

WHAT ARE GHOSTS?

Definitions

Traditionally a **ghost** is the soul or spirit of a deceased person or animal. It can appear visibly or in many other forms – descriptions of apparitions vary widely. The mode has been describes as an invisible presence, a translucent or wispy shapes, orbs of energy all the way to realistic, life-like visions.

According to Wikipedia:

The English word *ghost* continues Old English *gást*, from a hypothetical Common Germanic *gaistaz*. It is common to West Germanic, but lacking in North and East Germanic (the equivalent word in Gothic is *ahma*, Old Norse has *andi*, *önd*). The pre-Germanic form was *ghoisdo-s*, apparently from a root denoting "fury, anger" reflected in Old Norse *geisa* "to rage". The Germanic word is recorded as masculine only, but likely continues a neuter *s*-stem. The original meaning of the Germanic word would thus have been an animating principle of the mind, in particular capable of excitation and fury (compare *óðr*). In Germanic Paganism, "Germanic Mercury", and the later Odin, was at the same time the conductor of the dead and the "lord of fury" leading the Wild Hunt.

That entry provides a complex of the history of the word ghost, but does not tell us much else. The article goes on to mention *spooks* (Dutch), *wraiths* (Scottish), *shades*, *poltergeist* (German) and *revenants*. Still not much help.

So, what is a ghost? Well the answer probably depends on who you are talking to. As we have already discussed, in general a ghost is considered to be the spirit or soul of a person that has remained on earth after death. Rather than fighting with linguistics or competing concepts, let's look at the various ways a ghost might be experienced. In time, you will form you own opinions and chances are these opinions will not have an impact on your investigations.

Types of Hauntings

Here is a very general list of some types of manifestations you may encounter. This list is not intended to be comprehensive; it is just a general overview.

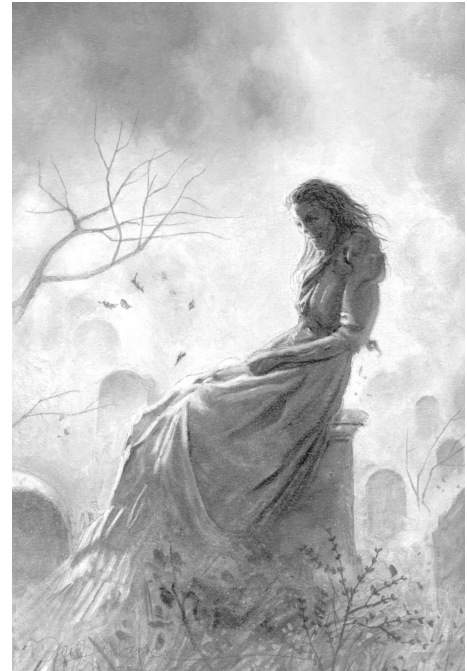
Residual hauntings seem to be the most common of paranormal event. Essentially they seem to be a psychic imprint of the past. This type of manifestation can occur on the site of a violent act, such a rape, murder or suicide. This highly potent and intense emotion and/or trauma can be so strong that it becomes permanently attached to a place, or object, and can be replayed over and over and over. It is almost as if they are on a “tape loop” performing the same actions again and again and again.

In contrast to violence, these events can also occur in a location where someone was happy or simply comfortable. The ghost adopts a “habitual” activity and continues to perform these actions long after death. Perhaps this entity does not realize they are dead, or perhaps they are so comfortable that they simply refuse to leave and pass all the way to the other side.

These events can reoccur regularly at a certain hour, in certain month, yearly or even over unpredictable intervals such as every few decades or on a special anniversary. Usually the entity is completely unaware of anything going on around them. They are oblivious to the passage of time or transitions of ownership or observations. For them, only that moment exists. There is nothing else, no one else. However, they can sometimes interact with familiar objects such as keys, furniture, toys and objects in their living space such as doors and windows.

You may also encounter a **Disembodied Spirit at Unrest**. This type of manifestation is a bit more complicated. Often a disembodied spirit is self-aware and can seek attention interact with the living.

