is known only to the locals of that district.”\textsuperscript{122}

Irrespective of evidence of distinct European and North American literary influences, the link to locality is often displayed in many of Australia’s early ghost stories as they recount experiences relating totally to the fledgling colony. In \textit{Australian Ghost Stories} Frank Cusack notes that most of Australia’s earliest tales “stem from … penal times and the squatting age, from the days of gold … from the bushranging days and selection life to the roping down of the outback;” times when tales were shared via an oral tradition, especially around campfires, not read out of a book.\textsuperscript{123} While in the cities, records of events involving murder, which appeared in the newspapers of the day, were occasionally followed by tales of ghostly phenomena arising from the incident. One murder in particular, that of Frederick Fisher, aroused speculation from the outset, due to the claim that Fisher’s body was only discovered after his ghost showed the way. Fisher’s death, which was the inspiration behind the first published tale of ghostly phenomena from colonial Australia, not only provided readers there and back in Europe,
and the United Kingdom in particular, with a gruesome account of murder avenged by a victim’s ghost, it also gave the colony a literary style it could claim as its own; as the Reverend J.D. Lang wrote in Tegg’s Monthly Magazine in March 1836:

The story of Fisher’s Ghost is rather a remarkable affair altogether, and we have reason to believe that the facts stated in the narrative [by William Kerr] are all well authenticated. It is well told, and entirely colonial; and we confess we like any thing [sic.] that relates to the colony, in a work professedly colonial, much better than even stories or narratives of a superior kind, copied from English periodicals. We want a literature of our own, and the attempt to create such a thing is at all events creditable, whatever be its success.124

Fisher’s Ghost125

Supreme Criminal Court – Before the Chief Justice – Friday, February 2nd, 1827. George Worrall was indicted for the wilful murder of Frederick Fisher, at Campbell Town, on the 16th day of July last. The information charged the death to have been caused by sundry wounds inflicted on the skull with a stick.126

Some authors of Australian ghostly experiences state that the tale of Fisher’s Ghost is “probably the best-known ghost story in Australia.”127 At one time that may have been so, yet mention this tale to a passer-by today and they will most probably state that they have never heard of it – unless they live in Campbelltown where an annual festival is held commemorating the ghostly event. Despite this, many books and articles dealing

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125 An outline of this tale is presented in Appendix A.
with Australian ghost stories begin with an account of Fisher’s Ghost, which was purportedly witnessed by John Farley, a local farmer. The main reason for this is the fact that the events surrounding Fisher’s death and the subsequent trial and hanging of his alleged killer, George Worrall, became the first Australian ghost story to be published; a story that was circulated not only in Australia but also elsewhere in the world.

Although the most popular version of this tale is John Lang’s ‘The Ghost Upon the Rail,’ which was published in 1859 in Lang’s book Botany Bay, or True Stories of the Early Days of Australia, it was not the first published version.\textsuperscript{128} While Cusack contends that the tale was “first mentioned in Robert Montgomery Martin’s History of the British Colonies, Vol. 4, published in London in 1835,”\textsuperscript{129} Stephan Williams suggests it appeared three years earlier, in 1832, as the “subject for one of [Australia’s] earliest long poems [The Spirit of the Creek].”\textsuperscript{130} Although these are not the only points of contention between Cusack’s details of the tale and Williams’ they both agree it was the first published Australian ghost story.

Since the publication of Australia’s ‘first’ ghost story, books and articles recounting Australian ghostly phenomena have slowly increased in number. However, while there was a slight growth in their publication during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, the addition of new tales was minimal. It was not until the mid to late 1960s that a significant rise in the number of new tales is evinced. It is only possible to surmise why this is so by studying overseas literary trends of the time regarding ghost stories. However, to do this it is necessary to

\textsuperscript{128} Cusack, ed., Australian Ghost Stories. 1.
\textsuperscript{129} Cusack, ed., Australian Ghost Stories. 1.
study the genre of science fiction as it is not uncommon to find ghost stories placed within this group of tales, as both deal with things outside what is considered normal.\textsuperscript{131} This lends further weight to Gelder’s comment regarding the lack of attention given to Australian ghost stories.\textsuperscript{132} Bearing in mind their possible inclusion within the science fiction genre, Russell Blackford’s observation that “little Australian science fiction of note was published during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s” due to the lack of contact with overseas literary trends, gives one plausible reason why publication of Australian ghost stories floundered during the first half of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{133} Blackford further argues that:

Australia is, of course, an English-speaking country in which American and British fiction is readily available. … Accordingly, American and British science fiction has been sufficient to meet the needs of most Australian readers. …

Yet there has been a stream of interest in genre science fiction by Australians since the 1950s. A flurry of local magazines appeared around that decade, the most interesting example being \textit{Thrills Incorporated}, which ran from 1950 to 1952. This was Australia’s answer to the American and British science fiction magazines of the time.\textsuperscript{134}

Australian contributions to the science fiction genre appear to have coincided with an escalation in the publication of non-fiction books and articles dealing with ghostly phenomena as well as many other books on Parapsychology and the occult. Apart from external literary trends, other factors that influenced the “revival of interest

\textsuperscript{131} According to Blackford, the link between science fiction and ghost stories arose from the fact that: “The science-fiction genre has roots that extend deep into the nineteenth century and even further into the past. Like its sister genre, modern fantasy, it developed from the fiction of Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe … and other literary giants of the Romantic and Victorian Ages. They, in turn, drew on older narrative traditions: myth and legend; epic and romance; folktales and fables; ghost stories; utopian writings; and accounts of fantastic voyages.” Blackford, “Australian Science Fiction.” 375.

\textsuperscript{132} Gelder, ed., \textit{The Oxford Book of Australian Ghost Stories}. ix.

\textsuperscript{133} Blackford, "Australian Science Fiction." 377.

\textsuperscript{134} Blackford, "Australian Science Fiction." 378.
in the occult” 135 during the late 1960s were listed by Marcello Truzzi in *The Occult Revival as Popular Culture*; the ‘factors’ were:

(1) the increase in our general population, (2) some disillusionment with the dominant religions, (3) our lack of fear of the occult or an involvement with it, (4) the present lack of social sanctions against involvement with the occult, and (5) the increased saliency of the occult resulting from the revival itself.136

Since that time, humankind’s fascination with ghost stories has resulted in continued publication of non-fiction books recounting ghostly experiences – experiences not only from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also from the twenty-first century.

**Ghost Stories as History**

This thesis’ contention that the study of Australia’s ghost stories would aid the development of a greater understanding of that society in general, and beliefs surrounding death and the possibility of an afterlife in particular, is exhibited in the way some authors use the tales to recount Australia’s history. For example, the connection between ghost stories and murders has long been accepted. However, not all ghost stories are connected to murder – nor are all ghosts connected to death. In *Haunted Earth* Read explores the different ‘ghosts’ that people encounter in Australia and, like many who research Australian ghostly phenomena, he mentions Fisher’s Ghost – not as a tale in itself, rather as a means of reinforcing the theme of ‘inspirited’ earth:

> Australian ghosts of legend are hardly ever to be found in the grave. Much discussed in southern Sydney, Fisher’s Ghost allegedly appears sitting on a rail, pointing to the spot where his body was found in 1826. The sites of fatal road

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accidents, marked by flowers and sometimes a plaque, have become for many mourners the key site of remembrance. … [M]oved by the place of death, not burial. 137

While Read focuses on tales that support the concept of ‘inspirited’ earth, other authors of non-fiction literature emphasise the traditional idea of ghostly phenomena. However, Read’s comment regarding the importance of place of death over place of burial is reflected in many of these traditional tales. The ghost of Frederick Fisher, for example, appeared not where his body lay, but on the “rail of [a] bridge” 138 not far from a timber fence on which “bloodstains were still overtly discernible … and accidentally noticed.” 139

The ghostly preference for place of death is exhibited in areas now explored by those who dare take part in a ghost tour. While some tours do take in a cemetery or two, most focus on buildings or sites where people have died – some suffering horrific deaths. In his booklet Now I Believe … in Ghosts! Brian McDonald, a former tour guide, recounts some of the ghostly experiences of those who either worked at, or toured, Sydney’s Quarantine Station at North Head. Although there are three cemeteries connected to the Quarantine Station, most reports of ghostly sightings centre on the buildings – especially the “Old Timber Hospital.” While some people claim they have encountered ghosts in this building, McDonald states that many profess they ‘feel’ their presence:

Upon entering the Old Timber Hospital, many people are overcome with the most incredible and varied sensations. Some feel a heaviness in their chests, which is so

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137 Read, Haunted Earth. 26.
139 Williams, ed., Fisher's Ghost & Other Australian Tales of Ghosts and Murder. 12.
overpowering, that they find it nearly impossible to breathe. Some people are totally
overcome with sorrow and others feel the most intense heat.\textsuperscript{140}

Whether or not the experiences of those who take the tour are real or imagined is
impossible to determine. However, the use of traditional ideas associated with ghosts
and hauntings are found throughout McDonald’s booklet; one of the most common
being the dispensing of rites associated with burial. Apart from Sydney Quarantine
Station being a place of death, it is also a place where people were buried without the
proper rites:

Five hundred and seventy-two people were buried [t]here, most without any
religious ceremony. …

Being interred with no farewell is the reason given for the hundreds …
no … thousands of sightings by people brave enough to walk around the deserted
buildings at night with the aid of kerosene lanterns.\textsuperscript{141}

The use of kerosene lanterns, combined with the heightened expectations of tour
participants, creates an atmosphere whereby any shadow could be mistaken for a
ghostly manifestation. However, not all ghosts need dramatic settings to make their
presence felt.

In \textit{Haunted Brisbane} Jack Sim writes not only of the ghosts that haunt Brisbane
but also various attempts to rid the city of them. Like Read, Sim maintains that ghosts
cling to the place of death, especially if that death was violent. Furthermore, while many
of Brisbane’s ghosts make the odd appearance, not all of its ghosts emanate from
deceased persons. Read’s theme of ‘inspired’ earth is reflected in Sim’s tales

\textsuperscript{140} Brian McDonald, ed., \textit{Now I Believe...In Ghosts!} (Sydney: Privately Published, 1999). 27.

\textsuperscript{141} McDonald, ed., \textit{Now I Believe...In Ghosts!} 2. McDonald notes that people were buried without the proper burial
rites due to health issues for those who were not ill: “To perform a ceremony meant people would have come near the
body and although the person may be dead the virus was still alive … looking for a new host to carry it beyond the
confines of the Station.” 2.
recounting the destruction of Brisbane’s older buildings – buildings that, during the convict era, were home to unmentionable acts of cruelty:

As Brisbane developed into the thriving capital of Queensland on Australia’s north-eastern seaboard, its citizens developed an almost pathological need to remove all trace of the ghosts of the past. The obsession to tear anything old down in this town was and is driven solely of an unrecognised internal embarrassment, nay, unspoken guilt, that somehow our city’s history was not as valuable as that of Sydney or Melbourne, because ours was particularly evil. The ‘convict stain’ has affected this town more than any other in the nation.142

Although the citizens of Brisbane have tried to expunge their convict past by tearing down buildings associated with horrific events from that period, some structures still remain – so too have the tales, and ghosts, connected to each of them.

Through his retelling of events that purportedly gave rise to ghostly phenomena, Sim also tells the history of Brisbane. Each tale highlights the reasons why citizens of Brisbane feel this guilt and embarrassment about their past. Yet out of their convict past came a song that “has become famous worldwide:” “A simple but emotive tune, originally known as ‘The Convicts Lament on the death of Captain Logan;’ today known simply as ‘Moreton Bay’. “143 The events surrounding the death of Captain Logan, sometime between the “late afternoon of 17 October 1830 … and 28 October,”144 resulted in the tale of his death and subsequent ghostly appearances becoming “Australia’s second oldest ghost story” after that of Fisher’s Ghost.145 Yet, unlike Fisher’s Ghost, no murderer was ever brought to justice. Logan was so disliked by the convicts and officers who served under him that “[u]pon hearing the news of his

142 Jack Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City (Brisbane, Australia: Jack Sim's Publications, 2005). ii.
143 Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City. 15. Refer to Appendix B for the words of this song.
144 Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City. 13.
145 Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City. 15.
death the penal settlement exploded in celebration, the sounds of men singing and
drinking could be heard by settlers fifty miles away.”

Sim (like McDonald in Sydney) conducts ghost tours throughout the City of
Brisbane; and, again in a similar vein to McDonald (as well as many other ghost tour
guides), uses the tours to recount the history of the area – past and present. Although
these tours take in well known sites and buildings, none of them are what many consider
to be Australia’s most haunted place.

Due to the 1979 film ‘Amityville Horror,’ most people today would be aware of
North America’s most haunted house. Similarly, England’s most haunted house,
Borley Rectory, while not as well known as the Amityville house, has been the subject
of many documentaries chronicling the experiences of those who have either resided
there or visited the premises. Among the Borley Rectory documentaries is an interview
with Harry Price, who was, at one time, the Honorary Secretary for the University of
London Council for Psychical Investigation; the interview was filmed in 1935 and
released through Movietone News. Similar to North America and England, as well as
many other countries around the world, Australia can also lay claim to having a ‘most
haunted house.’

Monte Cristo homestead in Junee, New South Wales, shares many things in
common with both the house at Amityville, and Borley Rectory; the least of which are
numerous documentaries recounting paranormal phenomena experienced by those who
have either resided at Monte Cristo or visited the homestead. According to the team that
compile the Paranormal Australia web site, Monte Cristo has “[f]eatured on several TV

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146 Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City, 14.
148 Information sourced from the Internet: http://www.prairieghosts.com/brectory.html. The Price interview can be
seen by logging onto; http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jdue2DaxFkw. Both sites were accessed: Tuesday 22
March 2011.
shows including The Extraordinary, ABC TV’s ‘Big Country’ and more recently, the psychological game show ‘Scream Test’, which aired in 2001. Although the haunting of Monte Cristo makes for suspenseful reading, and viewing, it also provides ample material for those who compile anthologies of Australia’s paranormal phenomena. In Haunted, for example, which details some of Australia’s better known ghostly phenomena, John Pinkney writes:

The Monte Cristo homestead … has long been known as a cauldron of disturbing phenomena. Hens inside a padlocked fowlhouse have been found with their necks wrung. The phantom of a murdered child, inexplicably torn from her nanny’s arms, lingers in the stairwell. A smell of burning has permeated the stables, in which a farmworker died after his straw bed was set alight. The homestead, troubled by uncountable numbers of ghosts, attracts parapsychologists from around the world. Specialist observers generally agree that Monte Cristo is Australia’s most haunted house…

Pinkney contends that the haunting of Monte Cristo began not long after the homestead was built in 1884 since:

[even from its] earliest days there were reports, and in one case apparent photographic evidence of ghosts. An intriguing picture taken when the homestead was newly built, shows a strange black figure peering from a window. The figure occupies a position where nobody – thanks to wooden blinds and heavy drapes – could arguably have stood.
From that time on, tales regarding the numerous ghosts that haunt Monte Cristo began to circulate. Today, it has become a tourist attraction for those who are merely curious as well as serious researchers of paranormal phenomena.\textsuperscript{152}

In 2005, while Pinkney was collecting tales about Australia’s ghosts, he interviewed Reg Ryan, the current owner of Monte Cristo. During the interview, Ryan told of how he came to buy the homestead and why, despite the many strange and, at times, nerve-wracking occurrences, he decided to stay and make it his family’s home. Although Ryan’s story is connected solely to Monte Cristo, his decision to buy the homestead reflects some common themes exhibited in other tales involving those who became owners of a haunted property. For example, despite its “near-terminal disrepair” when Ryan first saw Monte Cristo in 1955 he “found [himself] making plans and thinking, \textit{This place is going to take me years to repair}.”\textsuperscript{153}

The day I first saw this place I knew without a doubt I’d live here one day. I truly believe that something supernatural led me to this homestead – and that somehow I was meant to be the guardian, keeper and protector of this piece of Australian history that was nearly lost.\textsuperscript{154}

Similarly, when Lois Jackman, who was also interviewed by Pinkney, first saw Ascot House the desire to own it was so strong she went against her better judgement and, within days, approached the real estate agent handling its sale to make an offer:

\textsuperscript{152} Pinkney, \textit{Haunted: The Book of Australia's Ghosts}, 116
All I know ... is that from the first time I set eyes on the place it exerted an enormous magnetism. The proof of that, I suppose, is that I bought it three days later! I’ve long believed that I didn’t buy Ascot [House] – it bought me.¹⁵⁵

Not only do these two comments display nearly identical beliefs, the experiences of those involved also exhibit many similarities.

Ascot House, which was originally named ‘Tor,’ was built in the late nineteenth century for a wealthy man named Frederick Hurrell Holberton. However, unlike the Crawley family who resided at Monte Cristo from the late 1880s until the last remaining family member left in 1948,¹⁵⁶ Holberton was forced to sell his home eighteen years after it was built due to financial difficulties. The new owner, William Beit, renamed the property Ascot House, “to reflect his obsession with racing.”¹⁵⁷ Pinkney describes both houses as “symbol[s] of colonial wealth,”¹⁵⁸ nestled on large properties, each had wide verandahs that overlooked manicured gardens – and both collected their share of ghostly stories.

Apart from a “strange black figure” that showed itself just after Monte Cristo was finished, other unexplained phenomena include lights glowing from every window even though no one is home, family pets fleeing the premises as soon as they set foot in the house, animals and birds dying for no apparent reason, the partial ghostly manifestation of a “young male,” and the sense that someone is close by even though no one is there.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, Ascot House also makes one feel there is a presence close by with displays of paranormal phenomena ranging from the feeling that a finger has brushed along one’s shoulder to unexplainable changes in room temperature, wall

surfaces that feel “icy cold,” and ghostly manifestations. Between them, Monte Cristo and Ascot House supply a comprehensive range of phenomena often associated with haunted houses.

In Haunted Pinkney also recounts tales from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; tales that further reflect common assumptions associated with ghostly phenomena. Some of these later tales include the “devastating rampage of poltergeist activity” experienced by the Berrell family in the 1980s while they were temporarily residing in a holiday cottage at Budgewoi on the New South Wales Central Coast. The haunting made the local and national news; and, despite the Berrell’s efforts to escape the poltergeist activity they did not see an end to the disturbances until Pinkney “contacted a medium who, [they] hoped, could exorcise the presence.” According to Pinkney; the “phantom thundered out its final message in the presence of the Channel 9 team. Next day the medium gently put an end to the terror and the noise.” The poltergeist activity was thought to be caused by the ghost of an “elderly man [who] had had a heart attack” in the holiday cottage a couple of years earlier. Although he was still alive when neighbours notified the authorities two days after he collapsed onto the floor inside his home, he “died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital.”

While the publishers of Pinkney’s anthology of ghostly tales claim it is an “enthralling book [containing] the most comprehensive survey of Australian hauntings ever published” it was not Pinkney’s intention that it be used, like Sim’s and McDonald’s books, to recount the history of an area or event. However, the very nature of ghostly phenomena means that history is embedded in nearly every tale told. For example, during their respective researches into possible explanations regarding their homes apparent hauntings, Ryan and Jackman both uncovered not only the events that

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caused a decedent’s ghost to haunt what was once their home, but also the history of the building itself. As with other tales of ghostly phenomena, most of Pinkney’s stories contain some history if not of the site then of the circumstances surrounding the death of an individual and how their ghost came to haunt a particular site or building. However, not all non-fiction literature dealing with ghostly phenomena use the tales to tell the history of an area, or site.

‘Professional’ Ghost Hunters

A perusal of the paranormal, or mind-body-spirit, section of any bookshop reveals an ever increasing quantity of books by those who claim they can see and/or converse with the dead. Some books recounting the lives and abilities of individual mediums and psychics have inspired the production of television shows, which are based upon their accounts. Rather than describing the history of an area, these books predominantly deal with the skills required to help those who are haunted by a ghost or under attack from a poltergeist. Many books dealing with Australian psychics are self-published, while books recounting the tales of psychics elsewhere in the world are often produced by established publishing houses. However, the reluctance exhibited by publishing houses in Australia is understandable given the questionable content of many self-published books. An example of such a book is one by Australian psychic John Salter.

Salter’s book, Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover, is quite amateurish in its presentation. The lack of proof-reading displayed in the poor spelling and typographical errors clearly show that the book has been produced by someone

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162 For example: Medium, which is based loosely on the life of Allison Dubois; and Ghost Whisperer, which was inspired by the work of James Van Praagh. (Medium, Mary Ann Winkowski has also been called upon occasionally to help with the production of Ghost Whisperer.)

NOTE: Although psychics and mediums are similar in many respects, there are slight differences. However, the term psychic will be used throughout this thesis to denote both unless the term medium is specifically required. Refer to the Glossary for definitions of both terms.
unfamiliar with editing. Nevertheless, Salter’s belief in what he says he does – that is, remove ghosts – is evident, not only by his protestations of truth regarding the tales in his book, but also by his desire to have people know about him and his work. The tales in Salter’s book are very much like those found in most books about ghosts; just a retelling of events that led someone to believe a ghost was bothering them. It is interesting to note that the word ‘ghost’ is rarely used in this book. The few times it does appear, it is used to clarify a following statement in which a different term has been substituted. While it is not uncommon for psychics to occasionally create their own terms to denote ghostly manifestations, the terms they use can be very informative, as they give an insight into their own beliefs regarding survival after bodily death and therefore their biases and, occasionally, their motivation. The terms used as substitutions for ‘ghost’ in Salter’s book imply continued movement or activity, either in this world or on another plane. This is not surprising given that he believes in reincarnation – a fact that he makes clear in Chapter Eleven. However, due to the varying terms used to denote a ghost, it was necessary for Salter to provide a list of his alternatives in a ‘Legend’ at the beginning of the book. Some examples of these terms are: “Driver/Entity [for a] spirit, soul, or non-physical being … Elementals[, which are young entities without a vehicle … [and] Vehicle[, which is] a physical human being.”

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163 During a promotional tour for this book, Salter visited the Central Coast of New South Wales. He was the main guest at an event held by the owners of the Gnostic Forest Café at Woy Woy. The event was advertised in the Central Coast Express Advocate on Friday 27 January 2006 in the Central Coast News section.

164 Salter goes to great lengths to explain what he believes and how he came to hold those beliefs. One of his beliefs is that God, as an entity, does not exist. Rather God is an acronym for “(G)uardians (O)f (D)imensions” (p.145). Furthermore, when he talks of another plane, he is referring to a dimension other than the one humans experience on earth. According to Salter, this could be the fourth dimension spoken about by some physicists, or possibly multiple dimensions as yet undiscovered. (Refer especially to ‘Chapter 11: Conclusions,’ pages 139-146 in Salter’s book.)

165 For example: in this chapter Salter states: “Just how intelligent the entity is when it enters the foetus, depends on how many previous vehicles it has driven. (incarnations). John Salter, Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover (Ripley, Queensland: the Author, 2002). 141.

166 Salter, Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover. 2.
While Salter’s book is very similar to many others retelling ghostly experiences, it does differ slightly. At the end of each chapter, there is a summary, or comment, explaining why the previous events occurred, or why the entity remained on the earthly plane, thus neatly finishing each tale before moving onto the next. However, Salter’s use of this technique inadvertently raises doubt about the authenticity of his claims. In Chapter Three, for example, is a tale about the entity of a man called Pierre who was beheaded during the French Revolution. In his rage at being executed, Pierre somehow managed to haunt a person in Australia. Salter appears to express no surprise at a ‘foreigner’ invading the haunts of Australian ghosts, despite the fact that later in the book he states that: “most entities seem to stay close to the area they are familiar with; usually what used to be their home.”

In contrast to Salter’s book, Ghost Whisperer by Caterina Ligato exhibits the professionalism expected from a book produced by a publishing house – yet its content is very similar to Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover. Like Salter, Ligato recounts tales of “psychic interference” and how she managed its removal. Following each tale is a chapter detailing major factors regarding the ‘interference’ and its subsequent removal. However, unlike Salter’s summaries, Ligato’s lengthier explanations exhibit reasoning that appears to be based on knowledge of various supernatural belief systems, as well as research concerning the paranormal phenomenon of ghosts. Ligato’s accounts also reflect her Christian beliefs, which she claims supplies the “spiritual background” of skills and rituals that she utilises “whilst also employing the use of [her] God-given psychic gifts.”

This is in direct contrast to Salter who embarked on his journey not because he displayed psychic abilities as a child (Ligato

167 Salter, Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover. 140.
168 Caterina Ligato, Ghost Whisperer (Hartwell, Victoria, Australia: Temple House Pty Ltd, 2006). x.
169 Ligato, Ghost Whisperer. x.
was three when she “experienced the spirit realm for the first time”);\(^{170}\) rather, it was due to his refusal to accept mainstream religious teachings:

My first encounter with religion was around the age of nine when friends took me to church. From the onset [sic.], what I heard didn’t make any sense, it was from that time on I began searching for something that made sense to me. So over the next ten years I gathered as much information as I could and read many books on the occult, other types of religion, meta-physical abilities and the like, all of which were biased toward their own ideas. However, by correlation and cross-referencing of this information, I was able to get a general picture of what life was about and why human beings are here.\(^{171}\)

One outcome of Salter’s search for answers was his conclusion that, with the right training, most people could ‘tap’ into the spirit world.

Salter is not alone in believing that “EVERYONE has psychic abilities”\(^{172}\) as many psychics offer courses to “unlock [ones] psychic potential” – for a price.\(^{173}\) However, Ligato is not one of them. Rather than promoting the development of one’s own psychic abilities, Ligato stresses how dangerous it can be to meddle in the spirit realm:

Unfortunately the New Age has also created many overnight psychics, healers, mystics, of all manner of new methodology, many of whom believe a weekend workshop is all it takes to set oneself up as a healer. What becomes dangerous is when these practitioners find themselves in a situation where there are malevolent or demonic spirit entities, either in an environment or attached to a person’s aura. They have no idea how to deal with them, and when the spirits start making their presence known, the ‘healer’ gets scared, pretends they’ve done the work, only to

\(^{170}\) Ligato, *Ghost Whisperer*, iii.

\(^{171}\) Salter, *Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover*, 5.


\(^{173}\) From a flyer promoting Ezio De Angelis’ mediumistic skills; (as seen on Channel 7’s “The One”).
have stirred more trouble, and run away with a great deal of money in their pocket.\textsuperscript{174}

While Ligato acknowledges that many people think Christians are against any form of meddling in the paranormal or supernatural, she maintains that it is not, in fact, the case. In her opinion, the only way a psychic, exorcist, or psychic healer can achieve positive results, all the while withstanding any and all assaults from the spirit realm, is to call on divine help – God’s help.\textsuperscript{175}

Diametrically opposed opinions, such as Salter’s and Ligato’s, regarding psychic abilities and ghostly phenomena, are not confined to those who claim they can make contact with the spirit realm – nor are they confined to Australia. Researchers of paranormal phenomena are from many countries and many different walks-of-life. From philosophers to psychologists; theologians to pagans; believers to sceptics – the study of ghostly phenomena in particular, and paranormal phenomena in general, abound with diametrically opposing viewpoints and theories; even amongst those who, like Salter and Ligato, appear to be on the same side. These conflicts have given rise to research that explores not only the phenomena itself but also beliefs and opinions surrounding them.

Apart from the historical background presented at the beginning of this section, the main focus throughout has been on non-fiction literature dealing with purportedly authentic accounts of ghostly phenomena. The review explored a few ghost stories, some of the history behind the stories, and those who are a part of the fabric surrounding such phenomena; but what of the scholarship concerning ghosts and their link to the possibility of survival after bodily death? The next section will present an overview of

\textsuperscript{174} Ligato, \textit{Ghost Whisperer}, xi.

\textsuperscript{175} Ligato, \textit{Ghost Whisperer}, Passim.
some currently active Australian parapsychologists. The exploration of their work will strengthen this thesis’ contention regarding the need for further research into Australian ghostly experiences/phenomena – research that encompasses an interdisciplinary approach, which includes not only the Sciences, such as Psychology, but also the Humanities and Social Sciences.
Current Australian Research

Spectre and Apparition make a great Noise in the World …  
Between our Ancestors laying too much stress upon them,  
and the present Age endeavouring wholly to explode and  
despise them, the World seems hardly ever to have come to  
a right Understanding about them.  
‘A. Moreton’ (Daniel Defoe), Secrets of the Invisible World (1738).176

Pliny’s query regarding the reality of ghosts and the role human anxieties play in their manifestation is indicative of humanity’s long held desire to understand ghostly phenomena and their link not only to human anxieties but also the possibility that they provide proof for some form of survival after bodily death. The interest generated by such phenomena existed prior to Pliny and has continued, relatively unabated, to the present day. A consequence of this interest has been the development of research that explores not only ghosts, but other phenomena that contravene the ‘known’ laws of nature; that is, paranormal phenomena.

The review of non-fiction literature showed that although modern-day Spiritualism enabled people of the nineteenth century to seriously contemplate the possible actuality of ghosts, it also provided the impetus for the development of ‘serious’ research into ghostly phenomena. This research resulted in an increase in the publication of non-fiction literature that purportedly recorded factual accounts of ghostly experiences, as well as scientific exposés dealing with the many theories, experiments, and studies designed to prove, or disprove, the existence of such phenomena. Although some research was, and is, carried out by people with no scholarly qualifications, most, both in Australia and elsewhere in the world, is conducted by those who hold some form of tertiary qualification, with the Sciences being the dominant academic discipline; especially the various branches of Psychology.

The non-fiction literature, which included works from both Australia and elsewhere in the world, also demonstrated the variety of people, and academic disciplines, involved in the exploration of ghostly phenomena. For example, the review explored publications by psychics, self-proclaimed ghost hunters, journalists, and tour guides; as well as texts by Australian and overseas scholars representing the disciplines of Anthropology, Psychology, Classical Studies, Philosophy, English, Literary Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociology, and History. However, the eclectic mix of ideologies and disciplines exhibited throughout the review of non-fiction literature is not reflected amongst scholars currently researching Australian paranormal phenomena. This has meant that many aspects of Australian paranormal phenomena in general, and ghostly experiences in particular, remain unexplored while other areas are gathering an abundance of data.

The very nature of ghostly phenomena prompts most experiants to question the reality of their encounter – with many asking themselves: ‘Did I really see what I thought I saw, or was I imagining it?’ Experiants are not alone in wondering this, as many researchers also question whether the experience was ‘real’ or generated by some form of hallucination, vivid dream, or fantasy proneness. However, researchers’ focus on psychological aspects of ghostly experiences has resulted in a profusion of studies dealing with the mental state of experiants – especially amongst Australian parapsychologists. This has, understandably, culminated in a high representation of scholars from the academic discipline of Psychology. Although Australia is not alone when it comes to an imbalance in the disciplines representing those who study paranormal phenomena, the limited number of Australian scholars studying such phenomena means the imbalance is more pronounced than elsewhere in the world. Furthermore, the predilection towards research that explores psychological aspects of
ghostly and paranormal experiences has resulted in an incomplete understanding of Australian paranormal phenomena in general and ghostly experiences in particular.

