

below this level. It should be added that automatic recording of data as such is not necessarily fraud-proof and proper safeguard needs to be taken in any case.

The gold standard of experiments in physical mediumism is beyond any doubt the series of experiments with Rudi Schneider carried out by Eugène and Marcel Osty in 1930. Not only was the methodology of recording the absorption of an infrared beam flawless (at least has it not been called into doubt by fellow parapsychologists), also the results that have been achieved were impressive: the correlation of the oscillation of said absorption rate to the respiration rate of the medium. The nature of this correlation remains an open question (one of the many in the field). The later experiments with Rudi Schneider by G. A. Schwaiger employing an early TV-set were discontinued due to the turn of events during the 2nd World War.

Every leading edge of scientific research needs to utilize state-of-the-art equipment. At the time of Schrenck-Notzing this has been Amereller's electrical medium control apparatus applied in experiments carried out in the dark or in extremely reduced light conditions. The equivalent present level would be video recording such experiments by using light amplifier devices. Any experiment falling short of this standard (e. g. the Scole Group) cannot be regarded as conclusive.

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THE MYSTERY OF ECTOPLASM

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Most people consider the production of ectoplasm by physical mediums fraudulent. Many charlatans took advantage of the darkness of the séance room and the desire of believers to communicate with the dead. Many were unmasked and physical mediumship was ever after suspect.

However there are still instances that seem genuine. My purpose here is to reexamine some of the evidence for these cases and to encourage researchers to not "throw out the baby with the bathwater," but to look into a phenomenon that might teach us much about human mind/body capabilities.

Ectoplasm, if it exists, by its very nature strains the credulity of even those whose "boggle thresholds" have been stretched nearly to infinity. It is supposedly made up of organic elements, especially albumin, yet it appears in various forms from a vapor or clear liquid to a plastic, white solid or semi solid. It is exuded from various orifices of the medium's body but can dissipate and/or be reabsorbed by the medium. In addition it is also subject to the psychological idiosyncrasies of individual personalities, and may at times be influenced by what Jung called the "joker" or "trickster" aspect of our psyches.

Its many forms are as varied as the beliefs and unconscious mental images of the mediums who produce it. The phantom "Katie King," produced by Florence Cook, was at times life-like, seemingly warm blooded, had a measurable pulse, spoke and interacted with observers but did not always appear fully formed and disintegrated before the eyes of witnesses under the controlled conditions of her chief investigator, Sir William Crookes.

Ectoplasm may also have electrical or photo-electrical properties and sometimes appears as lights or luminous animate objects. These were particularly pronounced in the emanations of D. D. Home, Franek Kluski, and recently the Scole mediums.

The phenomena have been widespread with credible investigators reporting on cases throughout Europe and America beginning in the nineteenth century, and continuing throughout the twentieth.

Many photographs have been taken of ectoplasmic forms. These would be unconvincing except for the accompanying information provided by investigators and corroboration by witnesses.

Of interest are the findings of W. J. Crawford, a lecturer in mechanical engineering who examined the mediumistic work of Kathleen Goligher in the early 1900s. Among his theories and discoveries were ectoplasmic “rods” that seemed to cause the levitation of objects. He also found relationships between physical manifestations, including raps and levitations, and the weight, not only of the medium, but of the other participants in the séances.

Crawford was also able to trace the origins and workings of the ectoplasm. His engineering model however did not explain other related phenomena such as luminosity and the seeming suspension of the gravitational field e.g., the adhering of objects to a tilted table or the tilting of a candle’s flame when the candle was at an angle. However, his experience may illustrate the concept of ideoplasty in which the experimenter’s theory is confirmed because his beliefs affect the medium who in turn shapes the phenomena.

Physical mediums, although out of fashion, still exist. I encourage seeking out those who might lend themselves to investigation. I also want to urge investigators to attempt séances as the “Philip” group in Canada did.

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A SURVEY OF MEDIUMS IN ICELAND

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We contacted and interviewed all persons we were able to find with experiences of trance or automatism, that is, who had experienced involuntary speech or writing, at least a few times. These were 31 persons, 17 men and 14 women ranging in age from 19 to 70 ($M = 45$). 18 of them had fallen in trance more than 100 times, so most of them were practicing mediums, either professionally or in private home circles or organised groups like healing groups. About half of them admitted receiving pay for their psychic work and for two it was this their main income.

These mediums could be roughly divided into three rather equal-sized groups,

- a) Spiritists, where the emphasis was on communication with the deceased.
- b) Groups seeking healing from spirit helpers and deceased doctors who continued their healing work after death.
- c) Group exclusively found in Iceland, “nyalssinnar”, who believe that after death we are reborn on other planets in other solar systems, and can then communicate with people on this earth either through dreams or trance.
- d) The main purpose of this survey was to learn about how the mediumship started and developed in these individuals. About half of them first fell into trance at home (four of them being alone), or in the homes of friends and did so unexpectedly and involuntarily, whereas 40% experienced mediumship as a result of trying to fall into trance or after training. It also happened that the first trance took place unexpectedly and involuntarily at a seance when someone else was in trance.