

# Ghosts and Ghouls

'From ghosties and ghoulies and long-leggit beasties and things that go bump in the night, may the good lord protect us.'  
(An old Scottish prayer)

'Ghosties and ghoulies' and their equally strange allies are more than a medieval nightmare: for imaginary as they are in many ways, they still exist both in imagination and outside of it, and they are aspects of human experience that we can no longer afford to ignore. If we ignore them, we cannot control the effects they have on us; and whether those effects are objective or subjective, they are still real to anyone who experiences them.

I ought to mention that I've never seen anything that I could recognise as a ghost in the traditional sense; but over the past few years I have become acquainted with a number of magicians and exorcists, and have learnt to respect their knowledge and experience of this field. One aspect of their work that has come over most clearly is the close link between certain types of hauntings and the special characteristics of certain types of place – and in this they agree closely with our 'lunatic fringe of archaeology'. Independently, they too saw sacred sites (and some others) as centres for some kind of 'occult forces'; they too saw that energies of some kind travelled down the leys; and they too saw – much though it went against the common-sense views of Victorian science and theology – that the earth had and has a life and mind of its own.

The link between sacred sites and hauntings is important to us because, as far as I can tell from my own experience and from my discussions with magician friends, many of the hauntings are manifestations or side-effects of the concentration and movement of energies at those places. By studying the various categories of hauntings and their relationship with places, we can use them to tell us what the energies involved in our earth-acupuncture might be.

But before doing so there are two important obstacles to be moved out of the way. The first of these is the still-asked question of 'Do ghosts *really* exist?' – a question usually accompanied by a demand for proof one way or the other. The answer to this depends on what the questioner means by existence, and what he or she will accept as proof. So, to deal with the 'existence' part first, we can see from the categories of hauntings in the *Exorcism Report* that very few of these would produce directly measurable effects on a physical level: this would apply almost solely to the poltergeist group. Of the rest, it is true that they have little or no *physical* existence, but that does not mean that they do not exist at all, for it is clear that they have enough existence and reality to create the experience people recognise as 'haunting'. To take the *Exorcism Report's* categories, place-memories, for example, can be said to exist on an emotional level, operating on human emotions, and existing either as stored emotions or something stored by emotions. The other categories operate on or through other levels of existence, including those of the imagination, which can't so easily be described with a simple label. Poltergeists, as an

example, seem to operate through a whole range of levels at once, from the most abstruse levels recognised only by occultists, right down to recordable and measurable physical effects.

As for proof, there is only one kind of unambiguous proof of the existence of ghosts or ghouls, and that is direct first-hand experience. Most of the people who demand proof are unable to get any true proof of this kind because, as we shall see, to recognise a haunting for what it is requires an openness and flexibility of mind which few of these people can achieve. It is likely, though, that you will have experienced and recognised at least one kind of haunting in everyday life – that of a house's 'atmosphere' – but more about that shortly.

The other kind of proof is documentary evidence: and of that there is no shortage at all. The various national and international Societies for Psychical Research hold in their archives an enormous number of case-histories of hauntings of one kind or another; and while it's true that many of the events in these case-histories do have 'rational' explanations, a fair number of those supposed explanations are themselves highly suspect. Too often the explanation relies on assumptions of trickery or imbecility on the part of the 'haunted', and some of the examples I've seen were no more than garbled pseudo-science, attempting to conceal that something outside of the ordinariness of science's world-view had occurred.[1] All too often there is a world of difference between what the 'haunted' saw and what some self-styled 'psychic investigator' assumed they saw; so it is essential to be open-minded – literally – if hauntings are to make any sense at all.

It's true that the churches also have detailed records of all kinds of hauntings going back to the time of Christ and beyond; but the limits that Christian dogma imposes on interpretations of hauntings form the second of the two major obstacles to a more complete understanding of those hauntings and the energies they represent. It could be argued – and I have seen it argued – that the practical application of Christian dogma has been the direct or indirect cause of many types and cases of hauntings.

I don't want to get bogged down in a general discussion of the merits or demerits of Christian theology, but there are two aspects of it that do concern us here. One is the inability or unwillingness of the Church to recognise anything of value in human sexuality or fertility rituals, assigning most of this side of nature and human nature to the garbage bin labelled 'human sin'; the other is the labelling of almost the entire pagan pantheon as 'devils'.

Both of these labellings may have been politically expedient in the past, when the Church was struggling to establish itself and its identity; but from the research that I and several others have done it seems clear that both were major mistakes.[1a] There seems to be little doubt, from the results of that research, that both are major root-causes beneath the malaise of our present city-based cultures. The Church is right to warn us that certain aspects of sexuality and of paganism, if allowed to get out of control, can be unbelievably and horrifyingly destructive; but it is wrong to label them as 'evil' in themselves, for both

forces undoubtedly have constructive aspects. Indeed, that labelling could itself be said to be 'evil', to use the Christian term, for it has frustrated the constructive aspects of those forces, redoubling their destructive effects.

I do respect the Church and its work, and I am certain that its interpretation of hauntings is important to us; but I think we ought to be wary, for a while at least, of believing that the Christian interpretation is 'the Truth'.

Both of these obstacles – 'scientism' in the first case, religion in the other – are created by the limitations of dogma, which we could describe as 'premature definition of reality'. Rigid beliefs produce a rigid definition of reality. But in practice and in experience reality is fluid, because of the paradox 'Things have not only to be seen to be believed, but also to be believed to be seen'. Despite the concept of the 'Laws of Nature', we do have some choice and control over the effective form of the reality we experience. And that is the point of this study, for our aim, in looking for a new model of nature, is to create a practical and versatile reality that can bring nature back into our lives in the cities. Realities can have value as well as truth.

To construct a reality for a particular purpose, we can select or adapt useful beliefs or structures from other definitions of reality: this is what a technologist does, for example, for he uses scientific ideas and adapts them to his 'applied science', rather than following them as 'the Truth', as a scientist would.[1b] We can *use* beliefs and belief-systems, rather than having to accept or reject them in their entirety for their truth or untruth with respect to some arbitrary system of belief. The Christian interpretation of hauntings is suspect in many respects, but the categorisation in the *Exorcism Report* is useful: so let us use it as a framework with which to study hauntings.