An example of research that utilises an apparently balanced approach is currently being conducted at the University of Hertfordshire in England under the direction of Professor Richard Wiseman, from the discipline of Psychology, and Dr. Owen Davies, a social historian. Paul Cowdell, who has an MA in Folklore and Cultural Tradition, is the PhD student responsible for conducting the research, which is part of an Inter-Faculty Research Studentship looking at the belief in ghosts in post-war England. An online advertisement for this Studentship stated, in part, that the research will utilise “questionnaires and … interviews with a cross-section of Hertfordshire’s multi-ethnic society to explore how individual and generational patterns of belief have changed over time in different religious and ethnic communities.”\(^{177}\) Some of the questions this study is aiming to answer include: “What do people mean when they say ‘ghost’? How is this understanding reflected (or not) in their beliefs? [and] How do these beliefs fit into other, maybe more orthodox beliefs?”\(^{178}\)

Similar to Hertfordshire, Australia is a multicultural society in which imported beliefs have mingled with Indigenous ideas. As the generations move further away from their familial origins, the likelihood of a change in beliefs becomes stronger. The importance of ghost stories within any society lies in the information they can reveal about societal factors that govern beliefs pertaining to death and the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death or an afterlife. By fully exploring these issues, researchers can, for example, determine the impact they may have on individuals and society in general. As Read observes, generational changes in beliefs within migrant

\(^{177}\) University of Hertfordshire Inter-Faculty Research Studentship, “The Belief in Ghosts in Post-war England.” Located online at http://www.jobs.ac.uk/jobs/ZG908/InterFaculty_Reasearch_Studentship/ Accessed: 29 October 2007.

\(^{178}\) Taken from Cowdell’s personal blogspot, which is available online at: http://humphreywithhisflail.blogspot.com/2009/05/research-into-contemporary-belief-in.html Accessed: 29 June 2010.
groups, such as those relating to specific burial rites to prevent the dead returning as ghosts, can have an adverse effect on family relationships as well as individual cultural identity. To fully understand the effect such beliefs have on a society – especially a multicultural society – research, such as Cowdell’s, which utilises interdisciplinary methods, is needed as it has greater potential of providing a balanced approach. This, in turn, is more likely to supply a thorough analysis of these beliefs than the method currently employed, especially by Australian researchers.

Although, in the following section, the dominance of scholars from the discipline of Psychology is clearly evident, researchers from other disciplines are represented. However, despite their inclusion, it will be shown that their studies into paranormal phenomena only superficially touch on Australian ghostly experiences. This cursory approach appears to be indicative of a general reluctance to pursue research into these experiences especially by those outside the Sciences. For example; Gelder, a Professor of English whose work was discussed in the previous section, is from the School of Humanities and Social Science; as is Weaver, his co-author. Despite observing, during research into nineteenth century Australian ghost stories, that the genre is a “neglected one,”180 neither seem to have redressed the neglect. Furthermore, although folklorists elsewhere in the world (such as Cowdell and Bennett) are beginning to research and write about the ghostly experiences of their local culture, (including the stories they generate, and their role in society) this appears not to be the case in Australia. As two Australian folklorists, Gwenda Beed Davey and Graham Seal state in *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*: “A full survey of Australian ghost-lore

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remains to be carried out …,” 181 however, neither Davey nor Seal, nor any other Australian folklorists for that matter, appear to have taken up the challenge.

The reluctance shown by researchers to explore Australian paranormal phenomena concerning ghostly experiences reinforces Bennett’s contention regarding the general wariness of scholars worldwide towards “supernatural folklore.” 182 However, this thesis supports Bennett’s assertion that such experiences are worthy of scholarly study, especially as they provide a means of better understanding a society, since, for example, “[o]nce recounted, supernatural [and paranormal] experiences start to become subject to cultural processes.” 183 How ‘cultural processes’ influence literary representations of tales depicting supernatural beings, or paranormal phenomena, is evinced in the recorded ‘role’ of ghosts within any given period of history. For example; humanity’s earliest ghost stories, which often ascribed such phenomena to the supernatural, depict ghosts as foretelling the future, 184 while those from the Middle Ages are filled with religious propaganda. 185 Furthermore, tales from an oral tradition are often told in the third person, with the use of overly exaggerated, descriptive language to create a visual picture thereby increasing the anticipation of those listening to the tale. However, tales from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tend to reflect that era’s penchant for scientific reasoning by recounting ghostly experiences in a logical, scientific manner thus moving them out of the realm of the ‘supernatural’ and into that of what is now known as the ‘paranormal.’ (An example of this can be found in

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181 Gwenda Beed Davey and Graham Seal, eds., The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1993). 123.
182 Bennett, Alas, Poor Ghost! 1. This thesis understands that paranormal and supernatural phenomena are not synonymous.
183 Bennett, Alas, Poor Ghost! 5.
185 Schmitt, Ghosts in the Middle Ages. 87.
Furthermore, Ronald C. Finucane argues: “… for the historian, all the [ghostly] accounts provide valuable clues to contemporary attitudes, expectations and beliefs about the afterlife.” 187 This is evinced in the late nineteenth/early twentieth century by the creation of the term ‘paranormal’ as a means of differentiating between phenomena that is inexplicable under known scientific criteria, or natural laws, and that which is suggestive of life after death; that is ‘supernatural’ phenomena.

Despite the examples above from overseas researchers representing the disciplines of Historical Anthropology, Medieval France, and Folklore, the following section, which discusses the most contemporary and active Australian researchers of paranormal phenomena, reinforces this thesis’ contention regarding the under-representation of scholars from the Humanities and Social Sciences involved in research of Australian ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena. Furthermore, disciplines that one would expect to have an interest in beliefs/opinions, as well as experiences, pertaining to ghostly phenomena, death and an afterlife; such as Religious Studies, Anthropology, History and Sociology; are conspicuous by their absence. While the Humanities and Social Sciences are not totally unrepresented; with researchers from the disciplines of Philosophy, Behavioural Studies, and Culture and Society included in this discussion; it will be shown that current research from these disciplines does not explore the role of ghostly experiences nor the effect they have on, and within, Australia’s multicultural society.

Scholarly Research

Although many of the researchers presented in this section have published extended accounts of their work in non-fiction books, results of individual studies that focus on aspects of paranormal phenomena are often published in journals specifically devoted to Psychology and Parapsychology (or, as some would call it, Psychical Research).  

Eight years ago, in an endeavour to make some of these articles more widely available, the Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research, Inc. (AIPR Inc.) began publication of the Australian Journal of Parapsychology – the only Australian produced journal devoted to research dealing with paranormal phenomena. This journal presents peer-reviewed “theoretical or experimental papers on all topics to do with the paranormal, including extra-sensory perception, psychokinesis, and life after death.”

The disciplines represented amongst the “Specialist Consultants,” from Australia and elsewhere, include: Parapsychology, Transpersonal Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Psychology, Neuropsychiatry, Physics, Philosophy, and Anomalistics. The abundance of consultants from different branches of Psychology is further reflected in those who contribute articles to this journal; a pattern that is also exhibited in the following group of Australian scholars currently researching paranormal phenomena.

Despite the profusion of research from those in the various branches of Psychology, it appears not to be the result of an elitist attitude, but one of indifference (or wariness) from those in other disciplines. In March 2007, in an attempt to encourage

188 Thalbourne, A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology, 96.

189 On its web site the AIPR Inc. states: “The aims of the organisation are: to collect, assess and disseminate factual information about claims of psychic (paranormal) phenomena; to support and encourage parapsychology (the scientific study of paranormal phenomena); and, to undertake or promote activities (e.g., fundraising, social events, etc.) in support of the above.” The philosophy of the AIPR Inc. states: “The AIPR advocates the use of the scientific method; psychic experiences (or claims of such) should be studied in the same way as other human experiences; [and,] the AIPR places psychic phenomena in the broader context of experience, health and illness.” Located at: http://www.aiprinc.org/ Accessed: 9 March 2010.

190 Lance Storm, ed., Australian Journal of Parapsychology, vol. 9, No. 2. (Sydney, Australia: Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research, Inc., 2009). 2. This comment appears in every issue of this journal as part of its ‘Guidelines for Contributors.’
others to participate in research and discussion of paranormal phenomena, the AIPR Inc. commenced publication of a bi-annual newsletter, The A.I.P.R. News. In the first issue the editor, Dr. Lance Storm, explains why this periodical was created:

Probably no one knows parapsychology like the practicing parapsychologist, but ask two parapsychologists what they think the paranormal is and you’ll get three answers! That’s because paranormal issues are extremely complex. But why should we let ‘complexity’ get in the way of talking about the paranormal? Everyone has an opinion, but talking about psi – talking about the paranormal – means more than just idle chatter over the telephone, or stimulating speculation from the comfort of an armchair, so that’s why we at the AIPR, Inc., have created The A.I.P.R. News. ¹⁹¹

Since its inception, The A.I.P.R. News has published articles submitted by a wide variety of people – both scholars and others. This has resulted in a mix of topics covering various aspects of paranormal phenomena; from Jung’s theory of synchronicity to Ouija boards, dreams, and astrology. The newsletter, therefore, appears to be fulfilling its intended purpose of encouraging people to make their opinions known to others, thus widening the debate and, possibly, finding a few answers to the many complex questions engendered by such phenomena.

Storm’s involvement with The A.I.P.R. News and the Australian Journal of Parapsychology is testament to his conviction that paranormal phenomena is worthy of scholarly research. As such, Storm (a Visiting Research Fellow in the School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide) is also a member of the Parapsychological Association, and the Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research, Inc. ¹⁹² He has written, co-authored, and co-edited articles for refereed journals and non-fiction books


dealing with Parapsychology, as well as reviewing many non-fiction books and articles by other parapsychologists. Storm has also won awards in recognition of the contribution he has made to parapsychological research. It is, therefore, fairly safe to assume that Storm would have a good idea of the position of Parapsychology within the realm of Australian academia.

In the December 2007 issue of the Australian Journal of Parapsychology Storm comments that: “Nationwide, our universities have implemented various changes to their research agendas,” which led him to ponder the position of Parapsychology “amongst all these changes.” Storm came to the conclusion that: “on the whole nothing much has changed for parapsychology as a discipline in Australia or worldwide – we are still marginalized by academia.” Furthermore, he places some of the blame for this on sceptics “in positions of authority who don’t want parapsychology in their universities.” According to Storm, “these are the bad skeptics – they let personal ideology and prejudice get in the way of all that is fair and proper in academia.” While these issues could explain scholars’ reluctance to pursue research in this area, Storm also contends, as does this thesis, that these decisions have produced research that supplies flawed data due to researchers’ attempts to satisfy the expectations of scientific communities as well as university hierarchies.

Although this thesis maintains that scholars from disciplines other than Psychology need to take up the challenge of researching Australian ghostly experiences, and paranormal phenomena – in spite of the marginalisation and prejudice shown by

193 A list of some of Storm’s awards, publications and research interests can be viewed at: http://www.adelaide.edu.au/psychology/staff/vrf/storm.html
academia – it also acknowledges the contribution made to the overall study of paranormal phenomena in general and psi, in particular, by those in the various branches of Psychology. Storm, for example, has carried out numerous studies examining whether or not the human brain is capable of producing psi effects, and if so, under what conditions these effects take place. This type of research strengthens Campbell’s contention (mentioned in the review of non-fiction literature) that psi abilities, such as “telepathic process[es, could] affect the interpretation of apparitions.”197

In one study, for example, Storm continued his exploration of the divination practice of *I Ching*, which he theorised “involve[d] some proportion of paranormal influence [(that is psi ability)] at the personal level.”198 Findings from an earlier study conducted by Storm, in partnership with Dr. Michael A. Thalbourne,199 did not support their theory regarding personality traits and beliefs as “predictor variables” due to the inability of other researchers to replicate results based on these factors. However, there were indications that other predictor variables could provide better results; such as the “Time Perspective Inventory,” “pro-attitude,” and the “Sheep-Goat effect.”200

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197 Campbell, “Cognition and the Apparitional Experience: An Exploratory Study.” 7. Note: This was also the theory presented by Gurney, Myers and Podmore in *Phantasms of the Living*, which was discussed in the section pertaining to non-fiction literature.

198 Lance Storm, "Investigations of the *I Ching*: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness," *Australian Journal of Parapsychology* Vol. 8.No. 2. 104. According to Storm; “*I Ching* originated in China up to 5000 years ago. Traditionally [it] is a tool for guidance. … In ancient times yarrow stalks were thrown to generate one of 64 so-called *I Ching* hexagrams, or six-line symbols, each with its own unique reading which can be taken as advice or as a forecast. In the modern era, the user throws three coins six times to generate the hexagram.” 104.


200 Storm, "Investigations of the *I Ching*: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 105-106. Refer to Glossary for a definition of ‘transliminality.’ According to Storm: “Time Perspective Inventory [was created by P.G. Zimbardo and J.N. Boyd] to classify temporal persuasion. Persons with a present time perspective […] focus on immediate events, whereas those with a future time perspective […] focus on the future.” 105; “Pro-attitude” is as it implies – a positive attitude to psi tasks; e.g. “A person may be said to have a pro attitude towards state $S$ when they would prefer $S$ rather than not-$S$ if those two alternatives were to be brought to their attention.” 106; and for Sheep-Goat effect refer to the Glossary for a full definition.
In the previous section, this thesis questioned Tyrrell’s suggestion regarding researchers selecting the “right subjects and forming the right investigating groups.”\textsuperscript{201} It was argued that this approach may influence the outcome of a study or experiment. However, Storm contends that it may sometimes be necessary to carefully select research participants:

\begin{quote}
In the same sense that paranormal belief is considered to be psi conducive …, it is proposed that experimenters should not only test paranormal belief as a predictor of psi, but also consider it a necessary condition in bringing about stronger psi effects than might ordinarily be attained. This ‘psychopractic approach’ … is a response to conventional testing wherein experimenters often set themselves up for failure because random sampling inevitably produces samples comprised of believers and skeptics in equal or near-equal numbers so that we can often expect that the psi effect will vary bi-directionally between hitting and missing. When this happens … positive and negative partial effects cancel each other out and the overall deviation drops to zero.\textsuperscript{202}
\end{quote}

Despite these concerns, Storm chose not to ‘select’ the ‘right subjects’ for his study of \textit{I Ching}, preferring instead to take into account the variables that arose due to the inclusion of both believers and sceptics among the participants.\textsuperscript{203} As such, Storm’s study gave “special focus” to any data relating to the ‘Sheep-Goat Effect.’\textsuperscript{204}

While this may have decreased the positive ‘hits’ it enabled Storm to compare other aspects that could have relied on a participant’s perception of the \textit{I Ching} readings; such as “time perspective” and the “issue of meaningfulness,” which in the past was

\textsuperscript{201} Tyrrell, \textit{Apparitions}. 161.
\textsuperscript{202} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 107.
\textsuperscript{203} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 110.
\textsuperscript{204} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 107. Refer to the Glossary for a definition of the Sheep-Goat Effect (SGE).
thought to be linked to paranormal belief.\textsuperscript{205} For example, according to Storm, ‘time perspective’ relates to whether a person has a “present time perspective” or a “future time perspective.” (The former would “focus on immediate events” while the latter would “focus on the future.”)\textsuperscript{206} Storm hypothesised that people displaying a “future time perspective” were less likely to have positive first ‘hits’ but were more likely to have positive second ‘hits’; whereas those with a “present time perspective” would display the opposite tendencies. Overall, Storm found that although the results produced in the current study were not significant enough to support his hypothesis, “results … were in the directions hypothesised.” Therefore, he maintains that “time perception as a psi predictor” is worthy of further study, if only to clarify researchers’ understanding of it.\textsuperscript{207}

Although some may question the relevance of studies such as Storm’s research of \textit{I Ching} in relation to ghostly phenomena, this thesis contends the results are indicative of the important role beliefs play regarding the acceptance of not only psi phenomena but also other paranormal phenomena, such as ghosts. For example, in the ‘Discussion’ regarding his \textit{I Ching} study, Storm contends:

If a believer’s \textit{I Ching} reading could possibly be the product of psi, then the believer will assume that it is just that, thereby becoming a victim of subjective validation (i.e., believers will over-rate the reading by focussing on the positive and favourable content, while disregarding the negative and unfavourable content). Whether the rating process is governed by conscious or unconscious motives, the result will largely be the same.

However, we must bring in the skeptics as well since they can contribute to the effect through counter-emotional and counter-motivational investment. … So,

\textsuperscript{205} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 121-124.

\textsuperscript{206} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 105.

\textsuperscript{207} Storm, "Investigations of the \textit{I Ching}: I. Relationships between Psi and Time Perspective, Paranormal Belief and Meaningfulness." 105-123.
skeptics are likely to under-rate their readings by focussing on the negative and unfavourable content, while disregarding the positive and favourable content. Likewise, they would not be intent upon undermining their own belief system, so they are likely to ignore psi even when it is present, but we acknowledge that believers are likely to see psi when it is not present.²⁰⁸

If belief or disbelief plays a role in the interpretation of results obtained through the study of either psi or other paranormal phenomena then Storm’s query in The Survival of Human Consciousness, which mirrors Pliny’s, concerning whether “ghosts [are] nothing more than artefacts of the psyche,”²⁰⁹ raises the question of the validity of any findings pertaining not only to ghostly phenomena but also psi effects and paranormal phenomena in general; as Storm maintains: “Belief, then, appears to have manifest potency, and this fact may give reason for the reverence in which we hold our beliefs. It is not surprising, therefore, that our beliefs are the very foundations of our truths.”²¹⁰

Another parapsychologist who explored beliefs pertaining to paranormal phenomena was Michael A. Thalbourne. As well as conducting individual studies and joint research with various other scholars, Thalbourne’s partnership with Storm extended beyond the initial study into I Ching effects. Thalbourne co-authored many books and articles both with Storm and others, as well as personally writing books and numerous articles for refereed journals dealing with both Psychology and Parapsychology. In the June 2010 issue of the Australian Journal of Parapsychology, which was dedicated to the memory of Thalbourne who passed away in May of that year, the editor, Storm, included a full list of books, articles and chapters Thalbourne had written during his many years of parapsychological research. In refereed journals


alone one hundred and forty articles were listed – among them an article entitled ‘Religiosity/Spirituality and Belief in the Paranormal: A German Replication’ that outlined a study he conducted in partnership with Joop M. Houtkooper. While the findings of this study confirmed that a link did exist between religiosity/spirituality and belief in the paranormal, it was the inclusion of data pertaining to cultural differences that strengthens this thesis’ contention regarding the need to better understand such beliefs especially in relation to Australia’s multicultural society.

As with many studies concerning belief in paranormal phenomena conducted from the mid-twentieth century through to the twenty-first, results for Thalbourne’s and Houtkooper’s research were determined, in part, through an examination of cultural variations evinced in previous research that utilised the Sheep-Goat Scale. An earlier study, mentioned in Thalbourne’s and Houtkooper’s article, which explored similar religiosity/spirituality links, was conducted in 1981 by “Icelandic psychologist Erlendur Haraldsson.” Thalbourne and Houtkooper maintain that, given the prevalence of “religiosity in general and belief in the paranormal” found amongst individuals in Iceland, it was “not surprising that Haraldsson found a high correlation … between his 8-item Religiosity Scale and the Icelandic Sheep-Goat Scale.” Furthermore, they found other studies that utilised both the Icelandic Sheep-Goat Scale as well as the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale produced results that were also reflective of the test nation’s “general religiosity and belief in the paranormal.” However, while the use of an “English translation of the Icelandic Sheep-Goat [Scale]” in “an American context”


213 Thalbourne and Houtkooper, "Religiosity/Spirituality and Belief in the Paranormal: A German Replication." 113.

214 Thalbourne and Houtkooper, "Religiosity/Spirituality and Belief in the Paranormal: A German Replication." 113.
may have inadvertently produced different results due to language/translation difficulties rather than differences in belief or religiosity,\textsuperscript{215} there could be no such claims regarding the Australian results due to the use of a scale developed with that society’s beliefs in mind.

Thalbourne states in a journal article entitled ‘The Australian Sheep-Goat Scale: Development and Empirical Findings’ that the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale (ASGS) was “devised jointly” by himself and Peter S. Delin in 1976. The ASGS originally contained ten items that “covered belief in, and ostensible experiences of, ESP, as well as belief in life after death and in the possibility of contact with the deceased.” However, in 1982 the ASGS was expanded to include three questions “asking about the theoretical possibility (not just personal experience) of, specifically, precognition and active and receptive telepathy.” It was subsequently further expanded to include another five items that focused explicitly on “belief in and ostensible experience of PK. … Thus was born the 18-item Australian Sheep-Goat Scale.”\textsuperscript{216}

Among other issues, Thalbourne mentions in this article that there have been no reports of “studies … looking at socioeconomic status or ethnicity and the ASGS.”\textsuperscript{217} Yet, one theoretical hypothesis, which is used to aid the determination of belief in paranormal phenomena, has ethnicity listed as a factor in an individual’s susceptibility to such beliefs. This hypothesis is known as the “Social Marginality Hypothesis.” Thalbourne notes that:

\textsuperscript{215} This conclusion was reached based on Thalbourne’s and Houtkooper’s finding that the implementation of the Australian Sheep-Goat Scale in a German context required modification due to the fact that some items could not be translated; for example there was “no real word for hunch in German.” Thalbourne and Houtkooper, “Religiosity/Spirituality and Belief in the Paranormal: A German Replication.” 113.


According to this view “the people most susceptible to paranormal belief are members of socially marginal or disadvantaged groups, … It is held that the privation, loss of control over life and alienation associated with marginal social status encourage such people to appeal to magical and religious beliefs, presumably because these beliefs bring some emotional compensation to their lives.” … The primary indices of social marginality include (old) age, (female) gender, (low) socioeconomic status, (minority) ethnicity and (gay) sexual orientation.218

The importance of ethnicity as a factor in belief is not only mentioned in the aim of this thesis, it is also highlighted by the cultural differences displayed in Thalbourne’s and Houtkooper’s study of ‘Religiosity/Spirituality and Belief in the Paranormal.’

Another example of Thalbourne’s research, which appeared in the December 2008 issue of the Australian Journal of Parapsychology, was entitled, ‘Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings – Form C;’219 a title that he deemed necessary to explain prior to his analysis of the data. In his explanation Thalbourne also listed items “pertaining to the paranormal” that appeared in the study’s questionnaire:

In the early 1980s, Sheryl Wilson and Theodore X. Barber … reported in detail the results of an interview study of women who were excellent hypnotic subjects. … Wilson and Barber subsequently compiled a 52-item true/false inventory of all the characteristics of fantasy-prone people, calling it the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (ICMI). It was never published, but was circulated to interested researchers. Myers … edited this scale, shortened it to 48 items, and called it the ICMIC (that is, the ICMI, Form C, for children). In both versions of the questionnaire there are five items pertaining to the paranormal: (1) seeing a ghost, (2) having an out-of-body experience, (3) experiencing precognition, (4)


experiencing a veridical hunch, and (5) belief in (and possible experience of) reincarnation.  

After his analysis of the data, which used 244 participants (“mainly students”) from the University of Adelaide, Thalbourne noticed that the boundaries between paranormal experiences and “manifestations of spirituality or religiosity” were not viewed as three distinct domains by the participants; rather, there was a “blurring of the boundaries that professionals [tend to] make between the three domains.” He further concludes that:

Neither extraversion nor neuroticism turned out to be significant predictors in any of the six analyses. However, high Psychoticism was correlated with higher belief in the paranormal in three of the six analyses, namely, those for out-of-body experience [OBE], veridical hunch and precognition.

… As regards personality correlates, there was some evidence that a person’s degree of P (Psychoticism) can predict that person’s status on three of the six items.

Although Thalbourne states that his findings do “not mean that experiencers are necessarily more psychotic nor more prone to psychosis,” the intimation is that he does consider this to be the case.

The link between paranormal experiences and psychological disorders appears to be a common assumption amongst parapsychologists. The implied link, which has existed since ‘serious’ research of paranormal phenomena began, has resulted in many

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220 Thalbourne, “Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C).” 180-181.
221 Thalbourne, “Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C).” 183.
222 Thalbourne, "Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C)." This finding, which did not appear in the final proof of the article, is quoted from a pre-press draft received by email Monday 14 July 2008. It appeared on page 10 of the draft copy.
223 Thalbourne, "Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C)." The six analyses mentioned by Thalbourne are: apparition, OBE, precognition, veridical hunch, reincarnation, and the factor scores. 187-188.
224 Thalbourne, "Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C)." 188.
experiencing being reluctant to discuss their encounters – even with family and friends. However, their reluctance does not extend to general questions regarding belief in ghosts and the possibility of an afterlife.

In 1996, Thalbourne presented in the journal *Personality and Individual Differences* his findings of a study aimed at determining whether belief in an afterlife decreased death anxiety and, conversely, whether disbelief increased anxiety. Not surprisingly, the results did indicate that “[b]elievers were … less anxious about death and more accepting of death.”225 Moreover, after taking into account any variables and assessing the reliability of the measures used to collate the data, Thalbourne observed that the “most important variable relating to afterlife belief … is [a] liking for there to be an afterlife.” The results in favour of this finding were so strong that he came to the conclusion that they supplied confirmation of a view put forward by R.K. Siegel in 1980 that maintains; “belief in survival after death is probably related to some deep biological craving of the organism.”226

The conviction that humankind is programmed to believe in some form of life after death has also been explored by some Australian scholars; John F. Schumaker, for instance, in 1990 published his theory in *Wings of Illusion* in which he states that humankind “seem[s] [un]able to live without belief, and in particular belief in something, someone, or some force that simplifies and/or supersedes the reality of the human situation.”227 Through his research Schumaker determined that belief in paranormal phenomena was the result of humanity’s inability to cope with reality; as such, for the sake of survival it was “essential that we avoid perceiving reality for what

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it was – chaos followed by oblivion.”228 The reasoning behind this idea continues to be explored by other scholars; one of which is Dr. Krissy Wilson from the School of Psychology at the University of Tasmania. Wilson currently has two research topics that she hopes to pursue over the next few years exploring aspects of belief in relation to paranormal phenomena, including one similar to Siegel’s “biological craving.”

[G]iven that belief in strange phenomena (without any substantial evidence to support the claims) is so widespread, [Wilson] is hypothesizing that perhaps [humans] are pre-programmed to believe. … [As well as studying this aspect of belief, Wilson is also hoping to explore] the possible relationship between paranormal and religious belief [as] there is … a mixed picture in the literature as to whether the two are related or not.229

Prior to her tenure at the University of Tasmania, Wilson resided in England where she occasionally appeared on “Heaven and Earth,” (a BBC program for U.K. television). Wilson’s inclusion on the program was to provide a “skeptical perspective on a range of paranormal topics.”230 The programme’s success in the United Kingdom encouraged her to consider creating a similar show in Australia. In 2008, Wilson indicated that she was in the “process of setting up an independent production company [to be] called Apple Island Productions” with the aim of “prod[uc]ing] a series of programmes [looking] at belief in, and personal experiences of the paranormal in Tasmania.”231 If this programme reaches fruition, Wilson will become one of the few scholars presenting research that specifically focuses on Australian experiences of paranormal phenomena. However, until then, Wilson’s research into paranormal

228 Schumaker, Wings of Illusion: The Origin, Nature and Future of Paranormal Belief. 27.
229 From a personal communiqué – received Wednesday 9 July 2008.
phenomena examines, among other things, general psychological variables regarding such phenomena – an aspect of paranormal phenomena she has been exploring for many years.

In 2006, for example, (while still lecturing at the University of London) Wilson, in partnership with Christopher C. French, conducted a series of studies into “false memory creation.”232 They note that “interest” in research of this phenomenon began “in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the explosion in cases of falsely recovered memories as a result of questionable therapeutic techniques.”233 During these studies it was noticed that many psychological variables determining a person’s susceptibility to “false memory” were also found in those who reported “personal experiences of the paranormal.” Dissociativity and fantasy proneness – two variables that appear quite often in research regarding psychological aspects of paranormal belief – were both noted as “being related to the development of false memories.”234 Although the study explored the issue of false memory in relation to traumatic events; such as the death of Diana, the Princess of Wales; the discovery of common variables between false memory and paranormal belief led Wilson and French to consider the “intriguing possibility that:

… believers in the paranormal may show a heightened susceptibility to false memories compared to non-believers, and, by implication, that at least some reports of ostensibly paranormal experiences may be based upon false memories.235

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234 Wilson and French, “The Relationship between Susceptibility to False Memories, Dissociativity, and Paranormal Belief and Experience,” 1495. Refer to the Glossary for a definition of “dissociation.”

Studies such as this, combined with ones similar to Thalbourne’s 2008 study, plus Seligman’s findings regarding people not saying what they mean,\textsuperscript{236} reinforces negative connotations connected to the psychological state of those who claim to have had a ghostly encounter. Regardless, the issue of false memories and its strong link to paranormal belief means that Wilson and French consider it an area worthy of future study as it could supply a greater understanding of these experiences.\textsuperscript{237}

Another scholar with an interest in the “psychology of unusual experiences, paranormal beliefs and why people believe weird stuff” is Dr. Francesca Collins from Monash University.\textsuperscript{238} In July 2008, Collins made available a copy of her APS 2007 conference paper – ‘Very Superstitious: Dissociation, control and unusual beliefs.’\textsuperscript{239} Although Collins’ paper has some points that are relevant to research exploring Australian ghostly experiences, it does not specifically relate to ghosts. This was due, in part, to Collins’ method of gathering data, which utilised Tobacyk’s and Milford’s scale that looks at “[s]even forms of paranormal belief … [such as] traditional religious belief, psi belief, witchcraft, superstition, spiritualism, extraordinary life forms and precognition.”\textsuperscript{240}

As the title of her paper states, and similar to Wilson (and others), Collins also found that dissociation played a significant role in paranormal experiences. She came to this conclusion after finding that:
Dissociative experiences are characterised by a compartmentalisation of consciousness, that is, certain mental events that ordinarily occur together (e.g., thoughts, emotions, sensations, memories and attitudes) become isolated from one another and rendered inaccessible to consciousness. Dissociation ranges from simple daydreaming to pathological memory and identity disturbances, and everyone engages in dissociation under certain conditions. In non-clinical populations, dissociation tends to occur in relation to situations that are psychologically highly arousing and perceived as uncontrollable.\textsuperscript{241}

This finding led Collins to further argue that dissociation is not only interconnected with paranormal belief but also “locus of control,” which Collins maintains reflects:

… an individual’s beliefs regarding sources of reinforcement in life. [These range] from Internal, where the individual believes they exert control over important events in their life, to External, where the individual perceives events to be beyond their control and contingent upon luck, chance or powerful others.\textsuperscript{242}

Although her findings did confirm the link between paranormal beliefs, and dissociation and locus of control, Collins also found that ‘scores’ between participants who stated they held a religious affiliation did not alter significantly from those who stated they had \textit{no} religious affiliations.\textsuperscript{243} Despite the positive nature of her findings in relation to the original hypothesis, Collins did acknowledge there was a possible flaw in her research methods that “may restrict the generalisability” of her findings – that is, the choice of research participants, which were mainly derived from the student body at Monash University.

