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POLTERGEIST PHENOMENA AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

BY

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INTRODUCTION

Parapsychological studies can be roughly divided into two types, those that are intended primarily to demonstrate that a certain phenomenon exists and those that are intended to explore its nature. We may refer to the first as "proof oriented" research and to the second as "process oriented." The purpose of proof oriented work is mainly to convince the skeptic of the reality of psi phenomena by providing elaborate methods of observation which are designed to exclude all explanations other than the parapsychological one. Much of the early work in the field was proof oriented and we still fall back on this approach when we try to prove psi phenomena to a doubting scientific world. We assume that if the occurrences can be made to take place under tightly controlled conditions, the scientific community will accept them. This has not happened and the question is whether additional "proof" of the reality of ESP and PK will force such changes. The history of science suggests that the existence of occurrences in nature which cannot be explained by the prevailing theory of the universe are ignored until a conceptual model is devised which can accommodate both the "new" facts and the old. T. S. Kuhn points out that the theory which is generally accepted at a given time in history "is declared invalid only if an alternate candidate is available to take its place. No process yet disclosed by the historical study of scientific development at all resembles the methodological stereotype of falsification by direct comparison with nature" (1, p. 77).

Parapsychologists are becoming increasingly aware of the need for theory, which is tantamount to saying that they are becoming

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Poltergeist Phenomena and Interpersonal Relations

67

more process oriented. The emphasis is not on demonstrating the existence of ESP and PK, but on discovering their relationships to other parts of the matrix in nature where they occur. The guiding theory or hypothesis may be anything from a statement to the effect that ESP depends on the percipient's mood to a cosmology which includes the full range of psi and familiar events. A theory is not proven once and for all but needs continued support from observation. Psychical researchers are therefore primarily interested in recurrent relationships.

When questions are asked about the nature of psi phenomena, it is reasonable to look in places where they are abundant. In the case of ESP effects, some persons seem to produce more than others and parapsychologists are becoming increasingly interested in them. The same is true with respect to PK. In so-called poltergeist or RSPK incidents, striking cases of apparent PK are found in the vicinity of certain individuals.

Most RSPK occurrences are observed under informal conditions. The person who requires certainty is likely to be frustrated by this type of research. My rule has been to accept cases for analysis when there has been at least one incident which an apparently reliable investigator was unable to account for plausibly except by PK. If it is known that some of the incidents were caused fraudulently, I do not therefore abandon the investigation. The RSPK cases that I have studied seem to be the result at least in part of pathological conditions in the agent or in his interpersonal relationships. The instances of fraud that occurred in the Newark case (4) could be understood in terms of the psychological setting.

In that study the occurrences fell into two groups, an early, apparently paranormal phase, and a later phase where objects were thrown normally, probably in a dissociated state. Also in the present case the initial events seemed to be paranormal while some of the later ones were produced in a dissociated state (see page 75). From a psychological point of view, the normal incidents are as valid as any paranormal ones that may occur. But the mixture of normal and paranormal presents a difficulty for the parapsychological appraisal of those incidents which cannot definitely be classified as either. On the one hand there is the impulse to reject anything which is at all open to question; on the other hand there is the fear that one may be throwing the baby out with the bath water. In this report, as in the previous one (4), I have used all the reported incidents for my analyses of their relationship to physical and psychological conditions except those that were known to be spurious or those that in my opinion were probably so. I cannot claim to have definitely identified and excluded all occurrences that might have been due to fraud or other extraneous

factors. I prefer, however, the risk of including spurious data to the risk of overlooking significant aspects of the psi process. If the material is contaminated by fraud, chance, or other extraneous factors, this will show up in future work through failure of repetition and that will be the end of it. But if the relationships are real, they could, when confirmed, lead to significant advances for the field.

Unreal data of course may contain unreal patterns and these may recur in another set of unreal data. Confirmation of exploratory studies does not come from additional exploratory studies, but from work with improved methods of observation. Certain RSPK findings (such as the attenuation effect) could be tested in a PK laboratory with existing equipment while others (for instance, those pertaining to the trajectories of moving objects) require that the laboratory be brought into the field, for instance, as suggested by C. T. Tart (5). Such an extension of the research would be extremely costly. Before this step is attempted, the process oriented researcher will want to know if it is likely to extend his understanding of the nature of PK. I believe that the indications about the PK process which are emerging from RSPK studies are sufficiently challenging to encourage this step.

The present case came to my notice a few years ago through a newspaper article which referred to unexplained disturbances at the home in a midwestern city of a thirty-two-year-old woman, Mrs. Sonja Bloom, her sixty-one-year-old mother, Mrs. Hanna Gerb, and her thirteen-year-old daughter, Louisa.² In addition to movements and breakages of household items usually associated with "poltergeist" disturbances, the article said strange "triangular-shaped" puncture wounds appeared on the arms and legs of the two older women. I asked Dr. David L. Blumenthal (D.L.B.), a clinical psychologist with whom I had collaborated in a previous study, to contact the family. It was his impression that the phenomena might be genuine, and I decided to make an investigation.

I arrived in the afternoon of March 16th and stayed in the house until the morning of the 22nd. Mrs. Bloom told me she had bought the house four years ago. A downstairs apartment had been rented out, but was now vacant. Her main source of livelihood was a small restaurant she had been operating for about a month. She had earlier worked in a restaurant owned by a Mr. Earanda, who is now retired. Mr. Earanda told me that Mrs. Bloom had been capable and dependable during the ten years she worked for him.

Mrs. Bloom had been divorced for several years. Her former husband, Mr. William Bloom, visited the home during some of

² Pseudonyms are used throughout except for the names of the investigators.

the disturbances. Mrs. Gerb had joined the household three years earlier, when she left her native Germany. Finally, there was Peanuts, a Scottish terrier belonging to Louisa. Peanuts did not seem to be affected by the events.

There were one hundred and ten incidents in the period March 10-24, three later in the year, and two the following February. Seventy-six were unexplained movements of objects; fourteen, punctures of the skin; and twenty-five, strange sounds. Information about occurrences before my arrival and after I left was obtained from the family, D.L.B., and other visitors to the home. In many cases, details are lacking or it is uncertain if the witnesses correctly remembered the circumstances. The locations of the disturbances in the home, the directions of movements, and the distances the objects traveled are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

MOVEMENTS OF OBJECTS

The home was situated on a quiet street and there were no reports of anything unusual going on in the downstairs apartment or the neighboring houses. It therefore seemed unlikely that impersonal physical forces such as tremors caused by traffic, earth movements, and the like were responsible. The events ceased when the family left the house and when everyone was asleep. The most reasonable ordinary theory was that one or more members of the family perpetrated the events normally.

On four occasions during my stay Louisa was either not at home when the disturbance took place or she was in a different room, and in five cases Mrs. Bloom was not in the area in question. There were two incidents which none of the three members of the family seemed to have been in a position to cause normally.

On Sunday, March 18, at 10:35 P.M. I was seated in the kitchen with Mr. James Ford, a business acquaintance of Mrs. Bloom. Louisa was in bed in her mother's room (since I was using hers) and Mrs. Gerb was in bed in her own room. I was watching Mrs. Bloom, who had just been in her bedroom and was in the hallway, walking toward the kitchen when there was a sound in the direction of Mrs. Gerb's room as if something hit the floor. I rushed in but found nothing out of place which could have caused the noise. Five minutes later as I went downstairs with Mr. Ford, I discovered a long-handled bath brush on the fourth step from the second landing (Event 49).

There are three possible normal explanations for this event. The brush was placed on the steps beforehand and the sound made later to make it appear that the incident took place then; the brush