As I implied earlier, the Christian categories of 'human sin' and 'demonic interference' will need careful dissection; the others are slightly easier to discuss, although the 'poltergeist' group has a set of sub-groups within it. If we relate the six categories in the *Exorcism Report* not just to places in general but specifically to sacred sites and the apparent natural energy-matrix, research work suggests that we can ignore most of one category (ghosts proper, the 'spirits of the departed') and a sub-group of the poltergeist category (those due to 'an uncontrolled human subconscious in the house'). Although these are related to places, they are tied more to people at those places than the places themselves. There is admittedly some evidence that certain types of sites tend to hold 'spirits of the departed', or to increase 'uncontrolled human subconscious' poltergeist activity, but I don't think it's particularly important to our theme; and above all I don't want to get trapped into a discussion of the existence or nonexistence of the human soul or spirit. I'll leave that kind of discussion to the Churchmen: I assume they know what they're talking about in that respect.

This leaves us with part of the poltergeist category, and four others: 'magicians', 'human sin', 'place-memories' and 'demonic interference'. If we place magically induced poltergeist into the 'magician' category, and include poltergeists due to 'non-human mischievous sprites' as a sub-group of the 'demonic interference' category (for reasons

that should become clear later), we are down to four categories of hauntings related to the 'earth -acupuncture' matrix.

Because we are dealing with the interaction of people and place, we can re-form these four categories into three others with a different emphasis, this time on the type of activity behind the haunting: the three new categories are 'unconscious human interaction with the place', 'conscious or deliberate human interaction with the place' and 'non-human interaction with the place'. Basically, these are the *Report's* categories of 'place-memories', 'magical interference' and 'demonic interference' respectively, with various sub-groups of the old 'human sin' category included in the first and second, and possibly the third, new categories.

But the *Report* was only concerned with negative or destructive interaction with places, and all these three categories have constructive aspects as well. If we call them 'place-memory ghosts and ghouls', 'magicians' and 'angels and demons', these three categories form between them a framework through which we can study not only hauntings, but also the energies behind them, the energies of nature on which our 'earth-acupuncture' operates.

The first category of hauntings we'll look at is the place-memory type. According to the *Exorcism Report*, these account for some nine-tenths of all reported hauntings, but I imagine they account for an even larger proportion of the total number of hauntings people experience, for the simple reason that many of them are too minor or ordinary-seeming to be recognised for what they are. There are an enormous number of different kinds of place-memory, from stored emotion, to sounds, smells, sights and even complete filmic sequences; but the most common type, which you're almost certain to have experienced at some time or another, is the 'feel' or 'atmosphere' of some house or place. Sometimes aptly but inaccurately described as the place's 'vibes', you can often sense a definite impression of some underlying emotion at a place: the house may seem happy or sad, lonely or angry or sinister, or perhaps friendly, joyful. We'll look at the theoretical model that's behind this in a moment, but it will feel exactly as though the house has been somehow 'painted' with that emotion.

And that is in fact a good analogy to describe it. Imagine each emotion you can think of as having a matching colour: there's a world of difference between a bright canary-yellow and a sickly lime-yellow-green, between a sky-blue and the gloomy colour that goes with the emotion we call 'blue'. Imagine, then, that each time you walk into a house, you throw a bucket of the colour of paint that matches your current feeling onto the wall in the hallway, and wherever you go in that building. Although there will be a general mixture of this colour-cum-emotion on the walls of the house, in time a predominant paint of emotion, a general tone or mood, will begin to emerge as that which you normally have in that house, or in each room of that house. It is this predominant emotional 'colour' that you and your visitors may sense as the atmosphere of the house.

Because a predominant emotion tends to be painted over all that house, the emotional colour will encourage you to set up the corresponding emotion whenever you are there –

and thus reinforce the predominance of that emotion in the house's atmosphere. If you tend to be gloomy in a place, you paint the place with that emotion, and that tends to reinforce your gloominess each time you go there. But by recognising your tendency to be gloomy, you can deliberately paint the wall with some bright and cheerful emotion, which really can help to improve things. Hence the real value of 'positive thinking'; and hence also that comment in the *Exorcism Report* – that 'the blessing of a new home is a not irrelevant activity' – because in this sense its effect is like stripping off all the old paint from the walls and re-painting them with white primer.

There is a physical component in this, of course, for lighting and physical (as opposed to emotional) paint do undoubtedly affect the feel of a place. So too does 'association', in that as part of mental habit you will tend to repeat emotions, thoughts and even actions at the same place because of a kind of visually- and spatially-triggered conditioned reflex. But this can't explain the whole of place-related emotions: association, for instance, is most unlikely to play a significant role where the same emotion is repeated in people who've never been to the place before. It does seem that emotions can be stored directly in the fabric of a place, or rather spread over the surfaces exactly like layer upon layer of paint.

This routine layering applies to routine emotion, habitual emotion: but the occasional extreme and violent emotion can force its way right through many of these layers, sometimes breaking through as much as a few centuries'-worth of routine emotion. Given the human propensity for glumph, it seems quite rare to find a high-powered streak of joy: most of the stored extreme emotions are negative and destructive, which is why Lethbridge - whose work we'll come to shortly – labelled them 'ghouls'. To use the paint analogy, they are the emotional equivalent of a bucketful of acid or paint-stripper thrown onto the wall: almost regardless of what you lay over it, it will burn its way through. The only way you can deal with something like that is to strip off all the old paint from the walls, wash off the acid with care, and only then start again with the basic white primer: and in emotional terms, that's a close analogy to the effect of a formal exorcism and blessing of a place.

All this can make sense only if we can call emotion a force, and demonstrate or just accept that either it or its effects can be stored in the fabric of a place. For the former there is of course no physical evidence, though there is plenty of evidence for its physical effects when working through people; but for the latter, the storage of coded energy in a place, there is a physical counterpart, involving quartz or quartz-like crystals in building-stones. This was demonstrated on the popular-science television programme *The Burke Special* some time in 1973: the programme was about retrieving sounds from stones in Corfe Castle in Dorset. The theory was that sounds, as air-pressure waves, could alter the structure of quartzes and 'proto-ceramic materials' in the rocks, and thus store sounds as patterns of electrostatic charge; so by exciting the stones electronically it was thought to be possible to release this stored energy as audible but near-random sound. By comparing the wave-forms from the entire wall as they arrived at particular points (presumably a form of interferometry), the researchers claimed that it was possible to make out fragments of speech and other recognisable sound, possibly from five hundred or more

years ago. I haven't heard any more about this process, but I don't think it was a hoax – that programme rarely goes in for hoaxes.

