

An Ethnography of Energy: Manifestations of spirits in Norwegian Spiritualism

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Abstract

Spiritualism is a widespread belief in Norway that needs to be discussed in anthropology. In this thesis, I include different forms of epistemologies that impact the meaning-making of spiritual events and spread awareness of spiritual practices in Norway. I focus on how the notion of ‘energy’ in Norwegian spiritualism unfolds and functions as a key symbol. In spiritualistic discourses, definitions of spirit and energy are similarly understood, and I explain the difference between the two definitions. The data to support my arguments is collected from qualitative fieldwork among spirit mediums I met at medium courses arranged by the Norwegian Spiritualist Association and interviews with people that have experienced paranormal events. I illustrate how the paranormal events are being interpreted based on the embodiment, doubt, and experience combined with the evidence presented by a spirit medium.

In addition, I will look at two different approaches of ghosts in TV representations, where one is capturing paranormal activity on camera whilst the other dramatize and talk about spiritual experiences. I argue that these TV shows produce spiritual beliefs and create affective atmospheres by using different effects.

By presenting my informants’ spiritual experiences and practices, I aim to show the diversity of spiritual events in Norwegian spiritualism. The diversity illustrates that spiritual beliefs seem to be experience-centered and individually developed. I will also present the structure of arranged spiritual practices of a reading and platform reading. In these practices, mediums use humor to diminish the fearful perception of spirits and ghosts. In addition, I am explaining the learning process to become a medium and how to build strong evidence. Mediums improve their mediumship with energy exercises. This to sense spirituality where the body becomes an instrument for spirit communication. After reading this thesis, I wish to have illustrated the process of meaning-making and various understandings of what energy is, and how to use and sense energy in Norwegian spiritualism.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Spiritualism is a widespread concept and religious belief that has been practiced for decades in every part of the world in different ways. In Norway, spiritualism has become an increasing belief in the last decades, where spiritual organizations arrange multiple spiritual courses, evening shows, and one-to-one readings. Spiritualism is a popular ongoing theme on Norwegian television, and the mediums participating in these TV show has gotten national attention, becoming celebrities. The most seen spiritual TV show is “Åndenes Makt” which has aired 17 seasons and had over two million viewers. Today, spiritualism is also visual on social media. The medium Anita Helen Rasmussen, whom I have interviewed, holds free “healing seances” on Facebook every week. Here, people note their names on her event arranged on Facebook. After the séance, she writes her experiences of healing energies, atmospheres, and messages with names and personal details she received from the dead. On the video-platform TikTok, people post videos of clairvoyance readings using tarot and angel cards. People comment on the accurate the cards fit their lives and share their appreciations.

However, there are conflicting views on spiritualism in Scandinavia today and an overall lack of anthropological research on the topic in western countries. With this thesis, I aim to show the diversity in spiritual practices in Norway, decrease the previous misconceptions, and demonstrate how the concept of energy is evident in the meaning-making of spiritual beliefs. This introductory chapter will discuss the background and context, following a presentation of my questions, aims, and significance in studying this topic.

The development of spiritualism

Spirituality is found in ancient religions, for example, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Jesus in Christian faith received abilities to provide miracles: healing sick people and giving the blind their sight back. A spiritualist I interviewed believed Jesus was a mental and physical medium.

The first spirit communication in North America were prominent in making a new age religion, took place in a small house in Hydesville, New York, in 1848. Two sisters, Kate and Margaret Fox, first experienced strange knockings in that house when they were 11 and 14 years old. The knocking was thought to be spiritual communication. After trying to locate the sources for the knocking, the family concluded that it originated from a spirit. On the 31st of March 1848, Kate decided to challenge the spirit by telling it to knock as many times as she flicked. The spirit responded correctly. Several people from the local community paid a visit to the house and made up a knocking pattern or an alphabet so that the spirit could spell its way to a communication (Kirsebom 2020: 63-64). Today, the 31st of March is called the Hydesville Day and is the official day for international recognition of Spiritualism. Tomlinson (2019) referred to the Fox sisters' coded dialogue with ghosts became a sensational event that generated new knowledge with a new thrilling entertainment (Tomlinson 2019: 483). The story of the Fox-sisters spread to the western part of the United States and across the Atlantic in the 1850s in Britain. Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile (2017a) did fieldwork in Britain, and they argued that despite the accusations of the Fox sisters being frauds, the sister's account heightened the belief in spiritualism, which resulted in a culturally significant Spiritual movement lasting until the end of the Second World War (Bartolini, MacKian and Pile 2017a:4).

The Fox sisters are regarded as the official start of spiritualism, but another prominent person in the development of spiritualism is the American healer Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910). Davis was discovered by a local tailor. He saw that Davis had the ability to see through the physical body and diagnose diseases and medical disorders (Kirsebom 2020:62-63). Davis participated in a demonstration of mesmerism (an old term for hypnosis) held in Poughkeepsie, New York. Here, he experienced a vital force that made him fly, and the next day he woke up in the Catskill Mountains 40 miles away. Davis believed that the spirits transported him to the mountain. According to Davis, he got a spiritual awakening through spirit communication with the spirits of a Greek philosopher Galen (129 e.kr - 199 e.kr), and the Swedish medium Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772). The two spiritual incidences inspired across the world and set the ground for the development of spiritualism.

Literature review

Earlier studies of spirituality in Anthropology were directed toward theories of witchcraft, magic, spirit offerings, or shamanism. Theories from Evans-Pritchard (1937) on magic, witches, and sorcery among the Azande, Favret-Saada (1980) on witchcraft among the

Bocage peasants in Western France, and Rane Willerslev (2007) on shamanism in his book '*Soul Hunters*' where he compares a shaman with the hunters of the Indigenous group of Yukaghirs in Siberia. These authors were prominent in presenting spiritualism to anthropological scholars.

In the last decades, multiple anthropological studies of paranormal investigations have been executed (see Eaton 2015; Hanks 2016; Santo 2019; Santo and Barcelo 2021). Santo did research with Barceló (2021) on paranormal investigators in Chile. They show that paranormal instruments collected memories and histories while arguing that they create 'affective atmospheres' in their performance. Three years earlier, Santo did fieldwork on Chilean Paranormal investigators in Santiago, where she focused on the recording devices, Ghost boxes. Marc A. Eaton (2015) did fieldwork among paranormal investigators in the United States, where the investigators relied on science and technology in valuing their spiritual experiences of paranormal activity. He argued that the investigation function as a spiritual practice for them (Eaton 2015). Another study of this practice in the United States is Michelle Hanks's (2016) study of paranormal investigation focusing on the electromagnetic field and how this field is understood as the best field to capture spiritual activity. After mentioning the different approaches to ghost hunting practiced primarily in America and in the US, I want to present how paranormal investigation is shown in TV productions in Norway and how the instruments and the filming effects contribute to producing spiritual beliefs.

We also find anthropological studies of mediumships in other countries, for example, in Australia (see Tomlinson 2019), the UK (see Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2017a, 2017b), the United States (see Yerby 2017), and, in Brazil and Cuba (see Santo 2012; Santo;2020). The studies mentioned have highlighted different aspects of the praxis of mediumships.

Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile (2017b) studied British spiritualism and responded to the previous perception of seeing spirit communication as paranormal or enchanted. They argued that spirit communication is built on the ordinary character of the experience and talking to the dead are symbolic of affect and embodiment in daily life. Diana Espirito Santo (2012) studied Cuban spirit mediumship, where she focused on the phenomenology of learning in modern Cuban spirit mediumship. Erin Yerby (2017) introduced the prospect of the body being used as a sensory instrument in the North American Spiritualist tradition based on fieldwork among Spiritualist Churches, training courses, home circles, and mediumship

centers located in New York City, New Jersey, London, and in the Spiritualist camp of Lily Dale, in the north of New York State.

All the authors above brought different perspectives on mediumships, the sense of phenomenology of learning, the practice of the body and practices in different countries. An author that research on Norwegian spirit mediums is Anne Kalvig. Anne Kalvig is Associate Professor of Religious Studies and studied the development of spiritualism in Norway. She has been concerned around defining spirituality and argues that spiritualism is a religion. This argumentation is to find in her book “*Spiritisme: samtaler mellom levende og døde*”(2016, English version: *The Rise of Contemporary Spiritualism*). She has also been doing fieldwork among mediums in Norway. In addition to her religious approach to spiritualism, I wish to analyze the practices from an anthropological point of view. I want to research the deeper understandings of their beliefs and how the practices are understood and executed differently.

Spiritualism today

Today, the two most known directions for spiritualism are the SNU (Spiritualists’ National Union) which has its foundation in The United Kingdom, and spiritism, inspired by the French spiritualist Allan Kardec. The latter has its base in Brazil and France. Allan Kardec, described by Anne Kalvig (2013), developed a type of spiritualism that included concepts of reincarnation and karma doctrine. His message presented in the 1857-published book “*Åndenes Bok*” is built on God being the highest, spiritual reality existing in every existence and the soul continuously developing through multiple earthly lives (Kalvig 2013:133)

The practiced spiritualism in Norway is derived from English Spiritualism in SNU. Here the belief is threefold, spiritualism as a philosophy, a science, and a religion. Through their experiences with the spirit world, the philosophy becomes the theory behind their explorations. Spiritual science proves and underpins spiritualism as a philosophy and a religion. Lastly, their faith gives those who have the spiritualist’s philosophy a deeper foundation and helps spread the knowledge through its churches and ceremonies (Kirsebom 2020:25).

To set the context of what spiritualists believe in, I will now introduce their cosmology. The basis of SNU Spiritualism is built around the seven principles, once channelized through the mediumship of Emma Hardinge Bitten. I will now present these principles as they provide an overview of their cosmology.

The seven principles (as described by on the Spiritualist Union website, snu.org.uk):

The first principle is the *Fatherhood of God*. This principle is built around the idea of a Creative force or spirit that is manifesting in all living things, both directly and indirectly. This creative force is also called God, and the spiritualists are acknowledging God as their father.

The second principle is *The Brotherhood of man* where they gather all mankind as members of the same divine family because they all were created in the same universal life. The moral behind this principle is the brotherhood, and the sense of being a community for mutual support and comfort.

The next principle is often considered as the key principle, called *The Communion of Spirits and the Ministry of Angels*. Here the belief in after-death is central and built around how spiritualism present the evidence and demonstration of the fact that departed spirits can, and does, take place.

The fourth principle is the idea that energy and matter cannot be created or destroyed, therefore the spirit is indestructible. This principle is called *The Continuous Existence of the Human Soul*. In the spiritual life, all humans have a spirit body that is exactly a replica of the earthly body, but in a much finer form. The spirit moves on as an integral part of a world in different dimensions, and a spirit without a physical body exists in the Spirit World. An important factor in this principle is that the soul and spirit are the same individuals, both alive in the physical world and dead in the spirit world. They have the same personalities and characteristics, and the possibility of change is only a result of our actions and efforts.

Building on our own efforts is the fifth principle *Personal Responsibility*. Here is the idea of every spirit to accept the responsibility for every aspect of their lives. The spirit development depends entirely upon themselves, and it is not possible for any other outside influence to interfere in the development, unless the spirit is willing to allow the influence. There is also the belief of a free will, in the sense that spirits have been given freedom of choice and the ability to recognize right to wrong. In addition, spirits are also responsible for all their actions, words, thoughts and deeds.

The next principle is inspired by the laws of Cause and Effect, which relies on the saying “What goes around, comes around”. This principle is called *The Compensation and Retribution Hereafter for all the Good and Evil deeds done on Earth*. The moral is to not

expect popularity or love if you are being mean to others or behave poorly. It is also important to understand that the redistributive effects or the compensation of this law is operating now, and to not postpone the process onto the spirit world. With this understanding, the spirit begins in their physical life to undo their wrongs before passing on to the spirit world.

The last principle is the *Eternal Progress Open to every Human Soul*. The Human soul should desire for progress of advancing their wisdom and love and the rate of progress is directly balanced for gaining a better mental and spiritual understanding. The important fact here is to realize that the human soul is a part of eternity, and that the space for progress is always open as we continuously are met with challenges in this world.

Research problem

I argue that anthropological studies of spiritualism fail to include the diversity of spiritualism practiced by focusing on elder theories of magic and witchcraft instead of the practices in the western world. Spiritualism is a direction of faith that is included in all world religions and is therefore evident in different cosmologies. My motivation for this project is that spiritualism is a growing belief and trend in Norway that people are afraid to talk about. I wish to remove spiritualism as a taboo subject. When speaking to my fellow students or academics, they cared about whether I believed in ghosts myself. The ridicule of spiritual beliefs was found both among friends and the academics in my environment. Reactions of laughing and wondering if I were “one of those” highlighted the issue of not taking spirituality seriously. They encouraged me to research the topic further away in other cultures, which showed the importance of studying the concept closer to home. The responses showed the aspect of wanting to keep the concept of spiritualism distanced, as it became more comfortable to talk about from a distance. The problem is that we get a distant view of spiritual practices, which is not equivalent to the practice at home.

Given the lack of literature on spiritualism in Scandinavia, this paper will aim to broaden the knowledge of spiritualistic practices by presenting the data collected from my fieldwork among mediums and individuals that experienced paranormal events. I will then use my data to study the different approaches to spiritual events and how they present ghosts, both among spiritualists and through TV shows.

Research questions

I have chosen to specify my focus on spiritualism and will look at the dialectical relationship between humans and the spirits of the dead, where contact is sought not only from people but also that the dead seeking to contact the humans. My focus is particularly directed toward the question of how energy and spirit are developed and understood in Norwegian spiritualism. By presenting examples of spiritual experiences and mediumship practices, I will look at two different aspects of spiritualism. First, I look at the meaning-making of spiritual events and how beliefs in ghost representations can be said to be produced by embodied, aesthetic and technological means. I thus ask, how do epistemologies of experience and evidence develop and grow in the meaning-making of paranormal events? Second, by attending to the ubiquitous but also heterogeneous presence of the notion of 'energy' in spiritualist practice, I ask how energy may be understood as a key symbol in Norwegian spiritualism.

Structural Outline

In chapter one, I will introduce the aim of this thesis and set the context for the topic of study. In chapter two, I'll provide the choice of methodology, the planning behind the fieldwork, and issues that arose in the process. In the third chapter, I will present three examples of haunting places and show how these experiences affected them and their epistemological understanding. In the fourth chapter, I will compare two representations of ghosts on TV and how they used effects to contribute to the production of spiritual beliefs. I will discuss in chapter five how to practice mediumships and tools for spirit communication and how they use and express the concept of energy. In the final chapter, I will discuss the analysis presented and summarize the chapter and answer the research questions asked in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Methodology

My fieldwork of Spiritualism in Norway is a qualitative study of subjectively and objectively observation of the spiritualist environment. The research philosophy used is interpretivism, whereas I as a researcher uses the method of participant observation and interprets the spiritual activities. The data is collected through interviews and observations among spiritual mediums in a seven month's framework.

Getting started

When I started planning my fieldwork on spiritualism in Norway, my knowledge of the environment was through TV and social media. I, therefore, reached out to the producer of the TV show *Åndenes Makt* via email and quickly received a response with contact information for the TV host, Tom Strømness. They were helpful and wanted to help me during the fieldwork. I, therefore, planned on moving to the city where they were situated. To get a broader specter of the spiritual environment in Norway, I contacted The Norwegian Spiritualist Association (NSF: stands for the Norwegian name 'Norsk Spiritualist Forening'). It also has its headquarters in the same city as the producing company. When presenting my focus on spirituality for my Master's, I got positive reactions which made me hopeful for gathering informants. Because of the divided views on spiritual events in Norway, I thought the informants would be skeptical of my intentions, but they welcomed my project with open arms. By communicating about the topic for my research among my fellow students, I experienced that nearly all of them had someone they knew that had experienced paranormal events. I first received the contact information of a girl in her twenties and asked her for an interview. Through her, I got in contact with another girl with similar experiences.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected my fieldwork immensely. After finding a place to rent and getting ready for the move, the city went into lockdown only two weeks before I was supposed to move. The covid-restrictions ruled out the possibility of physically interviewing my informants. My informants were scared to meet in person in fear of getting infected with covid-19. The covid-restrictions were not as strict in my student city. At this point, I was trying to figure out how I could conduct fieldwork in my hometown. I knew that NSF had a department in this town and asked them if I could do the fieldwork there instead. They informed me of a mediumistic course on the first weekend of March and told me that I could join the course. Covid affected the practice of NSF as the number of participants decreased and impacted the economy. The course did cost money, and the price was too high for me as a student, and therefore I asked for a discount. Because of the tight economy, they agreed to give me a 50 percent discount. Even though I thought the price was too high, this was my chance to do physical fieldwork, and I decided it was worth it.

To prepare for the fieldwork, I reached out to Lars Birger Davan who previously did fieldwork on this same topic in Norway and the religion researcher Anne Kalvig. Through them, I got an insight into approaching the spiritualistic environment. After receiving tips on which mediums to contact, I started sending emails to multiple mediums. Here I met the

obstacles of not receiving responses to my emails. After waiting on responses, I found them on social media and decided to try to send them a Facebook message instead. During that same day, they responded. After finding out that social media was a better platform to get in touch with them the contact process became easier. I found out that many mediums use Facebook as their work platform and therefore learned that the best way of contacting the environment was through social media.

Interviews

The interviews with my informants took place online on the platform they preferred or over the phone. I decided to let my informants decide whether they wanted to have the camera on or not, to create a safe environment for them to tell their story. Ideally would the interviews happen face-to-face but as the covid-restriction increased, that became too risky in the pandemic we were living in. To have interviews online arguably was a blessing in disguise as it brought good outcomes in the sense that the informants looked comfortable with telling me their experiences. I started each interview by introducing myself and telling them about my project and informed them about their rights as participants of this study and reassured them that they will be anonymous. Considering I interviewed people with a public name, I asked them if they wanted to be anonymous or participate with their full name. I assured them that I would be transparent with them and show my writings of the interviews for them to approve what I wrote about them. I audio-recorded most of the interviews with consent from the informants. I noticed that my informants were interested in my point of view of the paranormal early in the process. By presenting my interest and fascination of paranormal events arguably strengthen my data collection as I noticed the informants got comfortable to tell me about their own beliefs. In a conversation with my informant Lisa, she expressed that she used to test the room before speaking of paranormal events. She tested it by asking open questions of paranormality to see if they seemed skeptical or even denying the existence. If they seemed close-minded, she would not tell them about her own experiences in fear of looking like a crazy person. Here we see the fear of not being believed and exemplifies the topic to be embarrassing for many. As I was aware of the embarrassing aspect, it was important for me to let them know that I was open to listening to their experiences. I believe the online interviews created a distance between me as a researcher and them that was helpful and less intimidating. The fact that they were sitting at home in a comfortable position helped them feeling at ease with the interview setting. Even though the setting made them comfortable, the issue with this form of interviewing is that it became harder to build

relations over time and get to know them properly as the interview tend to be formal conversations. By staying formal, I mean that the interview held a structure of me in order asking questions and they answered. I missed out on the informal conversation during the breaks or joining activities with them in a different setting than an interview. Even though, I missed out on the face-to-face meetings with the women grown up in haunted houses, I was happy to be able to finish my fieldwork despite of the pandemic. After each interview, I gave them an informed consent paper which they signed.

The ethics as a researcher

As a researcher, I had to evaluate thoroughly which methodological strategies I would use in my fieldwork. I had to think about how I wanted to present myself, and how much I could share of my life as a fellow human being in practices involving deep personal attachment to a set of beliefs. I have always been fascinated by ghosts as they symbolize spectacular experiences, and the aspects of the unknowing were intriguing to me. Throughout my upbringing, my family used to watch the TV show *Åndenes Makt* every Sunday and discussed what we saw. Imagining ghosts to be real and playing with the idea of ghosts was exciting. I have heard stories from friends and family about weird incidences that were believed to be caused by ghosts and that made me want to research deeper into spiritual beliefs. I personally have experienced weird incidences but not enough to believe in spirits. In my fieldwork, I was open-minded in researching the topic. On the other hand, spirit communication was I not familiar with.

