

# James McHarg

James McHarg (1917-2003) was a Scottish psychiatrist, university teacher and medical historian. He made a close study of psychic phenomena, seeking to understand it through Jungian concepts.

## Life and Career

James Fleming McHarg graduated in medicine at Edinburgh University in 1940 and then served in the Royal Navy, reaching the rank of surgeon commander. He trained at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and was the deputy physician superintendent at the Gartnavel Royal Hospital in Glasgow. His final post was that of consultant and honorary senior lecturer in the department of psychiatry of Dundee University.

McHarg was an elected fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and a foundation fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in 1971. He was the founder of the McHarg Essay Prize, awarded to a trainee psychiatrist who had produced an outstanding research paper.

## Psychical Research

In his later years McHarg sought to understand the psychic experiences reported by some of his patients.<sup>[1]</sup> He joined the Society for Psychical Research, serving on its governing council, and the (American) Parapsychological Association, and contributing articles to the *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* and other journals (see list below).

In an article about the paranormal and the recognition of personal distress<sup>[2]</sup> McHarg explores both genuine and pseudo psi phenomena that might arise from 'pre-existing psychotic, psychoneurotic, or physiological pathologies'. Here he mentions the writings of Hughlings Jackson, Henry James and cases of near-death experience. He further discusses the contribution of psychiatry to psychical research in a book published to mark the centenary of the founding of the SPR.<sup>[3]</sup>

## Selected Works

### Articles

Poltergeist and apparitional haunting phenomena affecting the family and associates of an adolescent girl with well-controlled epilepsy (1972). In *Research in Parapsychology*, ed. by J.D. Morris, W.G. Roll & R.L. Morris, 17-19.

A poltergeist case from Glasgow (1976). In *Research in Parapsychology*, ed. by J.D. Morris, W.G. Roll and R.L. Morris, 13-15.

A Vision of the Aftermath of the Battle of Nechtanesmere AD 685 (1978). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, 938-48.

Correspondence: review of at the hour of death (1979). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, 128-29.

Psychical research and Psychiatry (1982). In *Psychical Research*, ed. by I. Grattan-Guinness, 316-24. Wellingborough: Aquarian Press.

The paranormal and the recognition of personal distress (1982). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 201-9.

Personation—cryptomnesic and paranormal: Two contrasting cases (1983). *Parapsychological Journal of South Africa* 4/1, 36–50.

Psychose und Synchronizität (1985). *Grezgebiete der Wissenschaft* I, 23-31.

Comments on 'A neurobiological model for near-death experiences' by Juan C. Saavedra-Aguilar, and Juan S. Gómez-Jeria (1989). *Journal of Near-death Studies* 7/4, 229-31.

Correspondence (1989). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 55, 311.

## **Book Reviews**

*Journeys out of the Body* by Robert A. Monroe (1973). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 48-52.

*The Varieties of Psychedelic Experience* by R.E.L. Masters and J. Houston (1973). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 258-59.

*Telepathy and Clairvoyance: Views of some little investigated capabilities of man* by W.H.C. Tenhaeff (1974). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 47, 373-75.

*Parapsychology and Anthropology: Proceedings of an International Conference held in London, England, August 29-31, 1973*. Edited by A. Angoff and D. Earth (1975). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 161-64.

*Exorcism, Past and Present* by M. Ebon (1975). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 232-35.

*Song of the Siren: A Parapsychological Odyssey* by S. Krippner (1976). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 48, 345-47.

*The Realms of Healing* by S. and A. Villoldo (1977). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, 612-14.

*Case Studies in Spirit Possession*, edited by V. Crapanzano and V. Garrison (1977). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, 660-61.

*At the Hour of Death*, by K. Osis and E. Haraldsson (1978). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 49, 885-87.

*The ESP Experience*, by J. Ehrenwald (1979). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, 120-22.

*Poltergeists* by A. Gault and A.D. Cornell (1980). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 50, 301-303.

*Psychic-Nexus: Psychic Phenomena in Psychiatry and Everyday Life* by B. Schwarz (1981). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 93-94.

*Paranormal Foreknowledge: Problems and Perplexities* by J. Eisenbud (1982). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 51, 386-87.

*As in Adam all Die* by S. Ramsay Blackley (1988). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 55, 99-101.

*Superstition: The True Story of the Nanny they called a Witch* by C. Compton with G. Cole (1991). *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 58, 106-109.

Melvyn Willin

## Literature

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## Endnotes

### Footnotes

1. ^ Unsigned (2003).

2. ^ McHarg (1982a).

3. ^ McHarg (1982b).

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