The point about this process was that depended on the equipment being placed at a point where the wave-forms for a given sound coincided: and here we have another parallel with Lethbridge's work on 'ghouls' and place-memory 'ghosts'. To sense the basic atmosphere of a house, you need only be in the house; but for any more complex place-memory in houses and structures, and for any kind of place-memory in open country, things get a little more complicated. The more complex the place-memory, it seems, the more important it becomes that you repeat or set up more and more complex conditions of position, time and state of mind, if you are going to be able to perceive the place-memory and recognise it as such. Tom Lethbridge studied these conditions in detail during the 1960s, and his work on place-memories now forms the central part of almost all modern research on them.[2]

Lethbridge's basic theory was that every person has around them an aura or 'field' whose strength varies with emotional strength or arousal. This 'personal field' or 'psyche-field', as Lethbridge termed it, could be said to be a product of that person's emotional being. Lethbridge described this field as being 'electromagnetic', 'electrical' and 'static' (presumably 'electrostatic'); but as he himself realised, this is not quite correct, in the strict physical sense of the words. This psyche-field does resemble an electromagnetic or electrostatic field, but as with the energies involved in the complete weather-control system we met earlier, the psyche-field doesn't always comply with the strict physical rules of electromagnetism and electrostatics. But no matter: Lethbridge's concept of a personal field makes sense in practice.

Lethbridge suggested that most if not all hauntings by ghouls, ghosts or the traditional 'nature spirits' were the result of an interaction between this personal field and a 'field of force' of the earth itself. The *Exorcism Report*, as we saw, agreed that this was true of most, but *not* all, hauntings. As far as I can discover, Lethbridge never recognised the very low-level type of place-memory – the atmosphere of a house – as being a haunting at all: but in the terms of his theory we can see these as storage of emotional images in the ordinary background level of the earth's field in ordinary places, a background 'noise' rather like the background radiation level (mostly from cosmic radiation) that can be picked up almost anywhere with a Geiger counter.

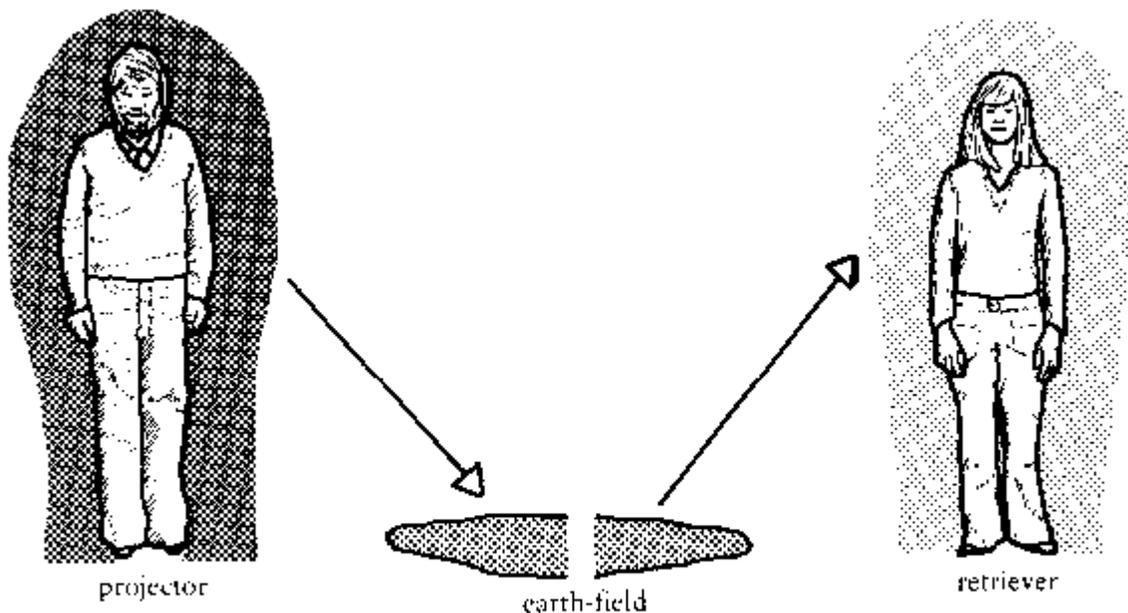
As with geophysical radiation surveys, certain areas have a much higher level of activity in a ghoulish sense, and thus stand out from the background noise: and it was these prominent places, concentrations of the earth's field, that interested Lethbridge. That these places of concentrations of the earth's field do in fact coincide with small areas of apparently higher background radiation levels than the norm is, I think, a significant coincidence.[3][3a] As we have seen throughout this study, there is a physical and geophysical component involved somewhere in 'paranormal' activity – but it's almost impossible to pin down its precise role in that activity.

The important part of Lethbridge's studies, from the point of view of our new model of nature, is that concentrations of the earth's field coincide with prominent natural features such as waterfalls, springs and streams, certain types of trees, and parts of woodland, deserts, moorland, mountains, sea-shores. Lethbridge noted that these "are just the places which were peopled with nymphs and spirits by the peoples of the ancient world and by simple modern ones". He therefore classified different types of field according to the type of nymph or sprite traditionally believed to inhabit that place: 'naiad' for waterfalls, springs and streams, 'dryad' for trees and woods in general, 'oread' in mountains and deserts, and 'nereid' in or by the sea.