While research that draws on student bodies can supply acceptable data, this thesis argues that it is not fully reflective of a society’s beliefs as it does not take into account the beliefs, or experiences, of people from every level of society, nor every age

\textsuperscript{241} Collins, “Very Superstitious: Dissociation, Control and Unusual Beliefs.” 98.
group. In Collins study, for example, “[e]ighty-six percent [sic.] of participants were aged between 18 and 23 years and 80 percent [sic.] were female.”\textsuperscript{244} Similarly, Thalbourne also commented that in his study, which also utilised student participation, although the age range was “from 17 to 63 years … the distribution [was] heavily weighted on the younger ages.”\textsuperscript{245} However, student bodies are often used by many researchers as it provides not only an easily accessible source of participants, but also a starting point that enables them to refine various aspects of their enquiry, such as questionnaires. An example of research that specifically required student participation was conducted in 2008 at Griffith University by Dr. Martin Bridgstock.

In his research Bridgstock, a senior lecturer in the School of Science, conducted two studies that explored the paranormal from a sceptical viewpoint. One project was in partnership with Kylie Sturgess, from Perth, Western Australia, where she is currently a lecturer of Religious Education and Philosophy. The joint study consisted of a survey that was based on 20 questions, which was given to “1,200 Queenslanders” regarding their “belief in ghosts, [as well as] … other beliefs and superstitions.”\textsuperscript{246} The other project that Bridgstock states required student participation, was a before and after study of the effects of his ‘sceptic’ course conducted at Griffith University, which examined, “among other things, … belief in ghosts.” Early results showed that after attending this course, “belief in ghosts drop[ped] markedly” among his students. Bridgstock intended to find out why; however, to date, there have been no details released regarding his findings on this or the first study.\textsuperscript{247}

\textsuperscript{244} Collins, “Very Superstitious: Dissociation, Control and Unusual Beliefs.” 102
\textsuperscript{245} Thalbourne, “Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C).” 183.
\textsuperscript{246} From a personal communiqué received Wednesday 9 July 2008. It is not known whether or not the “1,200 Queenslanders” were comprised of people other than students, or if the participants were totally from the student body.
\textsuperscript{247} From a personal communiqué received by e-mail from Dr. Bridgstock, Wednesday 9 July 2008; requests for an up-date have remained unanswered.
Bridgstock devised his sceptical course in 2006 with the intention that it be conducted at Griffith University and would be predominantly available to students within the Faculty of Science, but ultimately open to any students interested in the ideas embedded within the course; as such, “law, environment, education and humanities” as well as the sciences were among the disciplines represented. Rather than force scepticism on the students, Bridgstock “outlin[ed] … how a skeptical approach works” and how conclusions can be reached based on that approach. However, despite the popularity of his course it did have an unforeseen negative impact. Although the course fulfilled the initial criteria of supplying students with the ‘intellectual tools’ necessary to critically and sceptically evaluate claims of paranormal experiences and phenomena, Bridgstock underestimated the importance of belief regarding the supernatural and/or paranormal in people’s lives:

My first indication of the impact of the course came early in the first year, when one mature student told me “I’m having to re-think fifty years of belief because of this course.” … Another student, from the following year, put the impact in these terms … :

I feel empowered with knowledge. I have learnt the skills that Martin promised. I have been “equipped with a cluster of intellectual skills and abilities” and I now “foster a questioning and investigative approach” to most aspects of life. But I also feel like I’ve lost out in something. I have lost the ability to believe for the sake of believing, a trait which may be scorned in academic circles, but gives a thoroughly liberated and boundless quality to the soul.

… Although [Bridgstock] had always thought of skepticism as a set of ‘intellectual tools’ which could be used, or not, the reality is rather different. Once the skeptical perspectives are understood, then they become a part of people’s outlooks. Once you have seen matters in a new way, it is difficult to go back to the old ways. Often,


students found themselves looking at their previous beliefs – or the beliefs of other members of their families – in new and critical ways.  

Not only did students find their beliefs questioned, Bridgstock also had to admit that his understanding of the strength of knowledge that was based on acceptable scientific evidence was not as infallible as he thought. As he progressed through the course he came to realize that “nothing could be known about the world with absolute certainty.” In fact, Bridgstock found: “[b]ecause skepticism argues for the reliance of knowledge upon evidence, it also necessarily stresses that all knowledge is provisional. There is always the possibility of contrary evidence overturning any belief.”

One component of Bridgstock’s course was an “introduction of ethics.” Bearing in mind that many of his students, which by his own admission was about sixty percent, would have held some form of paranormal belief, Bridgstock’s argument: “that it is unethical to hold beliefs which are not supported by evidence” while “skepticism is an ethical approach, as well as an intellectual one,” would have been very confronting to them. Although both these statements, as well as other facets of Bridgstock’s course, raise many controversial issues for now the focus is on his apparent lack of understanding regarding the role paranormal beliefs play in an individual’s life. This further strengthens this thesis’ argument concerning the need for an interdisciplinary approach to scholarly research that explores all aspects of ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena, including that of the effect and role of belief in the paranormal.

An example of research (still within the Sciences) that explored the “multidimensional structure of paranormal beliefs,” and also involved the

250 Bridgstock, Skepticism, Science and the Paranormal. Passage appeared under “Outcomes.”

251 Bridgstock, Skepticism, Science and the Paranormal. Found under the heading “Some consequences.”

252 Bridgstock, Skepticism, Science and the Paranormal. Found under the heading “Constructing the Course.”

253 Grimmer and White, “The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students.” 357.
participation of university students, was published in *The Journal of Psychology*, under the title, ‘The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs Among Australian Psychology Students.’ (For now a brief outline of the findings will be discussed as a more detailed account of this study will be provided in Part Two of this thesis).

In the late 1980s Dr. Martin Grimmer and Dr. Keith White presented a questionnaire to “836 Australian psychology students.” As stated, the aim of the study was to determine whether or not there was supporting evidence for the “multidimensional structure of paranormal beliefs.”\(^{254}\) After a review of the various methods utilised to determine the structure of paranormal beliefs, Grimmer and White, like Collins, decided to base their research on the factor analytic procedure developed by Tobacyk and Milford. They maintained their decision was governed by the fact that Tobacyk’s and Milford’s “Paranormal Belief Scale allow[ed] both individual factor scores and an overall belief score to be computed.” However, despite these benefits, they found that the ‘Scale’ did not contain recent phenomena.\(^{255}\) This led them to wonder “whether, if more current paranormal phenomena were incorporated in a questionnaire, a new factor analytic structure would emerge.” After taking these concerns into account, Grimmer and White determined that the “purpose of the present study was, first, to develop a new set of items and, second, to apply a factor analytic procedure to identify the underlying structure of current paranormal beliefs.”\(^{256}\)

Although Grimmer’s and White’s study confirmed the “multidimensional structure of paranormal beliefs,” the “new item pool,” which was developed after analysing the results of a questionnaire, exhibited a decrease in the “extent of belief in

\(^{254}\) Grimmer and White, “The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students.” 357.

\(^{255}\) Grimmer and White, “The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students.” 360.

\(^{256}\) Grimmer and White, “The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students.” 360.
They determined that the cause for this may have been the format used in their questionnaire, or their choice of participants:

The extent of belief in items on the present questionnaire was moderately high, though perhaps not as high as some of the results found elsewhere. … This may be due partly to the format of the present questionnaire, which asked subjects to rate the amount of evidence they believed existed for each phenomenon, a rather more strict interpretation of belief than just giving a personal opinion about the existence of a phenomenon. The present results may also reflect a general reduction in paranormal belief (or perhaps we sampled a more conservative student population or a more conservative society).  

While the format of questionnaires can lead to distortions such as this, Grimmer’s and White’s admission that their choice of participants may also have had an affect on results, confirms another argument put forward by this thesis – the need for research that encompasses a broader spectrum of individuals from all levels of society. Furthermore, the research should have a wider age range as well as an ethnic mix that accurately reflects the society being studied. However, in this instance, where the target group was specifically Psychology students the results achieved may be a reflection of the type of person who is interested in studying and/or pursuing a career in Psychology rather than the student population or society as a whole. This raises another issue regarding research into Australian ghostly experiences and phenomena that will be discussed more fully in Part Two of this thesis.

The need to explore a broader spectrum of individuals and cultures as a means of better understanding various aspects of paranormal belief was acknowledge by

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257 Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 367.
258 Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 367.
“sociologist/anthropologist” Dr. Jeremy Northcote;\(^{259}\) who spent ten years researching issues such as:

… how the principal arbiters of religious and scientific truths – the Church and the academic establishment – reject paranormal ideas as ‘occult’ and ‘pseudo-scientific’, and how, on the other hand paranormal enthusiasts attempt to resist such labels and instead establish paranormal ideas as legitimate knowledge.\(^ {260}\)

During the ten year period, Northcote travelled around the world attending many gatherings focusing on different aspects of paranormal belief – the results of this field work were published in his book The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth. Northcote’s research not only explored ghosts but also UFOs and witchcraft. He examined all aspects of belief, and non-belief, in paranormal phenomena – from the sceptical viewpoint to the hardened believer, as well as the roles religion and science play in the development of diverse viewpoints and beliefs. However, despite the many areas of paranormal phenomena that Northcote investigated (and the many different people and cultures he studied) he could not determine “whether the paranormal is real or not.”\(^ {261}\)

Despite the inconclusiveness of his research into the ‘reality’ of such phenomena, Northcote did conclude that he saw:

… the paranormal debate as presenting a particularly clear platform for viewing the politics of truth that underlies the knowledge production processes of our Western society as a whole. Consequently, [he maintains that his study] may well help us understand the way a whole range of non-paranormal-related “truths” are contested, and how all utterances are, at the end of the day, inherently political.\(^ {262}\)


Northcote’s research, while adding little to an understanding of Australian ghostly experiences, does exhibit how research from a discipline other than the Sciences can increase awareness of the impact and importance of these experiences, and paranormal phenomena in general, both individually and within societies as a whole.

Although this thesis maintains that, within Australia, the Humanities and Social Sciences are under-represented amongst researchers of paranormal phenomena; one discipline from this School with a long history of involvement is that of Philosophy. It was shown in the review of non-fiction literature that there is evidence of philosophical discourses centring on the possibility of life after bodily death being conducted as early as the fifth century B.C.E. An Australian Philosopher involved in researching paranormal phenomena is Dr. Hannah Jenkins; an Honorary Associate in the School of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania, and current President of the Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research, Inc. (AIPR Inc.)

Jenkins’ doctorate dissertation, ‘Beyond Beliefs,’ which she completed in 2007, explores the divide between proponents and opposers of psi phenomena, and the debates surrounding their conflicting points of view. Despite years of discussion between both sides, Jenkins found that nothing has been resolved – if anything the “debate is at a deadlock.” Jenkins maintains that it is vital that this deadlock be broken despite both parties appearing to be resigned to “agree[ing] to disagree” on the issue of “what to make of the evidence.” Jenkins maintains:

… the lack of resolution to the dispute is harmful to both parties. If anti-psi proponents are correct then psi researchers are wasting time and money investigating a phenomenon that doesn’t exist; if the pro-psi proponents are correct then mainstream science and philosophy is missing out on investigating new

\[263\] Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 7.

\[264\] Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 8.
phenomena that are intriguing and, though anomalous, have the potential to impact significantly on contemporary theories of mind, time and causation.\textsuperscript{265}

The title of Jenkins’ dissertation explains what she is hoping her work will achieve; that is, go “\textit{beyond beliefs}” about psi and into “an examination of possible explanations of the phenomena.”\textsuperscript{266} Although her work appears to be at odds with the aim of this thesis, which maintains that beliefs pertaining to paranormal phenomena \textit{are} important, it actually supports it. By showing how the psi debate can move out of its “deadlock” Jenkins creates a way forward for future discussions that are based on philosophically sound premises. This can only benefit others involved with researching various aspects of paranormal phenomena; including beliefs and rituals that stem from experiences of ghostly as well as psi phenomena.

Jenkins desire to have issues concerning paranormal phenomena in general, and psi phenomena in particular, discussed in an open and rational manner has resulted in her devising ways in which she can bring together a “robust community of researchers” who share the same desire. Through the creation of this community, she hopes to generate “joint projects, get more funding and generally create a more supportive situation for those interested in paranormal topics at a high level of research.”\textsuperscript{267} To achieve this goal, Jenkins created, with the assistance of others interested in parapsychology, an Internet group called the Society for Anomalous Research, Australia (SARA). This society, which was officially founded in April 2008, focuses on “advancing the serious study of unusual phenomena.”\textsuperscript{268} Jenkins’ utilisation of modern technology to create this community is not wholly dependent on the Internet, or on those

\textsuperscript{265} Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 8.

\textsuperscript{266} Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 1.

\textsuperscript{267} From a personal communiqué via email: received Monday 9 June 2008.

\textsuperscript{268} Sourced from the Internet; available at: www.sara.org.au Accessed: Friday 20 February 2009.
who join SARA. In the March 2009 issue of The A.I.P.R. News Jenkins states her intention to “turn [her] radio show the Edge of Reason, into a TV show, thereby creating a “platform that gives psi researchers a voice.”

It is understandable that individual researchers study areas of paranormal phenomena that are relevant to their academic discipline; however, not all research is conducted by those in the world of academia. Individuals and groups from all walks of life research paranormal phenomena; many, like Jenkins, often place their findings on the Internet where others with similar interests can easily access them. Some current Australian Internet groups are: the ‘Australian Ghost Hunters Society,’ ‘Paranormal Australia,’ Unexplained Australia,’ and ‘EVP and ITC Australia – Evidence for Life Continuance.’ As well as these paranormal groups, there is also an international research group that is based in Melbourne called ‘Ghost Research International,’ an online Australian produced magazine devoted to spiritual and paranormal research entitled ‘inSpirit Magazine,’ and a web site that explores the “Case for the Afterlife” from a legal perspective, which was set up by Victor Zammit; a former Australian lawyer who currently resides in the U.S.A. While Internet sites developed by proponents of paranormal phenomena are quite prevalent, sites created by those who hold a sceptical viewpoint are less numerous. However, the opposing Australian point of view is represented by the Australian Skeptics group, which has a web site where people can access various articles relating to the sceptical viewpoint concerning paranormal phenomena.

While many Internet sites dealing with paranormal phenomena are created by individuals and non-academic groups there are some that have been developed by people who are affiliated with institutions of higher learning, while others are the

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270 A full list of these web sites and their access details is included at the end of the Bibliography.
creation of individual scholars, like Jenkins, who feel that the Internet provides an excellent arena for the discussion and dissemination of ideas regarding paranormal phenomena. One such group is the Parapsychological Association, which has an Internet site where many facets of Parapsychology are explained. Listed on this site are institutions, worldwide, that offer advanced degrees, coursework or credit in Parapsychology. Although most courses are conducted by organisations in North America, Europe and the United Kingdom, there is one listing for Australia – the Australian Institute of Parapsychological Research, Inc. (AIPR Inc.) – which runs courses coordinated by Dr. Lance Storm. Another institution that has a full list of worldwide research centres currently investigating paranormal phenomena is the Koestler Parapsychology Unit, which is based in the Psychology Department of the University of Edinburgh. The centres compiled by Koestler are listed as exploring psi phenomena such as ESP, direct mental interaction with living systems, precognition, remote viewing, microscopic psychokinesis, macroscopic psychokinesis, as well as the more conventional explanations of paranormal phenomena. Once again, the AIPR Inc., which has its head office in Sydney, is the only Australian parapsychological research facility listed.
Concluding Remarks

One of the aims of this thesis is to show how research into Australian ghostly experiences could enhance a greater understanding of that society’s beliefs concerning death, an afterlife, and the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death. Despite an increase in the publication of anthologies purporting to present factual accounts of these experiences, as well as evidence of an increase in the amount of research into psi phenomena, this thesis found that scholarly research of not only Australian ghostly experiences but also Australian paranormal phenomena in general, remain under-represented in both non-fiction literature and academic texts dealing with such phenomena – especially within the Humanities and Social Sciences.

The review of non-fiction literature, which began with a summary of the history pertaining to humanity’s belief in ghosts and the paranormal, displayed the ancient foundations behind the belief – belief that has changed little over the course of humankind’s journey, yet altered enough to reflect individual societal/cultural needs and beliefs regarding the role of ghosts and an afterlife through various historical periods. However, this thesis found that, in relation to Australian society, there was limited research exploring these issues; despite the fact that researchers who have investigated some Australian ghostly experiences concluded that more studies into this area are required.

The value of ghost stories as a means of recounting the history of an area, site, or event, was also discussed. It was shown how individuals, and local councils, have gained an income by conducting ghost tours that present the history of a site as well as the people who died there. Yet, there were no indications that scholars from the discipline of History have utilised these experiences and phenomena as a ‘learning tool’ – nor explored the history embedded within the tales thus providing further knowledge
regarding various aspects of Australia’s past. Furthermore, although Spiritualism gave rise to non-fiction literature that presented scientific exposés concerning ghostly phenomena, most publications discussed in the review were by researchers from elsewhere in the world.

The apparent indifference exhibited in the non-fiction literature regarding Australian ghostly experiences and phenomena was further reflected in the review of current Australian researchers. Although the people and institutions mentioned may not be the only researchers of Australian paranormal phenomena, as far as it has been able to ascertain, none of them have researched, or are proposing to research, ghostly experiences and phenomena from a specifically Australian perspective, let alone a non-Indigenous one. The review of Australian researchers also highlighted the scholarly imbalance surrounding research into this area; with most studies being conducted by those in the Sciences, especially the discipline of Psychology. While this thesis finds this understandable (given the nature of such experiences) and acknowledges the work they have done, it also contends that this imbalance does not enable a full understanding of the role, and effect such experiences and phenomena have on Australian society; or whether multiculturalism adds a further dimension to beliefs/opinions surrounding such experiences and phenomena.

Although the discipline of Psychology is very much represented in the literature and research concerning ghostly phenomena, other disciplines were present; albeit in a limited way; for example, there was one Philosopher, a Religious Education lecturer, and a Sociologist. This imbalance is not confined to Australian researchers of paranormal and ghostly phenomena. Eric Ouellet, from the Royal Military College of Canada also found that there is a “serious need for a social science and humanities [sic.]
equivalent” to the many journals presenting scientific exposés of paranormal phenomena – there needs to be a more balanced approach.272

This thesis’ contention that a full understanding of paranormal beliefs is necessary was amply exhibited in the unanticipated negative impact of Bridgstock’s sceptics’ course. Although his intention was to strengthen students’ abilities in critical thinking, he failed to realise that his course could destroy some students’ long held beliefs – a loss that, for some, appeared to far outweigh any gain. Inadvertently, Bridgstock has strengthened this thesis’ as well as various other researchers’ contention that humankind is unable “to live without belief.”273

While the review of non-fiction literature displayed how ghost stories provide a ‘window’ into Australia’s past, it also revealed how the experiences and beliefs surrounding ghostly phenomena can provide researchers with a means of examining the present. For example; the many psychological studies regarding belief in and experience of such phenomena not only look at the ‘mental health’ of experients but also social issues; such as false memory, fantasy proneness and dissociation. However, the study of alternative explanations for ghostly phenomena is not limited to parapsychologists as some mainstream scientists also explore theories concerning whether or not ghostly phenomena are genuine paranormal phenomena or merely unusual occurrences that, after intensive research, are found to be either the misinterpretation of natural/normal events or fraudulent claims on behalf of the supposed experient.

Although parapsychologists explore experients’ ‘mental health’ they are also concerned with the ‘power’ of the human brain and the possibility that it is capable of producing psi phenomena. Since the late nineteenth century the study of psi abilities has


resulted in researchers relegating ghostly phenomena to a minor role, especially regarding explanations of communications purportedly from deceased individuals.

While parapsychologists tend to favour theories that are indicative of psi phenomena, there are those who maintain that the many experiential accounts of ghostly phenomena provide proof that life after bodily death exists. However, those who claim to have experienced ghostly phenomena often question whether or not their experience was ‘real.’ They are not alone in wondering this. The abundance of psychological studies is testament to researchers’ curiosity as well. Some experiences may be the result of some form of psychological anomaly; some may be “false memory” of an event that, at the time, appeared to have no logical explanation. Regardless, there are those who firmly believe that they ‘saw what they saw – a ghost!’ Part Two, to which this thesis now turns, will explore ‘why’ people so adamantly hang onto their belief – sometimes, despite evidence to the contrary.

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274 Wilson and French, "The Relationship between Susceptibility to False Memories, Dissociativity, and Paranormal Belief and Experience."
Part Two: ‘Why’ people believe they’ve seen a ghost

Indeed the most common reason given for belief in the paranormal is one’s own experience. … It appears that the majority of believers are convinced that they have actually experienced the paranormal. A further question therefore raised is why people believe they have had paranormal experiences. 

Susan Blackmore and Tom Trościanko

Part One presented a review of both non-fiction literature and scholarly research regarding Australian ghostly experiences and phenomena. Although it was shown that researchers have contributed generally to a better understanding of the many issues surrounding belief in ghosts and their link to beliefs related to death; such as the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death; they have not increased an understanding of non-Indigenous Australian experiences and/or beliefs, nor the effect they have on each and every level of that society. Furthermore, it was shown that the imbalance of research into such phenomena is the result of reluctance by scholars from disciplines other than the Sciences to pursue research of paranormal phenomena in general, and Australian beliefs and experiences in particular.

It is not unusual for those who claim to have experienced ghostly phenomena to hold steadfastly to their assertion that what they experienced was real. Researchers’ interest in the existence of this adamance among experiants has culminated in the development of many theories, as well as studies, exploring psychological factors that may increase the likelihood of a person believing in, and/or experiencing, ghostly phenomena. Unfortunately, studies such as these have the adverse effect of deterring many people from imparting details about their ghostly experiences, as the implication embedded in the various findings is that those individuals may be more prone to fantasy, hallucination, or some form of psychological anomaly or disorder. However, the

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psychological factors behind these beliefs involves more than an experient’s current mental state.

While examining psychological aspects of ghostly experiences researchers often consider preconditioning factors that may have influenced, or aided, a belief in ghosts. Although it is necessary for researchers to examine these factors when determining their role in these experiences, consideration of the findings should also take into account whether the results are biased in any way, or reflect preconditioning factors on behalf of the researcher – not just the experient. During research into debates concerning dualism and its role in afterlife beliefs, for example, David Ray Griffin found that participants had difficulty maintaining “open-minded consideration of [the] evidence” due to holding “a priori judgements based on paradigm-convictions.” Griffin argues that:

… paradigmatic minds, if they believe that life after death is not possible, may quickly conclude that there is no good evidence for it. They will perhaps reach this conclusion in a largely a priori way, by simply refusing to look at the evidence … Or, if they do deign to look at some of the evidence, they will either explain it away, giving alternative explanations, or simply set it aside as “anomalous.” …

Contrariwise, those paradigmatic minds who think that belief in life after death is both desirable and possible are often less than fully critical about the empirical data. They often conclude all too quickly that the evidence is sufficient, failing to consider the fact that alternative interpretations of the evidence are possible …

Similarly, while an experient’s psychological make-up may have facilitated their belief in ghosts, Darryl Reanney maintains that the psychological make-up of a researcher may also play a part in how results are interpreted. For example; in his exploration of how the universe might end, Reanney discusses two possible scenarios – one he labels the

“hot’ Big Bang,” the other the “Big Crunch.” Despite the probability factors of both scenarios being equal, Reanney contends that:

Science has found it harder to accept the Big Crunch scenario than the heat death scenario. [He] suspect[s] the reasons for this have more to do with human psychology than with the search for truth. Science intensely dislikes the idea that the laws of physics break down at a singularity. …

It is not surprising that some scientists have tried to seek ways to get around this problem, to bring the cosmos in its totality back within the framework of physical law and order.²⁷⁷

According to Susan Blackmore and Tom Trońcianko, “there are two main possibilities” as to why an experiencer believes the experience they have had is real: “One is that they have” had a paranormal experience. “The alternative is that their belief is based on misinterpretation of normal events as paranormal.”²⁷⁸ While the ‘misinterpretation’ may be linked to psychological factors, preconditioning influences could also have played a part. This thesis will now turn to an overview of research that explores preconditioning and psychological factors concerning beliefs and experiences of ghostly phenomena – including those that focus on Australian experiences and phenomena.

Preconditioning Influences

Where do we begin this journey? How does one even talk about that which is beyond the limits of human experience? Human beings have used religious claims for millennia to hide our lack of knowledge even from ourselves. Are those reassuring but spurious claims all that life after death is about? John Shelby Spong279

Paranormal phenomena and ghosts in particular, have the tendency to polarise people into two main groups – those who believe such phenomena exist, and those who disbelieve; or, rather, those who are commonly labelled ‘Skeptics.’280 Contained within these two groups are varying degrees of belief and scepticism, and, despite inflexible opinions espoused by those at the extreme ends of each group, it is not uncommon for some movement to take place between the two. These movements exhibit fluidity similar to that found amongst members of Internet paranormal sites. However, while fluidity of belief on Internet sites is reflective of a need to create a better sense of belonging to a group (an aspect of paranormal belief that will be discussed further in Part Three), in this instance the shift is often governed by either personal experience of paranormal phenomena, or, conversely, a lack thereof; as Northcote states:

Participants themselves offer a variety of explanations to account for their pro or anti paranormal interest … Paranormal proponents, for example, frequently claim that their involvement was precipitated by one or more “extraordinary” experiences that led them to question various mainstream views about the nature of reality and to seriously consider various alternative, paranormal explanations. For example, one paranormal proponent, who claims to have once seen lights doing strange manoeuvres above a field, states during an Internet discussion:

“I’ll tell you something. I was once a complete skeptic about everything paranormal. Then, one evening, with five of my friends, as we were

280 Jeremy Northcote notes: “Skeptics tend to refer to themselves using a ‘k’ (the American spelling), even in England and Australia (where the word ‘sceptic’ is spelt with a ‘c’).” Northcote, The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth: A Sociological Account, 4; fn.1.
enjoying dusk after a sunny day, we all noticed something extraordinarily bizarre …

Despite the probability that this experient may have adjusted their beliefs to ‘fit in’ with other Internet forum members, Northcote contends that the shift in belief displayed a commonality that exists amongst others who have experienced paranormal phenomena and were not members of an Internet forum. However, just as experiencing paranormal phenomena can cause someone to question their sceptical stance, lack of an experience (or acceptable proof) can result in a believer, or proponent, abandoning their position; instead adopting one that tends to favour scepticism.

Blackmore, a parapsychologist and Psychology professor, was one ‘believer’ who did just that. Blackmore once thought (and hoped) that “each of us has a special inner core … that ultimately survives death, giving meaning to our otherwise short and pointless lives.” After spending twenty-five years researching whether life after bodily death was possible, or if “telepathy, clairvoyance, [and] psychokinesis” were plausible, she finally gave up. It was not an easy decision for her to make as she had to discard a lifetime of beliefs, and then set about creating new ones that fitted her view of life as she now saw it.

Apart from determining that “as far as [she] could tell, [there was] no good evidence for the paranormal,” Blackmore also states that:

The more serious reason why I have given up is that I no longer believe in the world [as I once viewed it]. Indeed, I no longer believe that the search for paranormal phenomena will provide insight into the “big questions” of life – though when I started out in my career in parapsychology I was sure it would. I really

believed that studying the paranormal would help me with such mysteries as “What kind of world is this? What am I? and How should I live my life?”

Despite her move to the opposite side of the paranormal debate, Blackmore’s faint hope that someone will one day prove her wrong lends support to her own and other researchers’ findings regarding a person’s reluctance to let go of their beliefs even when they are confronted with data that requires them to change, or rethink, them. The conflict that a decision like this creates within an individual is not only reflected in Blackmore’s final words on the subject in which she states that she would “be back like a shot” if researchers were to find a “way to demonstrate [psi] and a theory to explain it;” but also Bridgstock’s findings, which were discussed in Part One, regarding the negative impact of his sceptical course on students who found their paranormal and/or supernatural beliefs being questioned.

While these examples exhibit shifts in beliefs due to differing experiences, there are those who hold onto them despite their experiences. Similar to Griffin’s and Reanney’s conclusions regarding a priori judgments and personal biases, Blackmore found, during reassessment of her beliefs, that “some skeptics display just the same reluctance to change, and tendency to biased interpretations, as the most ardent believers do.” John Shelby Spong suggests, in the case of those who hold onto their beliefs concerning life after death despite evidence to the contrary, that such conflicts may stem from:

284 Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." 92-93.
285 For example; Dorothy Rowe, What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives. (London: Routledge, 2009). Rowe asks the same question regarding how a person should live their life. xii-xiii.
286 Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." 94.
287 Bridgstock, Skepticism, Science and the Paranormal.
288 Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." 92.
The human need to believe in God and in such ultimate matters as life beyond death, which Spong contends, must be greater than the human ability to believe these things. When people get to the point where they do not really believe what they are saying, they still seem to believe in believing in what they are saying! They do not even recognize the difference.289

While the examples above are clearly indicative of psychological aspects of belief in paranormal phenomena, they are also suggestive of preconditioning influences that may have aided the development of belief in such phenomena as well as belief in life after bodily death. Furthermore, although Northcote’s and Blackmore’s examples exhibit shifts in belief resulting from personal experience, the experiences themselves could merely have been the final catalyst in a series of events that determined how each perceived their individual situation; and that the reactions of each were based on a compilation of influences that had been progressively absorbed throughout their lives.

The shift from sceptic, for example, to not-quite-a-believer depends, in part, on an experient’s preconceived idea of what constitutes a paranormal occurrence. However, the move from proponent/believer to sceptic often comes about after previously held beliefs succumb to scientific methods or sceptical arguments, which continually supply data or theories that weaken supposed evidence regarding the existence of paranormal phenomena. In these instances, there are usually both internal and external influences at play – internally are beliefs that stem, in part, from preconceived ideas; while externally, is supposedly irrefutable scientific evidence that casts doubt on the possible actuality of most paranormal phenomena. Finally, Spong’s comment, apart from its religious connotations, displays a preconditioning factor that, if correct, is beyond the control of any individual – that is, the “need to believe.”290 Some researchers, such as Siegel and

289 Spong, Eternal Life: A New Vision. 3.
290 Spong, Eternal Life: A New Vision. 3.
Schumaker, argue that this is indicative of humankind being “biologically predisposed to believe the unbelievable.”