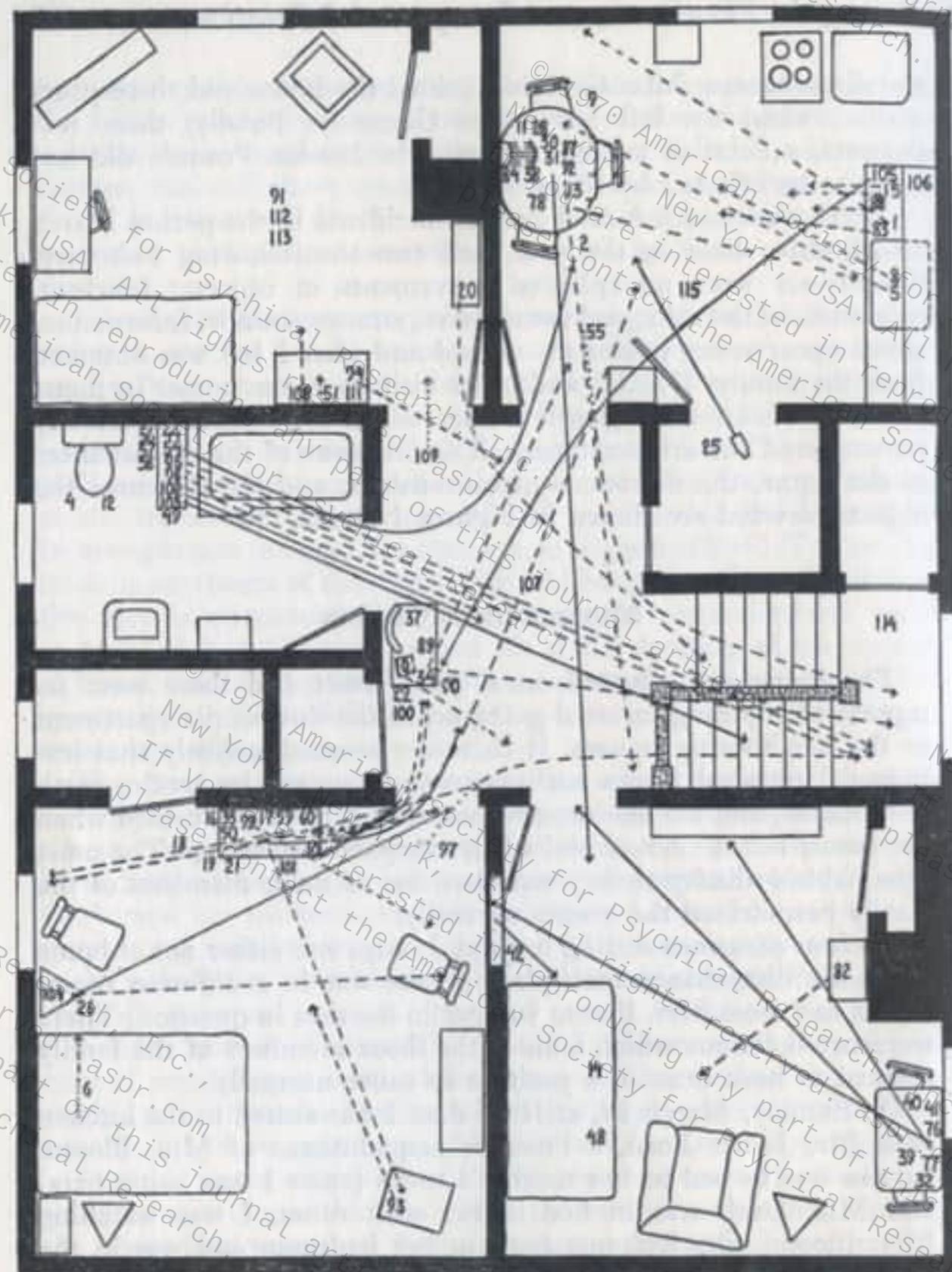


Fig. 1. Plan of the second floor of Mrs. Bloom's home showing the locations and chronological order of the disturbances. The arrows indicate the approximate direction and distance of motion, when they were known, of objects displaced from their original position. Arrows drawn with a solid line refer to movements when it seemed impossible, according to visitors to the home, that Mrs. Bloom could have caused the incidents; arrows drawn with a broken line refer to occurrences when Mrs. Bloom or the place where the disturbance occurred was not supervised; and the dotted lines indicate the path of objects whose original position was in doubt. Louisa's room is next to the kitchen, Mrs. Gerb's next to the stairs, and Mrs. Bloom's adjacent to Mrs. Gerb's.

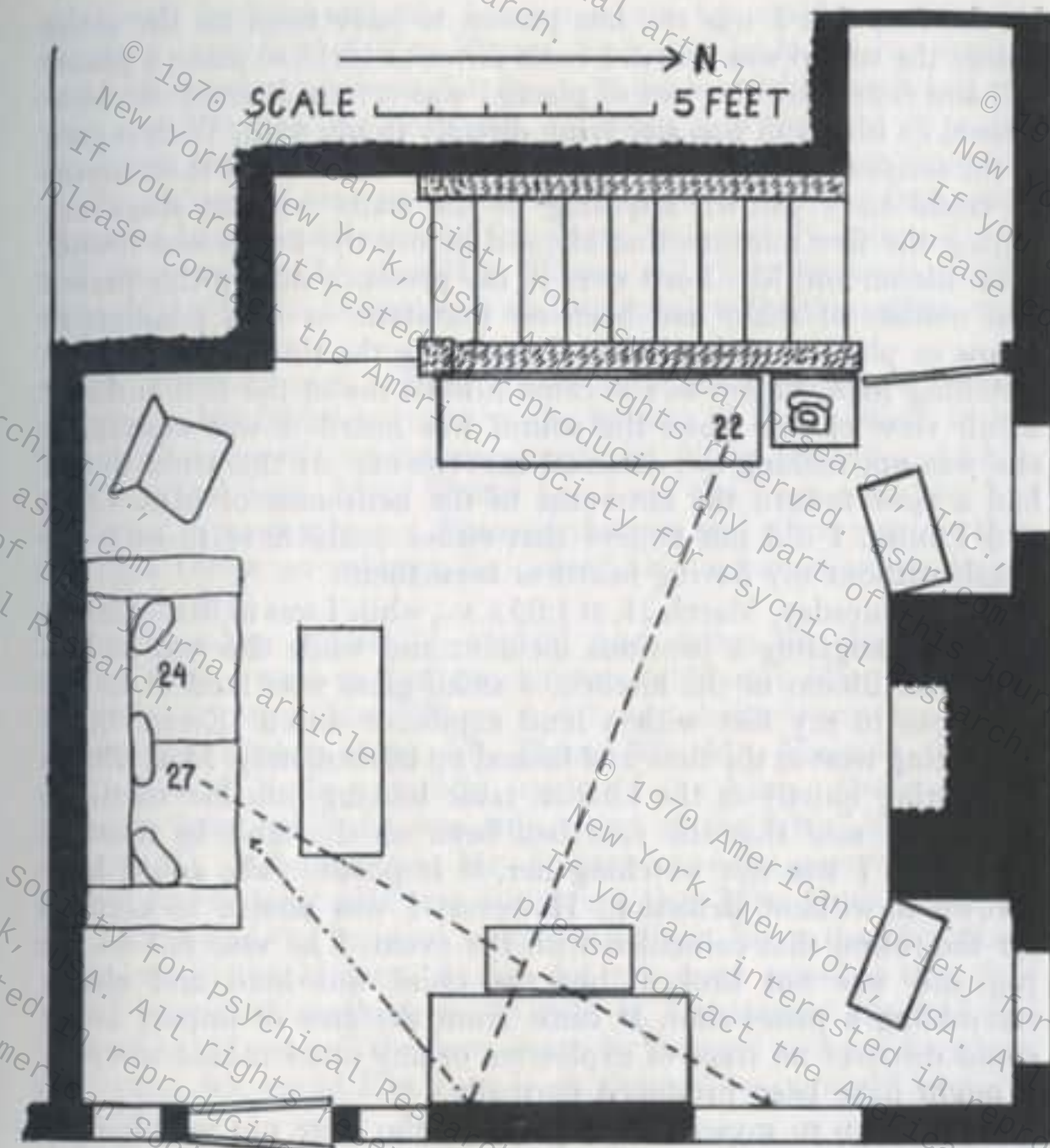


Fig. 2. Plan of the first floor of Mrs. Bloom's home (see explanation to Fig. 1).

was placed after the noise was heard, and the brush was thrown at the time of the sound.

With regard to the first theory, Mrs. Gerb was the most likely culprit since her room was next to the stairs and since the sound came from that direction. However, I had been upstairs since 9:10 P.M. and was with Mrs. Gerb for part of the time or was seated by the open kitchen door from where I could see the door to her room. I felt certain she could not have opened her door and thrown or placed the brush on the stairs without discovery. The possibility that she or either of the two others could have placed the brush beforehand seemed in any case to be ruled out.

by the fact that I was the last person to have been on the stairs before the sound was heard. I went down at 10:15 to make a phone call and found nothing out of place. I was certain I could not have missed an object of this size lying directly in my path. With regard to the second theory, neither Mrs. Gerb nor Louisa left their rooms or could have thrown anything to the stairs without discovery during the five minutes that elapsed before the brush was found. Mrs. Bloom and Mr. Ford were in my presence during this period and neither of them had been on the stairs or in a position to throw or place anything there. Concerning the third theory, I was watching Mrs. Bloom as she came toward me in the hall and had a full view of her when the sound was heard. I was convinced she was not making any unusual movements. At the same time I had a view toward the entrances of the bedrooms of Mrs. Gerb and Louisa. I did not believe that either could have thrown the brush without my having heard or seen them.

On Wednesday, March 21, at 1:05 A.M., while I was in Mrs. Gerb's room investigating a previous incident and while she was in bed and Mrs. Bloom in the kitchen, a small glass vase landed on the rug close to my feet with a loud explosive sound (Event 78). I was facing west at the time and looked up immediately. Mrs. Bloom was sitting quietly at the kitchen table looking into her mother's room. She said that the vase had been on the table in front of her. Since I was not watching her, it is possible she could have thrown it without detection. However, I was unable to account for the sound that coincided with the event. The vase fell on the rug and was not broken, but the noise was loud and sharp, resembling a pistol shot. It came from the area of impact and I could discover no trace of explosives or any other means whereby it might have been produced normally.