Two of these groups, the oreads and nereids, we haven't met before; but we have come across equivalents of both dryads and naiads before, in Underwood's work, in Watkins' ley-hunting and in John Richards' comment on the relationship between 'ancient sites' and hauntings. Lethbridge seems to have thought that mental or emotional images stored in these places by passers-by accounted for the traditional belief in these nature spirits. While I believe that he was mistaken in this, for reasons I'll come on to later, the observations and information he left us can, like the work of Underwood, Watkins and Reich before him (whose interpretations – like mine, I suppose – were also limited by the assumptions of their times), be correlated with other fields of study, to be seen, no longer isolated, as a facet of something more coherent and complete. So we'll come back to this idea of nature-spirits later: for now we'll use the terms 'naiad' and 'dryad' and the like solely as labels to describe different types of earth-field.

With one exception, it seems that all the types of earth-fields are related to underground water, either in underground flows or in ground saturated with water. The exception, the oread-fields, may not in fact exist: Lethbridge included them in the list because oreads were a class of the old Greek nature-spirits, but to my knowledge he does not describe an oread-field – a desert-field – in relation to any of the case-studies of hauntings he discusses in his books.

It is not just underground water – and thus, we could infer, nodes of Underwood's patterns – that affect the retrievability of place-memory ghouls and ghosts, but also water in the atmosphere, for according to Lethbridge a damp, muggy, slightly misty day seems to be best for hauntings. This coincides, of course, with the kind of weather so preferred by writers of horror-story hauntings; but it also seems to be the conditions of the atmosphere under which, according to Reich's theories, the body's level of orgone is most easily depleted, leaving emotional strength, stamina and resistance at its lowest. This in turn does tally with Lethbridge's theories, for he suggested that the mechanism behind place-memory hauntings was one of leakage between people's psyche-fields and the earth-field of the place. If we suggest that at least part of that leakage of energy involves Reich's orgone, the 'clustering' of phenomena like hauntings, UFO reports, fire-balls and other crazy weather – as we saw in Devereux and York's Leicestershire survey – begins to make sense.



29 Lethbridge's model of ghoulish images: the coded energy that forms the ghoulish leaks from a strong energy field to a weaker one.

The mechanism that Lethbridge suggested was behind place-memory hauntings went roughly as follows. In all cases a place-memory haunting involves at least two people at different times: the person who stored the place-memory in the place in the first instance (the 'projector') and the person or people who perceived it as a ghost or ghoulish or whatever (the 'retriever'). The storage of the place-memory was the result of an unconscious leakage of energy from the psyche-field of an emotionally-aroused person – with a strong personal field, in other words – into the relatively weak field of the place. Its retrieval was the result of the same leakage in reverse, from the relatively strong field of the place into the field of someone who wasn't thinking of or feeling anything in particular, and thus had a weak personal field at the time. That's the basic theory: from there on it becomes more complicated, as you might expect.

The first complication is the distinction between ghoulish and ghosts. Ghoulish are stored emotions, as we saw earlier: you could say that they are records of what someone *felt* – either strongly, or repeatedly, or both – at that place. Sometimes they seem to be sounds, but the sounds are always verbalisations of feelings such as the suicidal comment "Wouldn't you like to jump over the cliff?" that Lethbridge found attached to a naiad- or naiad-field at Ladram Bay in Devon.[4] Ghosts are different in that they are records – emotionally-loaded records – of what someone *perceived* from that place: they are records of what someone felt they saw, felt they heard, touched, smelt, tasted.

So ghoulish are amorphous emotions or feelings located within the area defined by the naiad-field or whatever, while ghosts are much more precisely defined, a definite image, a definite sound, often perceived as being in a particular direction from the naiad-field

and not seeming to be on or part of the field at all. Even so, ghouls and ghosts aren't so much separate classes of place-memory as opposite ends of a spectrum of stored images, ranging from the storage of feelings to the storage of perceptions, thoughts and even symbolic images, all of them carrying strong emotional overtones along with them.

The symbolic imagery of some of these more complex place-memories is interesting, as it seems to account for some of the more bizarre of the classic types of ghost, particularly the headless type. There is always the possibility that one of these may be a 'ghost proper', a 'departed spirit', to use the *Exorcism Report's* term; but in most cases it is more likely to be a place-memory. If it really is an image of someone who was beheaded, it could be a symbolic image of that person as seen by someone else – a servant, perhaps – who combined an image of the person with the idea that they were about to lose their head. Another place-memory interpretation of the headless horseman-type ghost in the forest, for example, is that the projector *thought* he saw a horseman without a head; and though perhaps a few seconds later he realised this was not so, his fright of that moment would be sufficient to project this image into a nearby and handy dryad-field. It's important to realise, by the way, that place-memory ghosts are not images of the projectors themselves, but of something or someone that the projectors saw or, as with that headless horseman, thought they saw.