The method of participating observation was especially evident in the participation of the medium course I attended with the Norwegian Spiritualist association (NSF). The course's main task was how to become spiritual mediums. Here, I had a vision of attending the course and observing how they taught their students to work on their mediumship. I did not know what they would expect of me, and how much I would be contributing to the course. Arriving at the course, I understood quickly that the best way to build relations with the participants was to join the activities as a full-fledged participant. After I presented myself to the group, I was soon seen as any other participant. The course started with meditation exercises to help us access our sensory center, with the following energy exercises that connected the participants to recognize a spiritual presence. The description of the energy exercises will be further examined later in this thesis. These exercises felt natural to test without putting my role as a researcher out to play. The true challenge started when the mediumistic actions took

place. We were set into teams of two, where we were told to perform a reading of each other. As a researcher with no previous experience of spirit communication and spiritual activity, I was in doubt if I should participate in this part of the course. To perform a reading, one needs to believe in spirit communication, which I did not. I was not comfortable in the reading and felt like a fraud as I could not see any spirits or feel I had a conversation with them. When expressing my challenge to the course leader, I was told to give it a try and trust that my intuition came from the spirit world. She told me that I should listen to the energies and feelings in my body and say whatever comes to mind. She advised me to trust the process that my thoughts came from spirits. The course leader was clear on how mediumship was a learning process and told the participants to not worry about whether the information was correct or not. The other participants wanted me to do the mediumistic exercises and I noticed that for me to participate was highly appreciated, and I decided to give it a go. I said whatever came to mind, and often the reader (the other participant) could connect it to a deceased loved one. It was important for me to express that I did not sense a conversation with spirits, as I was in no intention of leading them to believe I had a conversation with their loved ones. We switched partners and had many readings like this the next days of the course. The more readings we had, the more comfortable I felt throughout the course, even though I did not believe I had any form of gift in spirit communication. Researching religion and important values in someone's life is a hard task ethically. The spiritual belief is personal and to stay objective is problematic. Throughout the fieldwork I felt the pressure of being persuaded into a spiritual faith. The participants wanted to prove to me that spirits exist, and I could see their excitement when a reading resonated with my life. I was continuously asked where I stand in relation to religion and beliefs to see if I was convinced of the existence of spirit. I did respond that I was surprised of the concreteness in readings and fascinated by the stories, but I struggled to represent myself in the cosmological conversations and distancing my position as a researcher from how I am privately. In Favret-Saada (2012) work on witchcraft, she pointed out to the paradoxical split of the self, between the participant and observer in qualitative studies, of "being outside while imagining oneself completely inside" (Favret-Saada 2012: 437). The paradoxical split resonated with my attempt to practice mediumship, where at first, I felt outside of the environment, but later imagined myself having spirit communication. Later I got deeper into the practice and was surprised of the results, surprised of the participant's reactions to what I was saying. Another point is when mediums successfully described my deceased family members, I got emotional, and I found myself in a

split situation where it was hard to objectively observe the practice as my private emotions were involved.

Common limitations

Even though spiritualism has its key principles, that does not mean that everyone believing in spirits follows the spiritualistic principles. In my fieldwork, I witnessed a variety of beliefs in spiritualism. I interpret spiritualism as a religious belief that is experience-centered and focused on individually. A research problem to acknowledge is that this study is based on the informants I interviewed, and their cosmology will not cover the entire specter of spiritualistic beliefs. The data collected is from six-month fieldwork among NSF mediums and medium students. I have been in contact with Tv-productions and people who experienced spiritual hauntings in their homes. I will derive my arguments from the data collected from them.

Summary

In summary, the fieldwork was executed for seven months in my home city and due to covid-restrictions I had most of my interviews online. I experienced the online interviews to give a positive outcome of telling their experiences at a safe distance. The method of participatory observation was done in medium courses and spiritual evenings with NSF, where I got to join and observe the spiritualist environment in Norway. The methodological issues arose in balancing the role as a researcher and participant, and the pandemic context heightened the difficulty of building relations over time because of lack of physical meetings with my informants. As the society opened up throughout my fieldwork, I got able to conduct fieldwork and collect valuable data.

Chapter 3: Signs from the Dead: Haunting and Visits from the Spirit World

This chapter will examine three examples of different approaches to perceiving reality and the meaning-making behind paranormal experiences where energy as a concept is central. Therefore, it is evident to explain how energy is expressed in the discourse of ghost haunting. When presenting events that are believed to be haunted by ghosts, I use the word “unexplainable events,” first said to me by the TV host of *Åndenes Makt*, Tom Strømness. Their experiences were, first and foremost, described as events they found hard to explain. Even though they explained how they interpreted and experienced the events and how they got presented with a possible explanation, I noticed my informants were careful in determining the events to be paranormal activity. Therefore, I use the word unexplainable events.

When speaking of ghosts in anthropological discussion, the term hauntology is often brought up. The term “hauntology” is inspired by psychoanalytic and postcolonial theory, which builds on the idea of affectively presenting the unextinguishable, as postponed leftovers of trauma, repressed violence, and misdoings happening in the past (Street 2018:706).

Hauntings, according to Euro-American scholarships are merely influenced by psychoanalytic theory that aims to exorcise ghosts by giving them a voice and relieving their existence. In this specter, hauntings are understood as the past’s repressed memories to be erupting in the present. Alice Street explains that ghosts are transmitting silenced knowledge between generations and across times (Street 2018: 704). Hauntology is an idea, firstly developed by the French philosopher Jaques Derrida, in his book *Specters of Marx* (1994), where he claims that the ghosts of Marx are haunting western society. In his sense, hauntology is a concept and an idea of how the present is haunted by “dead” futures. In its philosophical meaning, it relates to the return of elements as ghosts from the cultural or social past ((Derrida in Good, 2020: 418). Even though his argument is about how events that happened in the past still haunt the living today, one can link the effects of the haunting of actual events to the discourse of being haunted by ghosts.

Energy is a concept and word that seems to hold a red line throughout my study of paranormal events. What is energy in a spiritual context? Energy appears in all shapes and forms. One can think of energy as a mass that both human beings and objects contain and spread out to the outside world like a wind reflecting their emotions and actions. Emotions such as bitterness, anger, and disappointment can influence the environment negatively as it holds negative energy, and emotions such as happiness, love, and joy infect others with positive energy. In the paranormal discourse, energy seems to align with descriptions of spirits, and the mediums I have been in contact with said that they communicate with spirits by mixing the spirits' energy with their own. In Erin Yerby's (2017) fieldwork with spirit mediums, her informants told her that energy is the term that describes the 'vital force' that connects the medium to spiritual communication. Therefore, if a medium works too long and a spirit comes too close, the medium's energy will be drained or cause bodily pain in the territory where the spirit moves (Yerby 2017:243). Energy is also known to have the ability to imprint places and objects. Often in spiritual readings, the medium reads the energies through a photo or an object. This practice is called *Psychometrics*. Lena Ranerhag (2013) argues that photographs contain the imprinted energy of the individual, and the reading would not be affected if the person is alive or dead (Ranerhag 2013:11).

To fully understand the depth of the concept of energy, it is necessary to further examine energy as a term. Theresa Caputo, a known American TV medium, explains her understanding of energy in her book; *There's more to this life than this* (2015). She describes energy as a holistic phenomenon that exists in all things, in our body and soul, and that energy exists in the core of everything we see, do, and talk about. She draws out the law of conservation that says, "Energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can only be changed from one form to another." (Caputo, 2015:135-136). Caputo has an enlightening analogy of the work of energy, the water cycle. There is a limited amount of water on our planet. This water can change its form, but it will never disappear. Through the rain, the water flows down, some of it will be drunk by animals, others will be sucked up by plants and some evaporated back into the clouds to fall again. The absorbed water in plants and animals returns to the environment and the cycle repeats itself. Here we can see that the water is never created or destroyed, it just changes shape (Caputo, 2015:136).

In an interview, Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile got told by an informant that the body is a source of energy. Energy is described as flowing energy that runs through our bodies while being a property of the body (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2017a: 14). If we follow this

thought, one can think of the energy in the human body changing its form after the death of the physical body and imprinting the energy onto the walls of their homes. The authors explain that spirits indeed can manifest in the material world, but they will never be fully present nor wholly material in the material world. (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2017a: 20). Following this thought, one can interpret that the spirit world and the material world always will be differentiated and that spirits cannot exist fully in the material world without a physical body.

In this chapter, I will show examples of how energies can affect a household. Haunting is a term we use when a house or building is affected by paranormal activity. In this manner, one discusses spirits to be captured, trapped, or stuck in the earthly world after death. When Caputo talks about the spirit staying on earth after death, she expresses that the spirit has stuck energy and denies crossing over to the other side, mostly because of unfinished issues that have left deep traces in their conscience. Sometimes the spirit is not aware of their body being dead, or they believe the actions they have committed were so unforgiving that they do not dare to face God. Caputo argues that a captured spirit needs help from a higher power or mediums to cross over to the other side, to the spirit world (Caputo, 2015: 156-157).

The terms ‘ghost’ and ‘spirit’ are closely related, and it is necessary to clarify the difference between the two terms. Defined by the website of Pure Spiritual (s.a.), a blog made by the spiritual medium Gail Webb, a “ghost is an earth-bound spirit- or dead people who remain among the living without crossing over to the other side”. Spirits, on the other hand, are the soul of a human or animal that have crossed over to the other side but can travel between the spirit world and the earth (Pure Spiritual s.a.). The ghost in this understanding is therefore a spirit that remains on the earth both knowing and unknowing of their death. The term ‘ghost’ is mostly used in discourses of haunting and is believed to be stuck spirits who need help to cross over to the other side. In practices of mediums that I have participated in, the term ‘spirit’ is mostly used, often because of the negative associations people have with ghosts and that mediums can talk to ghosts and spirits in their readings, a practice I will further discuss later in the thesis.

In this chapter I will present three examples of where ghosts are suspected to be the cause of unexplainable events. The first example is Lisa’s story about her childhood home where strange things happened, possibly affected by captured spirits and paranormal activity.

Lisa's story

“The whole thing started when I was two years old. My dad was often alone with me at night, because my mom worked nightshifts. He worked a lot, usually in the living room while I was asleep in the bedroom. We have a glass table that reflects the kitchen. He started noticing that there was movement in the kitchen. This he could see by the shimmers in the glass of the table. He immediately thought that it was my mother and asked: Tonje, is that you? But he didn't receive any answers. He was thinking, is it just me being completely silly, like now I'm going nuts. He went to check the kitchen and there was no one there. He went back to the sofa, but the glass was still shimmering.”

-Lisa (Interview: 28.01.2021).

Lisa is a woman in her early twenties who experienced paranormal events regularly in the house she grew up. At first, the experiences were not a conversation topic among the family members. As the events continued to happen more regularly, it was inevitable to avoid mentioning them. The events became an issue that needed action.

The father kept his vision of the shadow moving in the kitchen secret. Lisa didn't know anything about these experiences at the time. Four years later, in her bedroom, Lisa started experiencing a constant disturbance of something strange. She explained the disturbance to me by saying: “Look at my hand now,” while quickly waving her hand horizontally. She continued:

“Do you see the movement following my hand? It is a form of energy that comes after it. This is the disturbance that followed me constantly in the corner of my eye. I was six years old when this started. At first, I couldn't quite place what I was disturbed by. In the end, I successfully could place it, it was a woman in my bedroom, she was the one who disturbed me. She sat on my chair that I also used as my bedside table, or at least hovered around that same area. My father was shocked when I told him that I couldn't sleep because of the woman being in my bedroom.” The disturbance was out of great character, I didn't sleep for a whole year.”

I asked her if she believed this woman to be the same woman that her father saw in the kitchen. She answered immediately, “Yes, I'm sure of it.” The disturbance here is expressed and related to the energy following her hand in motion. Later she identifies the energy to be a woman. That illustrated how energy is first perceived as movement and further described as paranormal activity.

The family also struggled with electrical problems. The light bulbs would break instantly. They experienced the cooking stove and vacuum cleaner turning on by themselves multiple times at all hours of the day and night. The latter usually got turned on while they were asleep.

Lisa especially remembers one incident. She got home from school and turned off the entrance alarm, as she always does. The entrance alarm only turns on by pressing the button manually, except for alarming a break-in. Suddenly the alarm started in the house and started six times during that afternoon without anyone pressing the button. Lisa's father called the Alarm company. They told him to stop his kids from pressing the button, as the company could see that the alarm started manually. Why did the alarm turn on manually if it wasn't any of the kids or parents that pressed it? "Who pressed it then?"

Electricity is closely related to the discourse of energy both in a scientific and a spiritual context. The electricity works because of an energetic combination. Here the electricity is functioning without the regular combination. A rationalist would probably check for errors on the alarm or do as Lisa's father did; call the alarm company. They got told that there were no electrical issues with the alarm system. Their system showed that the button was pressed manually, so the "rational" explanation was not an option. Therefore, one must think of other reasons that could cause the alarm to start.

After repeatedly being disturbed by what Lisa believes to be paranormal activity, they contacted a medium to help them get rid of the problems. The medium also mentioned the lady that Lisa and her father saw. The medium told them that the lady previously lived in this house and lost her daughter at a young age. The lady channeled through the medium believed that Lisa was her daughter and looked after her. The medium's explanation ringed well with how Lisa interpreted and experienced the lady. The concretism to the medium's description of the woman in the spirit world exemplifies a way of creating meaning in spiritual beliefs. This was done by presenting a possible reason for the event which helped Lisa understanding her experiences in a spiritual context. Lisa told me that often when she was going to bed, she had a dialog with the lady ghost, which was based on telling Lisa to go to sleep. They didn't have a dialog in spoken words but inside her head. Lisa could feel what the lady was saying through her body and she "just knew" the lady wanted her to go to sleep.

The sentence "I just knew" is rich in meaning, especially in spiritual contexts. What makes the feeling of 'just knowing'? Even though it is unexplainable, the person in the experience of

paranormal events had a strong feeling to the extent that makes the feeling valid as a fact. When I asked Lisa how did she know for sure? She responded, 'it is hard to explain, but I could just feel it, throughout my whole body'. As I interpreted, I believe the 'just knowing' is based on strong intuition that embodies the human mind to create the conviction of the intuitional thought. In conclusion, "just knowing" is a form of bodily epistemology, where the body is used as a tool for knowledge that upholds certainty.

After the visit of the medium, the house changed its atmosphere and became calmer. Lisa believed the reason why she hasn't experienced paranormal activity after the cleanse was due to her specifically not wanting to let the spirits in. She also told me that the consequences of the paranormal activity were many. She had to work for a long time to get over what she experienced and got psychological help to process it. By listening to Lisa's story, I see that paranormal activity and haunting is a bigger problem than I first believed it to be.

Through this example, we see that Lisa's approach to spirituality is bonded through the feeling of her experiences. She felt the disturbance throughout her body and listened to her gut when understanding her experiences and in that manner found meaning in the events. The energy of the lady embedded in her body became a part of the meaning-making of the spiritual events. The belief was heightened by a point of affirmation made by the medium. The medium was specific in her comments and was close to how Lisa interpreted the unexplainable events and added details that fitted the description. In that sense, Lisa's experiences were connected to a possible explanation and more importantly affirmed Lisa's belief. Here, the aspect of embodiment and sensory observation played a great role in meaning-making. Another approach to finding meaning behind unexplainable events is Maria's interpretation where the events dissonate with her previous epistemology which creates uncertainty and skepticism.

[The shadows](#)

Through a common contact, I came to interview a young girl in her twenties, which I chose to name Maria.

Maria grew up in a house where the family experienced unexplainable events, which she considers to be paranormal activity. The activity started approximately around the year 2015. In that house she lived with her parents, a sister, a foster sibling, and a dog. The whole family experienced events that they couldn't explain, but the spiritual belief seemed to be in doubt.

Even though the skepticism affected Maria, she was still fascinated by the unexplainable events that occurred. Here follows examples of what could happen in the family house.

One night, when they were eating at the dining table, they heard distinctively steps upstairs, which they found strange because they knew that no one was up there. Maria was startled because the steps were even louder and stronger than regular steps from a human being. The family all agreed that the steps must be a ghost walking upstairs, and that's the only logical solution for the enchanted steps. The intensity of the steps goes beyond their knowledge and experience to explain it scientifically, which led them to think differently. By comparing the steps one can hear regularly from the first floor to the heavy steps heard that day, they found it more logical to be caused by a ghost than a human being. Therefore, a ghost walking upstairs made a greater meaning to the experience.

The second example happened after the death of their grandmother. Maria's younger sister was in the room, crying over the loss of her grandmother, and asked out in the air if her grandmother was there with her, and if she was, she should make a sign for her to see. A few seconds later, an object in the room started to swing by itself (Maria couldn't remember what object it was). The sister was convinced that her grandmother answered and gave her a sign. I argue that the key argument for finding meaning in this event is the setting. The timing of the object's movement to happen as soon as she asked the question is interesting. The coincidence of the object started moving seemingly by itself at the exact time where the response to the question would be expected if a person in the same room would answer is evident in the meaning-making. The timing led her to interpret the movement as a sign, as she felt her question was answered. If the object started moving at a different time, the meaning of the movement would probably take another turn.

Not only did the humans experienced unexplainable events, but also the dog seemed to be able to see things that the family could not see. There was one spot in the house the dog repeatedly barked at, and that was one specific window, which they found strange. Close to the window, they often saw shadows. Maria told me that the shadows were seen in different colors. The mother in the house saw black shadows, while Maria and her siblings saw white shadows. These shadows most often appeared moving from the living room to the kitchen.

Not only were there unexplainable events that frightened them, but also the atmosphere in the house. Especially in Maria's bedroom. Both she and her friends that visited her always felt extremely tired and drained of energy in Maria's bedroom. Her friends told her that the

moment they walked up to the first floor, they regained their energy. If that was coincidental, they don't know, but strange, indeed yes. Here, the energy that created the atmosphere is being characterized as a force with the ability to drain out their energy and take control over their mood. The energy embodied human beings and physically impacted them. To have a lack of energy was tiring, and understandable, but it also made them uncomfortable. Maria's cousin would never spend the night at Maria's house because she could not sleep there. This was due to the haunted energy, the feeling of having someone you cannot see being around you all the time. In other places, at friends' houses or other accommodations, sleeping was not problematic.

The examples above were incidences that her family found hard to explain. Maria is unsure if the incidences are characters of paranormal activity or shadows resulting from something else. The events in the house appeared more and more frequently and became very problematic for the family as they did not feel safe in their own home. The only possible way to stop the haunting was to invite a medium to cleanse their house.

The biggest problem for Maria was the constant sight of shadows in the corner of her eye. The shadows followed her wherever she went, even outside of her house. This was later brought up by a medium that the family contacted for help. The medium told her that she is surrounded by shadows, and Maria was surprised by this because she had not told anyone about the shadows. Maria was also told by the medium that she was very responsive to the spirit world and that she could become a medium if she started practicing. That was not even an option for Maria, as she strongly did not want to become a medium. She received advice on how to avoid the shadows and make them disappear. The advice was to tell the shadows to go away when they were around, which she didn't want to say, because she would sound "gæren" (meaning nuts or lunatic). The medium also talked about a specific window where there was much spiritual activity. That was the same window that the dog constantly barked at, which also confirmed and strengthened their belief in ghosts. After getting some of their experiences confirmed, the family was convinced that their house was haunted. They contacted two different mediums, and after the last medium cleansed the house, the activities vanished. It has been quiet in the house ever since. The family believes the medium to be the cause and that the cleansing was successful.

An interesting fact that I noticed throughout the interview was the doubt about the events. Maria repeatedly told me that they were convinced that ghosts were haunting their house, but

a few minutes later, Maria admitted that she doubted ghosts to be the cause of the events. Even though she doubts the existence of ghosts, it does not mean that she does or doesn't believe in ghosts. As Michele Hanks (2016) puts it: "Doubting ghosts entails active, persistent questioning. It demands action, the assessment of evidence, and, ultimately, a quest of resolution." (Hanks 2016: 812). Whether she or her family believed in ghosts or not became hard to say. The constant doubt and restraining of their belief in ghosts exemplify how difficult ghost activity is to capture and make sense of.

Gibsonian psychology suggests a form of thinking about environmental relations among humans with the standard dichotomy between culturally constructed worlds and the naturally given worlds (Ingold 2000: 168). I believe the two girls' perceptions of paranormal events conflict with the latter dichotomy. The experiences do not fit in the culturally constructed world they live in, as it crosses the boundary of cultural epistemology. The environment they grew up in made an impact on their physical bodies that lines with the natural given world, even though the experiences appeared abnormal. As Ingold mentions, inspired by Gibson, is the necessity of distinguishing between the 'real' environment based on scientific observation to the 'perceived' environment through selective responses, to stimuli (Ingold 2000: 168). Here, we see that the observations made in the haunted houses do not linger with scientific reasoning, but the act of perceiving the environment is more relevant in their meaning-making.