In addition to myself, three persons who were not members of the household were present when occurrences took place which they could not explain in terms of fraud by members of the family. Mr. Henry Cook, a photographer for the local paper, seemed a reliable person who wished to find an explanation for the events; to aid the investigation, he kept my visit from appearing in his paper. Early Tuesday morning, March 13, he was in the kitchen with Mrs. Bloom, who was seated at the east end of the table between it and the door. No one else was in the house. He had opened all the doors to improve his access to and view of possible disturbances. In the kitchen closet, he noticed that a milk bottle was lying on the floor with some other objects. He then went out to the hall to make a phone call, all the time keeping a watch on Mrs. Bloom. He was certain she did not leave her seat while he was in the hall. At 2:30 A.M. Mr. Cook was seated at the telephone

table and looking into the kitchen where he could see the arm, shoulder, and foot of Mrs. Bloom. Suddenly he heard her scream and saw her start up from the chair. At the same time he heard and then saw the milk bottle (Event 25) move into his field of vision from the closet. Mrs. Bloom was seated about six feet from the bottle and could not have reached it without leaving her place. Since he had himself opened the closet door shortly before, it also did not seem possible that Mrs. Bloom could have fastened a string around the bottle beforehand or interfered with it in other ways without detection.

Mr. Earanda was a good friend of Mrs. Bloom and seemed sincere in his desire to come to the bottom of the problem in her home whatever the explanation might be. When his wife told him that she had seen Mrs. Bloom knock on the floor after she had collapsed, apparently in a dissociated state, and when a priest then saw her throw an ashtray, he passed this information on to me (see page 75).

On Tuesday, March 13, at 4:00 P.M., when Mr. Earanda was seated at the west end of the kitchen table and Mrs. Gerb was also in that room, Mrs. Bloom and Louisa being elsewhere in the house, the kitchen lamp fell (Event 30). Mr. Earanda checked the nail and, finding it solid, replaced the lamp. About twenty minutes later, while he was still seated at the table, it fell again (Event 31). In both cases, Mr. Earanda was the person who was closest to the lamp. He was convinced that Mrs. Gerb could not have produced the incident unknown to him. Since the two others were not in the kitchen, it also did not seem possible that they could have had anything to do with it. I examined the nail and lamp; I could not pull the lamp down by the cord without damaging the lamp, nor could I balance it on the nail so it might later fall by itself.

Following my departure from the home, there were additional incidents when Mr. Earanda reported that he and/or his wife were with members of the family in one area of the house when a disturbance originated elsewhere. On Saturday, March 24, at 2:37 P.M., he was in the bathroom, his wife in the hall together with Mrs. Bloom, who was seated next to the phone, and Mrs. Gerb in her own room, when a gramophone record flew from Mrs. Bloom's room to the hallway next to the feet of Mrs. Earanda (Event 99). About 3:30 P.M., when Mr. and Mrs. Earanda, Mrs. Bloom, and Mrs. Gerb were all in Mrs. Bloom's room, a toothbrush moved from the bathroom to the hall (Event 103), and ten minutes later while Mrs. Bloom was lying on the floor of her room watched by Mrs. Earanda, an alarm clock moved from her bedside table to the door (Event 104).

Mr. Bloom visited the home the following February, staying in a hotel in town. On Saturday, February 16, at about 8:30 P.M., a light bulb fell to the floor on the stairway while he was with the two older women in the kitchen (Event 114). About an hour later, after the books in Mrs. Gerb's room had fallen from the bookcase several times, Mr. Bloom replacing them each time, he brought them into the kitchen to prevent further incidents. He stacked the books, crisscrossing them to form a straight pile which would not fall over accidentally. Mr. and Mrs. Bloom then went out of the kitchen to talk to Mrs. Gerb and upon returning, found the books had again moved (Event 115). They had not fallen together as one might expect had they tipped over normally, but were "strewn around" on the floor. Louisa was away during both incidents.

For each member of the family taken separately, there were additional events when that person was not in the area in question according to visitors to the home. Not counting the ten cases mentioned before, there were ten when Louisa was not at home and six when the witnesses stated that she was not in the room where the events took place. This makes a total of twenty-six disturbances which Louisa apparently could not have perpetrated on her own by throwing the objects or by using similar forms of trickery. There were seven events, again not including the ten previously referred to, when visitors said they were with Mrs. Bloom in one room while something happened elsewhere. Consequently, there were seventeen incidents which Mrs. Bloom apparently could not have perpetrated on her own. Finally, there were two incidents when Mrs. Gerb was away according to visitors and five when she was not in the room in question, making a total of seventeen cases, with the ten already discussed, which Mrs. Gerb apparently could not have caused. It is of course possible in this case, as in most others that deal with occurrences outside the laboratory, that there were concealed instruments in the home which were operated by one or more members of the family, perhaps in collaboration with outsiders. I examined the house for hidden devices, but found none. The police and other visitors also found no indications that anyone was using or trying to use such equipment.

Throwing Incidents

After the last knocking incident Wednesday morning (see page 80), the disturbances seemed to terminate. However, they resumed shortly before midnight Friday with a series of knocks on the front door, followed by nine movements and breakages of objects. There was then a pause which lasted until early afternoon when the first of twenty-two additional movements of objects began.

Mr. and Mrs. Earanda had been called back during the night and were also present later. Mr. Earanda telephoned a Catholic priest for assistance and it was suggested that the family pray the full rosary in Mrs. Bloom's room. They did so. Evidently this caused Mrs. Bloom to enter a dissociated state; she fell to the floor and as she was lying there, Mrs. Earanda saw her knock on it. Father O'Shea arrived then and while he was in the hallway and Mrs. Bloom was lying on her bed, he saw her throw an ashtray into the hallway. Mr. Earanda described Mrs. Bloom as being "almost in a coma."

The psychological reports do not suggest that Mrs. Bloom was prone to dissociative episodes. However, she was a good hypnotic subject (see page 95), and I do not find it difficult to suppose that the monotonous intoning of the rosary, followed by what must have been an exhausting evening and day, could have brought on a trance. In this connection it is interesting that the only unusual experience Mrs. Bloom said she had before the present events was a hallucinatory experience in a church where she had gone to pray. That we are not dealing with attempts at deceit is supported also by the lack of concealment. Mrs. Bloom did not hide either her knocking on the floor or the throwing of the ashtray.

Mrs. Gerb was also in an unusual mental state that day. She suffered from diabetes and occasionally had blackouts and dizzy spells. However, she had not had any during the period of the disturbances (except Wednesday night, March 14, when she became dizzy and stumbled at the Earandas' home as she bent down to pet a dog). In the early morning of Saturday, March 24, she blacked out and fell in a closet, remaining there more than an hour. When Mr. Earanda came, she was nude and hysterical, crying that "the devils are here." In the evening Mrs. Bloom decided to take her to the hospital. However, Mrs. Gerb collapsed in the downstairs room and Mrs. Bloom, unable to handle her herself, called the police for assistance. When a police sergeant came, Mrs. Gerb was still lying on the floor. He went upstairs to talk to Mrs. Bloom; on returning down the stairs, he saw Mrs. Gerb throw an ashtray and upset three pieces of furniture. Probably because he thought he had uncovered the culprit also of the previous disturbances, which had involved several investigations and visits by members of his department, he arrested her on a charge of disorderly conduct.

After a night in jail Mrs. Gerb was released on bail. On the understanding she would leave the country, the charges were dropped and she returned to Germany on Saturday, March 31. As far as the police and newspapers were concerned, the case was solved.

At the end of October, after repeated requests, Mrs. Bloom

allowed her mother to return. Mrs. Bloom said that Mrs. Gerb seemed like a new person and for the first few months, things were relatively peaceful. Then tensions began to mount, Mrs. Gerb's dizzy spells resumed, becoming more and more frequent, and in March, the following year, she again threw something.

During my stay, Mrs. Gerb at times was upset and crying because of the events. Especially the punctures and knockings disturbed her. The night between Wednesday and Thursday, when there had been sixteen series of bangings, she was quite weak and unsteady on her feet but seemed fully rational. The nearest to a dissociated state I encountered was when she could not recall the three punctures she had received on the previous day and thought that the marks were from some earlier occasions. But the lapse of memory occurred on a day (March 17) when there were no incidents. At all other times she was fully rational, had a good memory of the disturbances, and showed no sign of dissociation or other unusual mental states.

PUNCTURES OF THE SKIN

Except for the first punctures, which appeared close to Mrs. Bloom's right wrist (Event 2), the victim was Mrs. Gerb. She would suddenly scream and one to eight marks, resembling pinpricks, would be found on her body. The marks I saw were within an area of two and a half inches, but otherwise seemed to be randomly distributed. One cluster was on her throat, another on her right breast, five on her legs or thighs, and four on her arms, both the right and the left ones. On seven occasions she was alone (in her room, the bathroom, or on the stairs) and four times with Mrs. Bloom, Mr. Earanda, and others.

Incidents of this type are rare in RSPK literature. A case which in some respects resembles the Bloom-Gerb occurrences is reported by A. R. G. Owen (2). It took place in Bristol, England, 1761-1762 and was investigated by a Mr. Henry Durbin. As in the present case, two persons, in this case two sisters, Molly and Dobby Giles, respectively thirteen and eight years old, were the victims. On one occasion, "We saw their arms bitten about twenty times. . . . Their arms were put out of bed, and. . . . They could not do it themselves, as we were looking at them the whole time. We examined the bites and found on them the impression of eighteen or twenty teeth. . . ." (2, p. 261).

As in the Bloom-Gerb home, one of the victims, namely Dobby, was affected more often than the other. In addition to bites and movements of objects, some of which were also witnessed by

Durbin, the girls sometimes seemed to be pushed or pulled by an invisible force. This is reminiscent of Mrs. Gerb's impression that she was "glued" to a closet door prior to one of the puncture incidents (Event 23). Also in both cases choking experiences were reported. Mr. Earanda said, "We heard Mrs. Gerb scream. She was sitting on dayenport; felt choked. Policeman saw skin pinched as if by fingers, pin marks came then [on her throat]" (Event 24). Durbin said that "I saw the flesh at the side of her (Molly's) throat pushed in, whitish as if done with fingers, though I saw none" (2, p. 261).