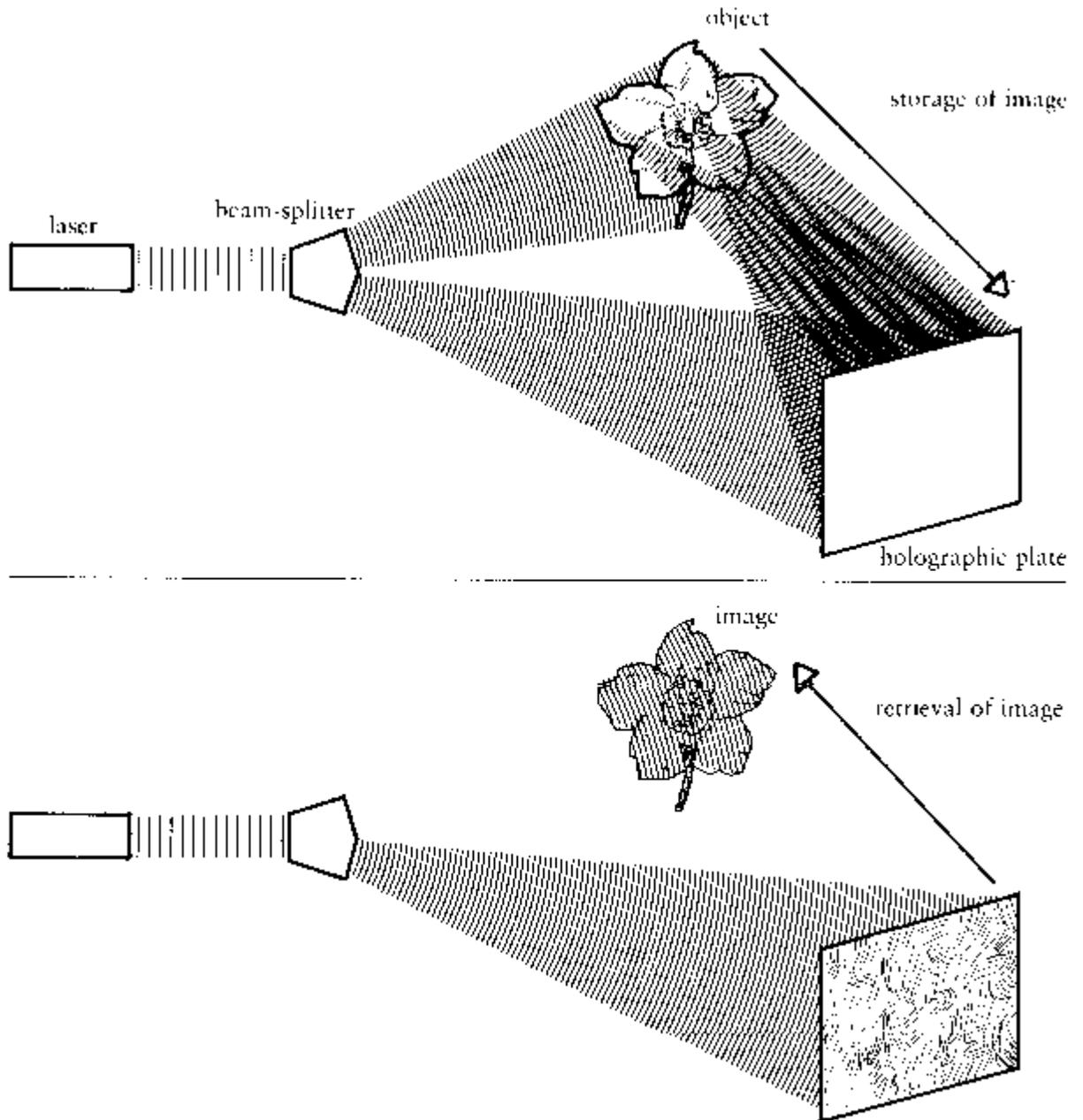
What I don't understand about place-memories is why a ghoul-type emotional image should be stored at one place, an apparent sound at another, a static colourless image at another, a complete filmic sequence at yet another, and so on. There doesn't seem to be any obvious reason why a place should hold one type of image and not another, except for the chance factor that the dominant part of any emotion in the projector, in a chance encounter between two people, should be visual in one case, aural in another, or just a plain feeling in a third. I don't know: that part of Lethbridge's place-memory research doesn't seem to make sense, partly because he doesn't discuss it much in any of his books.

He doesn't discuss the conditions controlling retrieval of these stored images much either, beyond this basic theory of leakage, but here we can build up something of a coherent theory by comparing his work with the work of others in other fields of research. Ghouls seem fairly simple, in that they seem to 'appear' to a lot of people, particularly in muggy weather, so Lethbridge's basic leakage mechanism would seem to be enough. But the further the type of place-memory goes up the spectrum of complexity from ghouls to sequence-ghosts, an increasing number of conditions come into play -as is clear from the relative rarity of filmic-sequence-type ghosts compared to the simplest level of ghoul, the atmosphere of a house. Again, I don't know or understand all of these additional conditions, but two of them which we can guess at – and which give us further clues as to the mechanisms involved – come from the directionality and the timing of these more complex hauntings.

The directionality of place-memory ghosts suggests that they are possibly emotional equivalents of optical holograms. An optical hologram is a three-dimensional image produced from a special photographic plate by a process that depends on beams of light coming in to each other and to the photographic plate from precise directions. It also

depends on the light-beams initially being formed of light-waves precisely in step with each other – known as 'coherent' light. Since lasers are the most practical sources for coherent light, almost all optical holography is done with lasers, particularly the continuous-output gas lasers rather than the pulsed-output ruby type we looked at earlier.

A hologram is not a photograph in the normal sense, with a photographic positive and negative. The image on the holographic plate bears no resemblance to the object – it just looks like a scratchy mess of lines, regardless of what the object was. No lenses are used, either: the idea is that because the light-waves coming on to the object are exactly in step, the interference-pattern formed by them as they bounce off the whole of the object (hence *holography*) can be recorded and used to reconstruct an image of the object later. In most holography two beams are used, both split off from one original beam by a semi-transparent mirror. One beam is aimed at the object – a knight on a chess-board, for example – while the other goes straight onto the photographic plate, to form a 'coherent background'. The wave-forms reflected off the object meet up with the light from the other 'reference beam' at the photographic plate, and the resultant interference produces the scratchy lines that you can see on the plate when it is developed.