In his search for a reality that stretches the boundaries of scientific knowledge while still maintaining its basic truths, Reanney explored the way personal experience could determine how two distinctly different individuals would react to the same occurrence. After citing an extreme example, he concluded that an individual’s reactions depended largely on past experience (both individually and collectively as a member of the human race) combined with the manner in which the occurrence fitted into the reality that the past had forged for each of them. Reanney contends that:

Our whole perception of reality has been fundamentally shaped by the experiences which life has undergone on the surface of this planet. … The models we build to explain the world are ‘of this world’, inevitably, intuitively, profoundly. They make ‘most sense’ when the images they create resonate with and correspond to the innermost structure of our thoughts. We find meaning in things we recognise …, accepting most easily a future contoured around the past.

While Reanney’s contention strengthens a hypothesis presented in Part One, which maintained that belief in survival after bodily death stemmed from ancient foundations, he also concludes that an individual’s perception of reality depends, to some extent, on the intelligence and/or educational level of that individual. This, in turn, influences how they might perceive, and react to, various experiences – especially those that appear to be of a paranormal nature.

Similar to Reanney’s findings regarding individual reactions and past experiences, definitions as to what constitutes paranormal phenomena often rely on beliefs held by people either individually or collectively as a community/society. These

292 Reanney, *The Death of Forever: A New Future for Human Consciousness*, 139-140.
definitions play an important role in the determination of an event or experience as being ‘paranormal.’ However, it should be understood that just as individual definitions are not developed in isolation nor are the many theories pertaining to paranormal phenomena; as Storm contends in his article entitled, ‘A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism about Psi:’ “Scientific paradigms … are born of human reason, but reason cannot take place in a vacuum – it is influenced by the factors of experience and the beliefs we hold.”293 Although Storm’s article deals primarily with research regarding psi phenomena his comments concerning influences on scientific paradigms could be applied to other areas of parapsychological research.

In Part One it was noted that: “Replication by independent scientists is of course the requirement for a phenomenon to be considered objective and real.”294 Likewise, Storm also found that: “the “common criterion” for assessing the existence of a phenomenon … is the prerequisite of repeatability, because predictability ensues, and as a consequence, theory can be gainfully tested.”295 However, the very nature of paranormal phenomena often makes replication difficult or even impossible, yet parapsychologists are not alone when it comes to problems like this. Mainstream scientists also find phenomena that are difficult to replicate; “for example, … the discipline of physics … delivers no more consistency of results from experimentation than do the social sciences.”296 The overriding difference is that mainstream scientists accept the findings of physics despite questionable replication. As well as the problem of repeatability, Storm also noted three other issues surrounding parapsychological research, which need to be taken into account when considering what constitutes

293 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 288.
294 Broderick, Outside the Gates of Science. Frontispiece.
295 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 280. Storm goes on to point out that “it is not always possible to specify what the term “replication” itself is supposed to mean because … replication would be dependent on acceptability and the “preconceived notions” that we use to interpret experimental results.”
296 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 280-281.
paranormal phenomena; they are paradigm incommensurability, sociocognitive discontinuity, and epistemological discontinuity.

Paradigm incommensurability depends, in part, on the repeatability factor; given that a ‘paradigm’ is understood to mean “an example or pattern, esp[ecially] one underlying a theory or methodology.” However, Storm states the second half of this ‘issue,’ depends upon the “Kuhnian … concept of “incommensurability” between paradigms (and theories in many cases),” in which ‘incommensurability’ is understood as “having no common standard of measurement; not comparable in respect of magnitude or value.” Therefore, Storm argues that: “if paradigms are incommensurable with each other then there is no standard by which they can be compared” – including that of replication. Although some see “science [as] a progressive enterprise” where old paradigms make way for “new superior paradigm[s]” this is not always the case; as Storm maintains:

Parapsychologists may accept or reject both old and new ideas according to their findings … but allowances need to be made. It is now not just a matter of upholding the theory that does (or theories that do) the best job of explaining experimental outcomes. Inevitably, parapsychologists will commit unreservedly to multiple or plural paradigmatic viewpoints, since different paradigms speak to different phenomenologies according to the discursive constructs of those paradigms. In the past, this approach would have suggested a discipline that was fragmented (if not unscientific), but now it may be regarded as a major philosophical strength for parapsychology. In fact, in recent decades pluralist approaches have been attempted in parapsychology.

298 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 283.
300 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 284.
301 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi." 285.
Although parapsychologists may support a pluralist approach it does not necessarily mean that a general consensus has been reached regarding the “facts” about paranormal phenomena; as Storm suggests:

Even when there is a consensus between groups on the facts about a phenomenon, they may differ about the ideas and conclusions that follow from those facts. Thus, in cases where groups (or, in fact, individuals) are opposed, argumentation may proceed with little chance of a resolution between the two (or more) factions.302

This is indicative of Storm’s second issue surrounding paranormal phenomena; that of sociocognitive discontinuity, which he maintains “describes the state of affairs that may exist between (say) two groups of scientists who use mutually exclusive epistemologies to inform their “social actions”.”303 This can lead to irreconcilable differences; for example:

Believer and skeptic both agree on what psi is according to what science cannot explain. But for sociocognitive reasons they split at this point – the one convinced that science needs to be more flexible, the other certain that there is no room for psi according to the standards of scientific truth. [While t]hese arguments create … sociocognitive discontinuity … both arguments also result in epistemological discontinuity (i.e., a new state of dissonance in the epistemology caused by incomplete or inappropriate applications of preexisting knowledge claims).304

According to Storm: “These discontinuities ultimately propagate more doubt, not certainty;” especially if one considers the construction of scientific paradigms, which are often influenced by the beliefs and experiences of those who propose them.305

However, beliefs and experiences not only influence scientific paradigms, they are also

304 Storm, “A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi.” 287.
305 Storm, “A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi.” 288.
reflected in individual interpretations regarding what constitutes paranormal phenomena. Therefore, the thesis will now turn to a survey of some of these interpretations.

What Constitutes ‘Paranormal’ Phenomena?

Collins’ research, which was summarised in Part One, explored the “apparent relationship between dissociation, locus of control and a specific set of unusual beliefs, namely, paranormal beliefs.” 306 Her research depended not only on Tobacyk’s and Milford’s scale of items, which they established as being representative of paranormal phenomena, but also on I. Dag’s definition of what constituted a phenomena as being ‘paranormal;’ which states that paranormal belief is “belief in phenomena which, if authentic, violate basic limiting principles [(BLPs)] of science.” 307 Although Dag supplies a very succinct definition, it is worthwhile viewing Tobacyk’s and Milford’s as they not only provide a more in-depth interpretation, but because their scale of items, which is based on their interpretation of what constitutes paranormal phenomena, is utilised by many researchers of paranormal phenomena:

Although there is no full consensus about the definition of paranormal, three criteria were used [in Tobacyk’s and Milford’s study]: (a) inexplicability in terms of current science, (b) explicable achieved only by major revisions in basic limiting principles of science, and (c) incompatibility with normative perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about reality. 308

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307 Collins, “Very Superstitious: Dissociation, Control and Unusual Beliefs.” 98. The definition Collins cited came from a journal article by I. Dag, “The Relationships among Paranormal Beliefs, Locus of Control and Psychopathology in a Turkish College Sample,” Personality & Individual Differences Vol. 26. (1999). Dag’s “basic limiting principles of science” were based on Broad’s BLPs, which “are called limiting principles because they specify restrictions or limitations on the way things can be, or the way they can be known. And they are called basic because they are supposed to lie at the very foundation of our conceptual system. Broad writes, “They form the framework within which the practical life, the scientific theories, and even most of the fiction of contemporary industrial civilization are confined.” Stephen E. Braude, E S P and Psychokinesis: A Philosophical Examination, Revised Edition ed. (Parkland, Florida: Brown Walker Press, 2002). 202.

Following their definition of paranormal phenomena, Tobacyk and Milford state the reasoning behind the inclusion of “traditional religious belief … as a paranormal belief dimension:”

… [was] because it appears that religious and other paranormal beliefs originate in the same fundamental human experience and might serve similar functions. Indeed Clark … and LeShan … proposed themes shared by religious and other paranormal belief systems, including (a) methods of communicating outside of typical, normal ways, (b) a unity or basic principle as the foundation of the universe, (c) the view of man as both a body and a mind/spirit/soul, (d) the notion of an afterlife, and (e) the notion that the reality we typically experience is not the “true” reality.\(^{309}\)

After establishing a definition that encompassed various aspects of beliefs exhibiting paranormal connections, Tobacyk and Milford compiled a list of factors that further enabled them to develop “reliable and valid techniques to assess belief in paranormal phenomena.”\(^ {310}\) In an attempt to limit “a priori assumptions about what constitutes paranormal belief,”\(^ {311}\) (assumptions that Griffin found interfered with “open-minded consideration” of evidence concerning paranormal phenomena)\(^ {312}\) Tobacyk and Milford determined that a more ‘valid’ approach would be to analyse the beliefs of a sample group. To aid the determination of belief in paranormal phenomena, the ‘group’ would be given an “item pool” of representative beliefs to choose from. Tobacyk and Milford would then collate the group’s choices to “assess the structure of paranormal belief.” After compiling their selections, they constructed an “assessment instrument” to

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“measure degree of belief in paranormal phenomena.” From this they developed their “item pool,” which they established as being: “Traditional Religious Belief, Psi Belief, Witchcraft, Superstition, Spiritualism, Extraordinary Life Forms, and Precognition.”

Tobacyk’s and Milford’s establishment of a definition regarding what constitutes paranormal phenomena relies, in part, on scientific principles – that is, either scientifically inexplicable, or explicable only if the principles of science are revised. Given the influence of science generally, its role in the development of belief in paranormal phenomena will now be discussed.

Science and the Paranormal

If one accepts, or adheres to, a scientific determination of what constitutes paranormal phenomena then points (a) and (b) in Tobacyk’s and Milford’s definition would appear to present incontestable criteria. However, some would view such acceptance, or adherence, as supportive of the “gatekeeper” attitude that is exhibited by some scientists; especially if one takes into account Tobacyk’s and Milford’s contention that “no full consensus about the definition of paranormal” has been reached. While the ‘gatekeeper’ attitude is not evident at all levels of science, those who maintain it appear to be the dominant instigators of what is deemed ‘acceptable’ knowledge; as Northcote found during research into the paranormal:

… it is the views of the academic/scientific “elite” – the “gatekeepers” of science as some analysts refer to them – that ultimately define what is and is not accepted

313 Tobacyk and Milford, “Belief in Paranormal Phenomena: Assessment Instrument Development and Implications for Personality Functioning,” 1029-1030. Their “item pool” appears in the abstract preceding their paper. Note: Psi Belief in this instance is said to include clairvoyance, telepathy, and psychokinesis.


knowledge, … and the “elite”, it appears, are not nearly as tolerant of paranormal claims as some rank-and-file academics/scientists are.\(^{316}\)

Northcote further maintains that there are those in the “academic/scientific community” who seemingly reject claims of paranormal phenomena in a similar manner to “those early intellectuals of the Enlightenment.”\(^{317}\)

Despite the aim of the Enlightenment, which was to discard “irrationality and superstition”\(^{318}\) in favour of reason, it could not entirely obliterate the influence of supernatural belief systems instilled by generations of ‘pre-enlightened’ societies; as John Potts contends: “The reality, of course, was that neither religion nor mysticism was banished by the Age of Reason. Instead, mystical belief forged a union … with the new spirit of scientific inquiry.”\(^{319}\) Potts maintains that the “union” between two seemingly opposing schools of thought arose, in part, from the general populaces’ inability to fathom the new technology of the day. For example, how electricity was created and, in turn, how it could affect things many miles from its source. People viewed this, as well as other technological advances such as photography for example, as evidence that paranormal or supernatural phenomena were not only possible but real.\(^{320}\)

While it is relatively easy to see how people of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reasoned that ‘modern’ technology supplied confirmation of paranormal and supernatural phenomena, it does not explain the increased interest in such phenomena


\(^{317}\) Northcote, The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth: A Sociological Account, 76. A doctrine of the Enlightenment states: “Beliefs are to be accepted only on the basis of reason, not on the authority of priests, sacred texts, or tradition. Thus Enlightenment thinkers tended to atheism, or at most to a purely natural or rational deism, shorn of supernatural and miraculous elements and designed primarily to support an enlightened moral code and, in some cases, to account for the fact that the universe is a rational system, wholly accessible to human reason.” By M.J. Inwood in Honderich, ed., The Oxford Companion to Philosophy, 236.


\(^{320}\) Potts, “Ghost Hunting in the Twenty-First Century.” 212.
witnessed in the mid to late twentieth century. Despite Garvin McCain’s and Erwin Segal’s contention in *The Game of Science* that the growth in scientific reasoning affected belief systems, gradually giving rise to a “disbelief in the supernatural,” they also observe that since the mid-twentieth century “there has been a rebirth of interest in the supernatural.” Similarly, Diane E. Goldstein maintains that the increasing interest in paranormal phenomena witnessed in the 1960s continued throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first:

According to the Gallup Organization, who update their audits of these issues every couple of years, continual surveys have demonstrated slight increases in paranormal belief over the last fifteen years with decline in belief in only one area since 1990, that of devil possession.

The ‘rebirth’ mentioned by McCain and Segal is also evinced in research concerning Australian paranormal and supernatural beliefs; as is Goldstein’s finding regarding the decline of belief in the devil, or Lucifer.

In December 2009, *The Sydney Morning Herald* published an article by journalist David Marr entitled ‘Our Faith Today,’ which was based on a survey of one thousand Australian individuals conducted by the AC Nielsen group. The survey “quizzed” these people on issues such as belief in a god, in life after death, in heaven, hell, angels, witches, UFOs, astrology, psychic powers, miracles, evolution and whether there is no God. It also asked whether they believed that the Holy book is the word of

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323 The article does not state the socio-economic level, age or other cultural issues of the participants – nor other factors that may have had a bearing on the results.
God, and if so, do they believe it to be literally true. In relation to beliefs pertaining to paranormal phenomena and some form of survival after bodily death, fifty three per cent of Australians were found to believe in life after death while forty nine percent believe in psychic powers such as ESP. As with the Gallup poll, it was found that although the “figure wanders over the years … [t]he Nielsen finding suggests hope in an afterlife is making a modest comeback in Australia.” Marr states that this ‘comeback,’ may be due to the “more religious Baby Boomers, [who] are heading for the grave – confident, by the way, in life after death.”

In Part One, it was established that people of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rebelled against Enlightenment’s scientific rationality due to discontentment with its propositions and the effect they had on people’s morale and sensibilities at the time. However, just as Enlightenment’s influence continues to be discernible in current scientific attitudes, so too an element of discontent regarding the role of science in societal issues persists even today. This may explain why, in the twenty-first century, some people still hold onto beliefs that others maintain have been shown by science not to exist, despite, as Victor J. Stenger claims:

… we can now safely say that the wide range of observations of thousands of scientists worldwide, with the best instrumentation modern technology can provide, reveal a universe that contains matter and nothing more. No data or theories currently require the introduction of either supernatural forces or immaterial substances.

While sceptics and those who believe in the infallibility of scientific reasoning argue, as Stenger does, that there is no need to look any further for answers concerning life after death, paranormal phenomena, and ghosts than current scientific data, which often discredits any such claims, there are those who feel otherwise; as Nicholas Humphrey, quoting Vaclav Havel, writes:

‘Modern thought – based on the premise that the world is objectively knowable, and that the knowledge so obtained can be absolutely generalised – has come to a final crisis. This era has created the first technical civilisation, but it has reached the point beyond which the abyss begins.’ [Havel] recommends instead the cultivation of ‘soul, individual spirituality, and above all, trust in one’s own subjectivity as one’s principal link to the world.’

Although Havel “recommends” a “trust in one’s own subjectivity” Tobacyk’s and Milford’s third criteria regarding what constitutes paranormal phenomena; as phenomena that display “incompatibility with normative perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about reality;” implies that this trust could be misplaced. However, McCain and Segal question the adamance of those who believe that science ‘knows all there is to know;’ observing instead the limits of science, thereby strengthening Havel’s recommendation to cultivate one’s soul as well as their “individual spirituality:”

[Even though science has … widespread influences and affects all aspects of our life, it has important limitations. … [One such limitation] falls under the general heading of “metaphysics.” These questions are about reality directly; … what is it really? … Do minds really exist? Do people have immaterial souls? … These questions can be most exasperating. And they cannot be answered.

328 Humphrey, Soul Searching. 8.
330 McCain and Segal, The Game of Science. 186-189.
If the hypothesis presented in this passage is correct then it raises doubt as to what actually constitutes “normative perceptions, beliefs, and expectations about reality.”331 Consideration of the issues surrounding this doubt is necessary if one also takes into account McCain’s and Segal’s further contention that: “Scientists can only find out what people believe and the consequences of such beliefs; they cannot demonstrate the truth of such beliefs.”332 Future research into these issues could either weaken the validity of science-based conceptions regarding what constitutes ‘reality’ and, therefore, the understanding of what “normative perceptions” are (some of which may fall under the umbrella of belief) or diminish the ‘gaps’ in scientific knowledge thereby decreasing the number of phenomena currently labelled as ‘paranormal.’

This discussion, which ostensibly set out to explore the influence of science in relation to paranormal beliefs, presented arguments that examined both sides of the debate. Although the period governed by the Enlightenment witnessed a weakening of belief in the paranormal and supernatural, and a rise in the acceptance of scientific reasoning, the beliefs were not entirely extinguished. However, the paranormal and supernatural beliefs that emerged during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were not the same as those prior to the Enlightenment. No longer did one have to rely on ‘blind faith’ to buoy belief in such phenomena as the inability of science to supply all the answers combined with discoveries that appeared to ‘allow’ for the existence of such phenomena meant that, once again, the boundaries of reality could be questioned and, therefore, that life after bodily death could be considered a possibility.

While Part Three will discuss in more depth the use of scientific discoveries as a means of justifying belief in paranormal phenomena, for now it is sufficient to recognise


332 McCain and Segal, The Game of Science. 188.
that science has influenced belief in paranormal phenomena but maybe not in the way that many hoped it would; that is, by supplying rational arguments that would result in the rejection of belief in such phenomena. Potts, for example, suggests that parapsychologists should utilise scientific methods to debunk sensationalist paranormal claims that weaken the “pro-psi” stance. This would, in turn, aid the legitimisation of parapsychological research within mainstream science:

The scientific approach needs to be publicized as an opponent of the pseudoscientific. Parapsychological researchers need to publicly disprove the unfounded claims of ghost hunters. …

Not every amateur enthusiast will rush to accept new “evidence” generated by digital cameras and high-tech sensors. A multiplicity of interpretation and commentary accompanies each development, each new technology, each finding or speculation. The patient, methodological voice of reason needs to be heard – on the media, on the Internet – among the more shrill, less rational voices vying for attention.

Although scientific discoveries, which have been objectively tested, may have inadvertently provided the means to question ‘reality’ and therefore paranormal phenomena, many people, like Havel, prefer to base their beliefs/opinions on subjective experience – seemingly ignoring rational or scientific explanations. However, Potts’ suggestion that the “voice of reason” (that is, scientists and serious parapsychological researchers) should use the “media” and the “Internet” highlights a preconditioning influence that not only has the potential of changing belief in, and perceptions of, paranormal phenomena but may also be responsible for the increased interest in such occurrences.

333 Hannah Jenkins coined the terms pro-psi and anti-psi as alternatives to ‘believer’ and ‘skeptic,’ which she felt contained “insinuations that [were] not intended in [her] thesis.” Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 5. The term has been used in this instance as it succinctly states what this thesis is trying to say.

Subjective Experience & External Influences

Since its development, Tobacyk’s and Milford’s factor analysis has been used by many researchers exploring belief in paranormal phenomena. One Australian study that employed their factor analytic procedure was conducted by Martin Grimmer from the Division of Health and Behavioral [sic.] Sciences, Griffith University; and Keith White from the department of Psychology, University of Queensland. A similar study, which also “adapted” items from Tobacyk’s and Milford’s factor analysis as well as elements from research by Irwin, Zuckerman, Tellegen, and Neppe, was carried out by Joseph Glicksohn who, at the time, worked in the Department of Psychology between Tel Aviv University, Ramat Aviv, and the Open University of Israel.335

In Part One, this thesis questioned the use of students as participants in research pertaining to belief in paranormal phenomena; especially regarding studies that were then used as a measure of societal, or cultural, beliefs in general. This thesis maintains that while data collected from these studies can aid the development of questionnaires for future research, as well as highlight areas that may require further study, they are not reflective of the beliefs/opinions of the wider community or society. Furthermore, it was found that most research into psychological aspects of belief in the paranormal not only use participants from a limited age group, but they are often selected from students currently enrolled in a Psychology course in which participation is “part of their course requirement.”336 In Collins’ research, for example, it was noted that participants were


336 Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 360. The same method was also used by: Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 677; Tobacyk and Milford, "Belief in Paranormal Phenomena: Assessment Instrument Development and Implications for Personality Functioning." 1030; Thalbourne, "Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the
Psychology students aged mainly between 18 and 23 years, while Thalbourne’s group were also Psychology students, which he stated were “heavily” represented by those in the “younger ages.”\textsuperscript{337}

In the ‘Summary’ of his research, which appeared in \textit{Personality and Individual Differences}, Glicksohn states, in part, that:

\begin{quote}
The underlying experiential base for belief in the paranormal is the focus of the present three studies, employing students ($N = 72$), schoolchildren ($N = 20$) and a select group of subjects interested in the paranormal ($N = 33$). A survey tapping the incidence of occurrence of various types of subjective experience, and in particular the hypnagogic state, the hypnopompic state, the state of lucid dreaming and the out-of-the-body experience was one measure. A second concerned paranormal experience and belief.\textsuperscript{338}
\end{quote}

For the purpose of this discussion, the focus will mainly be on the first of Glicksohn’s three studies as the participants in this study were of similar ages and educational levels to those in Grimmer’s and White’s study. It is worth mentioning that Glicksohn’s third group, which had a median age of 40 years, did not rely on Psychology students. However, the participants were attendees at a conference exploring “belief in the paranormal;” thereby indicating, at the very least, a prior interest in the topic.\textsuperscript{339}

Despite the use of different factor analyses and people from different cultures, a benefit of comparing these two studies lies in their similarities, which include: the findings for both studies were presented in 1989; both Glicksohn’s first study, and Grimmer’s and White’s used, as subjects, Psychology students from the researchers’

\textsuperscript{337} Collins, "Very Superstitious: Dissociation, Control and Unusual Beliefs." 102; and Thalbourne, "Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C)." 183.

\textsuperscript{338} Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 675.

\textsuperscript{339} Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 680.
respective universities; student participation was “part of [the Psychology] course requirement;”\textsuperscript{340} and both test groups had a median age in their early twenties – Grimmer’s and White’s was 21.31, and Glicksohn’s a couple of years older at 23. Although Grimmer and White based their study on Tobacyk’s and Milford’s factor analysis, the main purpose of their study “was to develop a new item pool of currently popular paranormal phenomena;”\textsuperscript{341} while Glicksohn’s research examined, in part, whether or not the “degree of paranormal belief was positively correlated with subjective paranormal experience.”\textsuperscript{342}

A common finding in both studies was the experiential nature of belief in paranormal phenomena. Glicksohn maintains that whether or not the experient actually had a paranormal encounter or “just thinks” they did is not relevant. What is important is how they perceived the encounter. He further contends that an experient’s interpretation of their experience is usually governed by a “prior belief system” and/or an interest in “spiritualism, ghosts or witchcraft.”\textsuperscript{343} Similar to Glicksohn’s findings, Thalbourne also maintains there is a link between paranormal belief and superstition.

Like Tobacyk’s and Milford’s factor analysis Thalbourne’s Australian Sheep-Goat Scale (ASGS), which was mentioned in Part One, is used by many researchers exploring beliefs surrounding paranormal phenomena. In some instances, researchers will utilise a variety of scales; for example, in a study exploring the association between paranormal belief and superstition, Thalbourne not only utilised his ASGS but also the “Tobacyk-Milford … Paranormal Belief Scale,” an extract from the “Eckblad-Chapman … Magical Ideation Scale,” “an 8-item visual analogue Superstition scale

\textsuperscript{340} Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 360; Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 677.

\textsuperscript{341} Grimmer and White, "The Structure of Paranormal Beliefs among Australian Psychology Students." 367.

\textsuperscript{342} Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." ‘Summary,’ 675.

\textsuperscript{343} Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 676.
devised by Thalbourne and Nofi,” and the “35-item Scale of Belief in Extraordinary Phenomena (SOBEP) devised by Windholz and Diamant.” Through the utilisation of these scales, Thalbourne examined an assertion by Tobacyk and Milford that the relationship between superstition and paranormal belief was “negligible.”

Before presenting his findings, Thalbourne first defines ‘superstition’ and its link to paranormal beliefs:

[S]uperstition [is] “a belief that a given action can bring good luck or bad luck when there are no rational or generally acceptable grounds for such a belief.” Superstition is an example of the over-attribution of causal relations. There are those who would maintain that belief in the paranormal – ESP, psychokinesis and life after death – is likewise superstitious.

He then chose various items from each of the above ‘scales’ that would best determine the hypothesised association. For example, from the Tobacyk-Mildford scale one item chosen was: “The number 13 is unlucky;” from the Eckblad-Chapman scale: “Good luck charms don’t work;” from the Thalbourne-Nofi scale aspects of “luckiness” such as “touching wood” and “wishing on a falling star;” as well as Thalbourne’s three versions of the ASGS and the Windholz-Diamant SOBEP. Thalbourne also chose “four subscales from the Tobacyk-Milford … [scale:] namely Psi belief, Witchcraft, Spiritualism, and Precognition.”

The results of Thalbourne’s study, which indicated a “low to moderate positive correlation between belief in the paranormal … and superstition,” showed that the association between the two was stronger than Tobacyk’s and Milford’s “negligible”

345 Thalbourne, "Paranormal Belief and Superstition: How Large Is the Association?" 221.
346 Thalbourne, "Paranormal Belief and Superstition: How Large Is the Association?" 221.
347 Thalbourne, "Paranormal Belief and Superstition: How Large Is the Association?" 223.
result and, therefore, worthy of inclusion in future studies pertaining to paranormal beliefs. While Thalbourne acknowledged that some parapsychologists may be disappointed with his findings, since they do not “regard their work as being on superstition” and, as such, have worked to eradicate any perceived connections,\(^\text{348}\) he supported the use of his findings by stating:

However, it may be pointed out that the size of the typical correlation between paranormal belief and superstition is too low for the two variables to be considered identical. The variable that may be causing the two to have some common ground is that they both may involve magical ideation – the tendency to posit a causal connection between events, a connection which traditional science declares to be invalid. Thus, from the point of view of conventional science, belief in ESP, PK, and an afterlife are superstitions to be eradicated along with the beliefs about black cats and broken mirrors. It is up to parapsychologists to show that their domain entails real causal connections and not invalidly posited ones, and thus to drive a wedge between belief in the paranormal and genuine superstition.\(^\text{349}\)

Although some parapsychologists, and most “conventional” scientists, may wish to eradicate any suggestion of a connection between paranormal phenomena and superstitions, others, like Thalbourne, acknowledge and utilise it. Furthermore, apart from enhancing researchers’ understanding of beliefs pertaining to paranormal phenomena, many magazine/newspaper editors also utilise the connection through the placement of astrological columns and psychic readings/articles (both of which pander to individual ideas of ‘good luck’ as well as belief in the paranormal) within the same section, thereby acknowledging the general perception that they in some way belong together.

While Grimmer and White determined that personal experience is an overriding factor in the development of belief in paranormal phenomena, they also found that

\(^{348}\) Thalbourne, "Paranormal Belief and Superstition: How Large Is the Association?" 223.

\(^{349}\) Thalbourne, "Paranormal Belief and Superstition: How Large Is the Association?" 223-224.
“stories in the media” are influential in the formation of such beliefs. Due to their studies displaying interconnectedness between experience and media representations, they based their survey on items sourced from stories in the media. These factors led Grimmer and White to conclude that: “interpretations placed on personal experience are strongly affected by the availability of information about the paranormal in the media.”350

While Glicksohn found that interpretation of an event as being paranormal was linked to an existing belief system, and Grimmer and White concluded that these interpretations are connected to media representations, this thesis contends that acceptance of an encounter, image or tale as being indicative of ghostly phenomena or paranormal phenomena in general, relies on preconceived ideas, some of which may stem from individual superstitions; as Finucane maintains: “Each epoch has perceived its spectres according to specific sets of expectations; as these change so too do the spectres.”351 Irwin’s theory, which was presented in Part One, that belief in survival after bodily death could be “bidirectional or circular,”352 is further reflected in Grimmer’s and White’s findings that the increase in interest and belief in paranormal phenomena was dependent on media reports, which in turn led to an escalation in media stories dealing with such phenomena.

Although the influence of media representations in the development of belief in paranormal phenomena during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is indisputable it is merely indicative of influential belief systems that were in existence prior to the use of modern technology. As such, Glicksohn’s contention that a “subject’s interpretation of his or her [experience] is determined by a prior belief system[, which is predisposed]
to a paranormal interpretation," goes to the core of the issue – that a major preconditioning influence in the acceptance of, and belief in, paranormal phenomena depends primarily on an experi ent’s pre-existing supernatural belief system. Media representations merely supply images and tales that reflect those beliefs. An example of the influence wielded by a supernatural belief system is evinced in the following story by an experi ent who, at the time, was in her mid-thirties and had not encountered any paranormal phenomena prior to this event:

One morning, while I was having breakfast, the ghost of my deceased grandmother, who had passed away a year earlier, drifted past the dining table where I was seated and proceeded over to the lounge. Seating herself there she then just kept looking at me. I did not hear her speak, she only sat and looked. Although her features were indistinct, I just knew it was her. After my encounter I began to wonder how I knew it was her. After all, the image I saw was not really clear; more a wispy, cloud-like form encircled by a bluish/silver band. Yet as it moved past me I just knew it was her. After a few weeks thinking about the whole experience I realised that what I had witnessed must have been exactly like the experience of those who first saw Jesus after He rose from the grave. In Sunday school and Scripture lessons, when I was a child, I was always told that although people felt the person walking by them was someone they knew it wasn’t until He told them who He was that their suspicions were confirmed. I had a sense that He must have looked like my grandmother did.