The fact that both girls were the victims of the bites made Owen raise the possibility of double agency. However, he found it "slightly more likely that only one of them was the poltergeist center and operated by externally applied 'force' on the skin of herself and her sister" (2, p. 264). Owen considers the stigmatization theory according to which the effects are due to some process that operates internally in the body of the person. Mainly because of the rapid way in which the poltergeist bites appeared, he suggests that they were due to an externally applied force. He concludes that poltergeist woundings are "real but extremely rare" (2, p. 264).

I question the stigmata (and psychosomatic) theory for the same reason as Owen. A simpler theory is that the marks were the result of some minor skin disease, and were only thought to be "bites" when attention was drawn to them. However, on one of the occasions when I was present in the home while Mrs. Gerb apparently received the wounds, blood flowed from two of the four marks I saw (Event 41), and on two other occasions (Events 40 and 48) it showed without flowing.

Mrs. Gerb said she thought the bites were due to a spider or other animal. However, she neither searched for it nor asked others to do so while I was there. When she had been wounded on the breast (Event 48), I found her pressing a cross against the punctures, an act which seemed at variance with the animal theory. She was in bed and, she said, on the point of falling asleep when she received the punctures. On some occasions clusters of five or more punctures appeared simultaneously (Events 2, 3, and 4). It is difficult to suppose that one or more insects could produce these without discovery. It seemed even less likely that an animal such as a bat or a mouse could have caused the wounds without detection.

A third possibility is that they were self-inflicted. After Mrs. Gerb was wounded on the breast, I examined her bed for foreign objects, looked on the floor underneath the bed, and also checked for needles and other objects in her hair but found none. Of course, a pin might have been secreted other places.

Whatever the explanation, the punctures occurred within the

general context of the RSPK disturbances. Two of the twelve wounds whose times were known happened within about a minute of two of the seventy-one movements spread over the initial two weeks. Mrs. Gerb said she had never received such wounds before the present series of incidents.

In the case of some of the punctures, one followed another in short chronological order (Events 23-24 and 40-41), suggesting the kind of focusing effect found in the case of the movements of objects. There may also have been a relationship between the punctures and the knocking incidents. The punctures ceased shortly after the knocks began and the latter usually came in groups of two, three, or more, as did the wounds. Moreover, Mrs. Gerb was the main victim of both. The sounds frequently originated close to her, frightening and upsetting her, as had the punctures.

KNOCKING INCIDENTS

I was outside the house with Mrs. Bloom Sunday evening, March 18, when Mr. Ford, who was alone in the kitchen, heard "a muffled rap" on the window (Event 45). He looked out but saw no one. Two minutes later, after I had returned upstairs with Mrs. Bloom, we heard a series of knocks, apparently from downstairs (Event 46). These were followed shortly afterwards by another series or two (Event 47). Since everyone in the house was upstairs, the sounds were evidently not produced by members of the family. However, I did not investigate further since I was reluctant to leave the family unattended. The following day two similar series of knocks (Events 52 and 53) occurred while I was upstairs with the family. I hurried down, but found no one outside or near the house, nor in the downstairs room.

Wednesday evening, while I was away from the house, the knockings resumed. At 7:45, five minutes after I had arrived and was with the family upstairs, three very loud knocks were heard downstairs. I rushed down, but found no one (Event 64). Twenty-five minutes later, knocking again came from downstairs (Event 65), and again no one was found. D.L.B. arrived at 9:10 P.M. and twenty minutes afterwards, knocks were again heard (Event 66), but this time they seemed to come from upstairs. Mrs. Bloom was with D.L.B. and me in the kitchen and could not, we were convinced, have produced them. Mrs. Gerb was in her room and Louisa in her mother's. Five minutes later, there was a series of seven distinct knocks (Event 67) with the people in the same areas as before. Again, Mrs. Bloom could not, we were certain, have produced them. They seemed to come from the opposite part of the hallway

D.L.B. and I hurried into the two bedrooms. We found Louisa in her mother's room, on the bed, wrapped in a blanket and reading. Mrs. Gerb was in bed in her room. Trying to reproduce the noise, we found this could be done by knocking on the frame of the painting over Mrs. Gerb's bed. We therefore suspected her of having caused it. D.L.B. consequently remained in Mrs. Gerb's room to keep her under observation while I returned to the kitchen with Mrs. Bloom. Five minutes later, there was a similar series of knocks (Event 68). At this time, D.L.B. was watching Mrs. Gerb. I was with Mrs. Bloom in the kitchen, and Louisa was in the bathroom. Since the sounds seemed to come from the painting or possibly from the wall between Mrs. Gerb's and Mrs. Bloom's rooms, or somewhere in that neighborhood, the only normal explanation seemed to be that Mrs. Gerb was producing them by knocking against the wall underneath the covers, though as far as D.L.B. could see, she was not moving. To exclude the possibility that she was making the knocks underneath the covers, D.L.B. took both of her hands in his. Shortly afterwards, at 9:53 P.M., there was a series of knocks (Event 69) when I was still in the kitchen with Mrs. Bloom, Louisa was in bed in her mother's room, and Mrs. Gerb in bed, her hands being held by D.L.B. D.L.B. was certain she had not produced them. In this case, he thought the knocks came from the hallway rather than from the wall next to Mrs. Gerb's bed. I felt certain that they did not come from the kitchen where Mrs. Bloom and I were, but from the opposite side of the house. I considered the possibility that Louisa produced them by knocking on Mrs. Bloom's bed or the wall behind it, but this was inconsistent with D.L.B.'s impression of the direction of the source of the sounds. The door to Mrs. Bloom's room was open and the lights were on then and at the other times that night when the sounds were heard. Louisa could not, I thought, have crossed the room to the north wall and knocked on it without detection by me since part of the area between the wall and bed could be seen from the kitchen. The moment the knocks were heard, I entered the hallway and from there had a full view of Louisa, who was lying quietly on her mother's bed. She could not, I thought, have left the bed and knocked on the west or north walls or on objects in those areas and returned without detection.

At 10:00 P.M., when the people were in the same rooms, knocks were again heard (Event 70), but only by Mrs. Bloom, Louisa, and me. D.L.B. was talking to Mrs. Gerb at the time. At 11:00 P.M., D.L.B. and I began a hypnosis session with Mrs. Bloom in Louisa's room. At 11:40 P.M., while Mrs. Bloom was still under hypnosis and D.L.B. was with her, and I was with Mrs. Gerb in her room, having helped her to the kitchen for some food and then to the

bathroom, and as Mrs. Gerb was lying down, the knocking resumed (Event 71). Louisa seemed to be asleep in Mrs. Bloom's room. Again, it was difficult to understand how any of the three women could have made the sounds normally. There were two additional series of knockings (Events 72 and 73) when D.L.B. was present, and three after he had left (Events 74, 75, and 79) and when I was alone with the family. In all cases except one (Event 72), when D.L.B. and I were downstairs at the time the knocking was heard, either he or I was with Mrs. Bloom. On one occasion he was asking Mrs. Bloom whether there would be other disturbances that night when the knocking was heard (Event 73).

The sounds exhibited marked focusing effects both insofar as the series of knocks tended to follow each other and insofar as they tended to come from the same two areas, the downstairs room and Mrs. Gerb's room.

ANALYSES FOR AGENCY

Studies were made of the times and places of the events in the hope of revealing their source. Beginning with Sunday, the events whose times were known were distributed as follows over the seven days of the week: sixteen, eleven, fifteen, twenty, seven, seven, and thirty-six. This is a significantly uneven distribution ($\chi^2 = 37.75$, 6 d.f., $P < .0001$). The most active day was Saturday and the least active days, Thursday and Friday. The only occurrences registered for Thursdays took place in the early morning, and they were continuations of Wednesday night's events. When we examine this situation in relation to the family's activities, we find that on the first Thursday, only Mrs. Gerb was in the house during the day and that no one was at home on Wednesday and Thursday nights.

Counting the events at two-hour intervals during the day, beginning 12:00 midnight-1:59 A.M., they were grouped: twenty, two, one, zero, three, four, eighteen, nine, eleven, twenty-two, and fourteen, with one additional incident sometime before noon and six after. This is also significant ($\chi^2 = 84.77$, 11 d.f., $P < .0001$). Most of the events were between two o'clock in the afternoon and two in the morning. When these figures are studied in relation to the activities of the three women, most of the occurrences coincided with their waking hours. There was a conspicuous reduction late at night when they were probably asleep. The bedtimes of the three members of the family were not the same, Mrs. Bloom usually staying up later than her mother and daughter. In eleven cases Louisa was probably asleep during the disturbances; and in

ten, Mrs. Gerb. There seem to have been no incidents when Mrs. Bloom was asleep, with one possible exception, when she said she was dozing (Event 26).³ If wakefulness is associated with RSPK agency, Mrs. Bloom is more strongly indicated than the two others.