### 30 Laser set-up for producing and reconstructing holographic images.

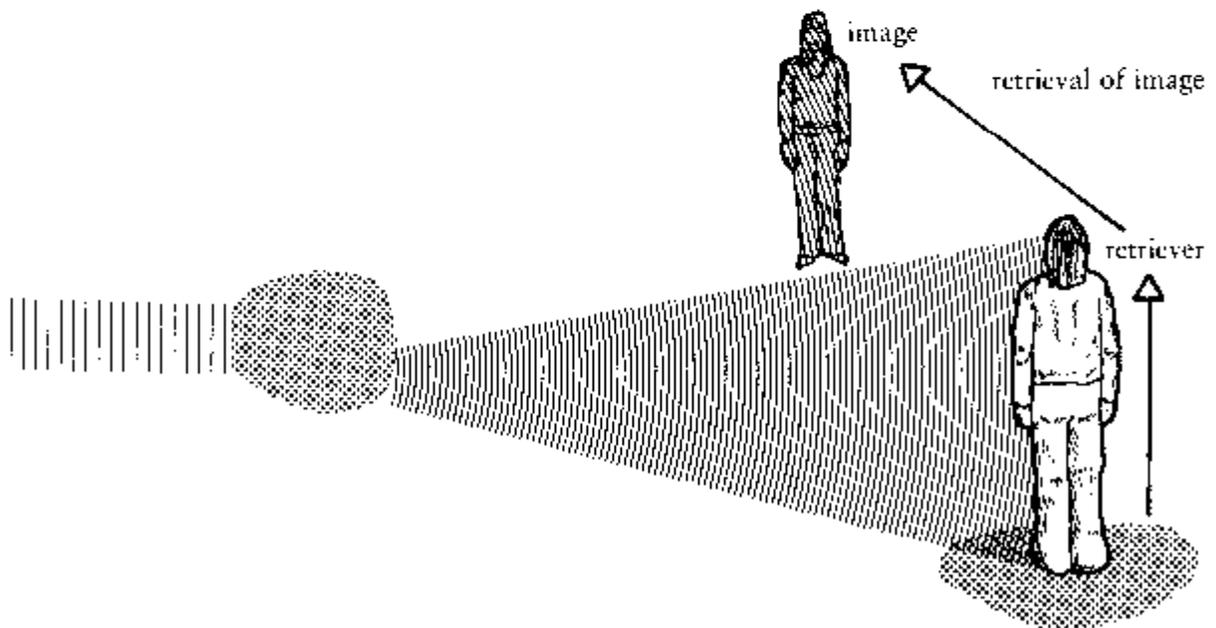
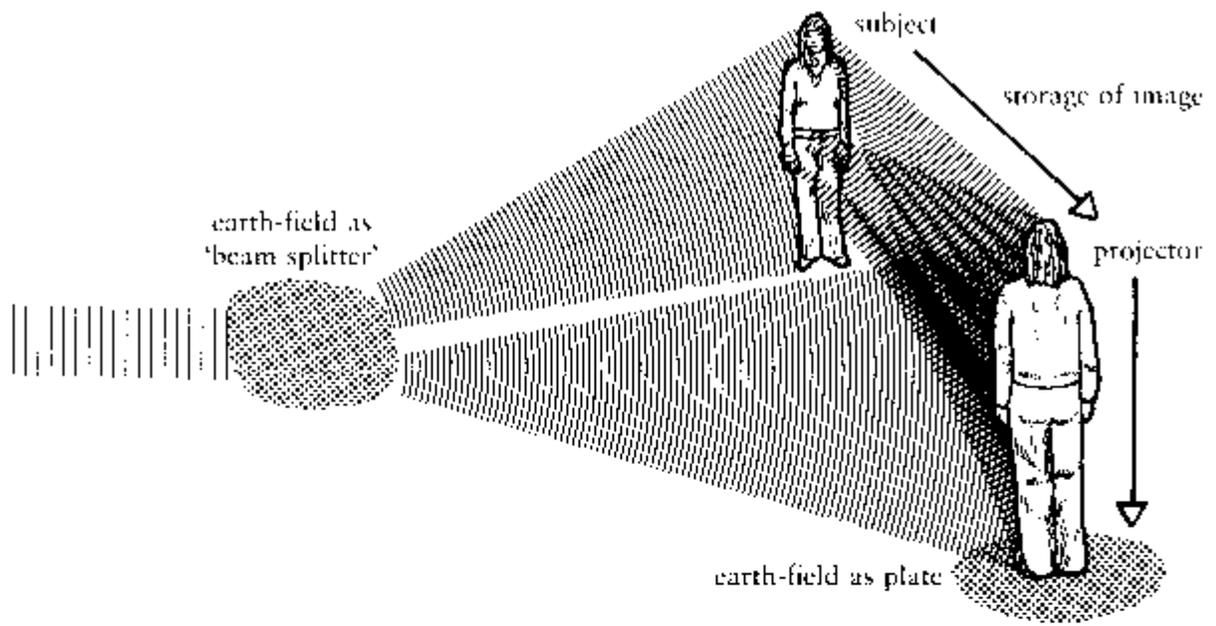
The hologram, the image on the plate itself, bears no apparent resemblance to the object; but when another laser beam of the same frequency is shone on to the plate from the same angle, the wavefronts that were 'frozen' onto the plate carry on on their travels, as it were, to form a real, photographable, three-dimensional image hanging in space in the same distance and direction from the plate as was the original object. And this three-dimensionality is real, not apparent as in an ordinary photograph: if you move from side to side you can see different sides of the object – see the chess-board from different

angles – as though it were a real object hanging in space. The catch is that with most holograms you can only see the image by looking through the plate, so that you can't see round the back of the original object; and because coherent light must be of only one frequency, the image will have a 'greyness' and 'flatness' that belies its true three-dimensional character.[4a]

Moving from the image to the process, there are two characteristics of holography which are particularly striking: one is that the hologram is formed by beams of light coming in to the object and the plate from precise directions; and the other is the ability of a fragment of the resulting plate to reproduce an image of the *whole* of the object - rather than, as on an ordinary plate, a small part of it – though it will be an image as seen from a more limited angle or with a poorer resolution. This is because, unlike a photographic plate, every part of a hologram is a record of light arriving from the whole of the object. So given these properties of the holographic image and process, we can construct a holographic analogy to describe place-memory ghosts.

The key to this will be whether or not a place can record complex and normally meaningless information as a kind of 'interference pattern'. The place, in other words, has to be the equivalent of a photographic plate. Using Lethbridge's labels for the different types of earth-field, an equivalent of a photosensitive emulsion at a place would seem to be water percolating through the surface at the place. Water, due to its odd 'bent' molecular structure – which I'll come back to later – has known information-storing properties; and we already know that water is in some way involved in Lethbridge's naiad- and nereid-fields by definition, in his dryad-fields by implication (because of the connection between certain trees and underground water, as I described in the discussion on lightning), and in sacred sites in general, as the work of Underwood and the other dowsers implies. Water can be seen in this context as an 'energy-sensitive emulsion'.

To be more precise, it would seem to be water chemically bonded to the soil that forms the plate, rather than flowing water, for otherwise the image stored within it would lose its coherence and fade away in a matter of seconds rather than be 'retrievable' for many years. The areas these earth-fields cover are as definite and definable as the shape of a photographic plate: one of Lethbridge's case-studies in *Ghost and Divining Rod*, of a ghost figure at the nearby Hole Mill, showed that the image was stored in and derived from a definite field formed on the inside of a curve in an underground stream by the Mill, a field whose limits were sufficiently defined to 'step over in a single stride', as Lethbridge put it.[5] It's possible that these earth-fields aren't always active in their role as plates: Lethbridge suggested that they were only active – for the retrieval of the image, if not the recording of it – on warm muggy days. Certainly the 'electric tingling' feeling which he describes as being on those sites in such conditions, and often coincident with a haunting, is only present from time to time, as I've discovered myself.