While Grimmer’s and White’s, and Glicksohn’s conclusions highlight two important preconditioning influences; that is supernatural belief systems and the media; this thesis does question the use of their findings, as well as those from other psychological studies, as determinates of belief in paranormal phenomena within society in general. The group of current Australian researchers presented in Part One were shown to be predominantly from the discipline of Psychology. Furthermore, many of

353 Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 676.
354 Personal communiqué.
their studies use participants from each researcher’s individual university courses, which are comprised mainly of Psychology students with an average age similar to Grimmer’s and White’s, and Glicksohn’s participants. Although it is common for researchers to utilise student participation, this thesis maintains that studies concerning psychological factors governing belief in paranormal phenomena that rely on similar focus groups could be deemed questionable; especially if they are then used to measure a society’s general belief in paranormal phenomena. However, in this instance, as the above passage shows, findings from research utilising student participation is apparently indicative of at least one preconditioning influence within the wider community – that of religion, or supernatural belief systems.

While the discussion above explored some major preconditioning influences regarding belief in paranormal phenomena, it is understood that there are other influences that may also govern such belief. However, this thesis maintains that most beliefs would, at their core, have at least one of the three major influences outlined above, such as supernatural belief and/or experience, the media, and science; but what of psychological factors? Although this thesis maintains there is an over abundance of studies into psychological aspects of belief in and experiences of paranormal phenomena, the next section will show that most theories pertaining to these factors centre on some form of psychological anomaly on the part of the experient; rather than acceptance of the possible ‘reality’ of their experience.
Overview of Psychological Factors

... [H]aving an ostensible psychic experience is the most frequently reported reason for many people coming to believe in the paranormal. Harvey Irwin 355

Despite the ever increasing number of people who claim to have experienced ghostly phenomena, or other paranormal phenomena, many researchers still maintain their experiences were not due to any external factors; rather, they were the result of some form of psychological anomaly on the part of the experient. However, these studies have the tendency to accentuate experients’ possible psychological aberrations rather than view their protestations that they did have an experience as support for a ‘reality’ that fits within the individual’s worldview. In the previous section it was shown how difficult it was for Blackmore to discard her beliefs regarding paranormal phenomena and then set about constructing new beliefs that sat more comfortably within the world as she now viewed it. Regardless of her re-evaluation, Blackmore could not totally leave her old beliefs behind – some part of her wanted to hold on to them even though scientific studies had shown they were wrong or implausible.

After her shift from believer/proponent to sceptic Blackmore continued to conduct experiments designed to test the validity of paranormal claims by individuals eager to confirm the ‘reality’ of their experiences. As she had now come to expect, each claim was proven to be false. However, despite the results, each experient hung onto their beliefs, consistently finding various reasons why the experiments failed. This did not surprise Blackmore since “[i]n all cases they were deeply committed to their worldviews and to some extent their whole lives were bound up with their beliefs.” 356


356 Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." 92.
While some sceptics would say that, given the psychological data regarding such beliefs, it is not surprising that ‘believers’ hold onto their beliefs despite the evidence, Blackmore suggests that some sceptics are just as stubborn – especially those in which “[s]kepticism is the focus” of their lives; “[s]ome hav[ing] committed their careers to promoting skepticism and to debunking paranormal claims.” While she personally feels that such a comparison isn’t really valid, given that no one has proven the reality of paranormal phenomena, she does state that “some skeptics display just the same reluctance to change, and tendency to biased interpretations, as the most ardent believers do.”

The varying degree of belief and scepticism amongst these two groups exhibits why there are copious amounts of research into the psychology of belief regarding paranormal phenomena.

While it is not uncommon for experients to swear that what they saw, felt, or heard, was definitely a ghost, it is uncommon for someone to swear “before a justice of the peace that [they] had watched [one] materialise in [their] room.” In Haunted Pinkney recounts the story of Mrs P. Wilder of Caringbah, who not only claims she witnessed a ghostly manifestation, but also “carefully made notes of everything, to swear a statement before a local justice of the peace.” Pinkney does not explore the reasons why Mrs Wilder felt the need to have her tale notarised by a justice of the peace; however, given the propensity for researchers to question the psychological health of experients, one can safely assume her reasons. According to Mrs Wilder’s account:

… the incident occurred at 5.40 am. The bedroom door was closed and [her] blind was drawn in such a way that no outside light could penetrate it. [She] was awakened by a brightness in the bedroom – a luminosity so intense that [she] could easily read the clock face.

357 Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." 92.
As [she] watched, a floating ball of light grew until it assumed the shape of a floating head and a body beneath. Through that body [she] could still plainly see the handles on [her] built-in cupboard. Curious – and surprised at [herself] that [she] wasn’t afraid – [she] left the bed and reached out to touch the transparent form. Immediately, its radiance faded. As soon as [she] sat back on the mattress the brightness intensified again, before fading a second time.

At that point [she] turned the light on. But it proved a poor substitute for the dazzling glare which moments earlier had filled the room. [She] went into the kitchen where the clock said 6 am. The experience had lasted 20 minutes. [She] carefully made notes of everything, to swear a statement before a local justice of the peace.

Later that day [she] got news that [her] brother had died in England.360

Those who research psychological aspects of belief in paranormal phenomena could argue, and rightly so, that Mrs Wilder’s belief in the encounter and her subsequent notarisation of the event does not necessarily mean it actually happened – it only shows that Mrs Wilder believed it did. Glicksohn, for instance, could contend that Mrs Wilder had experienced an altered state of consciousness (ASC) such as “the hypnopompic state (i.e. the transitional state between sleeping and waking).”361

Glicksohn’s research, which found evidence of preconditioning influences, also explored psychological aspects of belief in paranormal phenomena. His exploration examined issues such as “form[s] of cognitive distortion … personality traits and/or performance” and the relationship between an experient’s “belief in the paranormal” and their “own personal experience.”362 Among the issues discussed was paranormal experience whilst in a hypnopompic state. According to Glicksohn:

The hypnopompic state may … be an even more important source for belief in the paranormal [than the hypnagogic state]. As Alcock …, Reed … and Zusne and

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361 Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 676.
362 Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 675.
Jones … have all noted, hypnopompic imagery often deals with forthcoming events of the day … All these authors have argued that this characteristic of hypnopompic imagery may lead to the belief that one has actually forseen [sic.] specific events encountered later on in the day. As Reed … has noted, “subjects who are interested in spiritualism, ghosts or witchcraft may interpret their images as representing the attempts of spirit contacts to ‘come through’. Those who are interested in ESP … may credit themselves as being ‘peripients’; their images are then interpreted as telepathic communications …” That is to say, the subject’s interpretation of his or her hypnopompic imagery is determined by a prior belief system predisposing to a paranormal interpretation. This type of subject is likely both to experience hypnopompic imagery, and to hold a paranormal belief, each of which reinforce the other.  

Although this theory explains Mrs Wilder’s belief that her encounter was ‘real,’ and further strengthens Irwin’s hypothesis regarding the “bidirectional or circular” influence between belief and paranormal phenomena, it does not explain the experience mentioned in the previous section where the encounter occurred while the experient was fully awake and eating breakfast.

**Altered States of Consciousness**

In Part One Thalbourne’s research regarding the effect of belief in an afterlife on death anxiety was discussed. After reviewing the data, it was found that a decrease in death anxiety was evident amongst those who claimed to believe in some form of afterlife. The connection between these two factors led Thalbourne to conclude that it was indicative of a “biological craving” within in humankind. Similarly, Collins’ research

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into dissociation and locus of control, also mentioned in Part One, could be viewed as being part of humanity’s “biological craving” in that these two research items have been shown to help individuals deal with threatening or anxious situations.\textsuperscript{366} Humanity’s belief in ghosts and an afterlife provides a way of dealing with the most threatening situation of all – death.\textsuperscript{367}

Apart from Thalbourne’s “biological craving,” many other aspects of paranormal phenomena appear to lie beyond an experiënt’s control. Non-fiction accounts of ghostly experiences, for example, often state that the experiënt was in some way woken from sleep – sometimes by a bright light (as in the case of Mrs Wilder) or by a loud or odd sound.\textsuperscript{368} While these experiences can, in some instances, be extremely unnerving, awakening to the belief that one is under “attack”\textsuperscript{369} by some form of supernatural/paranormal force would be terrifying. Yet, many psychologists maintain that these experiences are evidence of an ASC on the part of the experiënt, rather than actual paranormal phenomena.

Glicksohn’s study of “subjective paranormal experience[s],” which explored the link between belief and experience, found there were four ASCs of “particular relevance:

[T]he hypnagogic state (i.e. the transitional state between waking and sleeping), the hypnopompic state [mentioned earlier], the lucid dream (i.e. the experience, while dreaming, that one is in fact dreaming), and the out-of-the-body experience (OBE;
i.e. the experience of one’s consciousness being located at a distance from the physical body).  

Although Glicksohn maintains that the “hypnopompic state [is a] more important source for belief in the paranormal,” he contends the “hypnagogic state is intimately tied to paranormal experience.” One possible reason for this could lie in the fact that it is usually while an experient is in this state that they come under ‘attack’ from what they believe is some form of supernatural, or paranormal, force. In his article, ‘An Experience-Centred Approach to Hauntings,’ David J. Hufford supplies an example of one of these ‘attacks,’ which are commonly referred to as “sleep paralysis:”

By this term [Hufford] refer[s] simply to the experience of finding oneself awake and paralyzed in the presence of a frightening being. [For example] … in Alice’s experience:
1) She was lying down and had been asleep.
2) She was awakened by the sound of footsteps.
3) She was sure that she was awake and perceiving her natural environment in the ordinary way.
4) She saw an anomalous “something” approach.
5) She felt paralyzed.
6) She felt intense pressure.
7) Her sheets were pulled down.
8) She could not cry out.
9) She was subsequently certain that she had been awake during the experience.

Davies states in The Haunted that prior to modern medical research, experiences such as Alice’s were often blamed on supernatural forces; such as, the local witch who, for some reason or other, felt the need to torment a sleeping person. After the era of the witch hunts passed, sleep paralysis was relegated to the domain of malicious ghosts;

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370 Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 676.
371 Glicksohn, "Belief in the Paranormal and Subjective Paranormal Experience." 676.
despite the fact that, up until that time, the only violent behaviour recorded for ghosts was the throwing or breaking of inanimate objects (that is, poltergeist activity). However, Davies observes that since the advent of modern medicine it has been “shown that the phenomenon is triggered by the disturbance of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep episodes, and various estimates suggest that up to 20 per cent of the population may experience it at least once in their lives.”

Although involuntary ASCs can result in one believing they have had a genuine paranormal experience, there are those who already believe in the paranormal and, as such, set out to induce an ASC for the express purpose of triggering a connection with the spirit realm. James McClenon, for example, states that: “Shamanism is an ancient religious system in which specialists go into a trance and communicate with spirits to … gain information or energy for healing others.” Likewise, Storm, in partnership with Adam J. Rock, defines shamanism as “a family of traditions whose practitioners focus on voluntarily entering altered states of consciousness in which they experience themselves, or their spirit(s), travelling to other realms at will and interacting with other entities in order to serve their community.”

One method used to induce a shamanic trance involves “sonic driving (i.e. monotonous drumming).”

Storm and Rock observe that “sonic driving” enables a person to enter a state whereby outside distractions disappear as the individual becomes ‘hypnotised’ by the

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constant rhythm and drone of the drums. Psychologists, such as Collins, refer to this state as ‘dissociation,’ which McClenon defines as “experiences and behaviors that exist apart from, or have been disconnected from, the mainstream of one’s conscious awareness, behavioral repertoire, and/or self-concept.”

Although dissociation is the desired effect for those wishing to enter a shamanic trance, Collins’ research, which was mentioned in Part One, implies that most people at some point have involuntarily experienced a period of dissociation, at least in its simplest form; that is, “daydreaming.” However, the link between dissociation and paranormal experience and beliefs has resulted in many studies exploring the psychological implications of this aspect of paranormal phenomena. While Collins’ research found a definite link between dissociation, locus of control and paranormal belief, other parapsychologists have found a correlation between dissociativity, hypnotisability and paranormal belief.

The study of psychological aspects pertaining to belief in, and experiences of paranormal phenomena does not centre on just those mentioned above. Psychologists have observed that individuals with certain personality traits are more likely to experience, or believe, in such phenomena than those who either do not possess the traits or have a very low score in tests designed to calculate their ‘level’ of certain personality traits. For example, those individuals who exhibited higher scores for dissociation displayed similar levels in relation to “absorption and paranormal

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experiences” and “fantasy proneness,” as well as other personality traits linked to belief in paranormal phenomena. V.K. Kumar and Ronald J. Pekala, for example, observe that some researchers go so far as to state:

In interpreting the literature, it is important to keep in mind that the variables – hypnotizability, dissociativity, absorption, fantasy proneness, and imagery – are intercorrelated with each other to such a degree that Kirsch and Council … commented that “… absorption, imaginative involvement, and fantasy proneness [are] concepts [that] are so closely related that it is not clear that they represent different concepts.”

They maintain that while it is “probably unwise to lump together studies” with varying methodologies and other research parameters, “finding consistent results across such different studies may reflect, to a certain extent, the generality of findings regardless of the variations in studies.”

While it is not this thesis’ intention to enter into an in-depth discussion regarding the many psychological studies, and issues, surrounding ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena, the overview of this aspect of research into paranormal phenomena reinforces the need for a balanced, interdisciplinary approach. This is especially relevant if one takes into account an issue mentioned in Part One concerning the questionable nature of data collected from studies utilising student bodies as participants. For example, it would be of benefit to know whether or not studies have been conducted into the personality traits of those who choose to study Psychology;


either out of interest or in the hope of a future career in the field. It has been shown how psychologists and parapsychologists often speak of common personality traits exhibited by those who claim to believe in paranormal phenomena, or who maintain they have experienced such phenomena. However, could these findings merely be a reflection of the dominant participant pool, which itself displays a pattern – that of using Psychology students? While this thesis acknowledges that some researchers use participants from the wider community, it also contends that issues such as those mentioned above, require further study especially if the results of psychological studies based on student participation are to continue to be used in the determination of the effect, and role, of paranormal beliefs and experiences generally and in Australia’s multicultural society in particular.

Researchers’ utilisation of student bodies as a ‘ready source’ of participants is not confined to the exploration of psychological aspects of paranormal phenomena. However, the use of the various findings to determine general beliefs or personality traits concerning such phenomena appears to disregard other factors that may supply a different result. To dispel some of these concerns researchers should conduct a series of studies using the same questionnaires, or research procedures, as those supplied to student participants of psychological studies into paranormal phenomena. These studies should, for example, target various ethnic and religious groups, non-student participants, people with differing socio-economic and educational levels, and a variety of age groups. Gender should also be taken into account as many studies have found females

384 In the research for his paper on ‘Paranormal Belief and Superstition’ Thalbourne, for example, based his findings on results from questionnaires presented to students as well as clinical and non-clinical participants from the general population.

385 This thesis suggests that one way of testing this theory would be to present the same questionnaire to students from various disciplines (or Schools) within a researchers’ university, comparing the results and then determining if Psychology students display psychological traits different to those from other disciplines.
score higher on various psi belief scales than males, as well as displaying one or more personality traits correlated to belief in paranormal phenomena.

Breen’s study, which gathered “qualitative and quantitative data on spontaneous paranormal experiences,”\textsuperscript{386} revealed an “ethnic element” in relation to the “ability to experience psi”\textsuperscript{387} within individual cultures. Similarly, Read’s research also acknowledges cultural differences in beliefs pertaining to death and an afterlife. However, despite the abundance of research into psychological aspects of paranormal beliefs and experiences, issues regarding cultural links appear to remain under-researched, especially in regards to Australia’s multicultural society. Yet, often individuals who experience ghostly and paranormal phenomena state, because of their family’s cultural heritage, they were not surprised at their ability to connect with those from the ‘other side’.

\textbf{Cultural Links}

Cultural links, even though they may be far in the past, hold deep significance for experiencers; especially when trying to explain why they experienced a ghostly visitation or paranormal phenomenon. In Part One, for example, Ingram states that the “Celtic inheritance” of many of Australia’s early settlers accounts for their ready acceptance of ghostly tales, and Spiritualism;\textsuperscript{388} while in Part Three, Sheila Kennedy, an Australian psychic, makes a point of mentioning her “Scottish+Irish+Welsh+Manx” ancestry.\textsuperscript{389} Similarly, during a discussion about her encounters with the spirits of deceased family members, an elderly woman stated that she wasn’t surprised she was ‘sensitive’ to

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[386]{Breen, “The Nature Incidence and Impact of Parapsychological Phenomena.”}
\footnotetext[387]{Personal communiqué; received Friday 16 April 2010.}
\footnotetext[388]{Ingram, ed., \textit{Shudders and Shakes: Ghostly Tales from Australia}, ix.}
\footnotetext[389]{Sheila Kennedy, \textit{Meetings with Spirit} (Melton, Victoria, Australia: Jasmine Publications, 2005). 1.}
\end{footnotes}
spirits around her – after all, her mother was Welsh, and her family had a long history of ghostly visitations and premonitions as well as mediumistic skills.390

Although cultural heritage plays a part in an experiert’s acceptance of their psychic abilities and/or encounter, Finucane’s assertion that “[a]s we and our cultures change, so do our ghosts”391 reinforces Read’s claims concerning generational changes in beliefs and their effect on individual cultural identity. Although, in his book Haunted Earth, Read primarily explores the idea of ‘inspired’ earth he contends that generational changes in beliefs within migrant groups, such as those relating to specific burial rites to prevent the dead returning as ghosts, can have an adverse effect on family relationships as well as individual cultural identity. This is especially so if one family member has discarded the family’s supernatural belief system in favour of one that does not allow for any supernatural connections, and/or diminishes the need to perform certain burial rites required for the appeasement of the decedent’s spirit/soul.

Read highlights the importance some individuals place on these rituals through a recounting of an interview he conducted with a young man who was originally from Chinese Malaysia, but is now residing in Perth, Western Australia. Despite the young man’s father voicing concerns about his son’s ability to carry out the required “devotions towards the dead” now he lived in Perth, his father was also worried about his own death and who would perform the necessary rituals when the time came. He had good reason to worry. After his father’s death, the young man decided not to carry out all the rituals, choosing only to do those that ‘fitted in’ with the beliefs he had adopted since his move to Australia. His decision upset many family members, none more so than his sister, who, although she had married an Australian, been educated in a Catholic school and now also resided in Perth, desperately believed all the rituals should

390 Personal discussion with a family friend in 2009.
be observed or their father’s ghost would not find rest. After much debate, the young man carried out an important ritual for their father, and in so doing finally gave his sister some peace of mind.392

While the cultural issues displayed in this example are particularly relevant in a multicultural society such as Australia, the psychological implications behind changes in cultural beliefs concerning death and an afterlife are just as important. Although physical assimilation into a new society/culture has some difficulties, it is relatively easily achieved; however, psychological adjustments take more time. Furthermore, although the universality of belief in ghosts and psychological aspects behind the belief is not in question, the effect cultural changes have on those beliefs requires further study, not only by psychologists but also by scholars within the disciplines of Sociology and Cultural Studies. The need for research that encompasses all aspects of belief in ghosts and paranormal phenomena is exhibited in Read’s account above, where the young man’s refusal to perform the necessary rituals resulted in his sister becoming “so traumatised that she was placed under medication.”393

The situation this young man and his sister found themselves in was the result of a culmination of factors, all of which stemmed from individual changes in beliefs and expectations. On the young man’s side was his belief that Chinese culture was distinct from Chinese religion and therefore his veto regarding the fulfilment of obligations relating to funerary rites was not a problem. On the other hand, his sister was divided between two cultures and beliefs:

… [and] her loyalties to the Chinese and Catholic holy places. She acknowledges that wherever the Virgin has appeared becomes a scared site. Yet although she

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392 Read, Haunted Earth, 131-141.
393 Read, Haunted Earth, 137.
knows her Catholic priest would disapprove, she continues to visit the Chinese temple out of respect for her elders.\textsuperscript{394}

The young man’s children are following his example and, although they accept their cultural heritage, they live by the culture they are now a part of – that is, Australian culture. Similarly, his sister’s child has fully embraced the Australian way of life (particularly regarding death and funerary rituals) yet holds onto Chinese customs that are pleasant to her and don’t encroach on her modern way of life. As Read observes:

\textit{In Perth, where the fragments are disturbed as much by generational and gender differences as they are by distance and by time, the line between secular and religious rituals wavers and threatens to dissolve. The sources of information are far away, and even in Asia the old ways evaporate or change. \[The sister’s child\] reflects: \textit{We only know the fragments and it’s harder work making the connections}.\textsuperscript{395}}

It is this thesis’ contention that cultural issues such as the ones displayed in Read’s account above, would benefit from research that explores both psychological and cultural aspects of belief regarding ghosts and an afterlife. However, the research should move away from trying to determine whether or not a person displays some form of psychological anomaly; exploring instead the psychological effect changes in belief have on individuals and their cultural identity.

\textsuperscript{394} Read, \textit{Haunted Earth}, 137.

\textsuperscript{395} Read, \textit{Haunted Earth}, 141.
Concluding Remarks

Although this thesis maintains there is an imbalance in research pertaining to ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena – an imbalance that is weighted towards studies exploring psychological aspects of these experiences and phenomena – Part Two discussed some of the findings from these studies. Rather than present a comprehensive analysis the discussion of preconditioning influences and psychological factors exhibited how a greater understanding of these experiences and phenomena could be achieved if researchers looked beyond concerns similar to those expressed by Pliny over two thousand years ago – that is, ghosts as being merely “unreal images that take their forms from our own anxieties.”396 Despite the abundance of research into psychological aspects of belief in, and experience of ghostly and paranormal phenomena, it was shown in Part Two that there are still some areas that remain either over-looked or under-researched.

Changes in beliefs regarding paranormal phenomena, ghosts, death and an afterlife, can be experienced by individuals for many different reasons and at any given point in their lives. However, the psychological consequences appear to be greater for those who have no control over the changes. Although some individuals experience internal conflict when they decide to abandon ‘belief’ in the existence of paranormal phenomena, ultimately they have no ill effects other than a longing that someday their abandoned belief would be vindicated. Similarly, Northcote’s example of a sceptic ‘becoming’ a believer while displaying the role personal experience plays in the development of such beliefs, also demonstrates that the individual was not greatly affected by his change in belief. However, Read’s illustration of the emotional conflict suffered by an individual whose cultural beliefs were ignored in favour of the cultural

beliefs of the family’s adopted country, exhibits the important role these beliefs can play in some people’s lives. As such, this thesis argues that future studies into psychological factors pertaining to experiences of ghostly and paranormal phenomena should be expanded to include the effect cultural issues have on these beliefs, especially within the context of Australia’s multicultural society.

Apart from psychological implications concerning belief in ghostly and paranormal phenomena, preconditioning influences were found to play a significant role in ‘why’ people believe they saw, or experienced, a ghost. Despite differences in interpretation, or perception of ghosts, which may have been influenced by religious and/or cultural upbringing, many tales of ghostly encounters mirror those displayed in literary tales and the media. Although this may be indicative of Irwin’s theory regarding the ‘bidirectional or circular’ nature of paranormal beliefs in which media reports influence beliefs, which in turn influence media representations – it is also indicative of a long tradition regarding such beliefs and phenomena. While this aspect will be explored more fully in Part Three, commonalities associated with paranormal phenomena in general, and ghosts in particular are evinced in experients’ reasoning concerning ‘why’ they believe they have seen a ghost.

Almost everything connected to paranormal phenomena exhibits similarities in one form or another. For example, most psychologists maintain that experients display certain personality traits that predispose them to having, and/or believing in, ghosts and paranormal phenomena. Likewise, psychologists’ observations regarding personality traits are derived from research which itself displays a pattern – that is, the choice of research participants. Similarly, commonalities exist in the reasons experients give to justify their belief that the experience was ‘real.’ For example, comments posted on an Internet forum regarding members’ ghostly experiences included statements such as:
• “What made me so sure is that we both saw it . . .”

• “I know I wasn’t seeing things cause [sic.] my flatmate snapped her head towards it at the exact same time I did!!”\(^\text{397}\)

While it is easier to accept a ghostly encounter as ‘real’ if someone else also experiences the same thing, it is also easier to accept media representations if they appear to confirm preconceived ideas surrounding such phenomena. As one forum member comments: “I guess for me I believe what I have experienced because it falls within my own personal parameters of what my perception of a ghost is.”\(^\text{398}\)

The irony behind the psychological search for answers to humanity’s belief, not only in ghosts, but in all paranormal phenomena, lies in the ability of the human mind to unravel the intricate nature of itself. Yet, even if this can be achieved, as Anna Wierzbicka observes: “It is impossible for a human being to study anything … from a totally extra-cultural point of view.”\(^\text{399}\)

Although preconditioning influences and psychological factors provide some clue as to ‘why’ people believe they have seen ghost, they don’t answer the question of ‘what’ they believe could survive bodily death. Part Three, to which this thesis now turns, will explore ‘what’ Australians believe survives after bodily death.

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Part Three: ‘What’ do Australians believe survives after bodily death?

We survive physical death, whether we like it or not. There seems to be only life. You just shift from one dimension to the next and back again.  
Robb Tilley^400

While the survey of non-fiction literature presented in Part One found indications that publications dealing with the ghostly experiences of non-Indigenous Australians have increased since the mid nineteenth century, it was evident that their content has remained basically unaltered. Furthermore, although publications from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries omitted some of the earlier tales to make room for more recent phenomena (as well as supplying summaries of the history surrounding some Australian ghostly phenomena) most non-fiction accounts continue to offer very little apart from retelling a good yarn.

The apparent disinterest regarding these experiences was further exhibited in the second section of Part One, which explored current Australian research. The examples presented in this section highlight this thesis’ contention that these experiences are either included as a very small part of international studies or superficially touched upon by researchers exploring other Australian paranormal phenomena, in particular psi phenomena. It was determined that research such as this could result in the use of data that was erroneous and possibly misleading when applied to Australia’s multicultural society. Furthermore, while the discipline of Psychology was shown to be amply represented other disciplines that could enable a greater understanding of the effect such experiences, phenomena and beliefs have on individuals, families, and society in general were very much under-represented.

Despite this thesis maintaining that researchers from disciplines other than Psychology need to explore the ghostly tales and experiences of non-Indigenous Australians, it also acknowledges the advancement made by those in the field of Psychology; particularly in regards to a general understanding of these phenomena and experiences; as well as the beliefs they engender. As such, the discussion of ‘why’ people believe they’ve seen a ghost, which was presented in Part Two, explored not only preconditioning influences behind the beliefs but also psychological factors that may have contributed to an experient believing they had witnessed paranormal phenomenon.

The limited amount of research into Australian ghostly experiences conducted during the nineteenth century is understandable given the attitude of the time, which maintained that Australia was “too new for that style of thing.”401 However, the fact that not much has changed in the ensuing one hundred and eighty years is evinced by Gelder’s comment that even in 1994 many people “doubted if there were any Australian ghost stories to be found.”402 While many assume that ghost stories offer little more than entertainment, the review of non-fiction literature showed that these tales have much to offer. For example, the use of ghostly tales to impart the history of a site or event (as displayed in Sim’s books about Queensland’s ghosts) could give an insight into the morals, mores and beliefs of early and modern Australians alike. Furthermore, Part Two, which explored ‘why’ people believed they had seen a ghost, showed how interdisciplinary studies of ghostly experiences could enable researchers to establish the impact and/or influence such experiences have on individual, familial, and societal beliefs concerning death and an afterlife; or, conversely, how individual, familial, and societal beliefs govern the perception of ghostly experiences.

401 Gelder, ed., The Oxford Book of Australian Ghost Stories, x.
Since the first Europeans laid claim to Australia, people from many different cultures have come there to live – especially after the dismantling of the White Australia policy, which was conducted progressively between 1966 and 1973. Prior to this the expectation was that “migrants should shed their cultures and languages and rapidly become indistinguishable from the host population.” After the abolishment of this policy expectations changed, with the result that “migrant groups [began] forming state and national associations to maintain their cultures, and promote the survival of their languages and heritages within mainstream institutions.” During the process of dismantling the White Australia policy, the term ‘multiculturalism’ was introduced along with social policies aimed at supporting Australia’s growing multicultural society. Over the years, these policies have undergone regular revisions as a means of lessening problems encountered by such a diverse population. Most of the changes brought about by these revisions were instigated after researchers made available results of studies that focused on issues relevant to Australia’s multicultural society. However, one aspect regarding the complex nature of multiculturalism that appears to be under-researched concerns issues surrounding the impact ghostly experiences, and beliefs relating to death and an afterlife have on Australia’s multicultural society – beliefs that were shown in Part Two could sometimes have devastating affects.

In Hauntings and Poltergeists Houran and Lange comment that: “[Paranormal beliefs are clearly sociocultural issues” since “people’s conceptions of ghosts, hauntings, and poltergeists are shaped by the prevailing sociocultural context.” Moreover, ghostly phenomena in general display significant cross-cultural experiences. Australia’s multicultural society, in which migrant groups try to maintain their

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404 Houran and Lange, eds., Hauntings and Poltergeists: Multidisciplinary Perspectives. 7.
individual “cultures, … languages and heritages,” provides a perfect opportunity to explore this aspect of ghostly experiences. However, prior to any exploration of changes in beliefs (generational or otherwise) concerning death and the afterlife, it is necessary to have an understanding of these beliefs and the experiences that helped shape them.

A major part of debates concerning ghostly phenomena involve discussions centring on death and an afterlife, which, in turn, focus on ‘what’ people believe could survive after bodily death. The inherent difficulties of such debates mean that many of them take the form of philosophical discussions. While Part Three presents examples pertaining to some of these philosophical debates, the validity of differing philosophical theories will not be delved into; rather, the focus will be on the apparent use of these theories in the development of beliefs regarding death, an afterlife and ghosts. As such, the intent is not to enter into a philosophical discussion of afterlife issues but to highlight some Australian interpretations of ghostly experiences/phenomena, (many of which appear to be based on individual interpretations of past and present philosophical debates) and how these interpretations evolved into firmly held beliefs about death and an afterlife. Furthermore, it is not intended that a definitive answer will be found to the question of ‘what’ Australians believe could survive after bodily death. Rather, the expectation is that the following discussion will indicate future areas of research concerning Australian ghostly experiences in general, and non-Indigenous experiences in particular, thereby enabling a better understanding of the effect these experiences and beliefs have on Australia’s multicultural society.

Part Three, to which this thesis now turns, begins with an overview of various philosophical theories concerning the possibility of survival after bodily death. Not surprisingly, many of these theories focus on the mind/body problem, which explore
whether or not the mind can survive independently of the body. Debates regarding this problem tend to be based on various dualistic concepts; but predominantly the account of René Descartes, which he developed in the seventeenth century. However, it will be shown that some philosophers appear to have extended their theories to encompass a trichotomy in which they argue that a person possesses a body and, not one, but two souls. The following section explores how some individuals have interpreted these dualistic concepts as ‘proof’ of survival after bodily death, which, in turn, aids the development of individual beliefs regarding life after death.