On the assumption the RSPK agent is likely to be in the area when something happens, I counted the incidents when each member of the family was at home. Mrs. Bloom was known to be at home during one hundred disturbances; Mrs. Gerb was present during ninety-eight; and Louisa, during seventy-one. When we consider the times when the members of the family were said to be away, Mrs. Bloom and Mrs. Gerb were both absent for six, and Louisa for twenty-nine events. The figures suggest that either or both of the two older women, rather than Louisa, were the agents. As a further aid in determining the role of the three members of the family, the average distance was calculated between their location and the place in the house where a movement originated. If a person was only stated to be in a given room or area but her exact position was not indicated, I have used the center of the room as the place she occupied. Since the localization of sounds and punctures presented difficulties, these have not been included in the analysis. Figures were obtained by adding the individual distances between the events and each of the three women and dividing this figure by the number of events. In Mrs. Bloom's case, there were thirty-five occurrences whose distances from her were known and the sum of these was 472 feet. Consequently, the average distance per event is $(472/35 =) 13.5$ feet. For Mrs. Gerb, this figure was $(562/39 =) 14.6$ feet, and for Louisa $(467/29 =) 16.1$ feet. Thirdly, a study was made of the proximity factor for the twenty-three events when all members of the family were at home. Occasionally, two or all three were reportedly equally close to an event. Mrs. Bloom was closest to the disturbance in twelve cases, or was among those closest to it. For Mrs. Gerb and Louisa, the figures were nine and six, respectively. This distribution is not significant.

None of the figures suggest that Louisa was the focal point for the disturbances. Mrs. Bloom and her mother were present and absent for about an equal number of incidents. Mrs. Bloom's average distance from the origin of movements was slightly shorter than her mother's and she was slightly more often closer to them. However, the differences are not large and leave room for doubt. A study of the physical and psychological aspects of the occurrences may throw more light on the question of agency.

³ However, there was an incident when she was hypnotized (Event 71) and another when she was lying in a state of semiconsciousness on the floor (Event 104).

PHYSICAL ASPECTS

In two earlier studies (3,4) there was a reduction in the number of occurrences with increased distance from the ostensible agent. In the present study, there were thirty-five instances where Mrs. Bloom was present in the home and when her distance of approximate distance from the origin of movement could be calculated. Using the groupings of 1-5 feet, 6-10 feet, etc., the distribution comes out as twelve, seven, four, two, two, four, and four. A linear regression analysis shows that the attenuation is significant ($t = -2.21$, $r = -.703$, 5 d.f., $P < .05$). The thirty-nine figures for Mrs. Gerb, seven, four, nine, seven, twelve, zero, and zero, did not show any decrease. In other words, the role of agent seems to fit Mrs. Bloom better than her mother. (The twenty-nine occurrences whose distances from Louisa were known were distributed as follows over the seven distance groupings: six, three, one, five, twelve, two, and zero.)

However, the ambiguity in the figures mentioned previously raises certain questions about agency which I shall return to later. It should also be added that there were five movements when Mrs. Bloom was not in the home. If these had been incorporated in the analysis, the evidence for attenuation would have become weaker.

For reasons similar to those discussed in the earlier papers (3, 4), the attenuation effect cannot be easily explained in terms of "observation and target-grouping artifacts" (partially because of the lack of attenuation with respect to Mrs. Gerb and Louisa) nor in terms of "motivational artifacts" (only one of the twelve objects disturbed near Mrs. Bloom is likely to have been in the foreground of her attention). However, the attenuation could be a "fraud artifact." If Mrs. Bloom caused several of the incidents fraudulently, a clustering of occurrences might have resulted in her immediate vicinity, since she might have been more likely to throw things that were close at hand than those further away. The following analyses rest on the assumption that most of the incidents were genuine, including those that happened close to Mrs. Bloom.

Dr. John L. Artley has made a mathematical analysis of the attenuation effect in relation to four curves, a freehand estimate of a smoothly, decreasing curve which fits the seven observational points the best, a curve of the inverse function, an exponential curve of decay, and a curve of the cardinal function.

The theoretical aspects of the four curves have been discussed in the previous two papers (3, 4) and will not be repeated. In this case the function for exponential decay is:

$$N = 13.3e^{-0.0365R}$$

The standard deviation for the graphical curve is 1.6, for the inverse function, 2.0, for the exponential decay function, 4.0, and for the cardinal function, 5.7. Since the best fit has the lowest SD, the data are best accounted for by the inverse function.

Table 1 shows the relationship of the average length of movement to distance from Mrs. Bloom for the thirty-one objects where

Table 1
AVERAGE DISTANCE OF MOVEMENT IN FEET
IN RELATION TO PROXIMITY TO MRS. BLOOM

1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35
10.9 (11)	12.3 (7)	13.5 (2)	1 (1)	10 (2)	12.75 (4)	15.7 (3)

Note: The figures in parentheses refer to the number of incidents from which the averages are calculated.

these two factors were known. These figures clearly do not show an attenuation effect. However, they resemble those obtained in the two previous studies. In one respect, the occurrences follow known energetic rules insofar as there were only few movements of heavy objects, such as pieces of furniture.

Ten disturbances originated in front of Mrs. Bloom and two in back, a significant difference ($\chi^2 = 5.3$, 1 d.f., $P < .05$). There was no marked favoring of sides, six beginning at her left and four at her right. There was a significant tendency for the movements to be toward Mrs. Bloom, twenty-two following this direction while ten moved away ($\chi^2 = 4.8$, 1 d.f., $P < .05$).

There was an insignificant tendency for the objects to move in a clockwise direction in relation to her, nineteen following this trend and eleven moving counterclockwise.⁴

In nine cases the path of movement was a curved one, assuming that the information regarding the origin and termination of the object was correct. Eight of these were counterclockwise and one clockwise, that is, facing the direction of movement, eight objects turned to the left and one to the right. This difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.44$, 1 d.f., $P < .05$). There was a significant

⁴ As before (3) objects that started off toward the ostensible agent and then passed him, were counted with the objects moving toward him; so were objects which moved in his direction and then veered away.

⁵ An object whose point of origin was not known but whose terminating movements appeared to be in a clockwise direction in relation to Mrs. Bloom was grouped with the clockwise movements, while another incident where the initial direction was counterclockwise, then veering off toward the center of the room occupied by Mrs. Bloom, was classified with the counterclockwise movements.

preference for objects to move in a northerly over a southerly direction, with thirty-four following this trend and sixteen the opposite ($\chi^2 = 6.48$, 1 d.f., $2P < .05$). There was no east-west difference (twenty-three against twenty-four).

In six instances at least the terminating stage of movement was observed. As a rule, there was nothing unusual about this. The only exceptions were a glass and a milk bottle seen, respectively, by Louisa and Mr. Ford (Events 6 and 25). The glass "went bump, bump, bouncing like it was dancing" and then rolled off Mrs. Bloom's bed. The milk bottle "was not actually airborne—it more bounced than anything else." Occasionally the movement was upward as in the case of two glasses that left the kitchen sink (Events 5 and 8). Similarly, a saucer that moved from the sideboard and hit the wall above the piano (Event 22), and a pillow that went from the sofa and struck the venetian blinds (Event 27), described upward trajectories.

There were about four times as many incidents with dielectric or probable dielectric objects as with conductors or probable conductors. The elements most often present in the disturbed objects were hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon. However, it is not possible to determine whether the predominance of these materials and of dielectric objects is due to their greater sensitivity to psi energy or to a greater abundance of such objects in the home.

FOCUSING EFFECTS

The tendency for certain objects or kinds of objects to be repeatedly disturbed, or for certain areas in the house to be repeatedly involved in RSPK cases has been referred to, respectively, as "object focusing" and "area focusing" (3).

Table 2 shows recurrences with single objects in relation to their distances from Mrs. Bloom. For each object the first check mark indicates the first disturbance, the second check mark the second disturbance, etc. Five objects accounted for fifteen disturbances, of which ten were repetitions. It is possible that there were more recurrences since some of the ashtray and vase incidents may have involved the same objects. The kitchen lamp was featured in the longest series of repetitions. Four were beyond the 1-5 feet range, suggesting something other than proximity as the cause. The only other repetition that was known to be beyond the close proximity grouping was the second incident with the letter opener. Additional evidence for object focusing comes from the close succession of three of the lamp incidents (Events 28, 30, and 31).

Table 2

FOCUSING ON INDIVIDUAL OBJECTS

Object	Occurrence Number	Distance of Occurrence from Mrs. Bloom							Number of Repetitions
		1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	
Wall Lamp	11 28 30 31 38 84				✓			✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	5
Telephone Base	29 90 100	✓						✓ ✓	2
Letter Opener	32 76				✓			✓	1
Alarm Clock	104 107 ^b		✓					✓	1
Chair	85 86							✓ ✓	1
Totals: 5	15	2			2			1 10	10

^a Beyond 1-5 feet range.

^b This refers to a clock face presumably belonging to the alarm clock.

Table 3 shows focusing on kinds of objects. Only the first incident with each object is entered to keep the figures independent of the previous analysis. If we again ignore episodes 1-5 feet from Mrs. Bloom and when the distances were unknown, five containers with cleansing or grooming materials, three drinking glasses, four brushes, and the three gramophone records remain.

Occasionally, episodes with the same kinds of objects took place in close succession at a distance from Mrs. Bloom, reinforcing the impression that some of the objects were endowed with a special RSPK property. Most of the toilet containers fall into this category (Events 54, 56, 57, 58, 60, 95, and 96; events that happened beyond the 1-5 feet range have been italicized). The three drinking glass movements also happened in short succession (Events 5, 6, and 8), and three brush incidents followed each other with only sounds or punctures intervening (Events 42, 44, and 49).