Comparing Maria to Lisa in their belief in ghosts, Maria seems to find meaning by perceiving the experiences closer to the culturally constructed world, and Lisa perceived the events through her bodily experience. One can see that Lisa trusts her experiences to a higher extent than Maria, while Maria uses her experiences to try to explain the phenomenon scientifically. I am not saying that Lisa is certain of all her bodily experiences. I interpreted her to also try to explain the events based on previously epistemology, but the events impacted her to a degree that was impossible to be explained. I believe that Lisa finds meaning through her experience and how the medium bonded the elements together. The bodily impression these events had on Lisa was groundbreaking in her belief that she knew what she experienced. She ruled out the possibility of her imagining the events. Those events happened. I argue that spiritual events must be experienced empirically to fully believe. Maria did experience unexplainable events, not ready to be explained scientifically, but the level of her experiences was not strong enough to convince her that they were spiritual. Maria seemed curious about the paranormal and did not rule out the possibility that it could be caused by something else,

even though she was open to a spiritualistic explanation. I believe Maria came from an even more skeptical viewpoint before the unexplainable events and needs stronger evidence to fully believe in ghosts.

To bring experience to validate a belief, I refer to David Hufford (1995) and his Experience-centered theory. The theory suggests that spiritual beliefs are rationally developed from experience. He argues that regardless of prior beliefs and backgrounds, spiritual experiences are similarly explained across cultures. In other words, belief is created from experience and not deriving from cultural or social pressure (Hufford 1995:28). Even though Maria and Lisa came from similar backgrounds, they perceived their experiences differently based on the number of empirical events at different strengths.

Place-bounded events

As we have seen previously in this chapter, haunting is often connected to a specific place. There exist hot spots for paranormal activity internally, for example, the window in Maria's house, or both Marias' and Lisa's bedrooms.

Why are some rooms or places worse than others? The answer to that is that haunting often is bounded to specific places. The spiritual activity may differ from one place to another. In the program *Åndenes Makt*, these questions are often being explained by the mediums, who can tell what the room used to be when the spirit in contact was alive. It can be the previous bedroom of a deceased woman or the living room in the building that used to be an important room during the second world war. The spirits are usually bounded to the place, either that they used to live there or that it was their workplace and have unfinished business that they did not have the time for when they were alive. During interviews throughout my study and in the content of paranormal TV series, the old houses are often thought of as a perfect place for a haunting. The older the house, the more haunting is likely to appear. Not only may it look scarier as the materials in the house are older, or it sounds scarier because the materials are older and "speaks" by the creaking sounds. As the house is old, there have been living people there through generations, and the imprint of their energy remains in the building. In other words, the older houses have been collecting spirits' energies for many years. In the newer buildings where people experience haunting, then it is more often spoken about the ground the house stands upon, as it may have previously been a battlefield in its earlier days. Another explanation for haunting in both newer and older houses is that the energy of

ancestors or spirit guides is bounded to the people rather than the place. The spirit is here illustrated to either be connected to people or the place. An example of paranormal experiences linked to a place is the haunting that took place in a grocery store in Norway, where the sociologist Lars Birger Davan did fieldwork.

The Haunted Grocery Store

This story is being told in my interview with Lars Birger Davan, on the 17th of February in the year 2021. Davan did a case study of a grocery store known as a haunted building. This example sheds light on unexplainable events that are believed to be created by strong spiritual forces.

For over 20 years this store has experienced what might be paranormal activity. Daily, the employees noticed small things, for example, finding an item on the floor in the morning that was not there when they closed the night before. But that wasn't the biggest issue. Other incidences were harder to explain, especially when suddenly chocolate bars were laying in a row on the floor or how the price stickers that were hung up the evening before were placed in a circle on the floor the morning after. The placement of the chocolate bars and the price stickers and how they appeared in patterns and formations should, in theory, only be possible for a human being to execute. Other extraordinary examples: when a heavy box of potatoes got lifted and dropped on the floor and fruit thrown through the air.

An interesting fact is that it was not only the employees that experienced the unexplainable events. Even the electricians that regularly were being called to repair the electricity systems experienced paranormal activity. That was strange to the staff members because the electricity caused many problems. The lights got turned on and off, and the cooling system turned off on plural occasions throughout the day. One electrician did not feel safe or wanted in the store, especially after he witnessed a turnip fall out of the shelf through the covered curtain to the floor and roll around 6 meters from him while standing on a ladder. The experience scared him so much that he refused to work alone in the store after that (Davan, 2019: 3). Other issues that affected the store were how things would break continuously and when there was much water on the floor that did not seem to originate from something. There must be an intention behind these events.

The customers also experienced paranormal activity. One example is when the store manager and a customer suddenly heard an explosion so loud that it beeped in their ears. The customer

fell on the floor while holding his hands over his ears. The customer then screamed that this store was haunted, but the store manager said he didn't hear anything. Lars argues that the store manager didn't want to admit that he heard it too in fear of letting the customers know that the store is haunted and potentially losing customers. More and more paranormal events happened, and the staff and customers started to talk about it. This grocery store is in a small town where words travel fast. They talk about the energy, feelings, and events that they experience in the store, and seemed to be the rumor that every local person heard.

This example shows how involuntary haunting can take damage in other forms. Not only did the events cause confusion and fear for the employees, but they also affected the business: material loss, loss of customers, and a negative reputation. One day in June 2016, the events happened more frequently than usual, and the staff agreed to close the store. They lost a day's income (Davan 2019: 61-62).

Another aspect was that even though the manager experienced plenty of weird incidences, he did not want to tell his employees for fear of them quitting their job. At first, he lived in denial of his surroundings, turning down the customers' questions on whether the store was haunted and choosing to not discuss the incidences with his employees. He was fully aware that his reputation was on the line and feared a decreased conversion. The manager told Davan that he, at one point, was concerned about his mental health due to his doubts about his perception of reality (Davan, 2019: 52).

In fear of being received as someone who has lost their mind, the employees also kept their experiences quiet. The meaning-making here was first stored individually, but then they started discussing the incidences that held no explanation. They realized that they were not alone in the experiences and sought comfort in each other. In this way, the experiences got validated and confirmed, and a collective approach to meaning-making emerged. That was due to their stories' alignment, which supported a common ground that challenged their perspectives on reality. As Ingold argues in his book *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), when people share their experiences verbally, the meaning is getting established within a community where the collective representations serve as a bridge between individual consciousnesses, and a mutual understanding is getting produced (Ingold 2000:158).

The boss of the region experienced an electrical disturbance one day when she visited the store and then contacted the popular television program *Åndenes Makt*. The TV team spent four days in the store, where two of the employees and the electricians participated in the

filming. Here, the story about the store was told, and a medium came to gather information and evidence from the spirits that were haunting the store and then performed a cleansing to get rid of the problems. The participation in the show produced both acceptance and skepticism about the incidences. The interest and openness expressed by the TV production underpinned and legitimized the employees' stories, and the mediums' findings confirmed their experiences by relating them to historical events. The team were applauding the events, which created a space for the employees to tell their experiences without being judged.

The ghosts got identified with the previous owners of the shop and the incidences were explained by the ghost's motives which proposed a new meaning to the events. Even though the doubt of the employees shrank, the show also affected the customers' view. The exposure of the store made some customers question whether the manager made up the stories to attract customers, therefore, increased the economy. While most of the customers found the story intriguing and asked the employees about the events and looked for hauntings to happen when visiting. The store did experience an increasing economy after the show aired on TV. The exposure seemed to have a positive effect, and in Davan's experience, the employees were now prouder of the haunting than shamed. (Davan, 2019:4, 63-66).

Discussion

Electricity

Every example illustrated above had issues with the electronic system. Lights got turned off, objects moved by themselves, and the cooling system in the store and the alarm system at the house did not function even though a flaw was difficult to find. Combining electrical issues with spiritual energy is clearly illustrated in the three examples above. We see that when the epistemology of the electrical system dissolves, the next possible solution renders that the issues are caused by ghosts. Through an investigation of an old yellow castle described by Ranerhag (2013), she proposes a reason for how the electrical system can be disturbed by ghost activity. In the investigation, she got in contact with a madame called Helga that used to work at the castle in the eighteen hundreds. She saw the energy of Helga to be powerful, so powerful that when her energy vibrated at the same frequency as the electrical high voltage field around the fuse box, the issues occurred. When the two energy fields combined, the energy vibrations disturbed the electricity in the building (Ranerhag 2013: 30-34). In this possible explanation, we see those spiritual energies have the capability to have the same

frequency as the electrical energies where the combination is therefore intertwined and causes electrical issues.

Embodied energy

All my informants have mentioned the issue of energy quickly changing when being in contact with paranormal events. Paranormal activity seems to have the effect of draining human beings' energy. In the case of Maria, her bedroom was a room that drew energy from its guests but changed already after one step on the staircase and completely disappeared upstairs. Lisa could not sleep well for a year and always felt tired because of the constant disturbance of shadows or the lady sitting in her room.

A common discourse between the TV- mediums is that the spirit takes energy from humans to gain the strength to communicate. The stronger the energy, the stronger the physical ability to move an object or shows its silhouette. If spirits use human beings' energy to become stronger, there is no wonder why people are constantly tired. Lena Ranerhag(2013) is a medium known from the program *Åndenets Makt*. She argues that humans can subconsciously carry a spirit's soulful energy. For example, when a human feels sudden anxiety and unease without understanding it, it may be connected to a spirit found in the house. In other words, the anxious feeling can be a result of taking the spirit's soulful energy influenced by a trauma they went through in their lives to integrate your soul. Therefore, you can carry a spirit's grief, emotions, and experiences without knowing it (Ranerhag, 2013:26). The energy discussed above shows that energy seems to be a mobile existence that mixes with human energy. The spirits mix their energy with the human and, therefore, can exist in two dimensions at the same time.

Despite similar experiences with unexplainable events, the three examples above hold different epistemologies of how to explain the events. In Maria's case, she holds an epistemology connected to the culturally constructed world. Here, experiences are being compared to the epistemology she already holds, which contains a skepticism of events that cannot be explained scientifically. The skepticism evolved around a fascination with the event versus the medium's investigation. The grocery store's employees' epistemology first was created collectively between them. Through a wide sample of experiences, meaning-making emulsified collectively. Later we saw how the participation in the show *Åndenets Makt* also strengthened their belief because it validated the incidences to indeed be caused by spiritual forces by identifying the ghosts and their will to run the store with them. The

medium's findings were believable and rendered with their experiences. Similarly, to Maria, the epistemology changed after the mediums' findings, where the explanation gave other meanings to the events, but it did not convince her of them being spiritual. Finally, we see that Lisa was also surprised by the medium's findings which confirmed her interpretation. The difference here is that Lisa highlights the embodied haunting that creates a bodily epistemology. The medium's findings mixed with her bodily experiences is evident in her meaning-making of spiritual events. In conclusion, the medium played a big role in all the examples above as it proposed a meaning to their experiences, but their interpretation of their experiences was valued differently. This illustrates the importance of their individual experience to understand and believe in spiritual events, despite the findings of the medium. Therefore, spiritual beliefs are results of collecting experiences.

The examples above describe acts of haunting and involuntary paranormal activity. In the next chapter, I will show how two TV shows in media present paranormal representations where they actively search for paranormality voluntarily. An aspect that both these examples from this chapter have in common with the following chapter is how problematic paranormal experiences can be and the need for a medium to cleanse the haunted places. One will see that the medium in the next chapter also has a role in making meaning to spiritual beliefs.

Chapter 4: Paranormal representations in Media and Producing beliefs

Paranormal activity has become a great form of entertainment in social interaction and has been a popular topic the latest years in media. While watching a ghost activity, you first get scared, then adrenaline appears, and, in the end, you laugh at how scared you got. In their study of Ghosts Tours in Chile, Diana Espirito Santo and Gonzalo Barcelo (2021) shows how the act of scaring is essential to the ghost entertainment industry. As one of the guides working in the Ghost Tour company told them, "if you guide with a solely historical script, five people would come but if you tell stories mixed with history and ghosts, seventy people would come" (Santo and Barcelo 2021:321) Here, ghost stories are used for attracting a bigger audience, because ghosts are a popular phenomenon and the aspect of the uncertainty of what is going to happen is intriguing.

The act of scaring each other amuses us, especially at a young age. I remember when I was ten years old, and my friends and I played a game called “Svarte Mathilda” (“Black Mathilda”). Black Mathilda is equivalent to the urban legend of Bloody Mary. The story revolves around a girl falling into a coma in front of the mirror, then getting buried alive and becoming a ghost showing itself in the mirror. It is believed that if you say the name of the legend seven times, she will appear in the mirror. In turn, we went into the bathroom alone, turned off the lights, and said “Svarte Mathilda” seven times in front of the mirror. I remember being terrified, getting shivers all over my body. I swore I could see her in the mirror. The atmosphere created around the game made everyone swear to have seen her in the mirror. As a result, you went into the bathroom expecting to see her ghost in the mirror. The game worked, not because you saw the ghosts, but because the eyes got used to the dark light, and you saw your reflection in the mirror. To experience the atmosphere in the bathroom and share the feeling with your friends created a bond and a collective common experience. Ghosts are indeed entertaining. No wonder it became a phenomenon in media, both on Tv-shows and horror movies.

In this section, I will present two examples of ghost representations in media and discuss the productions of beliefs in the TV programs and how they contribute to the debate on the representation of paranormal events. I argue that production of beliefs is heavily bonded to the affective symbolism used in the representation that creates a certain atmosphere that the viewer can be able to imagine. Here I refer to Sasha Newell (2018) work on affective symbolism, where the effects used, and reactions witnessed in the presentation of paranormality trigger the viewer’s memories and sensation felt in similar places individually and collectively. As Newell puts it; “many of our thoughts, feelings, and urges originate from neither our biological essence nor our subjective consciousness but from a collectively motivated space at once outside and within ourselves.” (Newell 2018: 13).

I will also focus on the discourse of energy and how these energetic forces are interrelated in how one can find meaning in paranormal events. I have chosen to discuss the two Norwegian TV programs, *Åndenes Makt* and, *Spøkelsesjegerne*. These programs bring two different perspectives on paranormal activity, and I will show how spiritual energies are expressed and understood. Then I will analyze and compare how the two programs represent paranormal activity and how entertainment produces belief and skepticism about ghosts’ existence.

Paranormality showed in Media

In 2021, the channel TV-Norge showed a new ghost-hunting program, *Spøkelsesjegerne*, a Norwegian version of the American tv-show *Ghost Adventure*, and the Swedish show called *Spøkjakt*. Here, a team of usually one skeptical host, a medium, and a technical researcher bring instruments that are said to capture paranormal activity. The team visits the most haunted places in the country and tries to document evidence of life after death. It is loved by both believers and skeptics and contributes to a debate on the existence of ghosts.

The other program I am investigating is *Åndenes Makt* (meaning 'The power of spirits'). This program was airing on the Norwegian channel TV-Norge since 2005, and in the year 2021 viewed its' last season of 17 seasons in total. In Autumn 2020, I reached out to the production of the popular TV program. Here I received the contact information of the TV host Tom Strømness, which I shortly after interviewed.

Åndenes Makt is a program where a team visits haunted houses and carries out a mediumistic investigation. Here, the medium walks around the house to contact the spirit behind the paranormal experiences or as Tom calls them "unexplained events". After gaining information about the events, the medium performs a cleanse of the house to help the spirits to cross over to the other side which let the homeowners get their peace.

The participants who write to this program are often families troubled with paranormal experiences and struggle to feel safe in their own homes. Paranormal activity is also evident at workplaces, such as cafes, bed and breakfast facilities, or train stations. Tom tells me that over 500 people reached out to them for help, and therefore it is clear to say that paranormal activity is a problem that needs to be taken seriously.

I will now present how the programs are structured and how they choose effects to represent paranormal events.

Spøkelsesjegerne

I am going to present the introduction of *Spøkelsesjegerne* (ViewMasters 01.11.2021) from the first episode of season 1 which illustrates their use of symbolism to intrigue the viewer.

The first scene of *Spøkelsesjegerne* goes as followed.

The camera angles from above and films an outstanding white building standing in a mountain landscape while playing an intense background melody. The dark lighting creates a mystical mood and contrasts the big white building which is the building in investigation.

The camera gradually moves closer to the building where one can see worn-out old windows, then changes location to old corridors inside, filmed with green night vision. The lights are blinking. The old corridors are common associations to haunting and spiritualism. The corridor symbolizes liminality, a room that is used to transfer from one place to another. The process of spirits moving into the other side are often described as a tunnel or corridor. Corridors symbolizes the path of change, where the decision on where to go next is made.

Now, a set of clips from the episode is being shown. Here, the clips invite the viewer to glimpse what would happen in this episode. Effects of focused filming leave the surroundings blurry and remind of an intro to a horror movie. The clips include strong reactions from the Ghost Hunting team and the equipment used in the investigation. Reactions, in addition, are filmed with a handheld camera that increases the fear by setting the viewers to see it from the investigators' perspectives.

After the visual presentation of the object of investigation, a picture of a beautiful fjord in the daylight is being shown with the text; "alle hendelser er autentiske. Ingen er manipulert eller forandret." (Meaning; all incidences are authentic. None are manipulated or transformed). Using lights and a familiar photo of a fjord helps diminish the fear due to the positive associations with the beautiful nature. An effect used is the contrast of lights and darkness. The white building surrounded by beautiful nature represent light, whilst the mystical music transforms the atmosphere to act creepy which represent the darkness.

The name of the building is Luster Sanatorium, which was previously a tuberculosis Sanatorium from the year 1902 when the sickness spread throughout Norway. It was later used as a mental hospital and during the 90s as an asylum. Old photos of people in hospital beds and the haunting sound of music gives the viewer an impression of the building's history filled with death and sorrow. Photos in black and white represents the past and post pictures to give the audience a proof of earlier existence at the hospital that introduce the context of the building. The building is rumored to have a paranormal activity where people have, among other things, seen shadowed figures and heard footsteps without seeing people walking there.

Paranormal activities are often linked to old houses with wooden walls. We live in expectation of old houses being haunted. Theresa Caputo (2015) wrote that elderly houses have more energy and spirits than newer houses because of their long existence and therefore collected a more extensive story. A story built of activities, incidences by people walking in

and out of the house leaving imprinted energies through generations (Caputo 2015:151). According to Ranerhag (2013), a room's negative energy is not necessarily from the spirit world, but a historical imprint caused by experiences like pain and death in the house that will impact any human being. She is also expressing that the feeling of the place is valid for sensing negative energy, one 'feels' the house's negative history, for example, the room feels of death (Ranerhag 2013: 33-34). She continues to say that these energies are energy leftovers that cannot be transferred to the spirit world since it is not spiritual. She defines energy leftovers as other's people's experiences and lives in the past that impacts her own feeling, and it is her job through mediumistic reading to tell their stories (Ranerhag 2013: 35). The atmosphere of negative energies is here expressed as energy leftovers but will later in this chapter see examples of specific energy and spirit coming from a ghost.

After receiving the context of the episode follows a presentation of the ghost hunting team. The first person presented is the known Youtuber, Victoria Skau, who says while holding a camera: *"I am Victoria Skau, and I have haunted ghosts since I was 14 years old"*.

The next is the medium Lilli Bendriss, also known as one of the leading mediums in *Åndenets Makt*. With her mystical look in her eyes, black hair, and heavy makeup moving her hands in a circle presents herself: *"I am Lilli Bendriss, and I can talk with the dead."*

The last person to present himself is the YouTuber Robin Hofset while holding a REM-pod, one of the instruments to measure electronic fields, believably a sign of a paranormal event. He presents as followed: *I am Robin Hofset. Paranormal activity can be measured, and I have the instruments."*

Finally, the host expresses that this program would prove that ghosts exist.

One can see used effects to both scare and comfort the audience. The effects are based on contrasts in lighting, music, images being shown, and comfort by using the viewer's associations of the dichotomy of scary and peaceful. Showing the scariest clips from the episode raises the audiences' expectations of what they are about to see. Claiming that they will prove the existence of ghosts is intriguing to both believers and non-believers. Will they live up to their audience's expectations, and will the audience believe in hauntings after viewing this program? Both yes and no, depending on how one interprets the events captured on camera. I will now present an example of paranormal events happening at a hospital room and how the communication with spirits were done in the first episode of season 1 of *Spøkelsesjegerne* (ViewMasters 01.11.2021). In this scene it is believed that ghosts

communicated with the medium Lilli through the paranormal measuring instrument, called REM-pod (translated to English):

A scene from Episode 1, Season 1 (2021)

13.00 to 18.19

Victoria walks in first and immediately returns. She is looking terrified.

Victoria: "I don't want to be here"

Lilli enters, she experiences an electric shock and begins to explain.