As with residual spirits, disembodied spirits are often the result of a traumatic death or in some cases there is an unresolved conflict or relationship. For some reason, an earthly concern leaves this spirit without peace or rest. They seem to be unable – or unwilling – to move on, to the next plane of existence.



These manifestations have personalities, likes and dislikes and they often have goals. They also have a will and (sometimes) the power to exert that will upon the physical world.

A disembodied spirit at unrest may manifest itself using any (or any combination of) the senses. Some of the phenomena generally associated with these spirits include strange visions and sounds, feelings of dread, illness, pressure (touches), odors, and unexplained physical events (doors slamming or even objects moving or breaking).

These are the events that usually show up in photographs, register on EMF devices and leave voice messages on recorders. If an area is “active” Disembodied spirits are the easiest to detect and the easiest to misinterpret.

Ghosts seem to maintain their own schedule and the unpredictability is one of the factors that makes an objective investigation difficult. In many cases, you just have to be in the right place at the right time. For that matter, an event that occurs with a very high degree of predictability or an event that occurs every time you look is suspect. In these cases, there is almost always a natural explanation. In these cases, a thorough investigator always assumes there is a natural explanation and seeks the source of that event before they run from the room screaming “GHOST!” During an investigation consider the following patterns.

An **Intermittent Ghost** has no obvious pattern or schedule. It ghost may be seen several times in one day and then not show up again for several weeks or even for several years. When this type of manifestation is detected, the credibility factor can be quite high.

In a similar manner you may encounter a **Cyclic Ghost**. These apparitions present themselves on a regular schedule. You could see them every day at the same time, or on a particular day every week or perhaps once a month or on a specific date. When an intermittent ghost is encountered, thorough research is required to support the event.

Like a Cyclic ghost an **Anniversary Ghost** will appear on a specific date. Almost always this date is the anniversary of an event that was important to them when they were alive. Unlike cyclic ghosts, anniversary ghosts usually appear on a particular date, regardless the day of the week. In addition, time of the day may (or may not) be a factor.

Hiesenberg's uncertainty principle states that observing an event changes the event. This seems to be the case with **Reactive Ghosts**. In other words, these ghost manifest is a living person modifies the local environment. For example, if a sword is removed from the wall or if their portrait is moved to a new location, disquieting phenomena can occur until the change is undone. Reactive ghosts can also appear as a result of remodeling or other building modifications. Essentially, a Reactive ghosts seems to be a creature of habit.

Another form of the Reactive ghost is referred to as a **One-off ghost**. As the name implies, these spirits appear one time and are never seen again. In some cases a One-off ghost can even be triggered by an investigation. In other words, an investigation takes place, the ghost manifests, perhaps to just get some attention or maybe they are just curious. It then moves on, never to be seen again. A One-off ghost can be a very strong manifestation, but it is the most difficult to document because, by definition, and perhaps by intent, they are never seen again.

A ghost is not always tied to a single location. An entity that haunts more than one site is called a **Circulative Ghost**. It must be noted, a Circulative ghost may also be cyclic. It is thought that these ghosts travel along ley lines or perhaps follow a residual energy path. Some investigators feel that circulative ghosts may have encountered major several places and as a result, they visit them all. A very rare type of circulative ghost may attach themselves to a significant person, a person that has a direct connection to the spirit, and it follows this person to differ locations by paranormal induction. On occasion, this type of manifestation will attach itself to a well loved pet. Circulative ghosts are sometimes called **Wandering Ghosts**.



Personality Characteristics

Assuming ghosts were once living people, there are as many different personalities among spirits as there are among people. We could go into personality type, aggress, passive, introvert, extrovert and so on. However, in an attempt to simplify, we will discuss only two general types.

Most ghosts seem to be **Benign Ghosts**. These ghosts mean no harm and in fact, they may even provide help and comfort in some way. There is no reason to be afraid, just enjoy the experience.

Benign ghosts can act in a variety of ways, but for the most part you will find that they tend to be Benevolent. If they were nice people while they were alive, it is probable that they will be nice after death. Keep in mind however, all ghosts can be a bit chaotic and are often unaware of their surroundings. A benign ghost will not intentionally do harm, but on occasion accidents can occur because they do not realize what might be going on around them.