However, several of the recurrences were in the same places in the home as the first disturbances of objects of that type. It is

Table 3

FOCUSING ON TYPES OF OBJECTS

Object	Distance of Occurrence from Mrs. Bloom								Totals
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	?	
Containers:									
Hand Lotion	1								1
Deodorant, Yardley		1							1
Hair Spray, Shampoo									1
Noxzema									1
Wax, Shoe Polish									1
Sardines, Turtle Food									1
Empty Milk Bottles	1	1							2
Empty Bottle								1	1
Poodle Bottle								1	1
Flower Pot								1	1
Totals:	2	2					1	11	16
Tableware:									
Cocktail Set	4							1	5
Drinking Glasses						2	1		3
Cups		1							1
Saucer	1								1
Knives								1	1
Beer Opener								1	1
Totals:	5	1				2	1	4	13
Miscellaneous Objects:									
Toilet, Clothes Brushes			1		2				3
Ashtrays	2								2
Flower Vases	1		1						2
Gramophone Records		2							2
Alarm Clocks	1						1		2
Figurines		1							1
Lamps								2	2
Light Bulb								1	1
Flashlight								1	1
Mirror			1						1
Pen						1			1
Telephone Base	1								1
Pillow								1	1
Books								1	1
Corn								1	1
Pennies						1			1
Letter Opener				1					1
Totals:	5	4	4	1	2	2	1	15	34
Furniture:									
Tea Cart								1	1
Serving Table								1	1
Chair								1	1
Totals:								3	3
Grand Total:	12	7	4	1	2	4	1	33	66

* Beyond 1-5 feet range.

† One event beyond 1-5 feet range.

‡ Some of these incidents may have involved the same object.

therefore possible that the place rather than the object was the important factor.

Table 4 shows the distribution of events over the areas of the home. If we disregard events in the 1-5 feet category and object

Table 4

FOCUSING ON AREAS IN THE HOUSE

Areas	Mrs. Bloom's Distance from Occurrence								Totals	Less 1-5 Feet and Distance Unknown	Less Repetitions
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	31-35	?			
Kitchen	3	2	2	1				1	10*	13	9
Mrs. Bloom's Room	6	2						1	9†	5	2
Bathroom		2	1						3	2	1
Louisa's Room	1	1	1						3	2	2
Hallway	1								1	0	0
Mrs. Gerb's Room				1	1	1		2	5	3	4
Unknown									4	0	0
Downstairs	1								1	0	0
Totals:	12	7	4	2	2	4	4	41	76	32	18

* Four events beyond 1-5 feet range.

† Two events beyond 1-5 feet range.

‡ Three events beyond 1-5 feet range.

repetitions, the evidence for area focusing is strongest with regard to the kitchen, while there was a deficiency of episodes in the hallway and downstairs room. Since the number of possible RSPK targets may have been limited to the few objects on the telephone table, this could account for the relative lack of incidents in the hall. As mentioned before, the bottle incidents in the bathroom could be attributed either to focusing on that room or on toilet and cleaning bottles. There may also have been a focusing on special areas within the rooms. In the kitchen three of the nine movements originated from the sink area and three from or above the table; in Mrs. Gerb's room, three of the four objects moved from her desk; and in Mrs. Bloom's room, there were two simultaneous movements from the dresser.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The relations between the three members in the family, particularly between Mrs. Bloom and her mother, were strained. On the basis of the two earlier studies (3, 4), it seemed that repressed hostility by the agent toward others in the home may be a contributory cause of RSPK disturbances. However, the hostility between Mrs. Bloom and her mother was not entirely masked. On several occasions, Mrs. Bloom was overtly critical of her mother

Mr. and Mrs. Gerb were divorced and Mrs. Bloom blamed her mother for the breakup of the marriage. The family was Catholic, but both Mr. Gerb and his daughter had left the church. Mrs. Bloom did not express hostility toward her father, but related an incident, when she was ten years old, where his behavior to her had been exceptionally cruel.

Mrs. Gerb was a diabetic and her illness was a drain on her daughter's finances and energy. Mrs. Bloom said that her mother's condition brought on dizzy spells which were sometimes followed by hysterical outbursts for which she would have amnesia. She took medication for the dizziness and sometimes Mrs. Bloom gave her insulin injections.

Personality Studies

The three members of the family completed the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). Mrs. Gerb did not know sufficient English to understand the questions, so I had to translate them into German. The profiles were analyzed by Dr. John Altrocchi. Psychological studies were also made by Dr. David L. Blumenthal and Dr. Theodore H. Barrett.

I asked Dr. Altrocchi to make a guess as to which of the three women was the central figure in the disturbances. He chose Louisa. Qualifying his remarks with the observation that she was younger than usual for the MMPI, he said,

... it is easy to imagine Louisa being involved in incidents with flying objects, either consciously or unconsciously, with the primary motivation being rebellion, with the purpose of upsetting her mother or grandmother (probably her grandmother) while at the same time punishing herself by getting herself into trouble.

My attempt to use the MMPI as a diagnostic tool for discovering the agent in poltergeist disorders was a failure in this case. However, Dr. Altrocchi did not find the kind of repressed hostility observed in other cases (3, 4). The MMPI suggested that Louisa's rebelliousness was overt rather than repressed.

The MMPI did not reveal much about Mrs. Bloom:

This is one of those profiles with a large number of very low scores—an unusual profile which is quite hard to interpret. One gets a clear general impression of solid ego strength, lack of psychopathology, a reasonably relaxed and unanxious manner in a rather quiet and introverted woman. In some ways this is the healthiest of the three profiles, but it is also the most unusual and one would want to know much more about her. Mrs. Bloom may well be the

least forceful of the three. Certainly she is a conventional and highly socialized woman, but there well may be a flare of individuality and originality in her. There is adequate ego strength and resiliency and an absence of psychiatric complaints. Under stress she would probably react with somatic symptoms. She is likely to be rather cautious and not terribly interested in revealing much about herself. She is not likely to feel very enthused about the phenomena in which her family is involved and would not be likely to revel in the publicity or to have a central motivational part in the happenings. . . .

There is little here to throw light on Mrs. Bloom's apparent role in the disturbances. The most revealing statement may be that she could be expected to react with somatic symptoms under stress. This actually was the case, as we shall see later.

Mrs. Gerb showed a more pathological personality. With the information we have about Mrs. Bloom from the psychological interviews, it is not difficult to see that conflicts might arise between her and her mother. Dr. Altrocchi qualified his remarks with the observation that the translation of the questions into German may have introduced changes which may have affected the replies.

This profile clearly indicates more psychological disturbance in the form of depression than the other two profiles, but much more striking is the really extreme degree to which it reveals a need to present a good front. Mrs. Gerb's stance toward taking this test and probably toward life in general and particularly her self-presentation involve excessive moral virtue, as if she is saying to us that she never has an angry thought, never does a wrong thing, and always behaves in a super-Christian manner. One wonders how much of this is culturally determined. She totally denies all animal aspects of herself and is essentially saying that she has no "id." Such a person can be very difficult to live with. . . .

Dr. Barrett, in his summary of Mrs. Bloom's responses to the Rorschach and Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), found her

... to be in good contact with reality. There are no suggestions of a psychotic tendency in this rather guarded record. This type of constricted record is consistent with conversion hysteria of a kind in which symptomatology is restricted. . . . The subject is coping with heightened anxiety and probably with feelings of inadequacy. She may feel a desire to regress from the problems of an adult role. . . . A sexual problem involving anxiety in heterosexual relations . . . seems to be present. . . . She is coping with intense feelings of rejection. She may long for a passive role with a protecting man, a relationship which she has apparently been unable to achieve. The subject seems to see her mother as quite possessive, controlling, and dominating. She directs considerable hostility toward her. . . .

I asked Dr. Gertrude R. Schmeidler to examine the Rorschach and TAT records. She found herself in agreement with Dr. Barrett and added the following, first about Mrs. Bloom's stories to the TAT pictures:

In not a single story does the identification figure act (except by attempted persuasion). Powerful, unhappy emotions are described in all but one of the stories, but they do not result in overt activity; they result in waiting, hoping, attempted persuasion, and impotence. In the single happy story the theme is repeated with an appropriate variation: looking for the good things that will be supplied. Unhappiness and passivity are extraordinarily consistent.

The Rorschach is a reasonably sensible, practical record, but with little overt action, and with strong indications of repression and denial as the way of coping with stress. It indicates that as a child she was freer and livelier than now; something of the child's freedom and mischief are still in reserve as a part of her personality. This is to be expected in a normal adult record, and seems neither unusually strong nor a source of conflict or guilt. The record does not indicate that she acts childishly.

If you had given me a batch of records including this one, and asked me to rank them in order of the likelihood of a poltergeist, this would have probably been below the middle of the list. It does not seem to me to have the vitality or the power that a poltergeist shows.

If you tell me that this is the record of someone responsible for poltergeist phenomena, then I will keep two interpretations as possibilities. One derives from Mrs. Bloom's imputation of devilish ideas to her own mother. It is that the mother represents a source of power on which Mrs. Bloom draws; that there's a kind of field interaction here. The other is that the Rorschach and TAT are inadequate as personality instruments. What they say is all right (that she is unhappy, that she represses, that she does not act out her desires in normal constructive or destructive ways) but they do not say enough to give the whole picture.