Lilli: "Here has the one body after another been lying, right. The imprint is being reinforced for each person entering with the same diagnosis. The electronic field is very strong here, which made me react very physically"

Lilli sits down in one of those beds and suddenly jumps back of, shaking.

Due to Lilli's strong reaction in this room, they made the decision of putting a REM-pod on the bed that Lilli was sitting on to see if the instrument would react as well.

Robin turns on the REM-pod and tests it to see if it works. He moves his hands back and forth to check and it does work.

Robin: "We must give it time to calibrate the temperature"

After a few seconds, the instrument starts to signal. The REM-pod gives signals on the part of the instrument that shows the electronic field, meaning that it is not temperature changes that cause the signal.

Robin: Now, someone is in between the electromagnetic field. It is no electricity here, and we are standing far away from the REM-pod."

The instrument is exactly where Lilli sat and got an electric shock. Lilli is holding her hand while closing her eyes and the REM-pod signals again.

Lilli: “Are there more people who would like to come forward and communicate? I go back to the time when tuberculosis was prominent. How many people came here, lived their lives, and died here? Is this a gathering arena where they can relive their lives?”

Here exists helpers. Deceased who want to help the hurting people here. They are left here to help. If what I’m receiving and saying here is resonating in any way, can you give a signal by sending energy to the object here, (pointing to the REM-pod) like you just did?”

In less than two seconds, a strong reaction from the REM-pod appears. Victoria gasps, her face looking shocked.

Victoria: “The REM-pod has been silent the entire time while you were talking!”

Lilli nods.

Lilli: “thank you.”

Lilli: “There is one who is talking to me now, just like he is breaking out and standing here. A man”

The REM-pod signals.

Lilli folds her arms in front of her chest to show how the man stands.

Victoria: “Is this the same man?”

REM-pod is giving signals.

Lilli: “Yes. We have respect. Many people do not have respect. Think about the destiny of those who were here. They were humans who did not have the easiest lives. There is also something about us, we are going to tell a story about things that were not right.

The REM-pod gives another signal, in several colors.

Lilli: “Things that were not done properly. There were people here who laughed while we were in pain”

Victoria: “Oh no!”

Lilli: “They were psychopaths. Tell our story. That was that. Then he is telling me to go down to the third floor, the basement.

Victoria: “Okay, but then we will do that.”

Lilli: “There were the operations.”

The timing of the appearing signals is here believed as ghostly answers. The question is how coincidental the signals seem to appear. During the show, Robin Hofset explains how the instruments work and demonstrate how close one must be for the instrument to react. Due to the explanation, it does seem like the REM-pod signals without them being close to it. When the instrument is silent and then signals accurately after the questions, it gives a response whenever they want it to. If the ghost is going towards the instrument, how do we know that the ghost answers yes or no? Arguably because of the leading questions, the instrument does not always give out signals to their questions. But it signals when they ask the ‘right’ question, therefore the response is interpreted as a yes to their question while silence is a no. The representation of the ghost here is that it has a message to deliver. Lilli talks about how she channeled the spirit. The spirit told her about its life in the sanatorium and wanted the TV team to tell his story. The story is about the people who got mistreated here. The facts that are being told here, can arguably be questioned or doubted to come from the investigation. The reason behind this evaluation is that the TV crew already knows the history of the building, about the operations that were done. Here the findings could resonate with what we would expect from the building. The question to ask comes from the findings and the response comes from how the REM-pod reacted without them being near it. In addition, it is the reactions of the TV members and their experiences of the event that the viewer evaluates.

We have seen how the signal from the REM-pod is understood as a yes, whereas silence is a no. Another pattern used to understand the spirits’ response, is the instrument used in the ghost tours in Chile. Here, the guide placed the electromagnetic sensor, Ghostmeter, in the middle of their formation, and specifically asked the spirits to present themselves once for saying yes, and twice for saying no. The guide here expects the spirit to understand his pattern and respond in the way they are told (Santo 2021:329). In that sense, the spirit is thought to know about how to understand different patterns and expects the ghost to understand the language to then form a real conversation between dimensions with the use of an instrument.

In this scene, the ghost gets to tell his story and is represented as a man who wants to be heard and let them know that there are helpers left to help the other spirits. The man is one of

the energies of the imprinted beds. Here we see a discourse of spirits leaving some of their energy to imprint objects, which leads us to the core belief that energy previously covered by a human body continues to live after the death of the body. When Lilli explained why the atmosphere was tense due to the energy imprints, one can see how energies create an atmosphere. The energy has the capability to create an atmosphere for humans after years of adding energy. More energy increases tension in the atmosphere.

We have seen how energy is communicated through instruments, which is an example of spirits getting materialized into objects. The famous expression “materialization” in spiritism’s discourses, expresses how spirits can transform themselves and make themselves visible in the human world. In other words, to materialize and manifest matter in human bodies.

After fieldwork among Puerto Rican Spiritists, Raquel Romberg (2017) argues that matter and spirit are interconnected constantly. When she speaks of matter, she means how spiritists note that spirits inhabit a form of matter that is unique and can materialize and communicate in ways that the human senses can sense. Puerto Rican spiritists live in the belief that spirits can be manifested in the material world, for example, in the forms of smells, sounds, or bodily sensations (Romberg 2017: 386, 389). Lilli’s physical reaction, the electric shock, can exemplify a spirit making itself visible by inhabiting Lilli’s body. The spirit’s energy imprints Lilli, and in that sense the spirit is manifesting her. Here is an example of where a spirit communicates by embodiment. As Thomas Csordas (1990) argues in his studies of American charismatic churches, mild electric reactions are not understood as a shock, but as an embodiment of spiritual power (Csordas, 1990: 18). The other form of communicating in this program is through instruments. As previously mentioned, the equipment is built to sense electromagnetic energies. Hanks (2016) explains electromagnetic energy as; “electromagnetic energy is a type of energy emitted by objects in the form of electrical or magnetic waves that travel through space.” (Hanks 2016: 815). Here we see the understanding of spiritual energy contains similar magnetic waves as wires or electrically charged objects. The energy is also believed to travel through spaces and dimensions. In Hank’s fieldwork among paranormal investigators, she got told by some investigators that spirits communicate through electromagnetic energy, while another meant that spirits are electromagnetic energy (Hanks 2016: 816-817). Here the spirits’ presence is diagnosed by detecting electromagnetic energy.

We have seen how the spirit communication function with the help of mediums and measuring instrument. We have also seen which symbols and effects are used in the program and where the haunting is happening in the present. I will now present another representation of hauntings in media where paranormal events have happened in the past.

Åndenes Makt

Through a rising meadow of lupines, one can see three traditional white houses, horizontally placed. While the camera is zooming in towards the house in the middle, a dynamic increasing melody is being played with hints of birdsong. Even though it is filmed in daylight, the music sounds mystical and creates a tense atmosphere. This is the first glimpse of episode 6 in season 17 of *Åndenes Makt* (ViewMasters 17.03.2021). Short clips of the reconstruction with the participants' experiences are being shown, where dramatic effects like lightning, music, and grey-colored filters are used. The participants are roleplaying themselves to demonstrate the incidences, and let the viewer experience it from their perspectives.

In *Åndenes Makt*, the presentation varies from episode to episode but has a regular intro including associations with hauntings and spiritism. It contains multiple symbolic objects and nature, among some are birds flying, a dark tight forest, and an old television turning off and on. As seen earlier in this thesis, electricity can be affected by ghosts, and here the television turning off and on again illustrates how one connects energy and electricity to paranormal events. Other associations with ghosts are text written on the mirror, long white corridors with blinking lights, and old black and white pictures. It is built on the viewers' expectation of paranormal activity and creates the setting for what the viewer is about to see.

Here I will give an example of a presentation of the episode is from episode 6 from season 17: in Larvik. It was aired 17th of March (ViewMasters 17.03.2021)

<i>'Savner du litt spenning I hverdagen - your daily life</i>	<i>'Are you missing a bit of tension in</i>
<i>Kan du jo bare flytte hit</i>	<i>can you just move here</i>
<i>Til det som ser ut som en vanlig</i>	<i>to what looks like a regular</i>
<i>halvpart av en tomannsbolig</i>	<i>half part of a two-bedroom home</i>
<i>I et stille og fredelig boligfelt.</i>	<i>in a quiet and peaceful residential area.</i>

Men det er bare utenpå

But that is just on the outside

Bli med inn, så skal du få se

Come inside, then you will see

*og høre noe som knapt er til å tro'
that's hardly believable*

and hear something

-Tom Strømness

As we see in this presentation, is that the program appeal to the excitement part of paranormality with asking the viewers if they want tension and entices them with claiming that they will see and hear something hardly believable.

After the introduction, the participants in *Åndenets Makt* tell the host about their experiences in the house. To intrigue the viewers, the unexplainable event gets dramatized. An interesting part is how the participants become actors in their characters. The scene illustrates the setting of how they experienced the event. In the dramatizations of the incidences, the aspect of TV entertainment appears. The use of effects, sounds, and camera angles present the tendency to view paranormality as scary.

A scene from *Åndenets Makt*, in the same episode above, represents an example of a story told with a teller's voice over the dramatizing of the participants themselves.

The couple who lives in the haunted house is sitting on each end of the sofa.

Woman: "Suddenly, it slammed on the second floor."

Man: "What the... is that? I went up and stared. I thought that something had fallen, or?"

Woman: "We turned every room upstairs and found nothing. Then I looked in the storage room. There I got to see it."

A red candle is lying on the floor.

Woman: "One of the red candles had crashed in the wall, one and a half meters across the room, and then fell down on the floor."

The candles lay on top of a shelf, and there was a red mark from the candle on the wall across the room.

Man: “For me, you need to tip the whole house around for that to work. It is not any natural explanation for that.”

Woman: “There is no way for that to happen.”

Tom: “If the candle were laying there (*points to the top of the shelf*) and crashed into the wall there (*pointing to the other wall*), then it must move very fast. In addition, set marks?”

Man: “It was red candle marks on the wall. We still don’t understand what happened there. It is physically impossible.”

Tom: “No, what the candle in the storage room has been affected by, is only the imagination that determines.”

As one can see, the repetitional questions involve whether the event can be explained or not. The comments: “It is not any natural explanation for that,” or “it is physically impossible,” are important elements in the discourse of unexplainable events. If an event cannot be explained, there must be another force causing the incidences to happen. The solutions could be leaning towards paranormal activity. As Tom expresses, “what the candle in the storage room has been affected by, is only the imagination that determines.” Here the weight of the evidence is given to the viewers, and the aspect of questioning paranormal activity is shown. To admit the uncertainty of the events is an effect that can create a bond to the viewers, as the events are not determinably argued which results in creating a distance to paranormality, and rather use it for entertainment purposes. This bond can be interrelated to the aspect of uncertainty and mystery which create life to the haunting itself. As Newell argues, “it is when signs participate in the objects they represent, when the boundaries between representation and object are confused, that we come closer to awareness of objects outside our culturally delimited perception of them” (Newell, S 2018: 7).

Here we find an example of how a spirit manifests matter. Even though it is not expressed that it is a spirit that affected the candle, it lies between the lines as it is investigated as being haunted. The questioning part of this example is how the candle managed to move at such speed and force to fly one and a half meters across the room and leave a mark on the wall. They explain that a spirit manifested the candle and used its energy to throw the candle across the room. This is only one experience of the multiple events explained through the episode.

Examples of other events that happened in the house, were the sounds of many people talking downstairs when they were in bed and the smell of smoke. Another example on object is spiritually manifested, is the example of the couple, Gillian and Michael presented in Newell's article. They moved into the grandmother's brother's house where there was a painting of a middle-aged woman with eyes that seemed to follow the couple whenever they went. Newell expresses that it is through the discussion of the mystery of how and why the painting was made, the painting gained power and meaning. The object was given a purpose and an energy that produced a meaning (Newell, S 2018:9). This painting's energy to stir at them could lean into the understanding of being manifested by a spirit, just as the candle described above.

After presenting the other experiences the family experienced, the show moves on to the medium's investigation of the house.

Tom meets Lena Ranerhag in a park nearby. She is the medium, who had gotten the assignment of investigating the house in Larvik. Tom follows to assure the audience that the medium has not received any information about where they are going, who lives there, or what is happening there. In the previously mentioned episode, the medium describes the ghost she is communicating with. She explained the ghost as a family-oriented man with average height, medium brown thin hair, and not thin or thick in size. This man she believed was the father of the man who lives there now. To easier differentiate, the name of the man living in the haunted house is Rune. Rune's father supposedly was a positive, happy, and hardworking man. Lena narrowed a yellow house while she was sitting in the car, driving to the house in Larvik. She did not know why the yellow house was important, but later she got an explanation. The haunted house was not yellow but painted white. Through further investigation, she talked about a family discussion between Rune and his brother. Then interpreted that Rune is living in the wrong house, according to the ghost. When the medium conveyed her information gathered from the ghost, Rune was surprised. Rune explained that the description of the man sounds like his father. Here the spirit is being personalized. He could also understand the discussion the father was talking about. The father and his brother lived in a house during the last years of the father's life. That house was white now, but the father previously painted the house yellow, therefore is it likely that the father would refer to it as a yellow house. After the death of their father, Rune was offered to take over the house, but as he was building a new one, he denied the offer and the brother took the house. The only error in the findings of the medium is that Rune and his brother agreed, and the takeover

was not a big discussion. Lena also told them the father said that he was extremely fond of Per. Per was the name he mentioned. The woman in the house said that Per is her son and that Rune's father liked Per. How Lena could know the name and the yellow house is peculiar, especially if one believes that she did not receive any information beforehand. Was she really in contact with him? It is natural to ask as the accuracy is impressive.

The way Lena is talking about spirits is that the spirit receives human abilities and physical characteristics. The spirit is presented as to how he was during his life, and still worries and wants to take part in the left family's life after the death. Lena explained that he knew he was dead but still was in the human world because he wanted to be a part of his son's family.

Tom expressed to me that he is essentially not concerned about finding out about spirits being the reason behind the disturbance in the home. He argues that the relation between the details captured by mediums and the experiences is surprisingly accurate and therefore presents a possible explanation of the phenomenon.

Comparison and the Production of Beliefs

Creating atmosphere

In a summary, one can see that both programs are playing with the audiences' associations with paranormal events in form of symbolism. They show objects that people combine with ghosts and haunting, such as blinking lights and empty white corridors. The symbolism derives from the core belief of spiritualism, based on ghost stories we have heard through generations. What is important to mention while comparing the two programs is that they are both produced by the same producer from the same company and appear on the same channel. Therefore, it is evident that they use some of the same effects. The first sign of the difference between the two is their use of lightning and filming effects. *Spøkelsesjegerne* mostly films in night vision, and with blinking lights, while *Åndenets Makt* films in daylight, except in the intro sound. Darkness is a specific tool to create a scary atmosphere. Even though, the lightning differs, the intense background music is closely the same. The filming throughout the episodes is different, but one finds similarities in the intro of the programs that contrast lights and darkness, where the music is contributing to changing the atmosphere whereas the locations represent beauty and light.

The filming effects in the pictures and the music relate to our vision and hearing. It sets its atmosphere. What I mean by atmosphere, is by viewing the setting of the scene evokes the feeling of the place to the viewer. This is because the symbolism used is built on our memories and associations which let us imagine how the atmosphere is felt in the haunted house. In the Ghost tour in Chile, the guide is playing mainly on fear when he tells the clients of bodily sensations previously felt, for example, feeling pushed, having their hair pulled or seeing ghost's silhouette (Santo, 2021:238) By hearing similar stories, one gets invited into the impression of a feeling or the bodily sensations felt in that moment. Feelings that a viewer can identify based on previous experiences or associations, like for example, horror movies. *Åndenes Makt* has a lighter tone in the way they express paranormal activity, and by filming in daylight and talk about the events with a sense of humor, the atmosphere seems calmer than *Spøkelsesjegerne*. By watching these shows together with friends, the energy can differ based on the collectively atmosphere created at home, where the mood of the others can affect your own. The atmosphere is then affective, hence the next concept I will present, Anderson's (2009) "affective atmosphere." The symbolism and lightning used in these shows are all effects of creating "affective atmospheres."

In Anderson's argument, atmospheres are changing constantly depending on bodies collectively interact with each other, as well as the individual experience, subjectively felt. In that sense, atmospheres are continually appearing and disappearing, as well as forming and deforming. The adjective affective is here in this sense not merely personal but transpersonal. Anderson (2009) explains; "affective atmospheres 'are a class of experience that occur before and alongside the formation of subjectivity, across human and non-human materialities, and in-between subject/object distinctions" (Anderson, 2009: 78). The two programs create the atmosphere by using symbolism and effects which builds on our emotions like fear or excitement. The way the TV team in *Spøkelsesjegerne* act towards each other is impacting the atmosphere. This by gearing each other up as events happen, with saying, for example, "did you hear that?" or "oh shit, the Rem-pod signaled. It is answering us!" With asking each other confirmational questions, excitingly stating the events, and collectively agreeing on the events highlight the events, as them becoming more believable as they all were experienced the same. Victoria, the host on the show is often appearing afraid while investigating the building, which then transfers to the viewer as it creates a scarier atmosphere. We see that the way the two programs differ on how they choose to present paranormal activity, where *Spøkelsesjegerne* plays on the aspect of fear and excitement, while *Åndenes Makt* is focusing

on presenting the participants' experiences from their perspectives and have a lighter form of trying to find the roots to the issues spirits can cause. The symbolism in the introduction of each show is similar, because they both use symbolism in form of associations one has to spiritual activity, and effects like lightning and music to set the atmospheres. Now comes the second part of the comparative analysis where I will analyze the structures of the programs.

The structures of the programs

In *Spøkelsesjegerne*, the event happens as they walk around the supposedly haunted building. In the beginning, Victoria speaks to a local who tells her about paranormal experiences, not necessarily their own experiences, but more about rumors to have happened at the place. The program focuses on investigating the building by using measuring instruments and the medium. Even though previous experiences get presented, the goal of the investigation is to move further into history and hopefully prove the paranormal activity. Therefore, the unexplainable, proposedly paranormal events happen in the present. In *Åndenets Makt*, the events have happened in the past and retold to the TV host and then dramatized by the participants for the viewer to see.

Another point is how they introduce the haunted places, both film the place, but *Spøkelsesjegerne* also tells the story behind the place and shows clips of what to expect to happen, while *Åndenets Makt* does not reveal the house's history. In *Åndenets Makt*, a photographer follows them around the house both during the interviews of the participants and later during the investigation of the medium. Here, it is filmed during the day with regular lights in the house. It is also being filmed during the dramatizations of the events, here, the lights depend on the story and the time the events were experienced.

Spøkelsesjegerne is switching from having a photographer filming them around the building and filming themselves. Usually, after the dark light has set, the team members separate to investigate more places. During the separation, a handheld camera is used, usually in dark light. The element of filming themselves getting scared, and the instruments reacting, creates an atmosphere of fear. When they hold the cameras, if an unexpected event happens, they will not get it on camera. The serious investigation starts after dark, as it is said that the darker, the more paranormal events appear. We can see that both programs bring the viewer into their perspectives. In *Åndenets Makt*, the dramatization of the events experienced are showing the viewer their perspectives and experiences, while in *Spøkelsesjegerne*, the handheld camera is imposing the viewer to see the haunting from the ghost hunter's

perspective. This way, they create a collective experience for the viewers where they can get an insight into how the paranormal activity was experienced.

Different sounds might also appear, for example, sounds of someone walking down the stairs while the team is standing still. The sounds are being played again for the viewer to get proper evidence. The team discusses the noise and confirms that they all heard it. As one does not know when something is happening, the viewer is not prepared to hear sounds or see anything peculiar, and therefore it is necessary to play the clip again while lowering the team's microphones to get a proper listen. The facial expression of the team members signals their fear and shock when hearing something they believe is ghost activity. These expressions highlight and create the atmosphere. Paranormal activity can create an atmosphere, especially in old buildings with haunting histories. One can ask whether the atmosphere is scary because of the knowledge of the building's horrific story and therefore expects it to be haunted rather than the actual events experienced through the investigation. If the investigation happened in a regular house with similar surroundings without holding a horrific history, would the atmosphere be the same as the Sanatorium? By looking at the other example shown in *Åndenes Makt*, the atmosphere seemed haunting to the people living there, but the atmosphere changed when the evidence by the medium was delivered, and the ghost is identified.