As well as the overview of philosophical debates, some scientific discoveries that may have facilitated, or influenced, belief in life after death are discussed. Dominant among these discoveries are those relating to energy theories, as many psychics and mediums believe there is a link between ghosts and a decedent’s ‘life’ energy. While the view of those who believe in life after death dominates this section, the sceptical viewpoint has been included to show how scientific data is used to support various arguments regarding life after death, ghosts, and paranormal phenomena in general.

The theories and beliefs presented in Part Three are predominantly by ‘authorities’ on the subject – such as; scientists, mediums, psychics and philosophers. However, as the main aim of this thesis is to begin the process of analysing general Australian beliefs concerning life after bodily death – that is, ‘what’ they believe survives bodily death and, subsequently, what a ghost is – an overview of their beliefs and interpretations will also be discussed. Although it has been acknowledged that the use of Internet forums has inherent problems regarding verification of a contributor’s nationality, sites devoted to paranormal phenomena, and ghosts in particular, do provide an insight into what people believe and how they perceive what they claim to have
experienced. Therefore, Part Three will also present various comments found on purportedly Australian paranormal web sites as well as those sourced from non-fiction books dealing with Australian ghostly experiences.

Included in Part Three is a discussion of interpretations regarding ‘what’ nineteenth century Australian’s believed could survive after bodily death. Although there are many tales of ghostly phenomena from this period of Australia’s history, the tendency of authors to focus on the horror engendered by such phenomena, which ‘fed’ the populace’s craving for entertainment, appears to have resulted in a reluctance by researchers of the day to explore scientific or psychological aspects behind the manifestations. Although this thesis contends that the use of data from elsewhere in the world has the potential of supplying erroneous or misleading conclusions when applied to Australian society, the scarcity of research into these experiences and phenomena has meant that, at times, it has been necessary to use ‘foreign’ data to support and develop various arguments presented in Part Three.
Overview of Survival Debates

Although … most advocates of paranormal interaction in general, and of life after death in particular, have adopted a dualistic philosophy, there is some precedent within the parapsychological tradition for … nondualistic interactionism.

David Ray Griffin

Whether in Australia or elsewhere, one of the main areas of disagreement engendered by ghostly phenomena concerns ‘what’ people believe could survive after bodily death. At one end of the spectrum are those who classify themselves as ‘extinctivists,’ seeing death as the total annihilation of ‘self’ – both body and soul. At the other end are the ‘survivalists’ who see death as a transition from one form of life to the next; a transition that involves the soul, spirit, or consciousness, of the decedent – not the body. Between these two opposing groups are others with varying opinions of what happens after bodily death. In an attempt to strengthen their stance, proponents from all sides of the debate have developed theories as to ‘what’ could, or could not survive after bodily death. While some may consider such debates futile, Australian psychologist Dorothy Rowe suggests they are important as beliefs concerning death and an afterlife often help to determine the course of a person’s life:

What we see as the purpose of our life becomes a project stretching forward into the future. Death cuts across that project. We find that we have to accept that our body dies, but we cannot accept the idea that our sense of being a person will vanish. …

408 Although some may question the use of this term, it is used in this thesis to denote all the various groups that hold some form of belief in life after bodily death. Refer to the Glossary for a definition.
409 For example: “reincarnationists, immortalists (who deny reincarnation), eclectics (who combine immortality with reincarnation), ‘other believers’ (who are unsure what form the afterlife takes), and agnostics (who are "completely uncertain as to what happens to the ‘conscious personality’ at the death of the physical body").” Thalbourne, “Belief in Life after Death: Psychological Origins and Influences.” 1043.
410 For example: Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." Especially page 92.
Our beliefs about the nature of death, the purpose of life, and the means by which the most important part of us will continue on become our religious or philosophical beliefs. We might want to regard our beliefs as absolute truths, but, alas, they cannot be. …

All of these beliefs about life and death are guesses or fantasies, but, if we have constructed these beliefs with a view to which beliefs would benefit us or which beliefs we can live with most comfortably, we can be very reluctant to change them, for to do so would mean changing how we live our life.411

Rowe’s observation concerning the link between beliefs and an individual’s life-choices is displayed in the internal conflict felt by those who ‘give up’ their belief in paranormal phenomena412 – a decision that not only makes them reassess their worldview but also raises other issues they would have to confront; such as Rowe’s finding regarding “how [one should] live [their] life.” Rowe further maintains that if a person chose to believe that death was the “doorway to another life,” they were confronted with a multitude of questions other than ‘what’ could survive after bodily death; such as, who would progress to the next life, and would it be a better life? On the other hand, to accept that death was the total annihilation of ‘self,’ while appearing to be the easier option in which the only requirement was to make “life satisfactory,” the actuality was that it too raised many issues – the least of which was the concern that “to die and be forgotten” is to be as though one “never … existed.”413

During a series of conversations with Phillip Adams about the nature of time, life, God and the universe, physicist Paul Davies made the observation that “our most primitive experience is of our own existence. We can directly perceive that we exist.”414

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411 Rowe, What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives, xii-xiii.

412 For example, Blackmore, "Why I Have Given Up." Passim.

413 Rowe, What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives, xi-xii.

414 Paul Davies, The Big Questions: Paul Davies in Conversation with Phillip Adams (Ringwood, Victoria, Australia: Penguin Books, 1996). 85. At the time this book was written, Paul Davies was a Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Adelaide, South Australia. While Phillip Adams – an Australian “author, broadcaster, columnist,
Davies suggests that the source of this knowledge appears to stem from a ‘consciousness’ that exists independently of the human brain. Davies further maintains that, although some scientists would prefer to ignore the problem of ‘consciousness’ by “sweep[ing] it under the carpet,” the consequences of possessing it meant its role in nature should be taken seriously. One reason why it should be taken seriously was suggested by Adams who proposes that although ‘consciousness’ of one’s own existence enabled humankind to survive as a species, it came at a “terrible price” as it gave “us an awareness of our mortality.” Some researchers have linked this ‘awareness’ to the belief in ghosts and an afterlife; a belief in which the fear of death and ‘non-existence’ is overcome by the prospect of some form of immortality. However, Thalbourne argues that a fear of death does not necessarily equate to a belief in life after death, as it depends on what the fear of death “may comprise.” Thalbourne maintains that:

… while a person’s emotional response to death or the threat of death might plausibly be expected to play a role in the development of afterlife-belief, the nature and extent of that role have received more speculation than research.

Thalbourne’s observation reinforces various arguments regarding a link between fear of death and belief in ghosts or an afterlife, as well as highlighting the need for further

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418 For example: Schumaker, *Wings of Illusion: The Origin, Nature and Future of Paranormal Belief*. Passim. Also, Thalbourne, "On the Psychology of Belief in Life after Death." especially page 227; and Rowe, *What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives*. Passim. Rowe’s findings appear to link belief in an afterlife with a desire to have one’s existence continually confirmed after death, either traditionally, through the act of remembrance, or paranormally through the physical manifestation of one’s soul to others – that is, as a ghost.
419 Thalbourne, "On the Psychology of Belief in Life after Death." 226.
420 Thalbourne, "On the Psychology of Belief in Life after Death." 229.
research into the role of this ‘fear’ – research that this thesis argues should utilise an interdisciplinary approach, rather than confine studies to the psychological aspects of these beliefs and fears.

Bearing these factors in mind, current research shows that concerns similar to those expressed by Rowe, Davies and Adams, mirror some of the earliest philosophical debates regarding the “riddles of existence.” Although these early debates focused predominantly on the existence of humankind, they also explored the “existence of God, or gods, good and evil, worlds beyond this one, [and] life after death.”421 The general consensus appears to be that it was Pythagoras who, in the sixth century B.C.E, first stated that: “The soul is an immortal thing.”422 However, R. Hackforth found that, in fact, this belief could be traced to “contact of seventh- and sixth-century [B.C.E] Greeks with the shamanistic culture of Northern Europe and Asia,” thereby displaying a continuity of belief from at least Babylonian times, as well as exhibiting the sharing of these beliefs throughout the ancient world (as in modern times) through periods of human migration.423

Regardless of the origins of this belief, Pythagoras’ comment appears to have initiated philosophical debates concerning the possibility of some form of immortality for humankind. However, Pythagoras did not stop at his contention that the soul is immortal, adding that it was “transformed into other living things – whatever comes into existence is born again in the revolutions of a certain cycle – nothing being absolutely new.”424 This theory became known as “metempsychosis [- the] doctrine of repeated

424 Osborne, Philosophy for Beginners. 7.
incarnations of souls, with punishments and rewards for behaviour in previous lives.”

Solomon and Higgins note in *A Short History of Philosophy* that Pythagoras based his conclusions on mathematics:

> Everything, he said, is defined by numbers. This is, of course, a view very sympathetic to that of many physicists working today, who insist that mathematics is the key to understanding the universe.

Although physicists believe that mathematics will one day unlock the secrets of the universe, few debates about the possibility of life after bodily death involve mathematics; instead centring on philosophical theories concerning the body and soul – or the mind/body problem.

**The Mind/Body Problem**

“How can we fit these totally different worlds – the mental and the physical – together? That’s the problem!”

This comment by Davies succinctly states what many have thought. Unfortunately, a satisfactory answer has not yet been found; for while the question may be concise the issues behind it are not so easily reconciled. Since Pythagoras first suggested the soul is immortal, many theories have been put forward to explain how the mental (soul or mind) and physical could divide at death – one to suffer total annihilation, the other to survive in either an ethereal realm or as some form of energy. One of the more popular theories, especially among believers in the immortality of the human soul, is the dualistic nature of body and soul (or mind/body). Although the dualistic nature of humankind has been debated in philosophical circles since

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426 Solomon and Higgins, *A Short History of Philosophy*. 27. Solomon and Higgins state that it is generally accepted that Pythagoras developed many of his ideas from those “which he imported from Egypt, along with much of his geometry.”

Pythagoras’ day, those who consider various survival hypotheses today tend to form their arguments around a mind/body theory posited by the seventeenth century philosopher, René Descartes – a theory that is often referred to simply as ‘dualism.’ However, according to Griffin, Descartes’ theory should, more correctly, be referred to as “ontological dualism” as it:

… contains a double thesis: (1) that the mind is an actuality numerically distinct from the brain (the quantitative or numerical thesis) and (2) that it is ontologically different in kind from the entities of which the brain consists (the qualitative or ontological thesis).428

The confusion engendered by dualistic concepts is reflected in the many different theories philosophers debate. Griffin, for example, supplies another theory that is known as “conceptual dualism,” which states that “if something is ‘physical’ it cannot also be ‘mental’ and vice versa;” 429 while, in The Oxford Companion to Philosophy Professor Thomas Nagel writes of “Substance dualism” and “Property dualism.”430 Although many philosophers maintain that ‘dualism’ is no longer relevant as it has been shown to be flawed in its reasoning, Nagel contends that:

Dualistic theories at least acknowledge the serious difficulty of locating consciousness in a modern scientific conception of the physical world, but they really give metaphysical expression to the problem rather than solving it.

The desire to avoid dualism has been the driving motive behind much contemporary work on the mind-body problem. …[V]arious forms of behaviourism and materialism are designed to show that a place can be found for thoughts, sensations, feelings, and other mental phenomena in a purely physical world. But these theories have trouble accounting for consciousness and its subjective qualia.

429 Griffin, Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom and the Mind-Body Problem. 47.
Neither dualism nor materialism seems likely to be true, but it isn’t clear what the alternatives are.431

Nagel’s dissatisfaction with metaphysical considerations reinforces McCain’s and Segal’s observation presented in Part Two regarding the limits of science, and their observation that some questions just “cannot be answered.”432

Although the theory of dualism poses many complex philosophical questions, as the above passage shows, some people believe that it offers the only acceptable means of explaining ‘what’ could survive after bodily death. A few researchers of paranormal phenomena, who state quite clearly that their survival theories are based on dualism, support their decision by supplying simplistic definitions that emphasise the duality of the mind and body, while appearing to ignore the actual complexity behind such a connection. For example, Karolyi’s definition in An Excursion into the Paranormal states:

According to [the dualistic] principle the mind on the one hand, and the brain and the body on the other hand, are separate entities, which during the lifetime of the physical body function together in a complementary manner.

… The mind-body duality principle, in assigning to the mind the possibility of separate existence from the body, leads to the survival hypothesis, which advocates the supposed ability of the mind to survive the death of the physical body.433

While most scientists and philosophers agree that some form of “dualism between soul and body is necessary in order to imagine” the possibility of life after death, acceptance of the theory does not imply a belief in life after death;434 as Thalbourne observes:

431 Nagel, "Dualism." 207.
432 McCain and Segal, The Game of Science. 186-189.
433 Karolyi, An Excursion into the Paranormal. 213.
Though belief in dualism does not entail belief in life after death, the converse does not hold: actual life after death would seem to presuppose a dualistic position on the nature of mind.\footnote{Thalbourne, “Belief in Life after Death: Psychological Origins and Influences.” 1043.}

Although some regard dualism as the only theory that offers a suitable explanation that allows for the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death,\footnote{John Cottingham, "Cartesianism," \textit{The Oxford Companion to Philosophy}, ed. Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). 122-124.} others consider it outdated in terms of its reasoning;\footnote{Davies, \textit{The Big Questions: Paul Davies in Conversation with Phillip Adams}, 95-96.} especially when one ponders, as Griffin does, “How … two things that are totally unlike be thought to interact causally with each other?”\footnote{Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration}, 104.} While Griffin acknowledges that dualism “is the position usually endorsed by those who believe in life after death,” he maintains that its endorsement is actually harming the case for survival:

\[\text{[as the]}\] association of belief in life after death with dualism, makes it very unlikely that the philosophical and scientific communities will ever be won over to the acceptance of life after death, no matter how much empirical evidence is presented.\footnote{Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration}, 104.}

Griffin maintains that a better explanation is supplied by panexperientialism, as it:

\[\ldots\text{commends itself as the best solution to the mind-body problem on purely philosophical grounds.} \ldots\text{However,} \ldots\text{this same view, while commending itself in terms of other considerations alone, does also allow for paranormal phenomena in general and life after death in particular.}\footnote{Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration}, 138.} \]
Despite his contention that panexperientialism supplies the better explanation for the division of mind from body at death, and therefore the greater possibility of life after bodily death, Griffin concedes that clarification of his choice is required. As such, he begins by explaining that the term ‘panexperientialism’ replaces the traditional term ‘panpsychism.’ He reasons that the change in term clarifies the current understanding linked to panpsychism, which maintains that “actual things at every level enjoy experience, analogous to our own” – an understanding that many believe includes inanimate objects.441 Expanding on this, Griffin argues:

“Panpsychism” is the term that has generally been used. … [However,] “Panexperientialism” is preferable … for two reasons: (1) The term “psyche” suggests that the basic units endure through long stretches of time, whereas they may be momentary experiences; and (2) “psyche” inevitably suggests a higher form of experience than would be appropriate for the most elementary units of nature. … The “pan” in the panexperientialism to be advocated here refers not simply to all things but only to all genuine units or individuals. This means that experience is not attributed to aggregational things, such as rocks and chairs … 442 … With reference to an individual, the term “mind” (or “experience”) refers to what it is for itself, while “matter” refers to its appearance to the sensory perception of others.443

Finally, Griffin maintains that his hypothesis solves the “ontological problem of dualistic interactionism” since:

Interaction between mind and brain is no longer counterintuitive, because the mind and brain cells are said to be qualitatively similar, only greatly different in degree. There is no absolute discontinuity and therefore no problem of where to draw an absolute line in the evolutionary process between sentience and insentience. There is no problem of emergence, because conscious experience is said to emerge not out

441 Griffin, Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration, 132.
442 Griffin, Unsnarling the World-Knot: Consciousness, Freedom and the Mind-Body Problem, 78; and fn ** on page 78.
443 Griffin, Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration, 135.
of insentient matter but out of things with less sophisticated experience. There is no problem of how time existed before experience did or, alternatively, how several billion years of evolution could have occurred before time arose. The experience and freedom of humans, or of humans and other animals, is not thought to be the great exception; spontaneous experience is characteristic of every level of nature.\textsuperscript{444}

Regardless of Griffin’s findings, as well as concerns raised by other philosophers regarding the inadequacy of dualism, its influence continues to be evinced in debates concerning life after death due to the fact that many people still hold the belief that dualism is the \textit{only} explanation that supports such a possibility. However, some people, while appearing to espouse the dichotomy of body and soul, or mind/body, which is reflected in dualism, have actually expanded their interpretations to form a trichotomy; an expansion that is exhibited in Peter Novak’s Binary Soul Doctrine.

\textbf{The Binary Soul Doctrine}

There are those who state that near death experiences (NDEs) supply proof that the soul disconnects from the body at death, progressing on to an ethereal realm where it resides with other souls.\textsuperscript{445} These experiences are also used to support claims of the dualistic nature of humankind. However, there are some who state that NDEs actually confirm a trichotomy, which holds that human beings are made up of a body and \textit{two} souls. In his paper ‘Division of the Self,’ Novak suggests that:

The two stages of near-death experiences, a detached, objective, and dispassionate “black void” followed by a subjective, relationship-oriented, and emotionally intense “realm of light,” reflect the distinctions between the conscious mind and the unconscious mind. The “darkness” stage seems to be experienced exclusively through the conscious half of the psyche, while the “light” stage seems to be

\textsuperscript{444} Griffin, \textit{Parapsychology, Philosophy, and Spirituality: A Postmodern Exploration}, 136.
\textsuperscript{445} For example; Raymond A. Moody, \textit{Life after Life} (New York: Bantam Books, 1976). \textit{Passim}.
experienced exclusively through the unconscious, as if the two were operating independently during these episodes.\textsuperscript{446}

Bearing in mind the stages of an NDE, Novak developed the ‘Binary Soul Doctrine’ hypothesis, which states that: the two halves of the psyche (the conscious and the unconscious mind) separate after death thereby offering a “consistent explanation for … afterlife phenomena” such as “ghosts and apparitions.”\textsuperscript{447}

According to Novak, belief that humankind has two souls not one, is evinced in cultures all over the world, and has existed since the very earliest times. For example, the ba and ka mentioned in the Egyptian Book of the Dead; the Greek version of two “distinct types of souls … the psyche [sic.] and the \textit{thymos};” the Persian equivalent of “two twin parts: the \textit{urvan} and the \textit{daena};” and the “Australian aboriginal tribes [who] believed that people possess two souls, one that reincarnates into another human body after death, and another that takes up eternal residence after death in a dreamlike realm known as the “Dreaming”.”\textsuperscript{448} While some ‘contemporary’ cultures still acknowledge a belief in two souls, other cultures (predominantly those from Western societies) appear to have forgotten that they too once believed in the doctrine of two souls. However, Novak maintains that while some may not knowingly realise they believe in the concept, it is reflected in the way they describe themselves:

The idea that people are three-part creatures, having one body which holds two soul-type elements, is still a very familiar image. … We regularly describe


\textsuperscript{447} Novak, "Division of the Self: Life after Death and the Binary Soul Doctrine." Abstract, 143. Novak states that NDEs consist of two main stages: "Stage One: Peace in the Dark Void … a realm totally devoid of forms or imagery of any kind … a strange loss of emotions and a sense of disconnectedness … [with] a deep sense of peacefulness, calm, and serenity … [yet] a heightened sense of objective intellect, feeling more alert, curious, logical, rational, and intelligent. […] And] Stage Two: Joy in the realm of Light … characterized by the presence of tremendously powerful and moving emotions, deep emotional connection to and investment in the experiencer’s own past life through a life review, and a suddenly renewed and enhanced sense of connectedness and community with others or, indeed, with the entire universe." 161-164.

\textsuperscript{448} Novak, "Division of the Self: Life after Death and the Binary Soul Doctrine." 144-154.
ourselves as having body, soul and spirit, or body, mind and soul, or body, heart and soul, or some other variation of this theme. We are not even sure what we mean by these terms anymore, but we use them nonetheless.449

Furthermore, Novak maintains that the ‘Binary Soul Doctrine’ is displayed in descriptions of mediums’ and psychics’ communications with the dead. Commenting on American “medium James Van Praagh[’s]” book, *Reaching to Heaven*, Novak notes:

In many respects, Van Praagh’s (1999) descriptions of the afterlife are a textbook example of the Binary Soul Doctrine. He wrote that two personal elements survive physical death: an “emotional body” that contains all one’s thoughts, emotions, feelings, yearnings, and desires, like the unconscious mind; and a mental body that he associates with a person’s data, logic, intelligence, and reasoning abilities, like the conscious mind.450

In the ‘Binary Soul Doctrine,’ the symbiotic relationship of the two souls mirrors the connection between the conscious and the unconscious mind, in which:

The conscious has no shape of its own, no unique personality, except as informed through the memory shape of the unconscious; without the unconscious with its memory and emotions, the conscious, although aware, would be as blank and featureless as a sheet of white paper.451

According to Novak, the manner in which the two souls continue to survive after bodily death determines how the dead communicate with the living. For example, the destruction of the connection between the conscious mind and unconscious mind does not occur immediately upon death, thus explaining why ghosts that manifest within the “first year or two after [a] person has died” appear to “have full use of all their mental

faculties … and they can still think rationally and communicate efficiently and effectively.” However, once the connection has been severed the behaviour of ghosts becomes “dim-witted and nonverbal.” Moreover, “they seem to possess no objective awareness or rational intellect.”452 This theory appears to offer an explanation for the behaviour of haunting ghosts, which repeat the same routines over and over; seemingly unaware of those around them and often passing through objects such as tables, walls or doors. Some have likened this behaviour as similar to a film, or recording that is played over and over as if it were on a ‘loop,’453 while others maintain it confirms various theories regarding the conservation of energy.454

The above summation of some philosophical theories that appear to allow for the possibility of life after bodily death display the complexity of not only the ideas that engender ‘survival’ debates but also the organism that some claim is both mental and physical – as Rowe observes:

… the living, working brain is not a collection of things but is a multitude of processes, moving, changing, interacting. We talk about ‘the mind’ as an invisible thing which is in the brain, somehow connected to it, but this is not how we experience our mind. All we experience is a stream of consciousness, a kind of passing phantasmagoria. Yet we talk about two things, the brain and the mind, and we wonder how they are connected. It seems that the language we speak is preventing us from asking the right questions. Perhaps what we need is a language which allows us to talk about being, changing, doing.455

452 Novak, "Division of the Self: Life after Death and the Binary Soul Doctrine." 179-181. Many parapsychologists commonly refer to a ghost that appears within one to two years after a person has died as an “apparition,” reserving the title of ‘ghost’ for entities that appear after this time with most exhibiting Novak’s characteristics of being “dim-witted and nonverbal.”


454 Stenger, "The Breath of God: Identifying Spiritual Energy." 363-374. Although this article presents a sceptical viewpoint, it displays the many ways that those who believe in paranormal phenomena utilise energy theories to support their pro-psi stance.

Rowe is not the only researcher to raise the issue of language in relation to the complexities surrounding survival debates. In his article ‘Where Do We Go from Here?’ that forms part of the Conclusion to The Survival of Human Consciousness, Storm explores the language used by researchers to describe ghostly and paranormal phenomena presented in the articles published in this book. He was surprised at “how often the various putatively scientific discourses reverted to, and even depended on, a terminology that has its roots in an archaic, even religious past.” Furthermore, he found that the use of this terminology was not solely related to accounts that came from “second-hand reports or hearsay, but often were denoted in the words of the authors.”

In Part Two preconditioning influences regarding belief in and perception of paranormal phenomena was discussed. Although it was shown that scientific discoveries have contributed to these beliefs and perceptions, an individual’s pre-existing supernatural belief system was also found to be influential. Moreover, as Griffin and Reanney found, Storm also contends that these influences are evinced in research concerning paranormal phenomena – especially research regarding the possibility of life after physical death:

The fact is, survival is an ancient idea … However, a viewpoint ostensibly presented as being exclusively secular can be seen as an attempt to strip the idea of survival from its historical and religious background in order to reach a considered scientific (i.e., objective) conclusion about survival. Ultimately, it is an attempt that fails. The main reason is that our culture, all cultures, are steeped in a religious past.

It is not surprising then that the language used to describe paranormal phenomena often contains religious overtones. However, Storm maintains that although it is important to

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456 Storm, "Where Do We Go from Here?." 278-279.
457 Storm, "Where Do We Go from Here?." 279.
bear this in mind it is also prudent to acknowledge that research regarding survival is also further complicated by the “meanings and derivations of our words and the way we use language;” as the “old Socratic rule [states] … we can never know anything because language is an abstraction of what really is;”

What still stands outside both viewpoints is the reality of the limitations of language – it reveals as much as it conceals. As long as the something and the somewhere remain inexpressible, or limited when expressed in language, or the conceptions of both cannot be understood by all, or are understood in different ways, there can be no answer, or no single answer to the question of survival.\textsuperscript{458}

Until a ‘language’ that can be understood by all is developed ideas pertaining to survival after bodily death, such as the apparent duality of humankind, must rely on the language that is available – just as those who believe in some form of survival after bodily death utilise the ideas displayed in complex philosophical theories to support their pro-paranormal stance. While these theories are reflected in general interpretations of ‘what’ people believe could survive bodily death, the question is how do they relate to Australian interpretations of ghostly experiences and phenomena?

Many of those quoted in the above summation are not Australian, nor have they resided in Australia. However, as issues concerning the mind/body problem are rarely governed by nationality but rather entail acceptance of one theory over another, it is not necessary to have an understanding of any one culture in order to debate survival hypotheses. It is how various cultures use and develop these theories that require a researcher to become ‘culture specific.’ Therefore, as the aim of this thesis is to explore

\textsuperscript{458} Storm, "Where Do We Go from Here?" 282-283. This thesis is aware (as Professor John C. McDowell pointed out) that: “it is clear to cultural theorists, philosophers and theologians today that language is not merely expressive but equally GENERATIVE – i.e., our languages shape and determine the very way we come to experience the world.” However, this thesis has presented individual views of the paranormal and the language used to describe their experiences. The issues that Professor McDowell raises regarding ‘language’ require another level of critical evaluation that, at this time, this thesis is unable to provide. Personal communiqué received 17 June 2011.
non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena, the discussion will now turn to Australian beliefs that display evidence of these survival theories.

In most cultures, it is the ‘professional’ psychic or medium who profess to know ‘what’ survives after bodily death; and, in this instance, Australia is no exception. Therefore, the thesis will now discuss some survival hypotheses evinced in the beliefs of a selection of Australian psychics and mediums – as well as those reflected in the tales of other Australians who have experienced ghostly phenomena. While the intention of this thesis is to present the ‘Australian view,’ the scarcity of interdisciplinary research into these experiences means that occasionally data from studies conducted elsewhere, and for different cultures, will need to be used to support the various arguments.

Experience as Evidence for Survival

Although the aim of this thesis is to present an analytical discussion that highlights academic disciplines suitable for future studies into Australian ghostly experiences rather than an in-depth exploration of the evidence for survival, it is worth considering how the evidence differs in relation to the manner in which such phenomena are experienced. In Part One, the discussion of non-fiction literature presented not only an overview of the history behind the paranormal phenomena of ghosts but also tales of encounters with Australian ghostly phenomena experienced by both those who sought contact, such as psychics and mediums, as well as those who did not. While these tales appear to provide evidence that survival after bodily death is not only a possibility but, in fact, a reality, Storm argues that:

Empirically … [he] must … say that we only have survival-like phenomena as “evidence” of survival because, by that evidence, the only statement we can make with absolute certainty is that it is living beings who claim to have survival
experiences. That is, it is not yet safe to say survival-like phenomena are the same thing as evidence of survival.\(^\text{459}\)

While Storm’s conclusion is based on sound reasoning, those who experience “survival-like phenomena” often remain adamant that their encounter was ‘real’ and, therefore, ‘proof’ that survival after bodily death is possible. However, as Storm points out, these experiences should not be considered indisputable evidence for survival after bodily death. Stephen E. Braude, on the other hand, after weighing up the results of his research regarding evidence for post-mortem survival, concluded that:

… with little assurance but with some justification, … the evidence provides a reasonable basis for believing in personal post-mortem survival. It doesn’t clearly support the belief that everyone survives death; it more clearly supports the belief that some do. And it doesn’t support the belief that we survive eternally; at best it justifies the belief that some individuals survive for a limited time.\(^\text{460}\)

It could be argued that Braude’s conclusion was, in part, influenced by a personal experience that “occurred in graduate school, during an impromptu séance with two friends in [Braude’s] home.”\(^\text{461}\) Yet, it was not so much the events of that day that intrigued him, rather it was his continued feeling of fear, which he still felt many years after the event, that aroused his curiosity. The fear felt by Braude is a common reaction amongst those who are unaccustomed to making contact with the soul/spirit of a deceased individual.

Although many people state they believe that something or some aspect of an individual survives after bodily death, their belief often does not prepare them for the


\(^{460}\) Braude, Immortal Remains: The Evidence for Life after Death. 306.

\(^{461}\) Braude, Immortal Remains: The Evidence for Life after Death. ix.
actuality of a ghostly encounter. In her book True Hauntings, Hazel M. Denning contends, despite their beliefs, if an everyday person has a “paranormal experience their normal reaction is fear.” 462 This finding was supported by a comment from a “famous obstetrician,” who told her that:

…it always amazed him that so few Christians believed what they professed, even though all were indoctrinated with the idea that human beings have a soul that lives on following physical death. As he served families experiencing death, he was impressed by how few actually believed their loved one continued to exist beyond the grave. … Perhaps the saddest aspect of this disbelief is the terrified reaction of almost everyone who experiences the full impact of confronting a spirit manifestation. 463

While it is considered ‘normal’ for psychics and mediums to be prepared for contact with the spirit/soul of a deceased individual, other experiencers are totally unprepared, often stating that their encounter was unanticipated and unplanned – even those like Braude who take part in “impromptu séance[s],” 464 all the while not really expecting anything to happen.

Some may argue that experiences of ghostly/paranormal phenomena by those who are unprepared for such occurrences provide a strong case for evidence of survival after bodily death. However, as it was shown in Part Two, this is not necessarily the case. While many people question the claims of psychics and mediums, often labelling their supposed communications as fraudulent or merely good guess-work, the experiences of everyday individuals is also open to debate; as Glicksohn’s study concerning altered states of consciousness showed.465 Furthermore, while claims of

463 Denning, True Hauntings. 3.
psychic or mediumistic abilities can be tested in a controlled environment, thereby fulfilling scientific requirements regarding objectivity as well as replication, experiences by everyday individuals are untestable. Nevertheless, the quantity of experiential accounts gathered over thousands of years is considered by many to be strong evidence that such phenomena does exist and, therefore, provides “proof” of survival after bodily death.