Dr. Blumenthal found

... a high level of conflict between Mrs. Bloom and the grandmother. They are very different in regard to their attitude toward life in general, and sex in particular. The grandmother has always been a suppressed personality, afraid of both aggression and sexuality, attempting to maintain a socially acceptable appearance at all times. This veneer of acceptability is punctuated with episodic outbursts of emotion followed by shame and regrets at having lost her head. Mrs. Bloom is in rebellion against many of her mother's attitudes, and seems to manifest very different standards of living herself. ... Most of the occurrences appeared to take the grandmother as their

target, as if these phenomena served as an extension of Mrs. Bloom's personality.

She shows real fear of antagonizing her mother, although this appears to be a paradoxical statement in view of her many expressions of irritation with her. ... [She] was inhibited in terms of expressing her rebellion towards mother. The phenomena might have served this purpose for her.

[She has] strong unfulfilled dependency needs, fixated apparently at an oral level. ... An important conflict in her life appears to be with father-people. She is drawn continually to paternal figures and ... moves from one suitor to another.

There is no indication of any psychotic disorder—no indication of fugue or dissociated states.

During Dr. Blumenthal's final interview with Mrs. Bloom, she said that when she was faced with problems, this would affect her stomach and she would get cramps and throw up. Toward the end of the interview with Dr. Blumenthal, as she was discussing the situation at home with Mrs. Gerb, she had to go to the rest room to vomit. Dr. Blumenthal commented:

... Obviously this is a psychophysical reaction she has to her mother and we see here what could be termed an affect equivalent—body is expressing a certain amount of emotion that she will not let herself recognize. One component of this emotion expresses itself probably through her stomach. The ideational content is obviously repressed. ...

Although she sees the solution to her problem in the direction of convincing her mother to behave differently, apparently she does not see her compliance to her mother's control mechanism as being important. From the point of view of the research, it is interesting to speculate as to whether this dissociation between the ideational component and the energy component of the emotion can have any bearing on the parapsychological phenomena. Can the affective energy dissociated from the thought be deflected in a parapsychological direction?

Psychological Data in Relation to Occurrences

The first incident, the breakage of Mrs. Gerb's cup, set the theme for the disturbances, many of which seemed to be directed against her. This is consistent with what we know about the relations in the home. The conflict seemed to be expressed particularly clearly by two of the gramophone incidents. The first record to break belonged to Mrs. Gerb and was entitled "Mit Mir zu Hause" (At Home with Me, Event 33). It came from a rack holding thirty-five records, of which only four belonged to Mrs. Gerb. The same message may have been expressed when a disc, entitled "Meine Mamma," flew out of Mrs. Bloom's room (Event 99).

Since Mrs. Bloom was working, Mrs. Gerb was largely responsible for the preparation of meals. On one occasion when I was present, Mrs. Gerb had done something wrong with the food we were to have for dinner and Mrs. Bloom showed her irritation. Many of the incidents took place in the kitchen. Since this was also used as the family room, it may have provided the main setting for the contacts between the two women and therefore for the RSPK disturbances.

Most of the movements were directed toward the north. This was the part of the home where the kitchen, stairs, and Mrs. Gerb's room were located. Louisa's room, the bathroom, and Mrs. Bloom's room were on the opposite, southern side. Since Mrs. Gerb occupied part of the north side of the home and since the kitchen may have been an area of conflict between her and her daughter, it fits the interpersonal pattern that there should have been more movements in this direction than in the opposite.

Another recurring theme seemed to involve Mrs. Bloom's relation to father-figures. The events began on Mr. Gerb's birthday and some of the other incidents brought Mr. Earanda into the picture. After a vacation in Florida, Mrs. Bloom had brought him a souvenir bottle with a nude figurine of a woman decorating the cork. Mr. Earanda found the present inappropriate, and it remained on the dresser in Mrs. Bloom's room. The figurine broke one afternoon, probably while Mr. and Mrs. Earanda were in the house (Event 16). The second record that broke, "Honeymoon in Italy" (Event 50), belonged to Mrs. Bloom, and may have been a return to the theme of her unsettled marital life.

Louisa did not seem to be a main source of friction for her mother. Mrs. Bloom was dissatisfied with her schoolwork and had other criticisms, but these are not unusual for a parent with a teen-age daughter. Nevertheless, a few of the incidents seemed to be directed toward Louisa. An ornamental glass swan, which she treasured, broke in the first phase of the disturbances (Event 20). There were three events in Louisa's room after Mrs. Gerb's departure while Louisa and Mrs. Bloom were alone. One took place there while she and Mrs. Bloom were watching TV (Event 111) and two when they were in the kitchen doing Louisa's homework (Events 112 and 113). Louisa was not doing as well in school as her mother expected and it is easy to suppose that the homework situation was tense.

The disturbances of toilet and drinking utensils may conceivably be expressions of Mrs. Bloom's dependency needs. However, these events are general enough to represent a wide range of needs and the message they convey, if any, may be a quite different one.

In two cases Mrs. Gerb actually seemed to be the target for the moving objects. A serving table moved toward her as she was lying in bed (Event 82), and a milk bottle, which Mr. Earanda had placed flat on the counter to prevent its tipping over accidentally, left its place, grazing Mrs. Gerb before it broke on the floor (Event 15). Later, a saucer in the downstairs room, which he had placed in a fruit bowl to prevent its falling down accidentally, grazed Mrs. Bloom and then hit the wall (Event 22). It is interesting that two objects which had been handled by Mr. Earanda to prevent breakage should be disturbed shortly afterwards and should actually hit the mother and daughter. The lamp also moved once shortly after Mr. Earanda had handled it (Event 31).

In three cases, the direction of movements may have pointed toward visitors to the home. Mr. Cook had placed a mirror on a chair in Mrs. Bloom's room so he could watch her from the kitchen. This was shattered by an ashtray (Event 26). From Mrs. Bloom's position, the mirror presumably showed Mr. Cook's reflection. In another instance, the object moved toward me (Event 78), but since I was standing in front of Mrs. Gerb's bed, where she was lying, it is uncertain whether she or I was the target. Finally, one of the records landed at the feet of Mrs. Earanda (Event 99) when she was in the hall with Mrs. Bloom.

If Mrs. Gerb was rarely a target for the moving objects, she was very much the victim as far as the punctures were concerned. Whether or not they were paranormal, they seemed to fit the psychological situation. Mrs. Bloom gave her mother insulin injections and she told me that Mrs. Gerb was afraid of the needle. In view of the fact that Mrs. Gerb's illness was a strain on her daughter, the inflictions of these harmless, but frightening, piercings may not have been as meaningless as they seemed. However, the theory that she was the agent for the punctures is not supported by the distance analysis. Of the ten cases when Mrs. Bloom's locations were known, in five Mrs. Gerb was 1-15 feet from her, in four, 16-30 feet; and in one, only Mr. Earanda was in the home with her.

On the evening of Sunday, March 18, the puncture episodes terminated and the knockings commenced. As had the punctures, the banging noises began at a distance from Mrs. Gerb, in the kitchen and downstairs part of the home, but later often seemed to be located in or near the wall by her bed. Though a series of bangs was probably not as frightening to Mrs. Gerb as a series of punctures, their loudness and frequency seemed to greatly upset her. I mentioned earlier that there were similarities in patterning between the punctures and the sounds. They may also have been related in Mrs. Bloom's mind. At the end of a hypnosis session

(see page 95), when Dr. Blumenthal asked her what the bites were like, she replied, "sewing needle, dang, dang, dang."

The fact that Mrs. Bloom on one occasion knocked on the floor when she seemed to be in a dissociated state may also indicate that she had a hand, albeit an invisible one, in the other knockings.

Agent's Activities

Table 5 shows the activities of Mrs. Bloom in relation to the occurrences. If we concentrate on movements of objects beyond

Table 5
MRS. BLOOM'S ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO OCCURRENCES

Activity	Objects Disturbed						Totals	Total Minus 1-5 Feet, Punc- tures, Noises, and Distance Unknown
	Con- tainers	Table- ware	Miscel- laneous Objects	Furni- ture	Punc- tures	Noises		
Lying in Bed			2*			1*	3	1
Lying on the Floor			1				1	
Seated with W.G.R.			4				4	
Seated with Mrs. Gerb			1*		3	8	15	4
Seated, Watching TV with Louisa	1				1		3	1
Seated, Doing Homework with Louisa	1						1	
Seated Alone	1*		1*				2	
Walking Toward W.G.R.			1				1	
Standing, Activity Unknown							1	
Standing, Phoning Mr. Earanda							1	
Phoning Mr. Earanda			1				1	
Talking with Mrs. Gerb and Mr. Bloom			1				1	
Talking with W.G.R.			1				1	
Standing with W.G.R.			1				1	
Seated with Mrs. Earanda			1			1	2	1
Totals:	3	3	17		5	10	38	13

Note: Four containers and a vase which fell while Mrs. Bloom was at her restaurant are not included in the table. At the time of two of these episodes she was waiting on customers.