Evidence

The search for evidence exists in both programs. For *Åndenes Makt* the evidence is created by the mediums' ability to talk to the dead and validated by their findings that match reality, history, or the knowledge of the owners. The stronger the knowledge relates to real-life determines the strength of the evidence but will never be proven. Therefore, *Åndenes Makt* is based on the belief of the medium and the stories of the people who experienced unexplainable events. In *Spøkelsesjegerne*, the evidence presented is the filmed investigation of the reactions of the instruments and the TV team. The equipment that they are using is, for example, the previously mentioned REM-pod or a radiation device. The REM-pod has two functions. The first function is that it captures temperature changes. If it gets colder, the device will make a signal that lets them know if the temperature is locally changing. The second function is that the antenna on the REM-pod creates its electromagnetic field. If something breaks in the field, the device will emit signals. The radiation device is a device that creates a radiation ray around a meter in front of the device, and if something breaks the

radiation it will start playing a melody. Through the medium, questions are being asked and the ghost gets the instructions to use the instruments as a responding device. The accuracy of the signals appearing at the right time makes the viewers question if it was coincidental or not. What causes the device to signal, especially when the team is not in the same room or when it only reacts after a question? The more accurate times of the signals are, the more convincing the instrument works. When it works, is it measuring ghost activity?

The role of the medium varies between the two programs. In *Åndenes Makt*, the medium plays the bigger role, where the medium investigates the haunted house and through communication with the dead spirits, she presents evidence on which characters the spirit were alive, characteristics, and motive for the haunting. It is often the spirit that has a specific message for the people living in the house, either a grandfather or a previous owner. At the end of the program, the evidence is being reality checked and often they ask if the person in contact with the medium could be the person the team found, the person with the most similarities to the description from the medium. The TV host never states that it must be a specific person and leaves it open for the viewers to decide for themselves. If the spirits' relatives approve, they show pictures of the spirit whom they believe is causing the haunting. By viewing old photos of the person in spirit, the spirit gets a face and diminishes the scary part of a haunting.

Why does the medium get more information in *Åndenes Makt*? A response to that question could be because the motives behind the two programs differ, and *Spøkelsesjegerne* is a show that is built on the here and now experiences and scientifically record ghostly activities, and not necessarily the mediumistic part of an investigation. Even though the medium takes a great role in spirit communication, the program has the desire to measure paranormal activity and prove its existence once and for all. On the other side, *Åndenes Makt* worries about find the reason behind the unexplainable events, and why ghost is present in the house. The medium is there to help the spirits cross over, as well as letting the people living there a solution to the events. The medium is the only instrument for channeling spirits and does not bring other paranormal instruments. The identification of the spirit is also easier, as the people often can confirm the details of the evidence presented.

Whether one believes in the evidence presented is based on their belief or will for paranormal activity to exist. Tom Strømæss, the TV host of *Åndenes Makt*, has an answer to whether the events told by the participants in the program are paranormal or unexplainable. He is

asking questions about what the events are a result and an expression of. According to him, here is where the medium comes in. They try to answer the question with their theories, where they seek a connection between their findings and events and hence present a possible solution. The mediums locate the source of the events by using Toms' example, that is due to Grandfather Pedersen, and then it is a matter of removing the source of the problems. It is common among viewers to question if the medium has any previous information about the participants or the place, but this is strongly denied by Tom. He tells me that the mediums don't receive any information beforehand and don't meet the participants until after the investigation. Hence when the mediums repeatedly find information that they should not know, one can ask oneself if it is random guesses or if they have found the connection and source of the events. This part would not prove life after death but comes down to what one believes or does not believe (interview, Tom Strømnaess: February 2021). After discussing the evidence brought up by mediums and paranormal instruments, one sees that based on your beliefs one analyses the evidence presented and whether to believe it or not. I will argue that paranormal discussions roots in the belief in life after death, and that human beings have a soul. A soul, or in other words, spirit or energy.

Spiritual energy and ability

Spiritual energies are expressed as having the capability to respond with devices, moving objects, and manifest themselves both materially and embodied. This is by the moving candle, making the signal of the instrument, and the embodiment with Lilli. The spirits are being personalized and identified. They receive human abilities and are able to communicate their messages. They receive intentions of why they are staying in that house, specifically. The spirits in the examples above have been identified as the father of Rune, and the man that was a patient at the sanatorium. The identification of Rune's father is more accurate than the patient. The latter identification is based on the responses through the instruments. The only visual description of the patient is how the man was standing with folded arms while the description of Rune's Father contained more details, in both looks and message, and are first retrieved from the medium, then confirmed by Rune. The only confirmation available for the episode of the ghost hunters was the knowledge they had about the sanatorium, and the ghostly spirit most likely lived from the beginning of 1900. Therefore, it can be hard to identify as they don't have anyone to confirm their identity.

Both ghostly representations in the two examples above are motivated to deliver a message and are worried about different situations. In *Spøkelsesjegerne* the message is clear that the medium should tell the real story of how badly mistreated the spirits were during their lives. Rune's father wanted to express his opinion of where Rune should live, but also to look after his family. We see here how the argument of ghosts showing themselves for a purpose is apparent. They are here to deliver a message and share facts with the human beings living today.

The description of the ghost presented earlier shows general knowledge that can resonate with many different people. This aspect creates skepticism among the viewers. One example is the description of the man Lena saw, as she described as average height and size, the thin medium brown hair. Under a video from *Åndenets Makt* posted by TV Norge (2020) on Facebook, one man commented (translated to English): “I can feel that your grandmother was a lady”, “Yes that’s true” and she was between 20 to 120 years old when she died. Yes correct, how do you know?” The comment is sarcastic, one attempt at making fun of the evidence presented. When the description from the medium is vague, then the evidence lacks strength, and then understandably causes criticism. Another comment that was based on humor, was a man commenting on a home video where one participant in the program filmed a small broom standing up by itself. He wrote that these ‘actors’ are better than the ones on Hotel Cæsar (popular Norwegian series) and, further down the comment section, someone called the program the Norwegian biggest comedy show (TVNorge 2020).

At the end of both programs, a goodbye ritual gets performed. In *Åndenets Makt*, the medium sends the spirits over to the ‘other side’ in a cleanse séance. Sometimes the medium and the members of the house or workplace hold hands to gather energy and through the energies, the medium leads the spirit to ‘cross over’. Other times, a drum is being used or the medium alone closes its eyes and tells the spirits to cross over to the other side. After a month or two, the TV team returns to the house to ask if they are still experiencing paranormal activity. Usually, the answer is no. The house is cleansed. In *Spøkelsesjegerne*, the medium rarely sends the spirit in contact over to the spirit world. The exception is only when a spirit is hurting. Here, no cleansing gets performed. After the ghost hunting team’s investigation, the members thank the place and the ghosts for the visit. This is to show the spirit world respect.

Voluntary versus involuntary

The foundation of these two TV programs is based on Ghostly hauntings or unexplainable events that arise either voluntarily or involuntarily. *Spøkelsesjegerne* is searching for hauntings to happen and try to provoke them with measuring instruments and a medium. *Åndenes Makt*, on the other hand, tells the story of people who wants to get rid of the paranormal activity and get help from a medium. In *Åndenes Makt*, the participants apply for help to remove the unexplainable events in their homes or workplaces. The program will not know about the haunting house before receiving an email from the owners. The age of the houses also differs from episode to episode, some places are old while others are new. The ghost hunting team on the other hand find elderly places with a long history and wants to experience for themselves and get scientific evidence for ghost hauntings. Even though catching ghosts on camera is their goal for the program, the capturing of a ghost on camera is yet not been successful. So far, they have evidence from reactions to their instruments, odd sounds, or movement of objects. Also, the participants often react physically and describe their feelings and emotions. Because it is solely based on their own experiences, the viewer needs to decide whether to believe the reactions or not. The teams in both programs visited haunted buildings and places, but the approach to finding the places is different. After comparing the structures and approaches in the two programs, I will discuss how they attributes to the production of beliefs in ghosts.

Producing beliefs

The striking issue of producing beliefs is the disbelief in media. Media create programs to deliver entertainment to its viewers. It is known that TV tends to bend the truth and overdramatize different subjects to get people to continue watching. It is therefore understandable that people question the credibility of the TV team.

The credibility of the events is based on trust. Trust to believe the incidences happened and not tricked by the production. Both *Spøkelsesjegerne* and *Åndenes Makt* assure their viewers that nothing is manipulated or staged. Tom Strømnæss from the TV team of *Åndenes Makt*, argued during my interview (February 2021) that the phenomena viewed in the TV program are incidences that challenge our perceptions of the world. He is convinced that there is an explanation for the events, but today we lack the knowledge to understand it. By referring to the number of participants telling their stories, it is hard to believe that they all lie and shows that paranormal experiences are not paranormal but normal. After being on air for 17 years, with hundreds of people coming forward with their stories, it is peculiar how this many

people have experienced strange events. As a viewer, it might be easier to believe families as they live very similar lives to themselves, in contrast to being told by a TV team, especially mediums, who does this for a living.

What causes the unexplained events is wholly based on beliefs, as it cannot be proven by the knowledge we presently possess. Even though it is not yet proven, Tom believes 100% that those unexplained events take place. In other words, physically impossible events that in theory should not happen. The producers of the tv-show are concerned with finding reliable participants that are not false or vague. Therefore, the unexplained events should be experienced by a variety of people or witnesses at a specific place. No doubt that some of the people reaching out to the TV program want to appear on TV and have other motivations for joining the show, therefore a background check is important. Through the interview, I get another insight into what is going on behind the scenes, but the latter is not presented in the program itself. Then again, the question is, if the viewer believes the TV team or not. In *Spøkelsesjegerne* it is not only the ghost hunting team that is being evaluated to be trustworthy but also the instruments used to measure paranormal activity. In a comment section of an article criticizing the latter program, one man among other things commentated that he would like to see a more skeptical man join the program, and exemplified a known TV character, Jon Almaas, that is known to be critical and a so-called ‘mansplainer’. He added that he also wanted to see ‘actual experts’ on technical equipment that can be used in the investigation and challenge the ‘signals and the sounds’ the instruments give out, that can explain better or disprove certain cases that can be grounded in interference caused by other forces than ghost activity. He also claims that the instruments being used in the program are bought on eBay (a low-priced sales website), (comment in TV-review «Spøkelsesjegerne»: *Åndenes avmakt – VG*, 29.10.2021). In his comment, he questions the ability of the ghost investigators and the equipment.

“I believe they were waiting for a haunting to happen” (one woman quoted in Hill, 2011:77). This comment illustrates a repeated element in the paranormal discourse. Waiting for a paranormal haunting can result in the team members interpreting sounds or lightning differently as if it was unexpected. The belief in the events is also based on the belief of the reactions. The example from the women’s comment is how the scary place affects them and interpreted as she does believe the participants’ reactions. Another example of the belief of reactions is how a 19-year-old female resonates with the TV team’s reactions, she said that if that was her walking in a dark castle and somebody was knocking on the door, she would

also be really scared (Hill 2011:79). This illustrates the aspect of being able to imagine the atmosphere and the TV teams' experience, based on their own fears.

A common response by the skeptics is that paranormal events have a psychological character. Hills quotes a trained parapsychologist (a paranormal psychologist) named Dr. Ciaran O'keefe, and he believes that nothing paranormal is happening in a séance. He believes that if something physically moves, for example, a table, it is an unconscious movement or a trick. When reporting subjective experience, for example, the temperature drops or feeling dizzy and tired, information comes up, is bounded in psychological matters, and the setting of sitting around a table and wanting to communicate with ghosts. He believes the whole thing as being a psychological phenomenon (Dr. Ciaran O'keefe in Hill, 2011:71).

Assuming that the participants' reactions are bounded by psychology is a strong critique, especially speaking from not being there themselves. How the energy is in the place of the haunting is only known to the participants or TV teams. When the TV team in *Spøkelsesjegerne* describes the physical error, for example getting headaches or electric shock, the experience is individual to them and hard to understand as a viewer seeing it onscreen. Also, all noise is not possible to record on the camera, especially if it is interfering with their voices.

The need to be there to completely believe is a regular aspect in the discourse of paranormal events. I believe that to properly be convinced of paranormal events, one needs to experience them for oneself. As the phenomenon yet is not proven or has any scientific explanations, it is built on experience and belief. As the TV team continues discussing the events happening, it is not always clear to the viewers because they cannot hear or notice anything. Repeatedly in the show, the TV team asks each other "did you hear that?" Or "what was that sound?". Often when these questions are asked, the TV members did hear it or were unsure of what it was, but the sound does not always transfer to the viewers. As a viewer sitting in their coach at home, the atmosphere is not the same and when the sound is not caught on camera, one needs to believe whether the participants heard it or not. If the viewers cannot hear or see the events that the TV team claims happened, then the need to be there to believe it is even stronger.

The audience does not only consist of skeptics, but some believers find the programs exciting and surprising. If you possess the thought of an explanation behind the events being grounded in paranormality, one will interpret the events to be true. Accuracy between the events and medium is often spot on and will be incredible if it turns out to be true. Some associations for

paranormality view ghosts as enchanting and the hope for a life after death is highly wished by many humans. If one keeps an open mind as a viewer, one will interpret the events differently than the skeptics. One comment from Hill's chapter illustrated the will to believe: "if you want to believe something, you will try to believe every evidence to believe it" (female quoted in Hill, 2011:88). Hill argues that there is a common understanding among the audience that in paranormal beliefs there are emotional and psychological factors (Hill 2011:88). As a believer, you evaluate the evidence presented as truth.

The production of beliefs is through evaluating the representations of ghosts in media, discussing what you have seen with friends and family, and then the thought process of putting together evidence, logical thought, and trust in the investigation. Produced beliefs are grounded in physical, emotional, and psychological factors. As previously mentioned, belief in the events presented in media is bounded by trust and the will to believe. One needs to trust the experiences, the instruments, the participants, and the TV team. In the end either keep an open mind to it or decide for yourself if you believe a paranormal activity to be the answer to the unexplainable events or not.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented, analyzed, and compared two ghost representations in media, *Spøkelsesjegerne* and *Åndenes Makt*, and shown how they use effects to view and present ghosts as a scary phenomenon. The producers appeal to the viewers by effects that are building on aspects of fear and excitement, which together create a haunting atmosphere. By bringing evidence based on measuring instruments and the use of a medium that talks to the dead, the spirit receives human capabilities, not any different from themselves. They are expressed as having brain activity where they are still feeling emotions, worries, and understanding of the commands given by the ghost hunters or the medium. The spirit is understood as energies floating around, moving objects, disturbing electricity as well as crossing electromagnetic fields.

The last discussion is the production of belief. I have discussed and argued that the belief in paranormal events is created by hearing about experiences the participants have, evaluating the evidence brought up as well as trusting the media aspect, whether they are true to the events or making it up. The style of the two shows is different as *Åndenes Makt* is presenting past events while *Spøkelsesjegerne* is presenting events while filming the show, in present. The atmosphere is slightly different, despite the similar introductions. *Spøkelsesjegerne* is

using more haunting effects in their way of filming, the use of lightning, and films in total darkness, while *Åndenes Makt* has a lighter atmosphere, as it films in daylight and talks about the events interestingly and does not present ghosts as scary, despite the dramatizations of the events. In summary, the biggest difference is how *Spøkelsesjegerne* is aiming to prove the existence of ghosts, while *Åndenes Makt* asks open questions and leaves the belief up to the viewers themselves.

In spiritual discourses, the search for evidence and proof of the afterlife is done by demonstrating spirit communication. In this chapter, I have focused on the representation of ghosts and haunting in the entertainment business. In the next chapter, I will present how spiritual mediums communicate with not ghosts but spirits, how they approach the spirit world, and the process of building evidence of the afterlife.

Chapter 5: Practice as a Medium

This chapter will describe how to practice spiritual mediumship in Norway today. The data collected are a result of my fieldwork with the Norwegian Spiritualist Association (NSF) and through my interview with the spiritual medium Anita H. Rasmussen. First, I will introduce how different spiritual readings are executed and then how the concept of energy is actively used and highlighted throughout the practices, both in embodiment and interpretation. In addition, I will describe how mediums build evidence in readings and the evidence's importance to increase the meaning making of spiritual beliefs. Lastly, I will present the ethics of the reading that the medium must pay attention to as they often deal with people in grief.

In spiritualism, there are two types of mediumships: physical and mental mediumship. Physical mediumship is based on using the body actively in spiritual communication and can include being possessed by the spirit or lending their body for spirits to use, while the mental mediumship, the mind is in focus on communication, but also using the body as a tool for understanding and channeling spirits. The mental mediumship is most common in Norway and will therefore be in focus.

Mental Mediumship

The central element in spiritualistic practices is the practice of mental mediumship, in other words communicating with the spirit world through the mind, body, and soul. André

Kirsebom who is the founder of the Norwegian Spiritualist Association (NSF) writes about the mental mediumship in his book *Mediumskap og Klarsyn I teori og Praksis (2020)*. He explains that the reason behind calling the mediumship for mental mediumship is due to the way they are communicating with the spirit world, where the medium uses its mental capacity and its own consciousness to have telepathic communication with deceased spirits (Kirsebom 2020).

Telepathy is a force in your mind that you use to communicate on a mental level and send your message to someone mentally without any spoken words. A form of telepathy is the idea that when you are thinking of a specific person, they start thinking of you because they received your telepathic thought. Have you ever experienced that suddenly one day you are thinking of a person you haven't thought of for long, and during that day that specific someone reaches out to you over social media, text, or bumps into you at the grocery store? (Kirsebom 2020:83-84.) For some of my informants, this example is a form of telepathy and is not coincidental.

In the spiritual community, the word *Channeling* is the professional expression for the practice of communication with the spirits. Communication happens through the medium's senses but dominates through visions, emotions, and hearing. The spirit is said to relate to the mediums' experiences, history, thoughts, and knowledge. In other words, the spirit communicates from their perspectives and the medium understands the message through its own knowledge center, which occasionally leads to misinterpretation or miscommunication (Kirsebom 2020: 21).

There are two central forms of executing mediumship, first, a reading, where the mediums sit in front of the sitter (receiver of the message) and deliver messages from the spirit world, second, a platform reading where the medium faces an audience and holds a reading for a group of people.

The reading usually lasts between 20-60 minutes, and the goal of a reading is to get in touch with the sitter's deceased family, friends, acquaintances, or even pets.

In the medium courses I participated in, there were presented four stages in a reading. First, the medium finds the spirits' affiliation, who is the deceased one that visits from the spirit world. I was told that the medium needs to know the identity of the spirit before delivering the message. The reason behind this rule is to create a safe place where the sitter is comfortable and to avoid the fear of being contacted by unknown spirits, which can scare the

sitter. The next stage is to represent a minimum of two pieces of evidence that confirms the spirits' affiliation and make sure of the identification's accuracy. The evidence needs to be capable of ruling out other possible spirits that the sitter knows about. Therefore, mediums have the so-called 50 % rule, where the evidence presented needs to be higher than 50% (where 50 % or less are being referred to as general knowledge). Let's say the medium catches up a lady who had grey hair and liked to bake. This evidence is inadequate because it can resonate with every old lady. Hence, the medium needs to add details. To help strengthen the evidence, the medium can ask the spirit; what type of hairstyle did she have or what kind of pastry does she like to bake? These details can help the sitter to get a clearer idea of who the spirit is. After having enough details for the sitter to know whom the medium communicates with, then add another piece of evidence. This could be that this lady has three children, two boys, and a girl, or she liked to paint portraits of the family members. Now, the evidence is concretized where the sitter can recognize the spirit in contact.

After identifying the spirit in contact with the medium follows the third part of the reading; the reason why the spirit decided to visit the sitter, in short, the spirits' message. I was told multiple times by spiritualists that the spirits only visit when needed. This can be built on the spiritualistic belief that "everything happens for a reason". The spirit's visit is often depending on the sitters' life situation, and challenges or whom the sitters wish to speak to. The wish is not necessarily being answered, as the spirit world is in charge and only sends the spirit that the sitter needs to speak to the most.

An example presented by André Kirsebom (2020) on this matter, is when the sitter is in the midst of housebuilding. If the spirit during his previous life had great knowledge of building, he might visit instead of a closer family member as he will be more capable of advising on that matter. If the message consists of general messages or is there to send love, the spirit that has the closest relationship to the sitter often appears (Kirsebom 2020:82).

The final stage in the reading is the dialog, and it is important to mention that this stage is only for advanced mediums as it is the hardest stage that demands a strong channel to the spirit world. Here, the sitter can ask questions to the spirit or ask for advice, and the medium can channel the spirits' answers. To get answers to specific questions, the medium needs to be able to hear the spirits well enough to be sure of the answers received are correct. The medium has a responsibility to respect the sitter and therefore not give out the wrong message.

