

## Shadow People, a Short Course for Field Researchers

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This week we will revisit one of the oldies but goodies of paranormal phenomenon. Yesterday one of our members asked for some information on Shadow People and my first response was that they are something that has been with us for centuries in paranormal literature, yet they seem to be “re-discovered” and then re-evaluated with each successive generation. Now don’t get me wrong, re-evaluation is a good thing, but reinventing the wheel is a waste of precious time.

As far as I can tell shadowy presences being seen from the corner of the witnesses eye can be traced back to the days of Caesar and beyond and while skeptics will tell you that they are hallucinatory in nature or, a kind of matrixing that takes place when someone sees “something” in their peripheral vision and the brain just fills in the blanks, I tend to disagree on that one, but to each his own, it is better to simply define the phenomenon as best I can and let you decide, but before I launch into that topic, a word of warning. With every generation you will find those who rewrite the history to fit their own agenda. I am reasonably sure that Lorraine Warren would identify Shadow People as something demonic, for example. There are modern seers that suggest they are other things, but right or wrong, you can only properly dissect the phenomenon by look at it as a whole, not the sum of its parts. Always let history be your guide.

Shadow People sometimes appear as the mere silhouette of a person, usually male, but generally lacking any other characteristics of gender. However, in no way does the description end there. There are “hatted” shadow beings, hooded shadows, cloaked ones, and solid or wispy, smoky types. Some are seen only from the waist up. Others clearly have legs that are seen fleeing from their observers. They dart into corners, through walls, into closets, or behind television sets, bushes, and buildings. Sometimes they simply fade into the dark recesses of the night. Lacking in the description is one common denominator unifying the many different types of shadow people that enter our world...except that they are “intensely dark.” But even then, there are exceptions. Hmmm, from the definition they sound like common ordinary ghosts!

Yet there is now an entire sector of the paranormal community that claims that they are something more, something they refer to as, “Inter-dimensional beings;” humanoids that pass from one plain to another. Some think of them as time travelers, some as beings from a parallel universe who can pass from their world to ours. Of course some place a religious significance to them, either as damned human spirits or demonic characters. Everyone seems to have a definitive answer, yet no two seem to agree. Shades, the ancient equivalent of Shadow People appear in Homer's *the Odyssey*, when Odysseus experiences a vision of Hades, and in the Aeneid, when Aeneas travels to the underworld. In the Divine

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Comedy by Dante, many of the dead are similarly referred to as shades (Italian *ombra*), including Dante's guide, Virgil, which only proves the age of these apparitions. Likewise, the common Wrath of Scotland is sometimes said to be a shadow figure, but most scholars tend to agree, it is just another name for "ghost."

Assuming you are not convinced by the dark side of the equation, you can look to the more scientific explanations. Electromagnetic fields have been demonstrated to interfere with the functions of the temporal lobe, creating altered states of perception in which auditory and visual hallucinations can occur. Researchers have used electromagnetic fields to recreate many experiences similar to those reported during paranormal encounters in the past, but recreations are not the same thing as actual events, which as we all know, do not lend themselves to the scientific method. Researchers have also documented correlations between variances in naturally-occurring magnetic fields and areas where paranormal events have been reported and suggest that there is a correlation here to Shadow People, again unfortunately, the theory does not always fit the phenomenon and there have been many sightings that were not accompanied by such fields, if there were, we could simply go to the scene at some later point and find the EMF field that has caused it.

Continuing on, you can ignore the research (and theories of others) only to a point. Some think that this may be a phenomenon that, for some reason, is manifesting with greater frequency and intensity now than ever before, some even suggest that the phenomenon is growing and in the process becoming bolder. Some say the shadow people phenomenon is growing and that these entities almost always used to be seen out of the corner of the eye and very briefly, but more and more, are beginning seen "straight on and for longer periods of time." Some witnesses testify that they have even seen eyes, usually red, on these shadow beings.

The mysterious sightings have become a hot topic of conversation in paranormal chat rooms and web sites as well as a good deal of attention on web radio. The shadow beings seem to be reported with more and more frequency and people are asking, what are they and where do they come from? To them the idea that this is just the current phase of a never-ending cycle of ghostly encounters does not seem to be enough of an explanation.

Some observations may be telling, for instance they don't usually seem to have purpose to their visits and from the bad feelings they emit; it seems that they aren't benign. One important observation about shadow people is that they seem to be aware of our presence. The Shadow People tend to be very

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aware of our presence and in fact seem like they wish to make us feel uncomfortable or frightened.

Are they evil? It is tempting to say that they are, especially given the bad vibes they seem to let off and the pronouncements of demonologist. However, there is not much documentation to say that a bad occurrence follows a Shadow Man visitation. In fact, most visitations usually result in the apparition fading away, or disappearing when noticed. They never seem to talk or approach the witness, instead standing menacingly in doorways and corners.

What makes the Shadow People phenomena interesting is the consistency in the sightings. No matter whether it's an old person or a child, or anyone in between, what they see is always the same. People on opposite ends of the world report seeing these entities on a daily basis and their recollections are strikingly similar. Whatever these Shadow People are they are definitely a regular occurrence in a lot of people's lives.