### 31 Holographic analogy for place-memory ghosts.

Other materials can also act as the plate, such as quartz-type crystals in building-stone, for example, and perhaps the water chemically trapped in the wooden timbers in buildings. If we use the holographic analogy for place-memory hauntings, this would explain why – as is sometimes reported – ghosts of old houses move to new houses that incorporate material from the old. The fragment of the plate would still contain enough information to reconstruct the whole of the image under certain circumstances. The analogy may also explain why some sequence-ghosts (those moving around, as if seen in

a short clip from a film) do impossible things like walking through walls and closed doors, for the walls and doors may not have been there when the original image was recorded by the place. The same analogy also explains the three-dimensionality of place-memory ghosts, their strange 'flatness' or 'greyness', and at least part of the reason why only some people see them. As with holograms, unless you're standing in the right place at the right time, standing in the same relationship to the plate as was the original projector, and with the power-source turned on, you won't be able to see the image the plate retains.

The time-factor is interesting, for it suggests that an astronomical component may be involved in the retrieval of place-memory images: ghosts that repeat their appearance on the same day each year might demand, as part of their 'lighting', the same angular relationship between the place and the centre of the earth, and between the earth, the sun and some hypothetical universal 'centre'. It's also possible, particularly with place-memories at sacred sites, that the equivalent there of the laser of optical holography might be the 'leyser', which we know has astronomically-linked pulses, linked to sun, moon, planets, and perhaps even the risings and settings of particular stars, if Professor Thom's theories about star-alignment at stone circles are correct.[6]

But if we look closely at the time-factor we can see that a holographic analogy, useful as it is, is not enough, for some place-memory ghosts appear to haunt their sites *before* the event that created them took place. Lethbridge gives an interesting example of one of these from his own experience. Before he moved into his house at Hole, he was asked if he minded ghosts, because a 'Red Lady' with white hair had been seen there several times shortly before the First World War. He never saw the ghost himself; but he believed he knew how it came to be. During the late 1950s the woman from Hole Mill, just down the road, used to visit him and his wife quite often: and she was a little old lady with white hair, who invariably wore a red coat – a 'Red Lady', in fact. Lethbridge also knew that she was something of a magician, in the proper sense of the word. She often came into their house without bothering to knock on the door, and Lethbridge said she sometimes caught him by surprise, sitting in the dim hallway, unexpected and unannounced, taking off her sea-boots. He thought that it was his surprise, coupled with the woman's known projective skill, that created the ghost of nearly fifty years before.[7]

None of this would matter, and place-memories would remain interesting if disturbing curiosities, if it were not for the fact that they can cause accidents of one kind or another. From the researches I've done, and from those of others I've talked to about this, there seems to be little doubt that this is so. The ghoul at Ladram Bay, the one who suggested to Lethbridge and several others that they might like to 'jump over the cliff', did in fact collect a suitably suicidal victim a few years later; and it's possible, given the crazy-time factor involved in place-memories, that the ghoul was both a cause and an effect of the same suicide. Apparently that ghoul is still there: it frightened several other people on top of that cliff before the suicide took place, and could still panic someone else into falling over the cliff accidentally.

I'm scared of heights, as it happens, so I wouldn't even go near a cliff; but I have noticed something very similar to Lethbridge's description of the Ladram Bay ghouls in a number of places on the London Underground. They are rarely 'active', fortunately; but when they are, the feeling-cum-thought of 'Why don't you jump under the train?' is unmistakable. It's probably true that most suicides of that type are at least partly premeditated; but I sometimes wonder how many times a ghoulish being of that kind has been the 'last straw' that pushed some unhappy person literally over the edge.

The unexpectedness of ghouls and ghosts, and particularly the emotional overtones carried with them, may well be the hidden cause behind a lot of accidents both at home and on the road. A sudden fright, a momentary irrational fear, can be all that's needed to cause a car-crash: and a ghoulish being based in a naiad-field under the roadway can be enough to produce that kind of fear. I've come across a ghoulish being of that type which could easily have caused a crash, but – fortunately for me – did not on that occasion. I was driving down from London to Somerset on the A303 with my wife and a friend in the car; and somewhere before Mere (I forget where exactly) we got stuck behind a very slow-moving car. We reached a clear stretch of open road, and I started to overtake; but just as I did so both my passengers yelled 'No!', so I had to pull in sharply – to avoid nothing.

Now this sounds like a routine complaint at my driving, but I don't think it was: the road was clear, and my car, though slow, had enough acceleration to get past with ease on that empty stretch of road. Both my passengers yelled because of a sudden fear: they had seen nothing dangerous, and realised (rationally, at least) that it was safe to overtake. Neither of them realised until later that the other had spoken, and, what is more, they had called out exactly as each of them had passed over the same spot on the road, the passenger in the back calling out about a tenth of a second later than my wife, who was in the seat in front of him in the car. The weather was also warm and muggy, if I remember correctly, so the conditions do seem to have been right for ghoulish action. It's not just from defence of my driving ability that I believe a ghoulish being was in action there; but what worries me is that that ghoulish being, under slightly different driving conditions, could well cause someone to crash.

This is true not only of ghouls, of course. Lethbridge, in one of his books, gives a detailed example of a ghost car that he and his wife experienced on a country road in 1964;<sup>[8]</sup> and I remember once reading somewhere of an accident caused by a ghost double-decker bus, complete with passengers and crew. As I remember the article, two cars collided when they both swerved to dodge an imaginary bus that appeared from nowhere, crossed a junction in front of the two cars (which is why they swerved) and passed *through* two parked cars before vanishing into thin air. Both car drivers, and a witness passing by, said that they thought at first that the bus was real: it was complete with its passengers and crew, and from its number was a normal bus to be travelling along that route. It was only its strange 'greyness', and the manner in which it appeared and disappeared, that made it clear that it did not exist in a physical sense. Whether the drivers were believed by their insurance companies or the court I do not know; but assuming that their stories were true, we could infer that there was – and probably is – a strong and large naiad-field beneath that junction. The image of that bus, as caught in that field, could well have been put

there by an infuriated would-be passenger whom the bus had failed to pick up, perhaps even some years before. A moment's anger in one year by one person, it seems, can cause a car-crash in another for another.