Now I have presented the one-to-one reading practice, but another form of reading is the platform reading. The practice for platform reading is similar with a few differences. A platform reading is a group séance where the medium stands on a stage or platform and delivers messages from the spirit world to an audience. In a platform reading, the time spent on each visit is shorter than in a regular one-to-one reading, where the reading takes 20-60 minutes, a platform reading lasts around 7 to 10 minutes. This is to keep the audience's attention and to get as many visits from the spiritual world as possible. Everyone attending is there in hope of getting contact with their loved ones.

Here, the medium either uses an elimination method or a direct method of finding the person the message is meant for. Some mediums first present the first one-to-two evidence about the spirit, and then the people who resonate with the information raise their hand. This is called the elimination method. An example here is that the medium says: "I have a father figure here. His name begins with a J" Who here has a father on the other side, with a name that begins with a J?" At this point, there might be three people raising their hands. Then the mediums add a more detailed description of this spirit. For example, "this man is very proud. He is telling me that his daughter just got a son, and the son is named after him". Then the medium asks again: who resonates with having a son named after your father? Now, there is only one person who resonates with this information. Now the medium knows whom the message is meant for.

Other times, the medium knows immediately whom the message is meant for. The spirit might lead them in the direction of who their loved ones are in the audience. Sometimes the medium gets a name and asks, "is there a 'Peter' here?" then someone raises their hand and says: "I am Peter." In a platform reading that I intended to, the medium pointed at a girl on the fourth row and said: "This message is to you. A man tells me: that's my granddaughter". Then the medium describes the grandmother, and the sitter responds 'yes' to the evidence presented and a message gets delivered. After presenting the platform reading practice, I will now present a platform reading that I intended to.

A Performance of a Platform Reading



Private Image from a platform reading

I want to present a platform reading and describe how the mediums present themselves and perform. The performative aspect is built on bringing evidence of the deceased spirit throughout mental conversation and translation of the spirits' message. The medium might embody the spirits' personality and play a certain performative role. Later in this thesis, I will present evidence that exemplifies the mediums' ability to act out a spirit, which only will be confirmed by the sitters' perception of the spirit and its personality. The medium needs to build a bond with the audience and convey the dialogs with spirits to keep the audience's attention throughout the reading. The bond is crucial because according to the mediums I have talked to, the spirit communication happens through cooperation with the audience by combining the mediums and the audience's energy. In NSF, the medium has a responsibility for building energy in the room and keep the audience in good mood. This is because it is believed that if the energies in the room are positive, it creates a better environment for spirit communication.

It is not a secret that mediumship is a controversial practice often perceived as a fraud or mediums associated with scary creatures like witches. It is common to imagine a reading held in a dark room where every participant sits in a ring while holding hands as you can see in

horror movies. The latter is more common in physical mediumship, where the medium enters a trance, and the spirit possesses the medium and talks through their bodies. A mental mediumship practice, here platform reading, is often held in a large room with rows of chairs and a small platform for the medium to stand on. This type of reading is more comparable to service in the church, where they also have an altar or a small table in the front where the audience can light a candle for their deceased loved ones.

The medium is aware of the prejudices of their practice. Therefore, at the beginning of the reading, the mediums often reassure the audience that nothing alarming should happen and explain that this room is a safe place of love and support. Here the performer creates a bond with the audience by reassuring them and making them feel welcomed.

In the introduction, the medium represents an anecdote of who they are as a person and a medium. Here the medium can talk about how they began as a medium and how to receive information from the spirit world. Often, the medium shares a story from their everyday lives that often include humor or humiliating factors that the audience can recognize from their own lives and reminds the audience that even mediums are not as exceptional as first assumed. The stories told are also a part of building the energy in the room, intriguing the audience and raising their expectations. In this part of a reading, the medium establishes an authority, or arguably a lack of authority where the medium degrades the expectation of them being exceptional by having rare capabilities to speak with the dead. Instead, they present themselves as any other person in this world. Another way to unease the expectation of scary ghost communication is through humor. The medium often uses humor to be less intimidating to the audience. The comments can be like: "I'm not scarier than a lamb or even a feather", or "I wouldn't even harm a spider", or "Look at me, I'm just a goofy woman that happens to be able to speak to the dead" with the following laughter. The humor is crucial in platform readings to keep the positive energy and show that even the medium is aware of how strange spirit communication might appear.

Then the medium presents the rules of the reading. There are three responses accepted in any reading, and that is 'yes', 'no' or, 'I don't know'. Part of the reason is that the medium should not be misled in the communication by receiving details of the spirit. That is because it can impact the communication. It can lead the medium into a logical state of mind instead of simply listening to the spirit. Another reason is to make sure the medium is on the right path and find the right sitter.

Another part of the introduction is to make the audience aware that the Spirit World is fraught with possibilities for mistakes and miscommunication. The medium Anita H. Rasmussen told me that the spirit world has a much higher frequency level than the earth. In other words, the speed of talking, movement, or information comes faster than in regular communication. Therefore, miscommunication or misunderstandings is common in a reading.

By giving an expectation that there might be mistakes during the reading, the medium prepares the audience for the possibility. That is to avoid any surprises amongst the audience. Important to mention is that most of the audience are either intrigued by spirits, spiritualists, or in great grief and come to the reading to get messages because they believe in the mediumistic practice. Even though the majority are believers, some are also not that convinced. An example is from a platform reading I intended, arranged by the NSF. The half of the audience members was from the spiritualistic organization. Some of the other people were interested in spirituality and wanted to try it out and others came with their friends and family and had one spirit they wanted to hear from. Apart from that, I especially remember three friends sitting in the back row, two girls and one guy approximately in their twenties. When the medium was about to start, I could hear them whispering and giggling while watching them rolling their eyes. It seemed like they were only there for the entertainment. A woman sitting a few seats ahead of them turned around and tried to hush them. By making a few faces they got quiet for a minute or two, and when the medium closed her eyes to contact the spirits, they started laughing again. The people sitting around them were giving looks and one of them quietly called them disrespectful. The medium presumably picked up on the laughing because right after she said: "The first time you come to a reading, you might find it strange, but makes life a lot more interesting, don't you think". It was fascinating to see how well the medium handled the situation and how she took control of her audience by using humor to make a relaxed environment. In Willerslev and Pedersen's (2010) work on humor used in shamanic rituals, they argue that acts of joking are essential as a way of distancing oneself from the cosmology and distancing the parallel realities of the dichotomies of the human and nonhuman and of the invisible human and nonhuman spirits (Willerslev and Pedersen 2010:262). Following this thought, I believe that the use of humor in spiritual practices is necessary to diminish the fear of the unknowing and the invisible to create togetherness among the medium and the audience.

It can be argued that the mediums who admit that the messages from spirits can be challenging to grasp and make themselves less responsible for their mistakes is to have an

excuse to be wrong. When mistakes occur, the medium needs to figure out where they went wrong by asking the audience more questions. One medium at a platform reading earlier this year told the audience that she's not going to be the only one working. She said, "I can't do a reading without you guys working with me. We are doing this together." One example of a misunderstanding taken from one of the medium events I went to where a medium claimed to be speaking to a sister who died young. The sister died suddenly at a young age and the death came surprisingly to the family. The medium asked who could relate to the loss of a sister. Two hands were raised. After a second of thought, the medium said, "I'm sorry, but I'm headed to the girl to the right". She continued to describe the spirit, but the girl did not recognize the description of her sister. The medium tried to rephrase her description, but the girl said, "that's not my sister". The medium turned her head to the other girl who previously raised her hand and asked if she understood, and the answer there was yes. The medium seemed confused as to why she was so sure of the connection of the girl to the right. "Wait", the medium said. "I know now why the confusion occurred, there are two spirits here. I think both of your sisters are here and talking at the same time." To solve the situation, she told the audience that she is putting the sister to the right side and asked the other sister to step forward. She continued the description and sent a message to the girl on the left. The girl was excitingly answering the questions and teared up as the medium described her sister correctly.

The evidence and information provided by the medium are only successful when the information presented could only be known to the spirit and the receiver of the message connects personally to the message and that seems true to the spirit's personality. This verification is relying on the production of space in-between the spirit and the medium. Also known as the space that Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile (2017b) call "intermediumship" (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2017b: 3-4). The intermediumship is a term to describe the space between the sitter in the audience, the medium, and the spirit world. It is a space that creates an embodiment of the spirit in communication. While presenting evidence, the sitter will empirically judge the messages and sense if the message sits true with how they remember their loved one. The information presented can only be true to the sitter that receives the message, and the rest of the audience will not be able to sense its truth or not. Multiple people I talked to in the audience described a feeling while receiving messages, the feeling of their loved ones being there with them. How they were feeling their loved ones was through chills throughout the body or sensing warm energy. The affective judgment of the messages given through the medium is the evidential sign that the spirit world is with them

and confirms the gift of the medium. In conclusion, Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile argue that the space in intermediumship is the production of created affective truths (Bartolini, MacKian, and Pile 2017b:4,9).

Learning process to become spiritual mediums

At the beginning of March 2020, I got the privilege to join a weekend mediumistic course at the Norwegian Spiritual Association in Bergen, Norway. The goal of the course was to practice mediumships and strengthen the spiritual channel to the spirit world. Due to covid restrictions, the number of participants was limited, and we were in total 6 participants and the course leader. The level of experience with spiritual readings was varied, some had previously participated in the courses while others were beginners. Through the course the participants learned how actively use energy to practice readings and platform readings in the structure as previously mentioned. The course mostly revolved around processes of contacting the spirit world and how to interpret and receive evidence from the Spirit World. I will now in order explain the structure made throughout the course.

The course room was approximately the size of a small classroom. I walked in and saw seven chairs placed in a circle. In the left corner was a door to a small kitchen, where there was tea and cookies that we could consume if we wanted. There were hanging one poster of an elephant on the wall, so big that it almost covered the entire wall. Two comfortable armchairs were put in two of the corners and created a sense of calming atmosphere. The course leader started by giving us a brief presentation of what NSF was presenting and its core beliefs. She reassured us that we should take the mediumship in our own developing stage and not worry about being the best medium. She continued with a motivational speech on how we should trust ourselves while doing the exercises and that this was not any form of competition. She highlighted the word respect and how we should respect ourselves, others, and especially the spirits we will be in contact with.

After the introduction, it was time to dive into spiritual practice. Before contacting the Spirit world, we learned activities on how to sense the spirit world and take control of our energy to make room for spiritual energies.

Guided Meditation

The first activity we had at the course was a guided meditation called “På Benken” (On the Bench). We sat in a circle, with our hands resting on our laps, and closed our eyes. Here a guiding voice-over and calm instrumental music made us imagine a bench where we would meet one of our deceased loved ones. Meditation is often used in spiritual settings and is a practice that one can find in several religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Judaism. Tomer Persico (2021) in his chapter on meditation in Judaism, defines meditation as “an intentional action initiated in order to bring personal mental transformation of a therapeutic or soteriological character” (Persico 2021:126). The goal behind the meditation was to learn how to shut out the outside world and focus on our minds and open our sensory center to the spirit world. The mental state is evident as it is the same space one need to create in spiritual communication. Anita argues that to handle the different frequencies of the spirit world, one needs to have complete mental relaxation to capture the action in the spirit world. This makes visits from the human body and visits from the spirit world possible. Meditation is an activity for the mediums to quiet their conscious thoughts, reduce the outside noise and mentally prepare themselves for spiritual interaction. That is what Matt Tomlinson’s informants called “attunement.” A process to mentally prepare for spirit communication, where one senses their own vibrations to build a baseline for comparison between spiritual vibrations versus one’s own (Tomlinson 2019: 485)

After the meditation, the course leader let the participants share their experiences through the meditation. I could see that the other participants were hesitant to start sharing their experiences. Two out of three days, the same participant started sharing. She was the participant who had authority among the group, as she was the most educated medium. After sharing her story, the other participants got the courage to speak about their own experiences. In this way, the atmosphere was calmer, and people started to uncover their shields. The reactions from the other participants were very welcoming, helpful, and supportive while sharing. In this way, the space reminded me of a therapy session.

We went on to practice different exercises to prepare for a reading.

Energy exercises

We were introduced to different exercises to train our sensitivity to energies, usually in teams of two. The first one was the aim of sensing our partner’s energy with our hands. The partner held their hand straight forward, with the palm facing to the side, and the one practicing mediumship played around the distances to the partner’s hand to see how close one needed to

approach the hand before sensing the energy. The sense of the energy can feel like pressure, warmth, cold, tingling, wind, or electricity. The energy was described to me as a meeting point for the auras around the partners. As we see here, when the auras around the human beings are expressed as the same tension as a spiritual being. The interesting aspect here is that the energy of a human is equivalent to the energy of a spirit. Therefore, the idea is that the spirit is not changing its existence after death. The effect and the aura are the same, just that the spirit in life has a body and after death lives without a body in another dimension. We continued to do energy exercises, but in the next game, we tested our senses without sight.

Red Lights

The second exercise is built around the classic child's play 'red lights.' Here the medium stands in front of the room with the back to the partner. The partner behind walks towards the medium, and when the medium shout 'stop!', the partner needs to stop. After the stop, the medium's task is to name the distance in meters to where the sitter stands. This is based on how strong the partner's energy is sensed and calculating the distance between them. Here, the body practices how to sense the energy around it. The feeling of having someone around you is at the base of this game. The game is also played to practice focusing on your senses to pay attention to any changes around you. Focus is an important aspect of the course. The ability to focus and be attentive to life around you and focusing merely on your own body and mind is key elements in spiritual readings.

We also got explained the difference between being a psychic and a medium. A psychic works with the energy of the person sitting in front of you. By looking at the person, read out their personality, interests, worries, or family relations. It is the sense of "just knowing" that is evident here. That is trusting your intuition and instincts while opening your sensorium to receive information. The psychic is the one who can predict your future if you continue living a certain way. If you make a move that is unlikely for you to choose, the future may differ. One exercise to practice psychic abilities is the card game.

Card Game

In the card game, one worked with two cards, where the sitter is shuffling the cards and by trusting your intuition, you guess which card it is. I experienced this game to be made with humor, where the participants tried their best but played it in a humoristic way. First, we used the psychic way and then the mediumistic way. The second time around, we did guess, but the information was said to come from a spirit. One needed to telepathically ask the spirits to

give you the right card. This game was used to prepare the mediums to trust the information received as well as ask for it. The results of this game were not very impressive after we both approximately scored 50 %. I noticed that by trusting my intuition I scored higher than receiving the answers from a spirit. If that was because of my lack of experience or my doubts on my ability to communicate with spirits is hard to say. My partner did also not receive clear answers from the spirit world and scored 5 out of ten in both rounds. Other partners got better results, but none of them had all the attempts correct. It is difficult to say if their abilities were better or if it was pure luck. Even though the result differed, the seriousness of the game was low and was used more as a fun thing to test, than proving communication with spirits.

The activities described above show how a medium can develop the mediumship and prepare for a reading. The exercises involve opening your sensory center to prepare you for sensing a spiritual presence. In platform readings, the medium often uses an opening act, which could involve singing or telling a story. As the informants from Yerby's fieldwork explain it, the acts to "raise the energy in the room." Mediums tell me that after a reading their energy is drained because of all the energy they have been given and consumed by the spirits.

Therefore, it is important to build your energy up to be ready for the overload of energy that is about to come. In Yerby's conversation with her informant, Janet said that one must "put on overcoat of the spirit". The overcoat symbolizes the role the medium step into with sharpened sensitivity. The body is transforming into an instrument where the entire sensorium of the body is activated (Yerby 2017: 244-245). By using and blending energies with the spirit, the body is collecting evidence from its experiences which helps 'coding' the spirit's message as well as the intuition and telepathic communication in the mind of the medium.

Building evidence

The evidence presented in the reading and the platform reading is evaluated at different strengths. I will point out the scale of evidence in terms of reading, and some rules the participants learned throughout the course. The structure of a reading regularly follows an order. First, the medium needs to know who the spirit is, and what connection it has to the sitter. Then follows a line of general knowledge concerning what gender and age the spirit had, and the further out in the reading, the more specific evidence needs to come up. The spirit's affiliation can be communicated telepathically between the medium and the spirit.

Another method to use for understanding the affiliation is the affiliation method. This method is executed through feeling your body, where the body becomes an instrument in spirit communication.

Affiliation Method

In a reading, the medium needs to affiliate the spirit before giving a message to the sitter. Many mediums are sensitive to bodily impressions and therefore gather evidence through the body. A method of receiving pieces of evidence from the body is the affiliation method. This method involves sensing energy through your body connected to evidence around affiliation. NSF made a map of the body to help the medium to localize the spirit's affiliation.

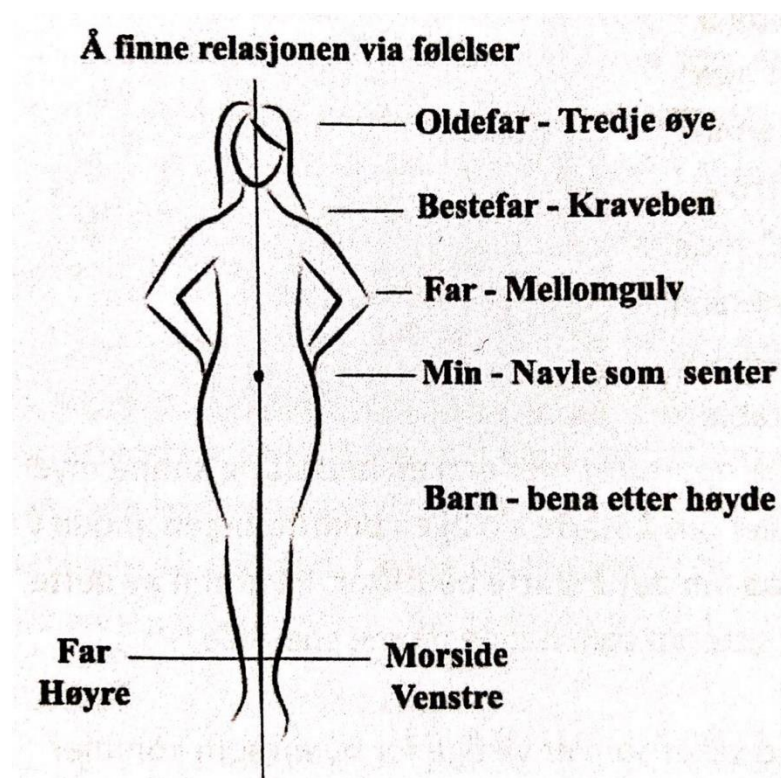


Figure 1(Kirsebom 2020: 168).

First, the medium asks the spirit in communication which generation it belongs to, and the spirit answers through imprinting energies to the body affiliation system.

The line horizontally placed in the center of the body is the central line, and the closer the spirit moves to the line, the closer affiliation it has to the sitter. For example, if the energy is felt very close to the line right under the ribbons, the spirit is in the parent generation, but if the energy is felt further to the side, it can be an uncle or an aunt. If the spirit belongs to the generation over, the tension appears around 10 cm higher up. The vertical lines are linked to generation, whereas the different sides of the central line explain which side the spirit comes from. The father's side is to the right of the line, whereas the left side represents the mother's side of the family. As an example, if the medium feels pressure on the left ribbons, it can be the sitter's mother.

The navel is the center of the map and is the first generation. If the spirit wants to give you that information, it will imprint its energy around that area. On the side of the navel can be your siblings or cousins. From the waist down, is the children's generation, and the length of the legs is organized after height. For example, grandchildren will be felt around the feet.

As mentioned, between the navel and the breast area is the parents' generation. The shoulders and neck represent the grandparents' generation, whereas your head or forehead, or the third eye that spiritualists call it, is the great grandparents' generation. If the spirit coming in is a friend, the course leader told me that one can sense the friend's energy in your aura outside of your body¹. Sometimes the spirit is a person married into the family, then the affiliation can be harder to interpret, but the spirit would place the affiliation to the relation they have based apart from the biological aspect. For example, if it is a stepmother coming in, it would place the energy on the parent's generation, if the stepmother were a mother figure to the sitter. If not, it might place the imprint further from the line, closer to an uncle or friend (Kirsebom 2020: 168-169).

One uses this method for channeling the number of children the spirit had. Here, the fingers are being used as a tool. The spiritualist association argues that when a spirit wants to inform the medium how many kids they had, they send energy to the fingers. An example is if the spirit had three children, the medium would feel extra tension in three of their fingers. Here, the body is used as a system of communication with the spirit world.