Despite the many questions surrounding whether ghostly/paranormal phenomena supplies evidence of survival after bodily death, most people have a clear idea of what a ghost is; as Hilary Evans suggests:

Though “seeing a ghost” is not a scientific term, there exists a pragmatic consensus as to what is meant by it. The situation could hardly be otherwise with an experience that has been widely reported over a period of some 3000 years. … If a person says “I have seen a ghost,” another may not know specifically what that person has experienced, but they will have a good general idea of what kind of experience it was.\footnote{Hilary Evans, "The Ghost Experience in a Wider Context," Hauntings and Poltergeists: Multidisciplinary Perspectives, eds. James Houran and Rense Lange (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2001). 41.}

The reports of ghostly phenomena over thousands of years have not only provided a “good general idea” of what ghostly experiences may entail, they have also opened up new avenues of research; as Storm contends: “Experience … is an important component of scientific research as it can determine the future path of an investigator.”\footnote{Storm, “A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi.” 291.} – as it did with Braude. However, while the manner in which one experiences ghostly phenomena, such as through mediumistic events or an unanticipated encounter, may provide differing evidence regarding survival after bodily death, individual ideas of ‘what’ could survive often contain evidence of religious, scientific or philosophical influences.
Soul or Spirit: An Australian Perspective

Despite the popularity of the dualistic concept amongst those who believe in some form of afterlife, there is evidence to suggest that the trichotomy displayed in Novak’s ‘Binary Soul Doctrine’ has been adopted by some Australians, as it is exhibited in their individual theories regarding ‘what’ could survive bodily death. While none state that they are familiar with this doctrine, the influence of religious teachings on their beliefs surrounding life after bodily death and the compound nature of humankind is acknowledged. Although the preconditioning influence of religion was highlighted in Part Two, the utilisation of an apparent trichotomy displayed in some of these doctrines was not discussed. For example, in a Pentecostal Church in Victoria, Australia, the congregation is told that the “spirit is that which has been in existence before birth and after death, and the soul is another word for the mind.” Furthermore, their understanding of the ‘spirit’ is that it is the essence of each individual; that is, who they are.468

In an article that appeared in the **Washington Post** debating issues surrounding the death of Terri Schiavo, Philip Clayton observes:

> In his encyclical *Donum Vitae* (“The Gift of Life”), Pope John Paul II says that the human body “cannot be considered as a mere complex of tissues, organs and functions,” for it exists in “substantial union with a spiritual soul.” The pope told the Pontifical Academy that “the moment of death for each person consists in the definitive loss of the constitutive unity of body and spirit.”

While some may argue that the definition given by Pope John Paul II displays a dichotomy rather than a trichotomy, his mention of a ‘spiritual soul’ could be interpreted as implying that a spirit resides within the soul, thereby forming a trichotomy similar to

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468 Personal communiqué received from a member of the Assembly of God Church group – 13 August 2009.

that of Novak’s ‘Binary Soul Doctrine.’ Regardless of whether this interpretation is
correct, it is necessary to realise that other individuals may hold a similar opinion;
especially those who claim to be able to communicate with the spirit world and,
therefore, purportedly have an understanding of the afterlife and ‘what’ dwells therein.

Throughout his book *Medium Down Under*, Anthony Grzelka, an Australian
medium who was raised in a “predominately Catholic community,” used three
conventional terms employed in discussions regarding ‘what’ some consider may
survive after bodily death, and therefore, possibly be responsible for ghostly phenomena.
The three terms were soul, spirit, and energy. The manner in which Grzelka used these
three terms implied that he saw the soul as the animating force of one’s earthly body. At
death the soul disconnected from the body, to join a ‘community’ of souls. Once
connected to the ‘community’ the soul then becomes known as a spirit. This
‘community’ of spirits then moves on to reside in a realm that consists of pure energy.
According to Grzelka, a ghost is the visible manifestation of the soul prior to its
connection with the spirit community. Although his interpretation consists of three
conventional terms it is not a trichotomy – rather, it is a dichotomy; for when the body
dies the soul leaves and becomes spirit, which in turn becomes pure energy. Furthermore,
although he “interchange[s] the terms heaven, afterlife, spirit world and spirit realm
throughout [his] book … [he maintains] they all mean exactly the same thing: where we
go when we complete our physical lives here.”

On the other hand, “Sydney-based Ligato,” ”a Christian by faith” who
“describes herself as a medium and spiritual healer,” maintains that “[t]erms and

language are irrelevant." Yet she is very precise in describing her division of the soul, which she states has three distinctly separate parts. While the three parts imply a trichotomy, it could be argued that Ligato’s explanation of the divisions actually extends it to a quadripartite, or possibly even a quinary. These extra divisions become apparent if one looks closely at her understanding of the composite structure of the human soul:

Contained in the inner most circle is our Higher Self, our eternal aspect, our divine DNA. In the next outer circle is our Rational Self, which is part of our Lower Self and finally in the next outer circle, we find our Emotional and Instinctual Self. The outermost shell being the outline of our soul we normally refer to as our aura, or energy field. …

Our Higher Self exists and functions in the realm of the Divine; our Rational Self exists and functions in the Realm of Ideas … Our Emotional and Instinctive Self exists and functions in the Astral realm. Finally, our physical body exists and functions in the gross material world, or physical world. …

We exist on all these levels. Thus, we create consciously and unconsciously emotions, feelings, thoughts, ideas and intentions with their respective energies making a direct imprint on the corresponding realms…

Ligato further states that, at death, the soul goes through a process of healing in which it observes, like a patron at a movie, a play-back of “every moment lived” as viewed by each part of the ‘self’ described in the passage above. How an individual lived their life, will determine the “evolution of the soul” and its “progress up the ‘mansions’.”

Ligato maintains that a ghost is the soul of a deceased person who, for some reason,
remains “within the physical plane,” not crossing over to the spirit realm where the
process of healing and progression to the ‘mansions’ takes place.479

The progression of one’s soul after bodily death displayed in both Grzelka’s and
Ligato’s interpretations, adds to the confusion surrounding ‘what Australians believe
could survive after bodily death. Their descriptions of the soul’s movement through the
various levels and the changes it undergoes at each level, combined with the different
terms used to describe ‘what’ survives after bodily death, further complicates the issue.
However, confusing explanations seem to go hand-in-hand with paranormal phenomena
whether in Australia or elsewhere in the world. Owen Davies, for example, attempted to
clarify terms used in relation to ghosts in the United Kingdom. Yet, in so doing,
reinforced opinions that maintain that defining such phenomena is as difficult as
determining ‘what’ caused the manifestation in the first place:

Souls were often also described as ‘spirits’, though both historically, and in my
usage, ‘spirits’ also included other entities such as fairies, devils and angels. The
term ‘apparition’ also lacked a precise definition, denoting the visual appearance of
a ‘ghost-like’ presence. So a ghost sensed visually was an apparition, but an
apparition was not necessarily a ghost; it could be another form of spirit, a saint or a
devil perhaps, or an image of the deceased created by natural forces. [Furthermore,
the terms ‘phantom’ and ‘phantasm’ a]lthough occasionally used in the sense of
‘ghost’, … were generally employed to denote visions or hallucinations of the dead
rather than the appearance of their souls.480

Furthermore, Davies observed in a recent study he conducted into supernatural beliefs
among a “group of Manchester women,” that “even in contemporary society people’s
use of terminology concerning ghosts is remarkably slippery.”481

479 Ligato, Ghost Whisperer. 78.
480 Davies, The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts. 2. Refer to the Glossary for further definitions.
481 Davies, The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts. 3.
Notwithstanding the many psychological studies regarding ‘why’ people believe they have seen a ghost, or experienced paranormal phenomena, it appears that the ‘language’ used to describe such events remains unexplored. In Part One it was shown how interdisciplinary research, which encompassed disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences, would aid a better understanding of paranormal phenomena and their effect on individuals, families and societies in general. In light of Rowe’s and Storm’s observations regarding a suitable language to describe ‘what’ could survive bodily death, Ligato’s contention that “[t]erms and language are irrelevant,” and Davies’ comments concerning terminology, this thesis argues that the inclusion of researchers from the discipline of Linguistics would aid studies into these phenomena as they may unravel some of the beliefs hidden within the terminology used by experiencers to describe their ghostly encounters.

However, despite the use of language that adds to the confusion surrounding paranormal phenomena, plus the complex philosophical debates centring on the duality of humankind, as well as differing opinions regarding whether it is the ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ that could survive after bodily death, the final form the surviving component takes appears to offer no such conflicts. Most survivalists tend to agree that after bodily death the spirit, or soul, is eventually absorbed into a realm of pure energy.

The Realm of Pure Energy

The link between spirit and energy is found in many interpretations of ghostly phenomena as well as beliefs concerning an afterlife. Ligato explains the reason for this link lies in the common understanding that: “[e]verything in our sphere of existence is

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483 Ligato, Ghost Whisperer, x.
made up of energy[, which can] consist of physical and tangible matter or ethereal and intangible matter.”484 As Georgina Walker, a former spirit guide for the Australian magazine New Idea explains in her column, ‘Your Psychic,’ the “difference between a ghost and a spirit” was merely the level at which each resided: “A spirit is an energy being who vibrates at a higher level, while a ghost can be trapped on the earth plane.”485 Similarly, Katreece Quigley, an Australian clairsentient, maintains she doesn’t deal with ghosts, “to her they are earthbound energies.”486 Furthermore, as Salter, an Australian ‘Ghost Remover,’ explains; regardless of the term used to describe a ghost, “this being, the entity, spirit, soul, driver, or whatever one wishes to call it, is an energy being.” However, Salter, as well as many other survivalists, cannot explain “what kind of energy it” is. 487

Many would argue that any energy present in an individual at the time of bodily death would dissipate and therefore cease to exist. However, many survivalists, both in Australia and elsewhere, counteract this argument by citing the First Law of Thermodynamics, which, in its simplest form, states: “Energy can be changed from one form to another, but it cannot be created or destroyed. The total amount of energy and matter in the universe remains constant, merely changing from one form to another.”488 Although some scientific data, such as that displayed in the First Law of Thermodynamics, appears to support claims of paranormal phenomena in general and ghosts in particular, thereby seemingly putting an end to any further arguments, actually provides the basis for those with a sceptical viewpoint to question claims regarding the
reality of such experiences. For example, although the First Law of Thermodynamics appears to support survivalists’ spiritual energy theory, the Second Law does not:

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that “in all energy exchanges, if no energy enters or leaves the system, the potential energy of the state will always be less than that of the initial state.” This is also commonly referred to as entropy. … Entropy is a measure of disorder: cells are NOT disordered and so have low entropy. The flow of energy maintains order and life. Entropy wins when organisms cease to take in energy and die.\(^{489}\)

It is interesting to note that Hermann von Helmholtz, a German physician and physicist, first “introduced the law of conservation of energy, also known as the first law of thermodynamics,” in 1847 – just one year before the Fox sisters’ paranormal experiences and the subsequent emergence of Spiritualism.\(^{490}\) At present, it is not known whether there was a link between ghosts and energy prior to Helmholtz’s introduction of the First Law of Thermodynamics. However, since the mid nineteenth century, the two appear to have become inseparable, and are often mentioned together in many debates pertaining to survival after bodily death.

In his article ‘The Breath of God,’ Victor J. Stenger, “professor emeritus of physics and astronomy at the University of Hawaii,”\(^{491}\) used his extensive knowledge of physics to disprove survivalists’ claims that it is humankind’s spiritual energy that survives after bodily death. Stenger suggested survivalists based their arguments on the inappropriate use of data relating to energy. He contends that the misuse arose from physicists’ loose application of words, and terms, when describing their findings; thereby creating a scenario that enabled such misinterpretations to occur:

\(^{489}\) Farabee, Laws of Thermodynamics.
[Physicists’] equations and symbols encompass the facts anyway, so they see no need to act like philosophers about the precise meanings of words. This, unfortunately, is a major source of the serious lay misinterpretations of physics that are exploited by merchants of paranormal wares.492

Although Stenger addresses some of the loose terminology used by physicists regarding energy theories, a few of his clarifications inadvertently allow for further exploitation of energy data; especially by those attempting to prove the ‘reality’ of an afterlife. For example, his comments that “invisible components of matter exist”493 such as “yet-unidentified “dark energy”,”494 exhibit a gap in physicists’ knowledge that survivalists could use to strengthen claims of a spiritual realm of energy. Likewise, NASA’s explanation of dark energy and dark matter confirms the lack of knowledge physicists have regarding energy within the universe:

… [R]oughly 70% of the Universe is dark energy. Dark matter makes up about 25%. The rest – everything on Earth, everything ever observed with all of our instruments, all normal matter – adds up to less than 5% of the Universe. … [M]aybe it shouldn’t be called “normal” matter at all, since it is such a small fraction of the Universe.495

Furthermore, according to NASA “more is unknown than is known” about dark energy; while dark matter poses similar problems in that physicists “are much more certain what [it] is not than … what it is.”496 While Stenger decries survivalists’ misuse of energy data, and acknowledges that misinterpretations are partially due to physicists’ use of loose terminology, reports of current energy research seemingly add to the problem; as

496 Netting, Astrophysics - Dark Energy, Dark Matter.
this comment by Rolf-Dieter Heuer regarding “Big Bang” and dark matter experiments shows:

“We know everything about [the Higgs boson] particle. The only thing we don’t know is if it exists. … And if it does not exist, we are bound to find something that is very much like it.”497

The examples presented above, demonstrate how scientific theories and observations can be utilised by survivalists to support their stance or, at the very least, raise doubts regarding the many arguments against the possibility of some form of survival after bodily death. One renowned nineteenth century psychical researcher who did just that was Frederick W.H. Myers, a classics scholar from Cambridge University in the United Kingdom.498 In his two volume work, Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death, Myers utilised Helmholtz’s Conservation of Energy theory to explain ‘what’ could survive after bodily death and go on to exist in an afterlife. He based most of his argument on what Helmholtz’s theory didn’t explain rather than what it did:

… faith in the uniformity of material Nature formulates itself in two great dogmas, - for such they are; - the dogma of the Conservation of Matter, and the dogma of the Conservation of Energy. Of the Conservation of Matter, within earthly limits, we are fairly well assured; but of the Conservation of Energy the proof is far less complete, simply because Energy is a conception which does not belong to the material world alone.499

To some survivalists, the link between energy and a non-material world combined with physicists’ admissions that their knowledge of energy especially that of dark energy, is


498 Myers, Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death. Vol. 1; ii.

incomplete, supplies a plausible explanation for ghostly phenomena; thereby adding weight to survival theories concerning spiritual energy.

One aspect of survival theories discussed earlier in this section, centred on philosophical debates regarding the dualistic concept in relation to life after physical death – a concept that is constantly presented in support of the belief that such a scenario is possible. As Thalbourne notes (and this thesis mentioned earlier): “actual life after death would seem to presuppose a dualistic position on the nature of mind;”500 however, Griffin contends there is a possible flaw in the use of energy theories to support claims of paranormal phenomena. He suggests that “dualistic interactionism … apparently violates the principle of the conservation of energy.”501 Despite this, he also maintains that the problem “has been greatly exaggerated,” but concedes that “if forced to choose between” dualistic interactionism and the conservation of energy then “one should give up the absolute truth of the principle of conservation.”502

The arguments presented above show that nothing to do with ghosts is simple. No sooner was the energy theory presented as a plausible answer to ‘what’ could survive after bodily death than it was discarded. Regardless of his conclusions, Griffin also supplies arguments that bring energy back into the equation. So, once again Irwin’s theory concerning the ‘bi-directional or circular’ aspect of paranormal beliefs is reinforced.503 However, there are those who pull the argument back even further – back to the soul.

Up to this point, theories pertaining to ‘what’ could survive after bodily death have chronicled a progressive journey through various levels until the soul reaches its final destination, which many proponents describe as a realm of pure energy. While the term changes at each level of this progression, ‘what’ survives essentially remains intact for the entire journey. Furthermore, although they acknowledge the energy of a deceased person most psychics maintain that a ghost is the visible manifestation of the soul while it is at the first level before it moves onto the second and, finally, the third level. Nevertheless, there are some who suggest that this is not the case.

In *Meetings with Spirit* Sheila Kennedy, an Australian psychic, offers her interpretation as to ‘what’ could survive after bodily death as well as ‘what’ manifests as a ghost. Kennedy’s theory, while appearing to be unique, exhibits ideas similar to Novak’s Binary Soul Doctrine. According to Kennedy:

[Her] common or market garden version of a “ghost” can be explained like this: If a person dies suddenly, violently, or unexpectedly, or does not believe that there is anything after the “now”, there can be a jerk in the energy field as the soul leaves the body. As a stone thrown into a pond creates a ripple effect, so the physical or “earth” energy of this person may be shocked and trapped in the energy fields which surround the earth. It is this trapped energy which is often described as a “ghost”. This energy can remain trapped in the energy of the earth planes until recognised and released. Remember, the soul itself has returned home, all that is trapped on the earth plane is the human energy and memories of the person who is deceased.\(^{504}\)

Although Kennedy believes that it is the soul that survives after bodily death, she does not believe that it changes into a spirit, is within the spirit, joins a spirit community, or is absorbed into a realm of pure energy. Rather, it remains known as a soul – a soul that simply returns home.

\(^{504}\) Kennedy, *Meetings with Spirit*, 6-7.
Throughout this section various opinions, beliefs and theories pertaining to the paranormal phenomena of ghosts were discussed. Despite the scarcity of research into non-Indigenous Australian experiences of such phenomena it was possible to explore some Australian opinions and beliefs due to the number of non-fiction books produced by Australian psychics and mediums who profess they experience these encounters in their day-to-day life. As well as chronicling their own experiences, their books also supply details of the ghostly encounters of other Australians. This thesis’ use of these accounts to ascertain the beliefs/opinions of Australian psychics and mediums reinforces the contention that researchers need to look beyond the psychology of these experiences and explore the chronicles of those who have had ghostly encounters. To do so would not only enable a better understanding of their effect and role in the development of beliefs pertaining to death and an afterlife but also provide a means of exploring societal factors that help shape Australia’s multicultural society.

In Part Two, Storm’s contention that “Scientific paradigms … are born of human reason, but reason cannot take place in a vacuum – it is influenced by the factors of experience and the beliefs we hold”^505 applies not only to ‘physical’ experiences such as ‘seeing’ a ghost, but also to external sources that supply information pertaining to praranormal and/or supernatural phenomena. Although this thesis contends that Australian opinions and beliefs are predominantly influenced by the accounts of Australian psychics, mediums, and experients, some of which appear in various anthologies and magazines chronicling such occurrences, it also acknowledges that external influences play a part in the development of these beliefs and opinions. For example, in Part One it was shown how modern-day Spiritualism came to Australia

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^505 Storm, “A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi.” 288.
“mainly through the gold rush migration of the 1850s;”\textsuperscript{506} similarly, Australian opinions and beliefs regarding ghostly and paranormal phenomena continue to be influenced by overseas sources – especially through the media. This thesis contends that, despite overseas influences, researchers should explore whether or not a non-Indigenous Australian perspective regarding survival of bodily death and an afterlife exists, and, if so, what effect it has on that society.

The following section will continue the discussion of Australian beliefs concerning ‘what’ could survive bodily death. Once again, it will be shown that an understanding of Australian beliefs regarding death and an afterlife would be enhanced by studying the accounts of those who have had ghostly encounters.

\textsuperscript{506} Gabay, \textit{Messages from Beyond}, 7.
So, ‘what’ do Australians believe?

Reported encounters with ghosts, wraiths, and other apparitions have long been interpreted as evidence for survival. Under this view, an apparitional figure constitutes some type of ‘spirit form’.
Harvey J. Irwin507

Prior to the analysis of survival theories, the presumption was that most Australians believe that ghostly phenomena and ‘what’ could survive after bodily death were one and the same. However, after examining various accounts written by a handful of Australians, this now appears not to be the case. Furthermore, although there is anecdotal evidence that implies that many Australians do believe they are indeed equivalent, the theoretical information shows that some Australians believe that neither the soul nor spirit is the cause of ghostly phenomena. Instead, it appears they believe that ghosts are caused by the residual energy of deceased persons – an energy that, under certain conditions, occasionally becomes visible to the living. According to “British paranormal investigator,” Thurston Hopkins, this visibility reinforces the “widely held view that violent death can create a type of ‘film’ or ‘recording’, which may linger for decades or even centuries.”508 The ‘film’ or ‘recording’ is believed to be the result of a person’s energy being absorbed into the surrounding structures or landscape at the time of their death. From time to time, this energy projects an aural and/or visual image of the traumatic events prior to and during their dying moments.509

While it appears that since the mid 1900s, many Australians believe that the ultimate outcome after bodily death is an eternal joining of one’s life energy to the energy of others – finally residing in a realm of pure energy – there are variations in opinions as to what stage after bodily death this joining occurs. Such variations are

understandable, given that philosophers the world over have been debating this issue for over two and a half thousand years, and are yet to provide any definitive guidance on the myriad of questions posed by these debates. In a summation of discussions regarding ‘what’ survives after bodily death, one member of an Australian paranormal Internet forum concluded: “That’s the million dollar question isn’t it? I really don’t know and does anyone really know?”\textsuperscript{510}

Although the previous section presented some philosophical debates that explored the issue of ‘survival,’ as well as discussing some opinions, and theories, expounded by some Australians who claim to have psychic and/or mediumistic abilities, those of other Australians are yet to be explored. While some information can be sourced through a study of non-fiction literature that chronicles these accounts, perusal of the Australian media and Internet forums, which are purportedly of Australian origin, can also supply relevant data. Occasionally, the views expressed via these mediums exhibit a knowledge that is indicative of a deep understanding of the theories and research surrounding ghosts and hauntings, as well as paranormal phenomena in general. However, more often than not, the comments imply that an individual has merely guessed ‘what’ could survive after bodily death, as well as ‘what’ could manifest as a ghost. Of the two scenarios, the latter one of guessing seems to be the most common, as many people, when asked, readily admit they really do not know the answers to these questions, nor have they given them much thought.\textsuperscript{511}

19\textsuperscript{th} Century Australian Interpretations

Despite the aim of this thesis, which was to explore non-Indigenous Australian ghostly experiences from the mid nineteenth century till the present day, much of the discussion


\textsuperscript{511} From personal communiqués.
has so far centred on non-fiction literature and research from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The reason for this lies not in a lack of tales, as there are many from Australia’s early days of settlement, but rather from the manner in which the tales have been recorded. Ingram’s edited collection of nineteenth century tales in *Shudders and Shakes* for example, fails to supply any clues as to ‘what’ Australians of this period may have considered survived after bodily death. This could be due to her propensity to publish children’s books, which require less detail than those aimed at a more mature audience, or the criteria she used during the editing of the tales. Regardless, it appears that, apart from anthologies chronicling ghostly tales from Australia’s early days, there is currently limited evidence of research pertaining to nineteenth century non-Indigenous Australian ghostly experiences. Moreover, newspaper articles, fictional tales and purportedly factual accounts from this period of Australia’s history tend to avoid any suggestions as to ‘what’ could survive after bodily death; focusing instead on the ‘horror’ of the phenomena or the traditional idea of the decedent’s need to right a wrong. While it is difficult to determine ‘what’ nineteenth century Australians believed could survive after bodily death, there are clues as to ‘what’ they believed may have caused ghostly phenomena.

Since the founding of the Society for Psychical Research in Great Britain in 1882, there has been an increase in theories concerning ghostly phenomena – especially science-based theories. Although Ingram’s book failed to give any clues as to ‘what’ nineteenth century Australians believed survived after bodily death, it did give an example of scientific reasoning regarding the creation of ghostly manifestations. However, despite the development of theories linking ghostly phenomena and residual energy, which gained favour amongst psychical researchers in the nineteenth century, Ingram’s example provides a far more down-to-earth, albeit scientific explanation. The
The apparent logic contained within this explanation not only displays a scientific interpretation of how a natural event could be mistaken for an apparition/ghost, it also exhibits nineteenth century society’s tendency to favour commonsense over sensationalism. However, nineteenth century ‘commonsense’ and society’s need for sensationalism did occasionally clash – particularly when retelling tales of violent crimes. An example of such conflicting mores is displayed in reports recounting events surrounding the murder of Frederick Fisher in 1826 and the trial of his alleged killed, George Worrall, in 1827.

Those who were connected with the events concerning this murder either told their stories to journalists of the day or wrote their own version of how Worrall was finally brought to justice. The painstakingly thorough police work that went into gathering evidence against Worrall was ultimately dismissed by the general public in favour of a tale that gave full credit to farmer John Farley’s sighting of Fisher’s ghost. However, there is no contemporary proof that a ghost had anything to do with the

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512 Ingram, ed., Shudders and Shakes: Ghostly Tales from Australia. 103.
513 Ingram, ed., Shudders and Shakes: Ghostly Tales from Australia. 106.
discovery of Fisher’s body, or the subsequent arrest of Worrall, other than a comment
made by Farley in front of patrons at the local pub regarding his encounter with Fisher’s
ghost – a comment which was overheard by one Thomas Leathwick Robinson.
Robinson, who knew Frederick Fisher and was present when his body was found, wrote
his own version of the affair, giving it to the “Reverend Richard Taylor in 1839.”
Although acknowledging Farley’s supposed sighting of Fisher’s ghost, Robinson
doubted if it were true; preferring instead to find a logical explanation for what may
have led Farley, who had just parted from a friend after having an argument, to conclude
that he had seen a ghost:

> It was strange [Robinson] thought, that an injured spirit should only appear to a
half-tipsy man, and that at a time his temper was in a state of great excitement and
perhaps the leather-like figure might be some sun-burnt labouring man who sat
there enjoying the folly of two sincere friends calling each other ugly names.

Regardless of Robinson’s opinion, Farley maintained, even on his death-bed in 1841,
that he had seen Fisher’s ghost; confiding to his “friend, Mr. J.K. Chisholm of
Gladesville” that he did indeed speak the truth of those events in 1827, and that he “saw
that ghost as plainly as I see you now.”

**Contemporary Australian Interpretations**

Farley’s adamance mirrors examples presented in Part Two where it was shown how
difficult it is for an individual to alter a lifetime of beliefs/opinions concerning the
possibility of survival after bodily death and/or an afterlife. This was found to be
especially so if one has experienced a ghostly encounter. In an attempt to make sense of

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514 Williams, ed., Fisher's Ghost & Other Australian Tales of Ghosts and Murder, 14.
516 Williams, ed., Fisher's Ghost & Other Australian Tales of Ghosts and Murder, 15; quoting Cusack, Australian
Ghosts, 3.
their experience, many experiencers develop theories as to ‘what’ survives bodily death and, therefore, ‘what’ manifests as a ghost. However, it is not only experiencers who ponder the possibility of survival after bodily death. A popular belief/opinion amongst those who have given the survival question some consideration subscribes to the theory that it is a person’s subconscious that survives after bodily death. For example, a member of an Australian paranormal Internet forum suggested: “What remains after death is the person’s subconscious state, the part of all of us that has the inner knowing of the world.”  

While comments such as this display an understanding of the popular view, which is based on survival theories centring on humankind’s subconscious, it also indicates that a certain amount of thought went into the development of the answer. However, it was not surprising to see that other forum members espoused the more commonly held belief, which maintains:

“A ghost is the spirit of a person which, (a) is stuck here due to trauma or an attachment to a person or thing; (b) pops in to visit or protect a relative or friend; (c) makes one last hurrah to say goodbye to someone they love.”

Despite embodying all the generally accepted criteria associated with ghostly phenomena, this statement demonstrates that its author may only have a basic knowledge of the most fundamental theories concerning such phenomena. Rather than exhibiting a studied opinion, comments such as this one simply serve to reinforce traditional themes found in most ghost stories. Although opinions such as this are evinced in non-fiction literature as well as articles from mainstream Australian media,

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NOTE: Due to the nature of Internet sites, although the people quoted were using a web site primarily devoted to cataloguing Australian experiences and haunted sites, it is not known whether the comments presented were actually written by Australian citizens.
there is also evidence that many Australians have expanded their beliefs/opinions beyond such basic criteria; with their explanations often exhibiting a mix of philosophical and scientific theories combined with the commonly held belief noted in the above passage. While some may argue that, despite the few who hold to the common belief, members of this forum display a more than basic knowledge of ghostly phenomena and the debates they engender, this thesis suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

Fluidity of Belief

An interesting aspect of members’ comments on this Internet forum was the subtle changes of opinion that took place as each person posted their own belief regarding ‘what’ could survive after bodily death. The common belief noted above, was the initial comment posted by one forum member. As the discussion progressed, other members began to go beyond such basic concepts, instead espousing ideas that mirrored the beliefs of other group members whose comments exhibited a rudimentary knowledge of various philosophical debates concerning the subject of ‘survival.’ For example, after reading the moderator’s reply, which stated: “I like to think there is a human soul but whether that’s what a ghost is, is another thing,” the author of the above passage adjusted their initial comment to be more in line with those of the site’s moderator, as well as other forum members.\footnote{Viewed on an open forum available at www.UnexplainedAustralia.com. Accessed: 14 May 2008.} However, it is also interesting to note that the member’s second comment does not include reference to a soul or spirit:

I believe that the inner you is what survives after death. Like your personality, your feelings towards things, things like that. Because of the complexity of the human personality and all the time it takes to develop it, I don’t see how something that powerful could be snuffed from existence forever by death. Whether you are
reincarnated, go to another dimension … whatever, I don’t know, but YOU must go on.520

The omission of a soul or spirit from the forum member’s second comment raises numerous questions; such as, whether or not they believe that humans possess a soul or spirit, if not then ‘what’ manifests as a ghost, and therefore, ‘what’ do they believe survives after bodily death? There also appears to be some confusion regarding this member’s understanding of the mind/body problem, or the supposed duality of humankind. Furthermore, the inconclusiveness of their comment suggests that, apart from knowledge of the basic concepts concerning ghostly phenomena, this forum member does not have an understanding of the many philosophical or scientific theories dealing with such phenomena. Rather, the second comment appears to be an attempt by this forum member to prove they ‘belong’ with the group, especially as their opinion/belief now mirrors those of other forum members.

After reading comments posted on this forum for a period of four weeks, it became apparent that other members’ beliefs/opinions concerning ghostly phenomena were also not ‘fixed’ but instead were extremely fluid. While a full account of why this fluidity exists amongst members of paranormal groups is addressed in Northcote’s book *The Paranormal and the Politics of Truth*, for now it is relevant to this thesis to note that members of paranormal groups, in general, often adjust their individual beliefs/opinions to conform with those held by the group, thus enabling a better sense of belonging. However, once part of the group, members’ beliefs/opinions become increasingly inflexible – especially in the face of perceived attacks on the groups’ commonly held beliefs and/or opinions. It is, therefore, fairly safe to conclude that Northcote’s observations regarding the fluidity of paranormal beliefs and opinions applies to users of

this Internet forum as they exhibit similar patterns of belief to paranormal groups elsewhere in the world. Although the comments were viewed on a forum that ostensibly belonged to an Australian paranormal group, there is no way of knowing whether they were written by Australians and, therefore, although they are presented here as being indicative of Australian beliefs/opinions it should be understood that this may in fact not be the case. Furthermore, members’ fluidity of beliefs and opinions, while displaying a common hope, or desire, that some aspect of a person must survive after bodily death, also raises doubt as to the actual beliefs of each individual forum member.