At this stage I'd better repeat that place-memory ghosts and ghouls are impersonal memories, not malevolent 'spirits'. They broadcast their stored images and emotions mindlessly whenever the conditions are right for them to do so, and for the benefit or otherwise of whoever happens to be part of those conditions at the time. In themselves they're harmless: it's their suddenness and unexpectedness, and also the heavy emotional overtones that are a necessary part of them, that can make them dangerous. To give an analogy, they wait around like tape-recordings of very loud noises, to be set off by a trip-wire or a hidden beam; and they're dangerous for the same reason and in the same way, in that they take you by surprise because you're not ready for them, not aware of them.

They're dangerous, in other words, because we try to ignore them. Many claim that no ghost of any kind, including place-memories, can exist: but that is literally ignorance, ignoring what is undoubtedly a real – and thus existent – area of human experience. But given that they do exist, and given that they can be dangerous if we allow them to take us by surprise, one of our concerns, in building a model of nature that can bring an awareness of reality back into urban life, should be to find out the natural processes and factors behind these hauntings, so that we can learn not so much how to control them as how to live with them and limit the destructive and dangerous aspects of their effects.

There are many things we can do about this. One of them, perhaps the most important, is to realise that the vast majority of hauntings are these impersonal place-memories, and that there is nothing about them to be frightened of. If we can lose our fear of them, they will lose their power to haunt us, and they will become just interesting curiosities, like pictures on the screens in the television-hire showroom that you pass in the High Street. It's not easy to lose our fear of them, but it can be done, even in the emotional 'deadness' of the cities. Another thing we can do, once again even in the cities, is to locate – by dowsing and by other means – the still-active earth-fields, and try to identify what kinds of place-memories they store and under what conditions they appear. Lethbridge's theory of leakage of field does explain one of the conditions – that of the retriever's state of mind – in some detail, but many of the others, particularly the astronomically-related ones and the weather linkage, remain poorly researched. We still need to do much more work on them.

There is one danger here: it is, I believe, foolish to try to ignore place-memories and their effects on us; but I think it is still more foolish to go 'ghost-hunting', prodding likely-looking sites in various ways to see if a place-memory appears. It's true that one may do so: but they have little choice in when or whether they appear, because they are impersonal memories, and they are anyway less likely to appear when prodded because the active or 'trying' state of mind that ghost-hunting implies is diametrically opposed to the 'emptiness' of mind in the retriever that seems to be an essential part of the conditions for their appearance. The danger in ghost-hunting is that other types of haunting may appear instead. More often than not these will be active and probably malevolent types,

such as true ghosts, elementals, 'guardians', poltergeists and other oddities lying around at other levels of the mind and elsewhere; and these are more likely to appear – in your mind and imagination, if not elsewhere – if you go looking for them, for by doing so you effectively call them into existence through you. I don't want to go into all the technicalities of this here; but it is a real danger that should not be ignored.[9]

The point I'm trying to make here is this: *don't* play at ghost-hunting unless you know *exactly* what you're doing – and if you're just playing at it, you won't know what you're doing. From personal experience I know how real the danger is: so *if you don't know what you're working with in this field, leave it well alone.*

The other point we have to realise is that since place-memories are simply memories of how someone has felt, or thought, or perceived at that place when it was active, we have to learn to be careful not only of what we do physically at those places, but also what we feel, what we think, what we perceive. In other words, we have to be careful, at such sites, of what we do at every level of our being. Place-memories can affect us, and negatively so if they happen to be negative; but it's useful to remember that we create them in the first place, for others or for ourselves to find at a later – or earlier - date. It's up to us, where we have the choice, to make sure that the atmosphere of a place is left as we would wish to find it.

We can do this semi-consciously, by watching our feelings and thoughts in places, particularly if the place we happen to be at is, as the *Exorcism Report* puts it, a 'desecrated' site. But we can also do it deliberately, by constructing an emotion, a feeling, a thought, with a view to implanting it in the place. The blessing of a house is one example of such deliberate action; but so is much of magical ritual, and that's what we'll move on to look at now.

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## Notes

[1] For a discussion of some interesting if depressing examples of prejudice and pseudo-science masquerading as proper scientific study, see *JSPR XLVIII* No. 770, pp.412-21.

[1a] For another view of this from a historical angle, derived from a detailed study of early English literature, see Brian Branston, *The Lost Gods of England*.

[1b] See Tom Graves, *Towards a Magical Technology*, Chapter 3, for a discussion of the structural differences between technology and science.

[2] See particularly Lethbridge's *Ghost and Ghoul* and *Ghost and Divining Rod*. [3] See SW Tromp, *Psychical Physics* and J.C. Maby, *Physical Principles of Radiesthesia*; also the more recent work discussed in Francis Hitching, *Pendulum*, particularly Part II.

[3a] In some cases the radiation level is *lower* than normal background, which is impossible according to standard theory. See Don Robins, *Circles of Silence*.

[4] Someone did in fact jump over, but not until a few years later: see *A Step in the Dark*, pp.94-6.

[4a] Some more recent holograms are in colour, but these are almost all of the simple 'virtual' image type, in which the image can only be seen as if through the plate. Place-memories seem to be more closely related to the 'real' or 'projection' holograms, in which the image is actually projected to a point clear of the plate.

[5] See Lethbridge, *Ghost and Divining Rod*, pp.31-3.

[6] For star-alignment, see Thom's *Megalithic Sites in Britain*, pp.97-10; little material has been published on astronomically-linked pulses at sacred sites other than what we've seen in this study.

[7] See *A Step in the Dark*, pp.110-11.

[8] See *A Step in The Dark*, pp.77-81.

[9] For a more detailed discussion of this, see Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defence*.