Rosemary Ellen Guiley has an interesting read on the subject, as reported in TAPS Magazine. Rosemary has studied countless accounts of Shadow People over several years and wrote a book about the phenomenon. Among other theories, she notes that many people see an ET connection and is quick to remind people like me that "we" raised that spectre when reporting on the Men in Black. If I am reading her correctly, Rosemary sees the Shadow People as possible scouts for other extraterrestrials, thus the common denominator that they all watch their subjects very intently, as if they were studying us. She notes that this is different than the common ghost, who obviously knows all about the world of the living. An interesting interpretation!

So, are these actually entities from another world, a parallel universe or time travelers? Or is the 21<sup>st</sup> century mind simply stretching the boundaries of imagination. Unfortunately, imagination only goes so far in paranormal investigations and while new generations will tend to see things that they explain in the terminology of their time, the researcher has to look at the common features, not just the oddities of a phenomenon. One interpretation is that we are dealing with what are called a Manifest Thoughtform (egregore), basically a demon created by negative psychic energy and related to a places or event in which extreme emotional or physical stress/trauma has taken place. These are not Elementals in the classic sense, in that an Elemental is believed to be created specifically by a human for some nefarious purpose. The "Thoughtform" is considered benign and created by accident or misadventure, never intentionally created or left behind.

Now we are getting into the real meat of the issue; "When is a red truck not a red truck," my old colleague Scott Rogo might quip. For those of you who missed this seminar, I believe it took place in a

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restaurant in the Bronx a few decades ago; the correct answer is, "When it is not there!"

A case in point, when two individuals report seeing a dark outline in their bedroom, is it just that or something else. What we know as investigators is that the reported phenomenon is rarely what we find in our ongoing research of the event. Over the last few years, ASUP has dealt with Shadow People who were purely Elementals, created by a human to cause havoc through magic, as well as "Shadow People" who were simply the residue of past generations remaining in a house. But then again, we also have dealt with Shadow People who seem to defy any of the common definitions mentioned, seeming to be neither human or created, so I guess Rosemary's theory has to be added to the list of possible suspects.

I am more intrigued with the intensity of the phenomenon in recent years, however. Shadow People are becoming a common occurrence in our work, so why now? At least one self proclaimed prophet of doom says it has something to do with the approach of 2012.... If you subscribe to that legend, you might give this argument some weight.

Literature being what it is and the growth in the interest in everything paranormal may be the causative factor here. As noted earlier, if you lived in Scotland a few hundred years ago, you rarely heard mention of "ghosts" but rather would nod knowingly when someone mentioned the word Wrath. Shadow Person is not a part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century lexicon, thus someone with little education on the subject, speaking about a dark silhouette seen flitting down a hallway and past a door, will call it a Shadow Person; simply put, the name fits the description.

All of that as a given, it seems we now have to pay particular attention to how we, as investigators, use the term. For me, Shadows are tied to an emotional reaction, not necessarily found when similar witnesses report a ghost or even a UFO. This is a trigger mechanism that is tied to "fight or flight" responses; it is much more than being startled or even mildly frightened. In true Shadow People reports the common factor is not just what they say they saw but the instantaneous feeling of pure terror coupled with the understanding that they are being watched closely.

Once you rule out all the obvious reasons that someone might report these occurrences, those associated with waking from a deep sleep, or even the more mundane ghostly apparitions, you have to consider categorizing what is being reported as true Shadow People. The key is in the obvious

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commonality of these reports, fast moving, sometime instant sightings that sometimes disappear in a moment and other times linger as if challenging the subject to react, the physical density of the vision, the interaction, without actual communication between the “being” and the subject, etc. Simply put, as always, “If it quacks like a duck, waddles like a duck and swims like a duck, it is most probably a duck.”

The challenge once we recognize this unique phenomenon is to categorize it. This is where the problem seems to be; we have reports of Shadow People at known haunted locations which tend to make us think of the common haunting, but also under conditions that have no historic explanation whatsoever. The concept of time travelers, other worldly beings and parallel universe hoppers can't be ruled out, either and of course we do have the near identical phenomenon found in Elementals, which are manmade entities, usually with a mission. The best rule is to observe but do not challenge. While the religiously motivated Shadow Person may dematerialize at the sound of St. Michael's Prayer, the same will not be true of an elemental creation or anything else. This is not a good place to test your faith!

As I said at the onset, my personal read is that these are ghostly sightings, when they are paranormal at all. We know that we can't subscribe wholesale to the skeptics explanation, given the number and similarities found in this kind of phenomenon, but we already know of two kinds of paranormal manifestations that have similar appearance, that have to be ruled out before we can start looking at the reports of Shadow People as a separate category of paranormal phenomenon.

As always, as investigators, use your mind first, your imagination second and report what is seen, then begin to rule out that which it is not first. I know you are all tired of hearing this, but as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote in Sherlock Holmes,

***“Once you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, no matter how improbable, must be the truth.”***

Now, let's see what you dream about tonight when you go to sleep. Nighty-night!