Figure 2 (Norwegian version in Kirsebom 2020: 140)

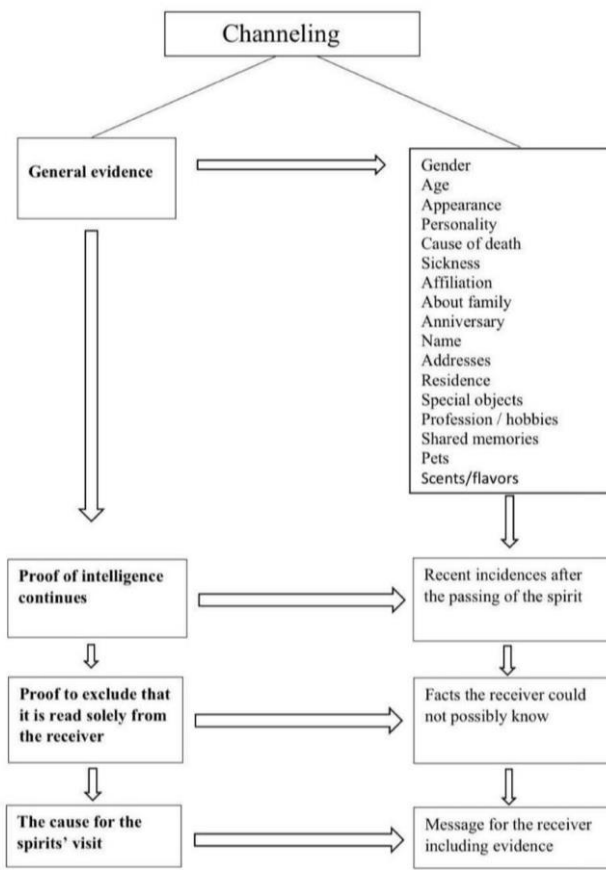


Figure 2 is a paper that I received at the medium course and translated. It shows the channelizing process and the standards for valuable evidence in readings. This figure shows how the medium evaluates the quality of their evidence. I understood that the medium seemed to want to convince even the most skeptics by presenting qualitative evidence.

The first evidence that should come is the affiliation the spirit has to the sitter or the audience. Before giving them the message, the sitter must know where the message comes from. Then the general knowledge among other things, the gender, personality traits, interests, or cause of death. One of the medium students at the course expressed to me during our break how she finds the gender in a reading with help of energy. She told me that when feeling energies, one can differ feminine energy from masculine energy. Either the energy is masculine or feminine. An issue of this thinking is that men can be feminine as well as a woman might be masculine. What happens if the spirit identifies as non-binary or changed its gender during his/her human life? Often in the readings I intended, the medium expressed that she

physically saw the spirit standing next to her and could tell me if it was a man or a woman. Another evidence that can be brought up in this stage is related to sickness or the cause of death. One time when a medium performed a reading on me, she meant she was having a conversation with my grandmother on my mother's side. After finding the spirit's connection to me, she started dragging the left side of her face, saying that her left side of the face was hurting. She continued to move her eyes, mouth, and cheeks. She asked me if I resonated with my grandmother to have pain in that area. At first, I couldn't place what the medium meant with that. The medium was trying to interpret what the pain was and asked if my grandmother had a stroke, which I denied. After asking me more questions without finding the cause of the pain, I remembered that my grandmother had issues with her eyes and ears and that could be why the medium felt pain in the left part of the face. We did not conclude on what the medium was referring to, and the issues with the eyes and ears were not the cause of death. Here we see an example of the medium physically feeling the sickness of a spirit and the issue with diagnosing the pain. Other evidence can be the number of children they had, or a hobby had in their previous life.

This type of evidence can resonate with many people therefore the next step is to present evidence about incidences happening after the death of the spirit. This is to assure the sitter that their deceased loved ones are still around them in the spirit world. Arguably the importance of this evidence might be a way the medium wants to convince them that spirit does have an intellect after death. The evidence here could for example be to mention the new job the sitter got or the grandchildren the spirit never met. If the evidence resonates with the sitter, then the evidence shows that the spirit is still around them even though they can't see it.

Following the figure above, the next step is to present an example of something the sitting doesn't know themselves. Here, the sitter won't confirm, and the medium can ask the sitter to think about it and try to find out what the spirit could mean from that information. If the information is correct, then the quality of the evidence might be the strongest and most convincing to the sitter. The last part of the reading is the message to the sitter, often motivational advice or assuring them that the spirit loves them.

While presenting the pieces of evidence, the delivery is as important as the evidence themselves. A key point in spiritual mediumship is to trust the process and talk with confidence in any delivery. The course leader told the participants to never doubt the

evidence, because the second one starts to doubt weakens the evidence as the genuine response is being disturbed. This is also important in platform readings to gain trust and awaken the audience. Tomlinson, with his work on Australian mediums, explained that mediums speaking confidently would result in the signs being perceived more easily as evidence among the audience (Tomlinson 2019: 491-492).

I have now presented the order of a spiritual reading and the techniques they use to gather evidence through telepathic conversations in the mind, the feelings of their bodies and visually sensing a spirit. I have also shown how a medium prepare for a reading. A reading can also be challenging as the evidence can confuse the medium and not always align with the sitter. The affiliation method can cause confusion as the spirit may not always be related to the person or that the spirit had the role of another relative. For example, the spirit is a friend of your mother but felt like an aunt to the sitter and therefore placed itself as an aunt. I was told that the affiliation method was used mostly as a tool for guiding the medium in the right direction and their intuition and feeling of the results are put together to gather a final understanding of the pieces of evidence.

The difficulty of a reading is the possibility of misunderstanding the spirit in spirit communication. It is therefore important to understand the ethical issues that can arise in readings. In the next part of this chapter, I will present the ethics of practicing mediumship.

The ethics for practicing mediumship

To channel communication between the sitter and their deceased loved ones comes with great responsibility. To give personal advice, reassurance, or encourage them to change their perspective on life is a task to take seriously. As we have seen, the message from the spirit world often consists of reassurance or solving a personal issue. In that manner, Mediums can step into the role of a counselor, therapist, or life coach. With these roles comes a great deal of ethical rules. Mediums that I have been in contact with have brought up ethics as the most important aspect of their job since they deal with people in grief. The medium, Anita Helen Rasmussen, told me that she would never tell someone when they die, even though she had seen their death in visions. Such information can change their life entirely and cause them both physical and mental harm. After knowing that information, the person would most likely behave, or act differently than they would without knowing about its death.

Sometimes contacting a medium is the ultimate solution to be in a difficult situation. An example of the latter is when Anita got a call from two sisters who needed advice on whether to keep their mother alive in a coma or unplug the machine. They wanted her to contact their mother, that was in a coma, and ask if they should unplug her. That put the medium in a difficult position, where the margin for errors was minuscule. The mother told Anita: “you need to tell my daughter that she has a red sweater on, and soon my toes are about to move.” Here came the sign to not unplug her. The response from the daughter was, “you know what Anita? I have the ugliest sweater on, and it is red!” The mother did wake up and lived for another year (interview, Anita H. Rasmussen: February 2021). This case ended well. If Anita got another answer, the situation could have gone in another direction. Here the work of the medium could be fatal for another person if she misinterpreted the mother in a coma. Therefore, as described by the course leader at NSF, it is crucial to make the sitter aware that the information that the medium receives is only the spirits’ opinions. Then the sitter needs to decide for themselves if their deceased loved one is trustworthy or not.

The course leader in a course about mediumship told the members to be careful around specific areas of information. For example, one should not inform the sitter what diseases they have or will get because mediums are not doctors. Mediums might get information about the sitter having lumps on their chest, probably breast cancer. Instead of saying the name of the disease, it will be more ethical to say: the spirit tells me you have pain in your left chest, and it advises you to get that checked. Kirsebom argues that if a medium wrongly diagnoses a sitter with a disease, then the medium can cause a nocebo-effect, which is the opposite of a placebo effect. That means telling them about a disease or a problem can end up inflicting the disease on them (Kirsebom 2020: 92).

Other topics that mediums should be careful of mentioning, according to Kirsebom, are sexual orientations, politics, religion, drug abuse, or criminality. These topics can be held secret and be secret for a reason. The medium should always ponder how this information can harm the sitter (Kirsebom 2020: 93). A medium should also not reveal information about people not being present in the reading, as they aren’t in the position to defend themselves. This rule exists in all types of mediumships but is especially relevant in psychic mediumship. Psychic mediumship is where the reading is held by entering the sitters’ energy and aura and reading from the sitter and not from a spirit. Sometimes people reach out to a psychic medium to ask questions about whether their husband loves them or if they are cheating on them. These questions should not be answered. As a medium, you should only answer

questions that benefit the sitter. In conclusion, the message given through the medium is meant to help the sitter, not harm them. After the reading or channeling, it is important to thank the audience or sitter for working with the medium and to thank the spirit for the visit. The key principle in any mediumship is respect. Respect for the sitter and respect for the Spirit World. Here we see that reading is a form of therapeutic session, which is made to not cause them harm, but to help them through a grieving process.

An example on how spiritual mediumship can affect the healing process of the sitter is presented by Lilli Bendriss, in an interview with Reynolds (2017). One day, a mother in grief after the passing of her thirty-year-old son came to Lilli. The mother felt bitter and sad for all the experiences the son missed. The mother thought he deserved more of life. He could've lived his best life and had kids. Suddenly the son in spirit said through Lilli: "Hei, mamma!" and then he gave Lilli a message. He said, translated to English, "tell my mother that I haven't missed out on anything because I can do what I want. Right now, I'm sitting on a sidewalk café in Paris with a cup of coffee and watching the street life! I can go wherever I want, and I can experience anything. The best of all is that I don't need to fly to go there. I'm thinking of being there, and I am there. I haven't lost anything. I have a rich life. I travel everywhere." (Lilli Bendriss in Reynolds 2017.) That the mother's worries were nothing to worry about was necessary for the mother to hear. To hear that her son is living his best life on the other side.

In a platform reading at the medium course, I got to experience the room to become a therapy room. The participant practicing got in contact with a young boy that committed suicide. The description of the boy reminded me of a boy I knew, and I started to tear-up. After the message was delivered, it was my turn to do a platform reading. I was still in shock after the reading before and said I could not go up and perform any reading now. The course leader said that she could tell that I needed positive energies and we sat in a circle and the participants were told to say one good thing about me on turn. The session made an impact on me where I could feel the love in the room. Here is an example of the support showed in a spiritual environment.

Discussion

Spiritual mediumship is continuously a learning process. The course leader told me that mediums are never fully trained. One needs to maintain our level and continue to strengthen the channel to the spirit world with exercises such as sensing spiritual presence and meditation to reach the level of consciousness that is necessary to gain access to the spirit

world. The presentation of the exercises like “red lights” or “meditation” are ways of recognizing energies and strengthening the mediumship by increasing the sensitivity to spiritual matters. To control the energy as a medium is a necessity to practice mental mediumship. I was told that if the medium is not mentally stable and in control of their energy, the medium should not practice readings as it can negatively affect the reading. This control is closely related to the use of the body as an instrument for spiritual communication. Practicing mediumship can be seen through Marcel Mauss’s “techniques of the body”, where the body is trained to walk or swim, or in Bourdieu’s concept of “body hexis” which argues that to develop skill one must routinely practice the specific technique for the body to get used to a particular process. The body in spiritual practices is taught how to sense spiritual energies and use the sensorium of the body to interpret the spirit. Yerby in her fieldwork in Spiritual Churches in North America expresses how the medium uses herself to be affected by invisible presences and learn how to interpret them through her sensorium. In this way, the body of the medium becomes the instrument of her sensorium (Yerby 2017:6).

In the medium course, the participants were vulnerable and open to laying out their emotions to each other. The support for each other was strong and created a safe atmosphere. The course leader reminded the participants of the room to be safe to try and fail in spiritual communication. There were many moments of them showing emotions and telling tough stories. Stories about drug use, losing people to suicide, or struggling with sickness. While expressing the stories the participants were listening and gave advice and support to each other. The experience of reacting emotionally to evidence brought up contributes to making meaning of the events. It is through strong resonating evidence and the feelings arising while receiving messages that create meaning in spiritual readings.

The ethics of practicing mediumship is reflecting the therapeutic aspect of the ritual. To lose friends and family is hard, and many of the clients come to mediums for a reason. For wanting to hear if the deceased loved ones are happy or if they want to say the things they didn’t get to say while their loved ones were alive.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, one sees that mental mediumship is practiced through bodily impressions, intuition, and the mind to connect the evidence.

Mediumistic reading is a process of gathering evidence through spiritual communication. Both regular reading and platform reading follow a similar order. The difference is that in the regular reading the sitter is identified, but in the platform reading, the medium must find enough evidence to rule out the people not related to the spirit in contact. We have seen how the medium at platform readings uses humor to diminish the fear of spiritual presence and creates a bond with the audience by letting them know that she is just like the others but has rare capabilities that the man in the street has. Gathering enough evidence is important in convincing the people that the medium can talk with the dead, and this proof is what the sitter came in hoping for. I have examined the learning process of becoming a medium by practicing energy exercises derived from my participatory observation with NSF. Here I learned that the process of building evidence is not only based on telepathic communication, but also through methods such as the affiliation method or feeling the sensation in the medium's body, like sicknesses related to the spirit. Lastly, I have discussed ethical rules a medium need to be concerned about when giving personal information and messages to the sitters. The ethics illustrate the reading's similarity with a therapy session. In conclusion, spirit communication happens telepathically with the use of the medium's sensorium and includes ethical, interpretational, and communicative aspects which in total could heal people of grief.

Chapter 6: Discussion and conclusion

The discussion chapter will provide a discussion of the findings previously mentioned in the thesis related to theories of energy, embodiment, and meaning-making. First, I discuss how spirit and energy are related in both mediumships, spiritual sessions, and TV shows. Second, I show how spirits are primarily accessed through sensorial means. Third, I argue that these sensorial ways of connecting with spirits give bodily experience and bodily entrainment a central role in spiritualism. Finally, I will answer how the process of meaning-making unfolds and discuss how energy is understood as a key symbol in Norwegian spiritualism.

Spirits and energy

We have seen that both energies and spirits imprint and manifest objects or subjects. In psychometrics, one reads the energies of a photo. Lena Ranerhag(2013) argues that the

energy connected to the photo can descend from both the dead and the living. We can see here that energy descending from human beings can imprint the same way as the spirit's energy. In haunted houses, spiritual energy is said to impact the human's body but also can be emitted into the walls and creates the atmosphere. In the next paragraph, I will discuss how the ghost's energy transforms the atmosphere into a room.

While watching *Ånden's Makt* and *Spøkelsesjegerne*, the atmosphere is scary because of the expectation of ghostly events happening and the use of effects. Influenced by horror movies created, ghosts are associated with evil beings that haunt and hurt people, and therefore is haunted places scary. The plot is usually filmed in darkness which is an effect to make the atmosphere even more scary. The fear of darkness is common among humans because of bad sight and the sense of not knowing what's around us. This built fear creates fear and increases the scary atmosphere. Why do ghosts/spirits associate with darkness? Anita Helen Rasmussen told me that the most common time for paranormal activity is during the night, around 3 am. In the example of Lisa, the vacuum cleaner got turned on at night, and the time when she noticed the spiritual presence was when she was going to sleep. This atmosphere is an issue in haunted places, and therefore people search for a medium to perform a cleansing ritual to get rid of ghosts and their energies. After the cleansing, people often experience relief and a feeling of breathing normally again. The house changes its atmosphere from a scary to calming atmosphere after the energies of a ghost are removed. Here we see that the ghost's energy is causing the atmosphere to be scary.

In the spiritual discourse, the ghost and spirit feed on human energy to gain strength. Therefore, in places feeling haunted, people are affected negatively. In the grocery store, the employees talked about how strong the ghost was when it was able to pick up a box of potatoes and throw it on the floor. If one takes the idea that the ghosts gain strength from feeding on human energies, then we can think that the ghost moving the box of potatoes fed on the energies of the employees and customers which made them distressed and affected their emotions like a car without gas. Energy is the human's fuel, so when spirits and ghosts feed on human fuel, the fuel is lacking and therefore negatively affect the human.

Both Lisa and Maria expressed that they always felt tired at their house and could feel the difference when being at other places. In that sense, the atmosphere at home was heavier than elsewhere. Also, the number of energies appearing in spiritual sessions affects the medium and can be demanding to the medium by communicating with spirits over time. In platform

readings, the medium must build the energy in themselves and the room to prepare for a quality reading. The medium builds her energy by doing meditations to calm the mind and builds the audience's energy by telling intriguing stories, often including humor. They also create relations with the audience by complimenting the good energy they send out and asking them to cooperate with good energy. It is when the energy of the medium, the audience and the spirits are balanced that spirit communication work at its best.

In spiritual sessions and readings mediums represent the spirit as a human. According to the fourth principle in spiritual beliefs, the soul and spirit are personalized and act as the same individuals, alive and dead. That means that the personality and characteristics are not changing after the death of their body. Changes are only transpiring because of their actions and efforts. This view can be seen in all the chapters above. For example, the pieces of evidence brought up in spiritual readings give the spirit human characteristic as withholding worries, intentions, or acting playful. The messages coming through is reminding of regular conversations among humans. If we think about spirits as human beings without body property, we can imagine how spirits obtain these qualities. For example, in the ghost hunting TV show presented in chapter four, we see that spirits are capable of understanding patterns to communicate through paranormal instruments. In the houses Maria and Lisa grew up in, ghosts seemed to use their furniture as their own. The spirit is here understood as intelligent individuals that have the same knowledge as the people alive but without the physical body.

How to sense spirits

A way of sensing spirits is Lisa's experience of the blurred disturbance in the corner of her eye. First, she described the disturbance as the energy following her hand and later felt like the energy was the spirit of a lady. Here the distinction between energy and spirit is blurred and sensed as the same thing. In the energy exercises done in the medium course, we learned that energy could feel like warmth, cold, wind, tingles, pressure, or feeling electric. In these exercises, the energy was in focus, but the goal was to practice how to sense a presence, in other words, spirits.

The spirits could also be sensed visually. Through the examples of haunting houses in this thesis, the ghost spirit could be shadows standing still or flying across the room. For example, Maria and her family saw a shadow moving from the kitchen to the living room. Another example, is the reflection Lisa's father saw on their glass table showed blurred movements in the kitchen, interpreted as a human activity. After looking up to find out that there was no

visual person in the kitchen, they defined the blurriness to be spiritual movement. The medium Lilli Bendriss is known for visually seeing spirits and in *Spøkelsesjegerne* for example, she sees a man in the sanitorium folding his arms. The ghost spirit could also be heard, for example when Maria's family heard heavy footsteps from the floor above and understood them as spiritual activity because they knew that no human beings were upstairs at the time. In the grocery store, seeing objects move from one place to another was a sign that ghosts were making them move. We can see here that when objects behave out of the ordinary, the initial thought is that the ghosts caused it. Lastly, some people can visually see spirits and ghosts. The spirits are visible through our sensory center. Ghosts and spirits also are believed to be connected to electricity. In the thought of spirits as energies, their presence can disturb the electrical or physical energy. This is the idea of the presence of spirits mixing with electricity overcompensates the electrical system, which leads to lightbulbs breaking faster than they should.

Spirit manifestation and mobility

The spirits' strength is also reliable on the human energy, and spirits use that energy to manifest in objects. I have heard multiple stories of people experiencing seeing a spirit using their materialistic things, such as a chair like the woman Lisa saw or making objects move around without any human touching them. Through these experiences, the spirit could live in the same house as the human body, using the same furniture or playing with their toys. Is it then a possibility that both spirits and humans live side by side in different dimensions but in the same house? People experiencing paranormal activity believes this to be true. Through messages and communication with the spirits, Lilli Bendriss explains that many of the conversations suggest that the souls continue to create their own life in the afterlife. In the spirit world, the spirits' possibilities to live their dream are endless as the souls are not dependent on money and matter. By thinking of a place, they want to go to, and they are there. The same in communication with mediums, the spirit shows the medium themselves at the age they want to present. In Lilli's description of the other side, the other side contains different levels of consciousness, and each soul is being placed where they fit the most. According to Lilli, spirits have told her that the spirit world has many houses, floors, and rooms. It is like the bible's description of heaven, as a place with many rooms and one room for each soul (Bendriss in Reynolds 2017).

Spiritual energies can manifest human beings. As Ranerhag argued, humans can carry a spirit's energy of grief, experience, sickness, and knowledge without knowing (Ranerhag 2013:26). For example, when a feeling occurs without knowing why, a sudden feeling of pain that disappears right after can be a spirit manifesting in the human body. Here we see an example of an embodiment. In the next part of this discussion, I will examine how spirits embody matter and body.