In contrast, we occasionally encounter **Malevolent Ghosts**. This type of spirit is quite rare, and in fact, malevolent spirits may not be ghosts at all. Just as good and bad people exist in our world, ghosts can be good or bad. If in life, a person was malicious or cruel, they occasionally maintain this facet of their personality in death. It must be pointed out, a malevolent ghost will sometimes push or shove, but rarely do they have enough energy to actually do much harm. They can be frightening, but malevolent ghosts are more likely to cause more harm mentally. Again, malevolent ghosts are quite rare. Just as in life, there are more good people than “evil” people.

These manifestations can be adversarial, they intend to do harm, or they may just be mean. They are often somewhat of a trickster, but benign ghosts can also be “playful” and not realize what they are doing is creating a dangerous situation.

In contrast, what appears to be a malevolent ghost is often nothing more than a benign spirit that is unaware of its environment. It may cause harm but actually is not evil in anyway. Remember, we are dealing with things that are not understood very well. Use some common sense. Always be careful. Assume that you can get hurt, avoid situations that could be uncomfortable, and everything will be fine.

The Five levels of Encounters

There are many ways to “detect” a ghost. They may appear in photographs or videos. They can manifest as background sounds in audio recordings or perhaps simply be perceived as electromagnetic energy. A manifestation can be nothing more than a feeling; it could be a simple spot of light, and occasionally we will witness a full materialization where the ghost looks absolutely alive and well - just like any living person.

When we do encounter an event, we need a way to quantify so the experience can be compared to other events. Modern investigators have adopted a five level scale that can be applied in all situations.

There are no exact levels at which an anomaly will appear. For example, there is no such thing as a pure Stage 1 or Stage 2 encounter. However, for consistency, we can apply this general scale to measure – and record – the strength of the manifestations we experience.

Stage 1 Encounters – Background Anomaly

In the early stages of paranormal activity, the manifestation seems to mostly have a fleeting impact on the basic human senses. At this stage, the manifestation is often attributed to someone's imagination and is easily explained away or ignored. A Stage 1 encounter may consist of:

- Unexplainable noises
- Audible Footsteps
- Odors
- Feeling as if you are being watched
- Strange activity by animals or pets

Stage 2 Encounters –Direct Anomaly

At stage 2, the manifestation can no longer be ignored. This is the first level in which EVP may be documented. At this point the noises and smells begin to turn into something very direct. Everything is still at a very basic level, but it is several times stronger. In addition to the Stage 1 impressions, you may also experience:

- Whispers, laughs or giggles.
- Moans or Shrieking
- Gunshots or other sounds of violence
- Breezes or drafts
- Unexplained Shadows

Stage 3 Encounters – Energy Anomaly

This is when the EMF and other energy detectors begin to react. EMF readings 50%-75% above background will be experienced and dowsing rods or crystals will demonstrate activity. Stage 3 is often referred to as the “classic level” of a haunting. In addition to Stage 1 and Stage 2 events, you may see, feel and record:

- Strong Static Electricity
- Medium to high EMF readings
- Marks (not writing) on floors or walls
- Lights and appliances turning on and/or off
- Hearing voices or words clearly

Stage 4 Encounters – Physical Anomaly

At this point, the encounter begins to gain momentum.

Photographic anomalies are recorded and the event begins to respond to direct questions or requests. There usually is a definite sense of a consciousness. Again, in addition to Stage 1 and Stage 2 and Stage 3 events, you may see, feel and record:

- Orbs
- Visual Clouds
- Unseen hands grabbing or touching
- Doors that open/close or lock/unlock
- Responds to requests or questions

Stage 5 Encounters – Visual Anomaly

Visual encounters are essentially the “holy grail” paranormal investigation. Encounters at this, the highest level, can also include a physical impact on environmental objects, personal tactile experiences and unmistakable audio events. At this level you may see (or hear or feel):

- Partial or Full apparitions
- Flying or moving objects
- Objects disappearing and reappearing elsewhere
- Strong physical contact such as pushing or even striking

This document may not be copied without permission

Copyright 2012

By Michael A. Henry, PhD

All rights reserved