Doubts such as these reinforce Seligman’s observation that researchers should be cautious when using literary sources as an aid in determining beliefs and attitudes, particularly in light of his conclusion that people “may not say what” they mean. Despite this concern, Seligman also maintains that literary accounts can supply “valid indicators” of personal beliefs and experiences. While the fluidity of members’ comments strengthens Seligman’s observation regarding people not saying what they mean, there are also ‘indicators’ of their actual beliefs. For example, the member’s comment above, in which they chose not to use either ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ in their definition of ‘what’ could survive bodily death could indicate they hold no religious beliefs. Although people may initially have been drawn to this group because they felt an affinity with the beliefs and opinions expressed by the group, the variations in beliefs and opinions that occurred over time possibly indicate that individuals felt the need to reinforce their position within the group outweighed the need to retain their individual beliefs/opinions.

While there is a tendency for individuals to mould differing ideas, or theories, to suit their own beliefs, each is based on a common core of ideas regarding ghostly

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521 Seligman, Learned Optimism: How to Change Your Mind and Your Life. 157.
phenomena as well as some form of life after bodily death. Commonalities surrounding these phenomena are further mirrored in Northcote’s conclusion concerning the fluidity of paranormal belief/opinions amongst members of paranormal groups, which is also exhibited within Australian Internet forum groups. However, Breen’s finding that international variations do occur appears to lie not in the beliefs themselves, but in the percentage of people from each country who hold the belief – as the Nielsen Poll found; 53 per cent of Australians believe in life after death as opposed to 80 per cent of North Americans.

Once again, it is important to remember Storm’s contention regarding human reasoning not taking “place in a vacuum;”522 for encompassed within this ‘reasoning’ are ideas, theories, beliefs and interpretations concerning ghostly and paranormal phenomena. Although this thesis maintains that the “ethnic element” mentioned in Breen’s research523 should be evinced within Australia’s multicultural society, it also acknowledges that this may not be the case. For example, the Nielsen Poll may only be reflective of Australia’s multicultural mix, which not only brings together people from most countries around the world, but also their beliefs – both religious and otherwise – especially those regarding life after bodily death. It was shown in Part Two that beliefs and interpretations surrounding ghostly and paranormal phenomena are influenced by a variety of external factors, from scientific discoveries to articles in the media. These influences can come from societies all over the world – not just community or ethnic groups within Australia. While some may argue that these factors undermine an objective of this thesis, which suggests the possibility of a uniquely non-Indigenous Australian perspective regarding experiences of ghostly and paranormal phenomena, I contend that it highlights the need for a thorough interdisciplinary study into Australian

522 Storm, "A Socioempirical Perspective on Skepticism About Psi.” 288.
523 Breen, "The Nature Incidence and Impact of Parapsychological Phenomena."
ghostly phenomena (including individual experiences as well as the tales recounting these phenomena), to determine whether there is a uniquely Australian point-of-view, which has been shaped by the multicultural nature of that society. Alternatively, an interdisciplinary study may find that Australian interpretations and experiences merely mirror those from elsewhere in the world. Regardless of the findings, a thorough study of non-Indigenous Australian ghostly and paranormal phenomena should enable a greater understanding of that society—especially in relation to the effect of multiculturalism on beliefs pertaining to life after bodily death and an afterlife.

Common Themes in Ghostly Phenomena

While the issues outlined above raise doubt regarding an individual’s actual beliefs or opinions, it also highlights a common problem surrounding most ghost stories that many authors claim are authentic. As with most belief systems, beliefs pertaining to ghostly and paranormal phenomena share many commonalities. For example, the hope or desire that ‘something’ must survive bodily death is not only exhibited on Internet sites devoted to those who believe in paranormal phenomena but also in other media dealing with such beliefs and phenomena; as is the general understanding of philosophical and scientific debates dealing with the issue of ‘survival.’

Although most people acknowledge that some form of dualism must exist for survival after bodily death to occur—often maintaining that it is a person’s soul or spirit that survives—many of those who have experienced ghostly phenomena appear to support the theory that such phenomena are the result of a decedent’s residual energy rather than a manifestation of their soul or spirit. Among the many individuals who support this theory is Rosaleen Faye Edwards who states in her book Ghosts? Spirit Visitation? ‘Earthbound Spirits’ and Healing Prayer, that it is the decedent’s “energetic
double” that manifests as a ghost – especially if one suffers a horrific or untimely death. According to Edwards, when a person dies their “earthly form is changed to …] a ‘new’ form – a weightless form;” this is because “[w]e are beings of light – energy. Our mind and body consciousness blend in with our spirit and we are ‘one’ as always, just in a different place.” Edwards’ belief exhibits a common theme espoused by others mentioned earlier in this thesis: Grzelka maintains that one’s soul ultimately joins a community of souls; Ligato believes the soul goes through a healing process before dwelling in the ‘mansions;’ and Kennedy states that the soul simply returns home.

Despite the commonalities displayed in most beliefs or opinions concerning ghosts and life after bodily death, there is a tendency for individuals to use only those theories that suit their own ideas of ‘what’ could survive as well as ‘what’ could manifest as a ghost. While Miriam Howard-Wright, for example, (author of Eyewitness) also believes that “we are beings of light” she does not make a direct connection between light and energy as Edwards does; instead her focus is on the illumination created by the light. To clarify what she means Howard-Wright cites a tale told to her by a leading authority in the “field of Psychical Science,” Sir Oliver Joseph Lodge, at a meeting in England sometime during the 1930s:

> When the Beacon Fires were lighted all over England during the reign of Elizabeth I to give notice of the approach of the Spanish Armada, they eventually went out leaving nothing but dust and ashes. But they had completed their work. They had stimulated the enthusiasm of the people and the Armada was defeated.

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526 Grzelka, Medium Down Under: Australia’s Ghost Whisperer. Passim; Ligato, Ghost Whisperer. 52; and Kennedy, Meetings with Spirit. 6-7, respectively.
527 Miriam Howard-Wright, Eyewitness: Australian Ghosts (Hay Street East, Western Australia: Artlook, 1980). 18.
The fires were lit to send a message across space. The fuel was not of any consequence nor was the residue left behind. Light and radiation are the important object for which the fire was lit. And that illumination is going on still. It has not been obliterated but is still coursing through space.

Just as we see the light of a distant star which has been travelling for millions of years before it reaches our eye so the observer with a sensitive instrument could detect the light of the Armada Beacons still.528

While not actually stating it, this definition lends support to those who believe that a ghost is a decedent’s residual energy. Furthermore, Howard-Wright appears to be suggesting that a ghost is the embodiment of a decedent’s light, or as some would call it – aura – that continues to shine long after all life has left their body. This assumption relies upon the common definition of an aura, which contends that it is:

A field of subtle, multicoloured, luminous radiations said to surround living bodies as a halo or cocoon; the term is occasionally used to refer to the normal electromagnetic field-forces surrounding the body.529

The link between ghosts, light and energy does not appear very often in Australian definitions. However, both in Australia and elsewhere in the world, the link between ghosts and energy is a common theme that is found in many individual theories about ‘what’ a ghost might be.

In the previous section it was shown how two Australians – a psychic (Grzelka) and a medium (Ligato) – explained the connection between a ghost and a decedent’s energy, as well as presenting their differing opinions regarding the soul or spirit. Nevertheless, despite the complexity of their interpretations, neither Grzelka nor Ligato mention, or even speculate, as to what type of energy may be involved in the creation of

528 Howard-Wright, Eyewitness: Australian Ghosts. 21. This passage not only displays the eternal aspect of the human soul/spirit, it also imparts images of the Christian belief that at death the body returns to the dust and ashes from which humanity was formed.

529 Thalbourne, A Glossary of Terms Used in Parapsychology. 6.
ghostly phenomena. On the other hand, Salter, who also states that he does not know “what kind of energy” could form a ghost, did give examples of what other people told him they thought the energy might be: “Some call it kinetic energy. Others refer to it as psychic energy, yet others would say electrical energy. Maybe it is a combination of all three.”

530 Salter, Chronicles of a Genuine Australian Ghost Remover. 141.
Concluding Remarks

The search for answers as to ‘what’ could survive after bodily death has formed part of philosophical debates since at least the sixth century B.C.E. In Part Three it was shown that these debates centred on some form of duality. However, as the discussion concerning the mind/body problem showed, for every theory posited there was another displaying flaws in its reasoning. Although it was not this thesis’ intention to enter into these philosophical debates, it was necessary to discuss some of the main philosophical theories pertaining to survival of bodily death as they are often reflected in experients’ beliefs regarding ‘what’ could survive after bodily death.

Similar to elsewhere in the world, the search for answers in Australia has resulted in an increase in interest, not only regarding ‘what’ could survive bodily death and ‘what’ manifests as a ghost, but in all things deemed ‘paranormal.’ As this interest gained momentum, the Australian media were quick to join in. Since the mid 1960s popular magazines, tabloids, and television shows have presented accounts of paranormal phenomena in general, but particularly experiences regarding ghosts, poltergeists or hauntings. The easing of taboos surrounding paranormal phenomena and occult practices has also culminated in the development of psychic festivals, which are now held on a regular basis in many towns and cities around Australia. Although mainstream religion once frowned on these events, some now regularly set-up stalls at each festival. In 2009, for example, the Sydney MindBodySpirit Festival had stalls representing Petersham Assembly of God, the Islamic community, and a Christian group called ‘Christocentric Light,’ which has links to a Pentecostal church in Byron Bay. While not forcefully pushing their individual doctrines, their beliefs regarding an afterlife were placed before those who chose to stop at their stalls.
According to social researcher, Hugh Mackay, the increased appeal of things that present, or delve into, the spiritual realm (such as psychic festivals) is not an uncommon occurrence. While researching the changing face of Australia in the 1990s, Mackay observed that Australia followed the rest of the world in searching for the meaning of life and an individual’s place within the greater scheme of things. He contends that:

This interest in spirituality and the occult traditionally happens at times of great world unrest and there are a few factors driving it. … One is the level of anxiety and uncertainty we feel, which causes people to look for explanations. Another is that we live in a time when traditional religious experiences are less attractive, so people are looking elsewhere to fill that vacuum.

The search in Part Three for beliefs that could fill this vacuum began with a perusal of where the belief in life after bodily death came from. It was suggested that this belief arose from a need to believe that ‘something,’ some essence of an individual, will continue to exist after bodily death; a need that is evinced in most societies around the world. However, while some researchers maintain that this ‘need to believe’ stems from a fear of death, Thalbourne argues that a fear of death does not necessarily equate to a belief in life after death. Regardless, the existence of this fear combined with humanity’s innate curiosity regarding the possibility that something within a person could survive after bodily death, has resulted in many theories that enable such a possibility to occur.

Similar to most societies around the world, it appears that many Australians hold to some form of dualistic concept, which states that a person consists of at least two

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532 For example: Rowe, What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives; Passim; and Schumaker, Wings of Illusion: The Origin, Nature and Future of Paranormal Belief. Passim.
components – an eternal soul/spirit/mind wrapped in a transient body. The progression of this concept to one that links the eternal element to a person’s residual energy at death was shown to have been incorporated into the beliefs of many individual Australians; including psychics and mediums.

Throughout this thesis, Irwin’s theory regarding the ‘bidirectional or circular’ nature of paranormal phenomena was continually strengthened. Furthermore, despite centuries of debates, humankind is no nearer to finding an answer. As Jesse Bering wrote in What We Believe But Cannot Prove, the ‘circular’ is often encountered by those who contemplate death and its meaning to one’s existence – contemplation that can effect an individual, so much so it sends their mind into a ‘spin.’

In 1936, shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Miguel de Unamuno, author of the classic existential text Tragic Sense of Life, died alone in his office of heart failure at the age of seventy-two.

Unamuno was no religious sentimentalist. As a rector and professor of Greek at the University of Salamanca, he was an advocate of rationalist ideals and even died a folk hero for having openly denounced Francisco Franco’s fascist regime. He was, however, ridden with a spiritual burden that troubled him nearly all his life. It was the problem of death. Specifically, the problem was his own death and what, subjectively, it would be ‘like’ for him afterward: ‘The effort to comprehend it causes the most tormenting dizziness,’ he wrote.533

Some Australians who have experienced ghostly phenomena avoid the ‘dizziness’ Unamuno felt when he contemplated life after bodily death, by not questioning ‘what’ could survive bodily death or ‘what’ manifests as a ghost – rather, they just accept the experience as ‘proof’ that something does survive.

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533 Bering, "Comments on an Afterlife." 32.
Conclusion:  

‘Shades of Australia’
The Research Continues

But I also feel like I’ve lost out in something. I have lost the ability to believe for the sake of believing, a trait which may be scorned [in] academic circles, but gives a thoroughly liberated and boundless quality to the soul.534

Previous research that explored the general history of ghostly phenomena found that studies centring on non-Indigenous Australian experiences were under-represented in scholarly texts and non-fiction literature pertaining to these phenomena.535 Therefore, the aim of this thesis was to present an analytical discussion that highlighted academic disciplines suitable for future studies into non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena, and their role in, and connection to afterlife beliefs in that society – particularly in relation to multiculturalism. It was argued that research encompassing disciplines other than those in the Sciences (especially the various branches of Psychology) would provide a better understanding of ghostly phenomena and experiences as well as paranormal phenomena in general. To facilitate future research, this thesis focused on identifying issues that various disciplines within the Humanities and Social Sciences could pursue thereby enabling a better understanding of non-Indigenous Australian ghostly experiences; and the beliefs surrounding these experiences and phenomena.

The discussion began in Part One with an overview of non-fiction literature that highlighted the fact that Australia’s ghost stories offered more than merely tales of ghosts and hauntings. However, despite many anthologies chronicling these tales, it was found that scholarly research into non-Indigenous Australian ghostly experiences and

534 Bridgstock, Skepticism, Science and the Paranormal.

phenomena remain limited. Although various studies have explored psychological issues pertaining to ghostly experiences and their link to afterlife beliefs, they do not focus on issues relating specifically to Australia or the role multiculturalism plays in the development of these beliefs; such as, subsequent changes in beliefs due to cultural shifts and their effect on individuals. This trend continued to be evinced in Part Two, which discussed preconditioning influences and psychological factors that aided belief in ghostly phenomena in particular and paranormal phenomena in general.

Despite research into these aspects of paranormal phenomena focusing predominantly on experiences and phenomena from elsewhere in the world, this thesis was able to ascertain that non-Indigenous Australian beliefs exhibit similar patterns regarding preconditioning influences. However, there is some doubt concerning the reliability of psychological studies pertaining to Australian experiences and phenomena due to researchers’ choice of participants, which primarily relied on students enrolled in university psychology courses. The exploration of non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena concluded in Part Three with a discussion concerning ‘what’ Australians believe could survive after bodily death.

Ghostly experiences and paranormal phenomena in general, offer more than just scary stories. They also exhibit more than psychological anomalies on the part of experients. Embedded within these tales is the history of a site, an event, and/or an individual that could be utilised by those in the discipline of History; thus aiding a better understanding of different periods of Australian society since European settlement. Furthermore, scholars from the disciplines of English and Literary Studies could engender a greater appreciation of these tales if they acknowledged their value and importance within Australia’s literary scene, rather than placing them under the umbrella of ‘science fiction.’ It was also observed that these tales, which form part of
Australian folklore, have been over-looked by folklorists despite some finding that: “A full survey of Australian ghost-lore remains to be carried out.” While it was encouraging to see that others noted the neglect accorded Australia’s ghost stories, it was surprising that few have attempted to redress the neglect – even those who commented on this fact.

Although ghost stories can provide historical insights, a study of Australia’s ghost stories could also supply sociologists with a resource that would enable them to explore changes in Australian society since the early days of European settlement; as this thesis has shown, these tales reflect societal mores and morals of any given period. Furthermore, despite this thesis’ contention regarding an over-abundance of research into psychological aspects of ghostly experiences and phenomena, and associated beliefs, it was found that there appears to be one area that has been over-looked – an area that is particularly relevant in Australia’s multicultural society. As such, this thesis contends that future ‘psychological’ studies into Australian ghostly and paranormal phenomena should explore cultural issues pertaining to beliefs connected to ghostly phenomena and the subsequent effect they have on Australia’s multicultural society at an individual, familial, and societal level.

While belief in ghostly and paranormal phenomena are not considered by some to be in themselves religious, their connection to beliefs concerning survival of bodily death and an afterlife reflects, or is reflected in, many religious doctrines, which contain some form of afterlife belief. As such, this thesis maintains that the discipline of Religious Studies should include research into the link between ghosts and afterlife beliefs – if only to determine whether or not various religious doctrines are evinced in

536 Davey and Seal, eds., The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore, 123. **NOTE:** Although the differences between Internet forum discussions of ghosts and the folklore surrounding ghost stories are important, they have not been presented in this thesis as they have been identified as requiring further study by researchers from disciplines conversant with these areas of academia.

537 Gelder, ed., The Oxford Book of Australian Ghost Stories, ix.
these beliefs or, conversely, if afterlife beliefs have in any way shaped (or aided) various religious doctrines.

It is quite easy to see how the Humanities and Social Science disciplines mentioned so far could benefit from research that explores non-Indigenous Australian ghostly phenomena. However, this thesis contends that one discipline that displays significant benefits to those researching Australian ghostly experiences (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) is that of Linguistics. The language used to describe these phenomena and experiences has been questioned by parapsychologists and sceptics alike, with some acknowledging that the creation of new terms to accommodate developing theories has only exacerbated mainstream researchers’ unfamiliarity with parapsychological terminology. It is quite easy to see how the Humanities and Social Science disciplines mentioned so far could benefit from research that explores non-Indigenous Australian ghostly phenomena. However, this thesis contends that one discipline that displays significant benefits to those researching Australian ghostly experiences (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) is that of Linguistics. The language used to describe these phenomena and experiences has been questioned by parapsychologists and sceptics alike, with some acknowledging that the creation of new terms to accommodate developing theories has only exacerbated mainstream researchers’ unfamiliarity with parapsychological terminology.538 Although Davies’, Rowe’s and Storm’s concerns regarding terminology and the development of a suitable language to describe these experiences is not shared by all who deal with ghostly experiences and phenomena, the fact that it is mentioned by many researching or chronicling such phenomena and experiences indicates that it is an area that requires further study.539

Many would argue that research into non-Indigenous Australian experiences of ghostly phenomena is an unnecessary avenue to pursue. However, this thesis, which is a continuation of a journey that began ten years ago, contends that research of these experiences and phenomena is required. This thesis grew from research that was presented in ‘Shades of Life’ – an exposé that explored the general history of ghostly phenomena down through the ages. The research continues in this thesis; ‘The Ghostly Experiences of non-Indigenous Australians.’ Yet, as it has been shown, the research is not complete – it will continue in ‘Shades of Australia,’ which will explore both

538 Jenkins, “Beyond Beliefs.” 2.
539 Davies, The Haunted: A Social History of Ghosts. 3; Rowe, What Should I Believe? Why Our Beliefs About the Nature of Death and the Purpose of Life Dominate Our Lives. 48; Storm, “Where Do We Go from Here?.” 278-283, and Ligato, Ghost Whisperer. x.
Indigenous and non-Indigenous ghostly experiences. Like life itself, which has many “shades; from the full bodied vigour of youth, through the slowing down of middle age, culminating in the pale existence of old age filled with a lifetime of memories.” The final chapter in this trilogy of research will be like “old age, the palest shade of life; a time of reflection about life itself – its meaning, one’s individual journey, and, sometimes, thoughts of the ‘life’ yet to come.”

540 Dyne, “Shades of Life: An Interdisciplinary Investigation into Ghostly Phenomena.” 64.
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**Internet Web Sites**


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EVP and ITC Australia – Evidence for Life Continuance
http://www.epv-itc-australia.org/37.html

Ghost research international – http://www.ghostresearchinternational.com/


Victor J. Zammit: A Lawyer Presents the Case for the Afterlife
http://www.victorzammit.com/


The Parapsychological Association – http://www.parapsych.org

The Koestler Parapsychology Unit – http://www.koestler-parapsychology.psy.ed.ac.uk/

(Direct link to list of research centres)
http://moebius.psy.ed.ac.uk/~info/ResearchCetnres.php3
Appendix A

An extract from Stephan William’s book:
Fisher’s Ghost & Other Australian Tales of Ghosts and Murder

It is unlikely anyone will pick up this volume who has not read one (or more) of my earlier books, and will therefore be aware that my guiding interests in writing history are sources and evidence. Some sources, of course, cannot be held credible, some details and stories defy verification, and thus find no place in my “professional” line of work.

Yet often what cannot be verified is the most tantalising aspect of any affair; and it is only to be expected that the private soul in me sometimes demands expression, too: so tonight I will set down two stories which particularly appealed to me and which may or may not be history.

One is that perennial Australian tale, “Fisher’s Ghost”, which I first heard in barefoot youth – if memory serves me, during travels in the back of Uncle Noel’s new Holden, on a rare visit to distant relatives or simply a trip of sight-seeing and picnics in the bush. Far-off days of the fifties when Molong was romance and dinner was still tea!

The story related how Fred Fisher of Campbelltown vanished from that place without trace, leaving his neighbour, George Worrall, to explain his sudden return to England, and also to sell off the said Fred Fisher’s various properties and possessions. Months passed without undue remark. On a night, however, a farmer of that district who had been regaling himself in an hostelry, but not to a point of excess, saw the ghost of Fred Fisher sitting on the rail of the bridge which perforce the farmer crossed on his route home. Luminous, bloodstained, silent, the spectre rose slowly in the air from the railing; turning, it pointed to the creek which ran beneath and before them, then slowly faded.

The apparition was too much for the farmer to keep to himself, and too much for the magistrate to keep to himself, either, when he became acquainted with it. The news, indeed, percolated throughout a large part of the population. It was the unanimous opinion of all concerned that the ghost wished to communicate some fact of importance, and its behaviour suggested that a clue to that fact might be found in the creek’s course.

The exploration was conducted by an Aboriginal tracker, who promptly unearthed Fisher’s remains. A charge of murder was brought home to Worrall, who was hanged in Sydney.

Some versions of the legend say that, having achieved its end, the ghost appeared no more; others, that the ghost returns each June 16th or 17th, the anniversary of the forceful separation of Fisher’s flesh from spirit.

When I lived at Campbelltown, ten years ago, I crossed Fisher’s Ghost Creek daily, and often sauntered and lingered past or along it of an evening – particularly the nights of June 16th and 17th, though I have to report that a fervent imagination, even
aided by strong vinous and spirituous liquors, could not conjure up this spectre at the site which bears it name.

It was, indeed, nigh impossible to see then, in a fearfully utilitarian sweep of concrete and bitumen, the scene of events which have engaged the interest of generations. Elegant buildings still stand (and are duly admired) along Campbelltown’s main street, Queen Street, dating from the 1840s to the 1880s – grand old residences, the post office, bank, town hall and fire station form a tight cluster; then the Airds Building, a simple single-storey structure with all the hall marks of an old pub. This latter structure was claimed to date from 1826, and stands at the old crossing place on Fisher’s Ghost Creek. Over the road is Kendall’s mill, of the poet Henry’s family. Yet the modern road speeds heedlessly through and beyond and past, to other places and foreign parts, with no care or time at all for the creek or its ghost.

Still, late at night, when the traffic temporarily ceases, the ceaseless silhouettes of street lights could lend a magical orange brightness to the scruffy scrubland which marked the end of the Department of Main Roads’ engineering responsibilities, and the generally dry gully which bears the name of Fisher’s ghost.541

Appendix B

A copy of ‘Moreton Bay’ from page 15 of Jack Sim’s book: Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City

One Sunday morning as I was walking
By Brisbane waters I chanced to stray,
I heard a convict his fate bewailing
As on the sunny river bank I lay.
I am a native from Erin’s isle,
But banished now from my native shore.
They stole me from my aged parents
And from the maiden I do adore.

I’ve been a prisoner at Port Macquarie
At Norfolk Island and Emu Plains,
At Castle Hill and at Cursed Toongabbie,
At all these settlements I’ve worked in chains.
But of all places of condemnation
And penal stations in New South Wales –
To Moreton Bay I have found no equal
Excessive tyranny each day prevails.

For three long years I was beastly treated
And heavy irons on my legs I wore.
My back from flogging was lacerated
And oft times painted with my crimson gore
And many a man from downright starvation
Lies mouldering now underneath the clay
And Captain Logan he had us mangled
All at the triangles of Moreton Bay.

Like the Egyptians and ancient Hebrews
We suffered under Logan’s yoke,
‘Till a native black lying there in ambush
Did deal this tyrant a mortal stroke.
So fellow prisoners be exhilarated
That all such monsters such a death may find
And when from bondage we are liberated
Our former sufferings will fade from mind. 542

542 Sim, Haunted Brisbane: Ghosts of the River City, 15.
Appendix C

Predicting the Ostensible Paranormal Experiences Canvassed in the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings – Form C

By Michael A. Thalbourne

ABSTRACT

Data previously collected by Thalbourne (1998) were re-analysed in order to see whether the five “paranormal” items of the Inventory of Childhood Memories and Imaginings (Form C) could be predicted by any of 16 variables – four from the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire – Revised (administered to a quarter of the sample), and 12 variables that included transliminality, aspects of religiosity, and potential psychopathology (these 12 were administered to the entire sample). The paranormal ICMIC items were (1) experience of a ghost, (2) experience of precognition, (3) experience of a veridical hunch, (4) out-of-the-body experience, and (5) belief in (and possibly experience of) reincarnation. A correlation matrix displaying the relationships between all five items (plus the Rasch Australian Sheep-Goat Scale543) showed all the correlations to be positive and significant. Accordingly, factor analysis of the matrix revealed that just a single factor underlay all six variables. An appropriate name for this factor is “Paranormal Experience”. Following this, multiple regression analysis was employed to see whether the four Eysenck variables could predict status on the experience items. In general they were not able, but there was a slight suggestion that some experiencers are more “Psychotic” (i.e., more unconventional). The 12 remaining variables were then analysed for their predictive power: there was a somewhat marked tendency for two predictors to be singled out, namely, Vivid Spiritual or Religious Experience, and Unusual Experiences from the O-LIFE schizotypy questionnaire.544

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**Glossary**

Note: All definitions have been taken from Michael A. Thalbourne’s book; *A Glossary of Terms used in Parapsychology*. Page numbers are enclosed in brackets after each quote.

**Anomalous**
Having the quality of an *anomaly*. (3)

**Anomaly**
Neutral term applied to a phenomenon which implies that the phenomenon is unexpected according to conventional scientific knowledge, but which does not commit the user to any particular type of explanation; sometimes preferred to “paranormal.” (4)

**Apparition**
An experience – usually visual but sometimes in other sense-modalities – in which there appears to be present a person or animal (deceased or living) and even inanimate objects such as carriages and other things, who/which is, in fact, out of the sensory range of the experient… (4)

**Clairsentience**
*Paranormal* information expressed as a sensation or feeling; generally considered to be a form of clairvoyance. (18)

**Clairsentient**
As a noun, a person gifted with *clairsentience* … (18)

**Clairvoyance**
*Paranormal* acquisition of information concerning an object or contemporary physical event; in contrast to telepathy, the information is assumed to derive directly from an external physical source (such as a concealed photograph), and not from the mind of another person … (18)

**Discarnate Entity**
A disembodied being, as opposed to an incarnate one; the surviving personality of a deceased individual or non-human entity; a *spirit*. (31)

**Dissociation**
A process in which a body of awareness becomes separated or blocked from the main center *[sic.]* of consciousness; examples are trance speaking, automatic writing, amnesia, multiple personality, and so; thought by some to be a *psi-conducive* state. (32)

**Experimenter Effect**
An experimental outcome which results not from manipulation of the *variable of interest per se*, but rather from some aspect of the particular experimenter’s behavior, such as unconscious communication to the *subjects*, or possibly even *psi-mediated* effect working in accord with the experimenter’s desire to confirm some hypothesis. (39)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ghost</td>
<td>As popularly used, this term denotes only the apparition of a deceased person, and is not sufficiently precise for use in psychical research. (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>A predominately Spiritualistic term applied to a person who regularly, and to a greater or lesser extent at will, is involved in the production of psi in the form of mental and/or psychical phenomena. (69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paranormal</td>
<td>A phenomena is paranormal if it refers to hypothesized processes that in principle are physically impossible and outside the realm of human or animal capabilities as presently conceived by conventional scientists ...; often used as a synonym for “psychic,” “parapsychological,” “attributable to psi,” or even “miraculous” (though shorn of religious overtones). (83-84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phantasm</td>
<td>Any hallucinatory sensory impression, whatever sense may happen to be affected. (86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psi (Ψ)</td>
<td>“A general blanket term, ..., used either as a noun or adjective to identify paranormal processes and paranormal causation. ... also applies to survival of death. ... From the Greek, psi, twenty-third letter of the Greek alphabet; from the Greek psyche, mind, soul.” (92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychic(al)</td>
<td>As a noun, “psychic” refers to an individual who possesses psi ability of some kind and to a relatively high degree; as an adjective, it is nowadays applied to paranormal events, abilities, research, and so on, and thus means “concerning or involving psi,” or “parapsychological.” [From the Greek psychikos, “of the soul, mental,” derived from psyche, “soul, mind”]. (96)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep-Goat Effect</td>
<td>Term first used by Gertrude Schmeidler to describe the relationship between acceptance of the possibility of extrasensory perception occurring under the given experimental conditions, and the level of scoring actually achieved on that ESP test: subjects who do not reject the possibility (“sheep”) tend to score above chance, those rejecting the possibility (“goats”) at or below chance; the terms “sheep” and “goat” are nowadays often used in a more extended sense, and “sheep-goat effect” [SGE] may thus refer to any significant scoring difference between these two groups as defined by the experimenter. (114)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirit</td>
<td>A discarnate entity. (117)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivalist</td>
<td>As an adjective, pertaining to or involving the notion of survival; as a noun, a person who subscribes to the survival hypothesis. (122)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transliminality Term introduced by Michael A. Thalbourne [...] meaning literally “the tendency to cross the threshold into awareness.” The most recent definition of transliminality is “hypothesized tendency for psychological material to cross thresholds into or out of consciousness.” Highly transliminal persons tend to believe in paranormal phenomena, report more magical ideation, more creative personality, more mystical experience, more manic-like experience, more absorption, more fantasy-proneness, more hyperaesthesia, and tend to have a positive attitude toward dream-interpretation. [From the Latin trans, “across, beyond,” + limen (limitis), “threshold”] (128)

In memory of Dr. Michael A. Thalbourne, (24 March 1955 – 4 May 2010) whose words of encouragement inspired me to see this thesis through to fruition.