Ghosts

- Usually the term is associated with some type of apparition of a dead person
- Often referred to as the souls of the dead
- Stories about ghosts date back millennia and are common in our earliest literature
- A 2005 Gallup poll found that 32% of Americans believe in their existence
Ghostbusting

Bill and Dan aside, there are not actually scientific methods that can be used to detect ghosts. Those methods used (infrared cameras, magnetometers, etc.) may be scientific, but their use in this case is actually pseudoscience!

Tools of the “Trade”

Infrared thermometers
Unable to detect something that doesn’t have a surface (i.e., ghosts) because they measure surface temperatures.
Infrared motion detectors work on the same principles.

EMF meters
Detect electromagnetic fields, which always require some sort of energy source.
You can even own your very own set!

Ghostly Evidence

To date, no ghost has been verified by science. This is despite the thousands of hours of effort put in by amateur ghosthunters around the world.

Let us, however, examine some of the produced evidence...or some of these.
Media Critique #3

Demon – Greek, meaning “knowledge”

Science – Latin, meaning “knowledge”

Interesting, eh?

I do not fear Satan half so much as I fear those who fear him.

Saint Teresa of Avila

4/29/2010
A Brief History of Demons

- Viewed as a natural entity during Greece, neither good nor bad, but intermediaries between gods and humans
- Early Christian leaders “demonized” them and saw them as evil spirits
- Witches were often seen as the spawn of demons with human females

Witchcraft

- From the Old English wiccecraft, or “sorcery”
- Usually refers to the use of some type of magic
- Negative connotations in the Western world since rise of monotheistic religions
- Today, often associated with either Neo-Paganistic movements or “Satanic cults”

The Witching Cycle

1. Accused are often on margins of society
2. Sex or sexual abuse is involved
3. Mere accusation “proves” guilt
4. Denial of guilt is further “proof”
5. Once one claim appears, others quickly follow suit
6. Movement spirals out of control, until everyone is a suspect
The Witching Cycle

7. As the accused fight back, accusers become the accused
8. Movement fades, public loses interest, proponents are shifted to margins once again

“The giving up of witchcraft is in effect the giving up of the Bible.”
John Wesley

Feedback Loops

Which Witch is Which?

Accusations by suspected witches against other witches, Manningtree, England, 1645

Accusations against suspected witches (in boxes) by other villagers
This is the *Malleus Maleficarum*, the “Hammer of Witches”

Tells you how to determine if someone is a witch!

She’s a Witch!

*A startlingly accurate portrayal of witch trials*

Even though the times change, we often just find substitutes for “witches”

For example...

Satanic Panic!

In 1980s and early 1990s, Satanists were
Kidnapping and murdering children
Well organized and numbered over 1 million members
Forcing young women to have children like farm animals, so they could be killed in rituals
Behind the scenes of major corporations, legal agencies, and the media
A very lucrative business for a number of people
Satanic Panic!

Even Proctor & Gamble were accused of being a front company for the Church of Satan.

The 13 stars are a mockery of Christian symbolism, plus there's a 666 in the beard!

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Satanic Panic!

No evidence of any actual "Satanic cults"

Memories were often elicited during hypnosis or from children using questionable tactics.

Still, many people (especially fundamentalist, evangelical Christians) believe these stories to be partially true.

Thanks, Geraldo!

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Recovered Memories

Followed same type of cycle as the witch and Satanist crazes.

True incest survivors formed support group, overzealous therapists helped them “recover” lost memories of abuse.

Most exposure came when Roseanne Barr said she had recovered sexual abuse memories from before she was one year old.
Recovered Memories

“If you think you were abused and your life shows the symptoms, you were.”
Alleges that 1/3 to 1/2 of all women were sexually abused as children

We have reached the point where the accused become the accusers, fortunately
Therapists, psychiatrists, and police detectives have all been sued successfully for making false accusations and implanting memories
Any guesses on what the next craze will be?

Notice Any Similarities?

• Lost time
• Sexual acts
• Being kidnapped
• Paralyzed
• Coming from sky
• Special powers
Cultural Manifestations

• What is the purpose of demons, faeries, witches, aliens, and so forth?

• Why are the depictions of aliens so different from culture to culture?

• What does this say about us as a species?

In the demon-haunted world that we inhabit by virtue of being human, this may be all that stands between us and the enveloping darkness.

Carl Sagan, on science and reason