- * With Louisa during one occurrence.
- * Hypnotized, with Dr. Blumenthal.
- * Reading the paper.
- * Possibly attending to Mr. Ford.
- * Possibly attending to W.G.R. and Mrs. Gerb.

five feet, most of the thirteen incidents took place while she was seated, standing, or walking. In seven, she was discussing the disturbances with me or appeared to be attending to me. During

three episodes, she was talking, phoning, or attending to others, and in two cases she was sitting with Mrs. Gerb or Mrs. Earanda. Only in one case was she lying in bed, though probably not asleep. In short, during nearly all of the disturbances, Mrs. Bloom was involved in a social situation. The occurrences did not seem related to her being with any one person. The relatively large number of times she was with me can probably be attributed to the fact that as a rule only I recorded her activities.

Unconsciousness of Phenomena

If Mrs. Bloom was the agent for the occurrences, she did not seem to be aware of it. The tendency for the disturbances to take place when she was engaged in purposeful activity apparently unrelated to the event in question suggests that the episodes were triggered in her unconscious.

In an attempt to discover unconscious material that might be relevant to the incidents, D.L.B. and I conducted a hypnosis session with Mrs. Bloom Wednesday evening, March 21. She had no difficulty in stating that she was upset with her mother, but could throw no light on the cause of the events.

There was a curious, but possibly coincidental, connection between the bangs and the words "sewing needle, dang, dang, dang." When she said these words, her mother woke up and asked help to go to the kitchen and the bathroom. After I had escorted her back and as she was lying down and while Mrs. Bloom was still hypnotized, there was a series of knocks (Event 71).

POLTERGEIST FÜR ZWEI?

If Mrs. Bloom was the agent of all the occurrences, including the punctures, it was curious that she herself was once a victim. As in the Durbin case (2), the fact that two persons were afflicted raises the possibility of double agency. Dr. Schmeidler suggested that a "poltergeist à deux" situation might have developed, corresponding to the old psychiatric concept of "folie à deux," and proposed the phrase which heads this section. The first few events are not inconsistent with a RSPK contest between the two women. Half an hour after Mrs. Gerb's cup broke, Mrs. Bloom received five punctures close to her right hand (the one, we might note, with which she probably administered the shots to her mother). Next, Mrs. Gerb received two clusters of pricks.

It seems doubtful that Mrs. Gerb was the sole agent, mainly because of the absence of attenuation of occurrences in relation

to her locations. On the other hand, her personality, especially her use of repression in dealing with unacceptable emotions, is not inconsistent with a poltergeist role.

The theory that Mrs. Gerb was a secondary agent combines well with the focusing hypothesis. According to this, certain objects have become endowed with a special sensitivity to psi energy so that they may be disturbed even at great distances from the agent. However, no disturbances were known to occur when the house was empty. For the five movements when Mrs. Bloom was absent, her mother and daughter were at home (the former being closest to three of the events, the latter to two). Perhaps these objects, four of which were toilet containers, possessed this special sensitivity so that the lower level of PK ability possessed by Mrs. Gerb was sufficient to trigger the incidents. If she contributed to the disturbances in this way, this might also account for some of the events that took place at the extreme distances from Mrs. Bloom. Three of these occurred in Mrs. Gerb's room while she was there.

Dr. Schmeidler suggested there might be a "field interaction" between the two women. If we ask how the energy of the two psi fields was supplied, Dr. Blumenthal's question whether the "energy component" of Mrs. Bloom's emotion could have been "deflected in a parapsychological direction" may be relevant. There is a suggestion that the RSPK disturbances were associated with extrasomatic releases of energy which otherwise were expended by organic disorders. Mrs. Bloom told me that on Wednesday, March 21, she had vomited in the morning and also in the afternoon while she was in her restaurant. No occurrences took place on Tuesday, with the exception of one event at 12:45 in the morning, nor on Wednesday until late afternoon, shortly before Mrs. Bloom left the restaurant. Mrs. Gerb's fainting spells may also in part have been psychosomatic. She said she had none while she was in Germany, and she also did not have any after her return in October and until tensions in the family again began to mount. There may have been an inverse relation between the psychosomatic symptoms and the RSPK effects; Mrs. Bloom's vomiting episodes and Mrs. Gerb's fainting spells subsided during most of the periods covered by the RSPK disturbances. Perhaps the energy usually expended on psychosomatic complaints was diverted to the psi fields.

CONCLUSION

This study is not presented with the intention of proving anything. Conviction is only likely to result from the recurrence of similar incidents under improved methods of observation in con-

junction with a plausible explanation. I have outlined the beginnings of a theory before (3). The presence of recurrent patterns is not necessarily indicative of paranormality. For instance, the attenuation phenomenon could be explained by fraud as well as by a reduction of psi energy. The investigator must have other evidence that he is not dealing with spurious effects. The brush incident (Event 49), the explosive noise produced by the vase (Event 78), and some of the knocking sounds (Events 68 and 69), caused me to rate the parapsychological interpretation above competing normal ones. Some of the events reported by other visitors reinforced this judgment.

Assuming that there were genuine RSPK occurrences and that they were sufficiently numerous to indicate valid trends, we may compare the characteristics of this case with those found in the previous two (3, 4). The three cases differ with respect to the age and sex of the ostensible agents; the type of RSPK effects; conscious attention to objects that would later move; directions of movements toward or away from the agents; the mathematical function which best described the attenuation; peculiarities of movements, such as rotating objects and changes of speed; the Rorschach and TAT findings (Michael revealed violent and hostile emotions under a calm exterior, while the tests of Arnold and Mrs. Bloom showed much less aggression); and degree of repression (the two boys seemed unaware of their feelings of anger, while Mrs. Bloom's hostility was not entirely repressed).

Some of these differences are probably related to differences in the personalities of the agents and the interpersonal relations in the homes. Other differences may have resulted from extraneous factors. For instance, the failure of the exponential function to provide a good fit in the Bloom-Gerb case might be due to the double agency which possibly was operating in that case. Other differences again might result from faulty observation or recording.

Whatever the explanations for the differences between the three cases, their similarities are striking. In the analysis of the groupings of the incidents in time, the day-to-day distributions in all cases seemed to be determined by whether the families and/or the ostensible agents were at home. The hourly distributions were also similar. For the eight-hour periods beginning at 12:00 midnight, the figures for the Lessing case (3) are six, seventeen,⁶ and forty-four; for the Newark case (4), zero, four, and thirty-eight; and for the Bloom-Gerb case, twenty-three, twenty-five, and fifty-six. In all, the majority of the occurrences were concentrated in the latter part of the day.

⁶ Incorrectly given as fourteen in the Newark paper (4, p. 170).

The three cases show a more or less smooth attenuation effect governing the disturbances in relation to the agent or main agent. For none of the other members of the families was there such a decline.

In all three cases, the movements in the 1-5 feet range were shorter than for the 6-10 and 11-15 feet groupings; and in all three there was a reduction in the 16-20 and 21-25 feet categories. In none of the cases were many pieces of furniture disturbed, and the distances they moved generally were shorter than those observed for lighter objects.

The analyses all showed a significant tendency for the movements to originate in front of the agent; in none was there a favoring of one side over the other. The objects tended to describe a clockwise motion in relation to the agent, but this was only significant in the Newark disturbances.

Several of the objects in the Newark and Bloom-Gerb homes apparently moved in curved paths and in both the motions also tended to be counterclockwise. In the Lessing case there was no evidence of curved trajectories, but the unscrewing of bottle caps is consistent with a force operating in a counterclockwise direction. In all three cases, many more dielectric objects were affected than conductors, and hydrogen, oxygen, and carbon headed the list of elements of which the disturbed objects were composed. It remains uncertain whether such objects are more sensitive to the presumed RSPK energy or whether there simply were more of them in the homes.

All the cases showed evidence of focusing of one or more of the three types and in all there were temporal clusterings of the events.

When we turn to the psychological analyses, the most obvious common feature is hostility in the agent which could not be adequately expressed in normal ways, the main target for the anger being another member or members of the family. This, taken in relation to the fairly normal psychological records of two of the agents, substantiates a suggestion made by Dr. Altrocchi in the Newark study that the disturbances may be the expression of pathological interpersonal relations rather than of pathological individual personalities. The selection of objects and the directions in which they moved seemed to express the tensions in this relationship.

With regard to the activities of the three agents at the time of the disturbances, Michael and Mrs. Bloom were often engaged in purposeful activities and the same seemed to be true for Arnold, though the data for him are more scarce. In none of the cases were there disturbances when the agents were deep asleep.

None of the investigations suggested that the agents were conscious of their roles in the disturbances. Mrs. Bloom and Arnold were hypnotized, but this procedure failed to uncover even unconscious knowledge of their involvement.

In summary, there seemed to be a sufficient number of shared features in the three studies to suggest the existence of common, lawful processes.

Some of the patterns must wait for further research and insight before their place in the RSPK process can be assessed. Others can be viewed, if only partially and provisionally, in terms of familiar physical and psychological interactions. At the heart of each of the three cases was an interpersonal relationship characterized by frustration and anger which could not be adequately expressed within the relationship. As a result, tensions built up which were released as psychic energy in the surroundings of the agents. Here it interacted with physical objects and its energy was converted to familiar forms, mainly kinetic and sonic energy. Since the process was initiated by tensions in the agent's personality caused by a thwarted interpersonal situation, the RSPK disturbances reflected these tensions and this relationship in the selection of objects, the directions in which they moved, and in the areas in which they were disturbed.

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