The spiritual body

The body in spiritualism receives functions beyond the biological purpose. The body is a source of energy that exists and communicates through different dimensions. English spiritualism describes the spirit body as a replica of the earthly body. The difference is that the spirit body is in a much finer form than the earthly body (Spiritualists' National Union s.a.). The body is an epistemological instrument to find meaning in spirit communications.

This bodily epistemology can relate to the concept of cultural phenomenology that Thomas Csordas developed for understanding situations using bodily senses linked with intersubjectivity. Religious experiences are an example of embodied knowledge that is culturally constructed in this manner. This concept relates to the assumption that the body can collect knowledge of non-rational situations (Csordas in Ulland 2012:83). An example of such experiences is the study of Toronto Blessings that Dagfinn Ulland (2012) examined. The Toronto blessing was done in Toronto Airport Vineyard Church (a Pentecostal church). The blessing was an experience of meeting God, and his spirit is manifested into them. The manifestations led to people falling on the floor shaking and uncontrollably starting to laugh and cry. The sensation of physical shock reminds me of Lilli Bendriss' in *Spøkelsesjegerne* when she received an electrical shock and did not hesitate to relate it to a spirit's manifestation, the touch of a spirit. Ulland's informants experienced losing control over their bodies (Ulland 2012). The understanding of these experiences led them to believe God was in the act of blessing them. The bodily epistemology reminds me of Lisa saying that she could feel what the lady in spirit told her through her body. The sensations connected to her intersubjectivity show how she interprets the feeling of her body to tell her about the message sent from the lady in spirit. Speaking of the body as an instrument in mediumistic practices shows how bodily sensations mirror the truth.

Csordas symbolizes the body with a book, and the book's text is the 'embodiment'. This is the idea of the body being a subject rather than an object. In that sense, the body is not

making sense alone and, therefore, continuously forming opinions by putting together the embodiment with cultural context. That shows the idea of the body being a subject rather than an object. A subject that while being in the world constantly reads its sensations and interprets in the cultural frame (Csordas in Ulland 2012:95). Connected to the Toronto Blessing ritual with the spiritual meetings in this thesis, the body is sensing the impressions while the subject of the body interprets them and makes meaning to the events based on religious and cultural contexts. The body in this context has an upbringing that is built on its individual experiences. As Ingold emphasizes in his book *The Perception of the Environment* (2000), is that when people from different backgrounds orient themselves differently not because they interpret the experience through the same sensorium culturally but because of their previous bodily training in sensing situations. Their sensorium is differently attuned to the environment (Ingold 2000:162). In this sense, we can include the training of becoming a medium where the medium practice strengthening their senses. This is done by learning the body to sense presences around themselves. The affiliation method explained in the latter chapter is an example of a training exercise. Csordas argued that the body is storage of cultural and bodily knowledge that are activated in the understanding of rituals. The body is getting used to the sensing techniques which creates the “habitus” that sets the potential of the body to take in new experiences (Csordas in Ulland: 95). The habitus can connect to the medium training the body to sense spiritual activity, and the body gets used to communicating with spirits and the medium opens their sensorium to a greater extent.

Meaning making

I will argue that the meaning-making of haunting is context-based and related to the abnormal behavior of objects and subjects. The abnormal aspect is then related to the word paranormality. When an event happens in a time and place where it should not happen, one starts to think abnormally. For example, objects moving when no one is around or an alarm system starting by itself. To hear someone walking in the house when knowing you are home alone or the vacuum cleaner starting by itself at night when you are asleep. The timing of the alarm or the vacuum cleaning is abnormal behavior. One usually does not vacuum clean the house at night. Another example of abnormality is when Maria and her family heard distinctive footsteps on the second floor. The footsteps were heavier than human footsteps. Here we see that the footsteps got abnormal qualities that make it hard to explain otherwise than paranormal.

When something is unexplainable, we tend to look for a way to clarify what happened. In chapter three, we saw how Maria reasoned out her situation. She ran out of ways to explain the events that led her in the direction of realizing the possibility of ghost activity. Tom Strømæss found meaning in the acceptance of not being able to explain the events as we don't hold the knowledge yet to prove it. He rather left it open for multiple explanations. The meaning's absence demonstrates that the meaning is created by settling down with the possibility of not finding meanings. Hence back to the events be unexplainable events.

In the TV shows in chapter 4, the context was evident in the meaning-making.

Spøkelsesjegerne visited old places that both looked haunted and knew the story behind them became an even more likely haunted house. In the sanatorium, one would expect haunting events to happen. The context of the instruments placed around the building, with the lights off while witnessing the tv team's reactions. The timing of the instruments to signal to start after asking questions is important in finding meaning. The atmosphere of expectation can also be found in the Toronto Blessing, where the expectation and longing for God's presence imprint within themselves since these manifestations are symbols of God's presence (Ulland 2012: 93).

The will to believe impact the meaning-making in spiritual beliefs. For example, Maria's sister wanted to know if her grandmother was there in spirit and asked for a sign. The sign was given to her that validated her belief in her grandmother was with her. Ghost hunters also want events to happen and put meaning to the sounds heard or the instruments turning on. In the setting, all senses are heightened and understood in spiritual terms. While they wait for hauntings, the explanations based on previous knowledge and science are already ruled out. This means that when they hear a noise or feel a certain way, the quicker the brain runs to the conclusion of being a result of a ghost.

The doubt is visible in discourses of spiritual experiences. The possibility of imagining the events is always there. Everyone I have talked to during this fieldwork has expressed that they sometimes wonder if the event they experienced was real. People are afraid of sounding crazy because ghosts are a phenomenon that is not yet proven to exist. In the grocery store, we saw that the number of events happening experienced by multiple people strengthened their beliefs in their own experiences. Hearing other people experiencing the same thing produces meaning because you are not the only one experiencing abnormal activity. It is the

validation to know you are not the only one. You can be crazy together. Spiritual beliefs bring people together and are heightened by sharing experiences.

The meaning-making of evidence

Why is the quality of the evidence important for mediums? We have seen throughout the thesis that mediums have a set of rules for presenting well enough evidence. The evidence is based on the 50% rule described in chapter five that the evidence needs to stand out and not be based on general knowledge that can resonate with most people. To present details that are precise enough for the medium to not know about, is essential in being a good medium, according to the course leader at NSF. She told me that the weirder the evidence is, the better. One can argue that it is because they are afraid of being called out as a fraud, as it is a common perception of spiritual mediums. The other aspect is that if the evidence is strong, it is easier to identify the spirit and therefore make sure the right sitter is found and avoid miscommunication.

In chapter three, the evidence presented by the medium in Lisa and Maria's case had the strength that impacted their understandings of the unexplainable events. They were both surprised by the accuracy of the mediums, as the medium confirmed their experiences. For the medium to explain the experiences that the medium could not know beforehand, made the evidence strong. How could the medium know? The evidence is sufficient to believe in the medium's ability to speak to the dead. In chapter four, Lena Ranerhag presented concrete evidence, like the yellow house, the name Per and a description of the discussion between Rune and his brother. The evidence resonated with Rune and the evidence combined with the same situation heightened the evidence. The yellow house, which was white at the time, was yellow when the discussion between Rune and his brother was happening. The name Per was Rune's wife's son. Did the evidence resonate because of good luck may a skeptic ask. Did the medium run a search of Rune before visiting the house? If not, the amount of evidence that connects to the truth rules out the possibility of the medium making it up. The knowledge is there, but if the medium found the fact through spirit communication, is based on trust and beliefs.

After discussing how spirit and energy are expressed in different contexts, and the role of the body in spiritual experience that creates epistemologies of making meaning of spiritual events, I will move on to discuss how energy may function as a key symbol in spiritualism.

Energy as a key symbol

The aspect of energy working as a key symbol is understood from Sherry Ortner (1973)'s theory on key symbols. She presents two categories of key symbols in cultures; summarizing and elaborating (Ortner 1973:1338-1348).

Based on the five indicators of key symbols that Ortner presents, I will start explaining how energy plays a key role in spiritualism and later discuss whether energy can be understood as a summarizing or an elaborating symbol. The first clue is the importance of energy expressed by mediums in this project which relates to the indicator that the symbol is culturally important (Ortner 1973:1339). To have good energies in a reading or platform reading room is evident to create an appropriate space for spirit communication. We have seen how energies are actively used to strengthen the channeling between the medium and the spirit. Mediums also expressed that the medium needs to control their energy levels to have the correct energy to receive and interpret the spirit's message while mixing their energy with the spirit's energy.

The second indicator is the idea that the people practicing react positively or negatively about the symbol instead of indifferent (Ortner 1973:1339). Spiritual experiences, expressed in the third and fourth chapters, do poorly affect the people's energies as they feel energetically drained, whereas, in mediumistic practices, good energy is said to be important in having the best reading possible. In the act of delivering personal messages, the room is transformed into a therapy room where the energy is positively affecting the sitter and the medium. We see here that energy can both be positive and negative in the discourse of spiritualism. Here, the energies function differently in a different setting which leads us to the third indicator that the symbol arises in different contexts, conversation, and inaction (Ortner 1973:1339).

Energy is getting summarized in discussions. There is energy that reflects emotions or energies understood as presences of paranormal activity, energies affecting atmospheres, manifestations of energies that both imprint objects and subjects, and the talk of stuck energies. In action, on the one hand, there is the understanding of energy leftovers on objects, where the spirit is not present, and on the other hand, physical energy where the spirit is present. We see here the variations of using energy in spiritualism.

The fourth indicator is that there is a greater cultural, vocabulary, or detailed elaborations surrounding the symbol's nature combined and compared to similar phenomena in the environment (Ortner 1973:1339). This indicator can be seen in the similarity between the

definition of spirit versus energy. The distinction between the concept of energy and spirits is blurred in spiritualistic discourses and often appears as the same thing. Taken from the principles of the English spiritualism transferred to the Norwegian Spiritualist Association, we find the idea that a creative force and spirit exist in all things. In the interviews with my contacts, they said that energy also exists in everything. When mediums talk about energy in readings, they talk about the spirit's energy. Here, the energy is described as a fluid that flows inside the spirit and not as the spirit itself. Therefore, can energy be equivalent to spirit? Even the definitions of spirits and energy build on the same idea. In the fourth spiritual principle "*The continuous Existence of the Human Soul,*" the idea is built on energy, and matter cannot be created or destroyed; therefore, the spirit is indestructible (snu.org.uk). We see here that energy and matter are unbreakable, and the spirits are indestructible. Therefore, both spirit and energy are unbreakable entities. The idea of energy is repeated later in the thesis on the Law of Conversion that "energy cannot be created or destroyed; it can only change from one form to another" (Caputo, 2015:135-136). The perception that spirit and energy cannot be destroyed means that both concepts are eternal. This paragraph illustrates different ways of thinking of energy, and the concepts of energy and spirit are similarly defined.

The last indicator is that it exists restrictions surrounding the symbol, which can arise in several rules or sanctions that regard a form of misuse (Ortner 1973:1339). Energy can be misused and can cause distractions or be distracted. As previously mentioned, lack of energy can affect spirit communication negatively and if the medium is unfocused, it should not start spirit conversations.

I have shown examples of how Ortner's five indicators of key symbols in culture can resemble energy as a symbol in spiritual practices and understandings. I will now discuss whether one can conclude energy to be a key symbol, and if so, is it an elaborating or summarizing symbol?

Summarizing key symbol

Energy is a summarizing and repeated word found in all conversations about spiritual experiences and practices. It is expressed and interpreted in different settings and plays multiple roles. In that context, energy could be a summarizing key symbol. As Ortner argues, a summarizing key symbol is when the symbol is expressed, summed up, and represented in

an emotionally and powerful way to find meaning in the system. If we compare energy in spiritualism manner to the example Ortner presents of the American flag, one finds errors in defining energy as a summarizing symbol.

Energy is an ambivalent concept to argue with because of its physical character. Biologically, humans need the energy to do any practice or movement. Energy with its invisible and heterogenous form is working as a non-visual symbol, and the American flag is objective and pictured. The American flag stands for the ‘American way’ and includes multiple values regarding ideas of patriotism, freedom, hard work, and democracy. The flag stands for all the values in unity, as a package deal. When we think of energy, the initial thought is probably not spiritualism as the flag is for America. The flag is a representation, first and foremost, of the country and the associations transform it to be symbolic (Ortner 1973:1340). If we look at the reference spiritualists use by linking energy to ideas of a soul and the soul’s characteristics, identity, and personality, we can see the sentimental aspect. For example, when energies imprint the walls of a home, the energy felt is expressed as the deceased spirit’s experiences and emotions. Here we see that energy can represent emotions and be religiously powerful in the idea of reincarnation and an eternal soul. While in other ways, the energy in spiritualism is used as a tool that helps to find meaning in their experiences. On the one hand, energy is often related to spiritual discourses, but it does not contain an all-or-nothing package. On the other hand, it is not possible to practice mediumship without using the energy of some form. Although we can talk about physical energy that makes any movement possible or energy as reflections of emotions, it is the use and understanding of the energy’s different functions that makes the discussion of energy interesting as a key symbol in spiritualism. If energy is not a summarizing key symbol, can it be linked to an elaborating key symbol?

Elaborating key symbols

In the elaborating symbols, the focus is on categorization and sorting out of undifferentiated ideas where the symbol is evident in simplifying these experiences. The sensation of feeling energies in spiritual events does help to find meaning behind the events. This is a felt experience that we found in Lisa’s bodily epistemology of the lady ghost in her room. It was when she combined her experience of the lady’s energy and the medium’s findings that made her capture a full understanding of the spiritual activity. It is here we see that energy is a tool to think with, which is the essential factor in elaborating symbols. Also, in the TV shows, the

energy affected the investigation team where they described the sensation felt while walking around the building and related it to ghost activity. In mediumship, the sensing energy was used in interpreting the message of a spirit, in methods of finding affiliation and gathering information, for example, their sickness. Another factor is that the medium makes room for spirit communication by mixing their energy with the spirit's energy. Energy, therefore, is playing a great role in spirit communication. If we look at the minor categories within elaborating symbols that are root metaphors and key scenarios, we see that energy also can be related to them. The difference between 'root metaphors' and 'key scenarios' is that the scenarios involve the strategies to organize the actions, while the 'root metaphors' involve conceptualizations of the experiences and implies of effective ways to act upon them (Ortner 1973:1338-1345)

'Key scenarios' is based on the formulation of achieving the goal and present strategies for it. The strategies can refer to the energy exercises and meditation used in improving mediumships. Strategies on how to control their energies and mental states to better the quality of spirit communication. In the other direction, of the 'root metaphors' one can think of energy being a metaphor for spiritual presence. For example, when the TV team in *Spøkelsesjegerne* walked into a bedroom in the sanatorium, and instantly expressed that there were many energies there and continue to explain the patients' experiences in that room. The first expressed energies are thought of as deceased patients, where energies seem equivalent to ghosts.

As shown, energy is evident in spiritualistic practices, as spirit communication would not function without the use of energy, but it is not a summarizing symbol that works at representing the system holistically. I argue that energy in spiritualism is closer to being an elaborating key symbol with the idea of energy as a tool for conceptualizing and understanding spiritual events and evidence, even though it is a symbol that can be emotional in different practices.

Conclusion:

In this thesis, I have expressed the dialectical relation between the living and the dead and how the communication and interaction are wanted or unwanted. In chapter three, we got to see how spirits haunt the living involuntarily. The spirits appeared in the electrical system by taking the living's energies and making objects behave abnormally. Ghost activity affected the human's sleep and comfort in their homes, as the events scared them. To help themselves,

they invited a spirit medium to cleanse their house for unwanted ghost spirits. The voluntary relation to the spirits arose in chapter four, where a ghost hunter team was trying to call the spirits to communicate with them. The paranormal activity still had a fearful atmosphere, but the desire to document proof of spirits and ghosts was stronger than fear and made it even exciting. Spirit mediums met in chapter five wanted to demystify the concept of ghosts and spirits. They explain their belief that the spirits are the same spirit, dead and alive. They represent the human characteristics of the spirit and explain how they are humans too, but without a physical body. In readings, the mediums use humor about their mediumistic skills and the spirits to make them less intimidating. We have seen how people in grief seek mediums to help them communicate with their deceased loved ones. The medium receives a role as a therapist, where they deliver messages from the dead to the living to help them heal from their losses. The spirit communication is wanted, even necessary.

This paper has shown that energy is developed and understood as a multifunctional notion in spiritualistic conversations, containing a set of meanings. Energy manifests both subjects and objects and can affect human emotions and create atmospheres. This atmosphere can be sensed both positively and negatively. Spirit communication derives from the mix of the spirit's energy and the medium's energy where the energies are combined to make the communication possible. In the cosmology of spiritualism, the energy can be transformed from a spirit to a human, where a human can carry the spirit's energy filled with their emotions, even without knowing it.

When discussing the atmosphere to be affected by spiritual activity, the energy can reflect the spirit as present, as well as being imprinted in the walls but not reflect the spirit's presence. For spirits or ghosts to haunt, it is believed that they feed on human energy to be stronger. The strength determines how they can visualize themselves, get attention by moving objects, or affecting electrical systems. In mediumistic practices, the energy is continuously being controlled correctly and creates space for communication. Energy is understood to be sensed in various ways, by temperature changes, tingling, tensions, or electricity. Energy functions as a human's fuel, an electric presence, a tool, a representation of a full life, and a reflection of souls.

The next question to respond to is how meaning-making processes in spiritualism work. I argue that the meaning-making of spiritual events is experience-based. In chapter three, we saw that Maria and Lisa found the meaning of the events by thinking outside the box, as the

events seemed impossible to explain. The event shouldn't happen with the knowledge they held about the world. The medium's visit impacted their meaning-making as the medium presented evidence that rendered with the girl's perceptions and performed a successful cleanse of their houses. For Lisa, the sensations felt were enough for her to explain the events to be ghostly, whereas Maria was not convinced on ghosts affecting her and accepted that the events cannot be explained. In the grocery store, the amount of people experiencing similar events creates a collective understanding and epistemology where they confirm each other's experiences that lead to the conclusion that it must be ghosts. How the people experienced the events combined with evidence and sharing experiences is essential in finding the meaning of spiritual events.

In the ghost representations in chapter four, the meaning-making of spiritual events are in *Spøkelsesjegerne* found by using paranormal instruments where the signals of the instruments appear at the right time in the right context. The evidence is collected technologically and evaluated as proof of ghosts. When events happen, effects are used to create the atmosphere to transform the sensations for the viewers. They can visually see and sense the events through the camera. The TV team reacts similarly and shares collective experiences that may heighten the spiritual meaning. By visiting buildings with much history, a history filled with horror actions, the expectation of the place to be haunted sets the atmosphere and the sounds or lights blinking are instantly thought of as haunting. In *Åndenes Makt*, the representations of ghosts are relatable to the audience by the dramatizations of spiritual events. Here, the findings of the medium are later confirmed by history and the participants. An explanation of the haunting is proposed and may connect the pieces together. As the events are filmed, the viewers can see for themselves if they believe in the events shown. This illustrates aesthetic epistemology.

Chapter five illustrates the process of building evidence that creates meaning in spiritual beliefs is complex and follows a set of rules. In gathering evidence, the mediums' cooperation with the sitter or audience is together creating the meaning of events as the sitter confirms the information. The meaning-making can also be achieved by the will to believe. The medium is concerned with proving their abilities to speak with the dead and therefore sets a standard for what creates good pieces of evidence. In readings when evidence is well described and rings true with real-life details, the meaning increases and may lead to the sitter believing in spirit communication. The meaning-making and epistemologies are created by

evidence that is collected through embodiment, aesthetic representation, and technical instruments.

As energy is continuously used in conceptualizing spiritual events and actively used in spiritual sessions, it does function as a key symbol. The energy is not a visual symbol that immediately refers to medium practices and ghosts, but it is expressed in various ways. Energy is a key symbol as it renders with the five indicators that Ortner presented; 1: energy is an important culturally for my informants, and 2: it can be expressed negatively and positively in practices, 3: it is a repeating word all conversations, 4: it has great cultural value, and holds different understanding in different contexts. It is also closely related to other phenomena, such as spirits, and 5: energy has restrictions in how to use it in mediumistic practices. These indicators illustrate the importance of the concept and show how energy is a key symbol in spiritualism. Energy has summarizing effects, but in my interpretation function as a helpful tool to conceptualize spiritual experiences, and therefore is an elaborating key symbol with characteristics of a 'root metaphor.'

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