

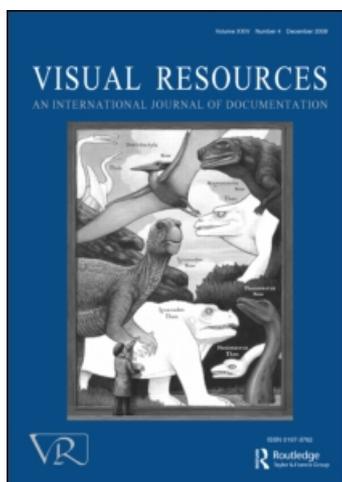
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Spirits, Apparitions, and Traditions of Supernatural Photography

Daniel Wojcik

For nearly 150 years, the photographic process has been attributed with the apparitional ability to reveal discarnate beings and miraculous phenomena. In the nineteenth century, members of the Spiritualist movement embraced photography as a technological medium that provided evidence of the afterlife and contact with departed loved ones. Today, traditions of supernatural photography continue to thrive, particularly among the Catholic faithful at Marian apparition sites who regularly use cameras to document miraculous phenomena. This article examines the meaning and appeal of beliefs about photography as a revelatory technology, the popular desire for visible proofs of invisible realms, and the ways that the photographic process allows believers to ritually engage the otherworldly, the sacred, and issues of ultimate concern.

Keywords: Spirit Photography; Spiritualism; Marian Apparitions; Lueken, Veronica (1923–1995); “Baysiders”; Eschatology; Religious Visions

Soon after the invention of photography was announced publicly in 1839, it was widely believed that supernatural forces and images of otherworldly beings could be captured on film. Photographs of spirits and life energy proliferated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and today, similar images and associated beliefs continue to flourish about the photographic documentation of ghosts, divine beings, auras, psychic energies, and various other supernormal phenomena. What is it about the photographic process that has evoked such beliefs for nearly 150 years? How does one account for the persistence and enduring appeal of such ideas in the twenty-first century, with the current knowledge about the ease of photographic manipulation and widespread skepticism about visual proof of the miraculous?

The phenomenon of spirit and occult photography has received both scholarly and popular attention in recent years, with publications ranging from important historical works in photographic and film studies,¹ the relation of new communication technologies to metaphysics,² the debunking of paranormal photography,³ and contemporary art inspired by the paranormal and technology.⁴ Popular interest in the subject was illustrated in 2004–2005, when the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York held highly acclaimed exhibitions of spirit photographs entitled “The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult.” The accompanying catalog, beautifully illustrated, contains thoughtful essays on famous figures, chronologies, and themes of the spirit photography movement, although it takes, by its own admission, a “resolutely

historical” approach to the subject, seeming to view any analysis of occult photographs beyond that of historical and aesthetic aspects as restricted to debates about their authenticity.⁵ Although providing valuable information about significant personalities and events, the publication offers limited insight into the personal experiences and meaning-making processes that allowed spirit photographs to attain such prominent levels of popularity among believers or the continuing significance and enduring belief in supernatural photography for millions of people today.

Inspired by and in dialogue with these recent exhibits and works, this article examines vernacular practices of supernatural photography within broader sociocultural contexts and explores the relationship between cameras, film, and beliefs about communicating with departed loved ones and other discarnate entities. Early spirit photography occurred at a time of profound cultural and technological change, and the seemingly supernatural qualities of photographic images confirmed existing folk beliefs and provided “proofs” of the afterlife and consolation. A hundred years later, after spirit photography was dismissed as fraudulent by skeptics and most Spiritualists alike, new practices of supernatural photography emerged. Of particular relevance are the photographic activities of millions of devotees of visions of the Virgin Mary, who regularly attempt to document miraculous and apocalyptic phenomena with their cameras at apparition sites throughout the world. Like the Spiritualists, these believers attribute a revelatory power to the photographic process and use cameras to mediate between natural and supernatural dimensions, to produce visible proofs of invisible realms, and to engage ritually with the sacra of their faith. Understanding such practices provides insights into the visual culture of popular religiosity, the influence of photography on visionary iconography, and the uses and meanings of spiritual images historically and in the present day.

Spiritualism and Photography

In 1839 the invention of photography was made public when Louis J. M. Daguerre (1787–1851) introduced a practical and accessible photographic process in the form of a plate camera. This new photographic technology appeared at about the same historical moment as the Spiritualist movement, the beginning of which is usually traced to the spirit communications of the Fox sisters in Hydesville, New York, on 31 March 1848.⁶ Although Spiritualism developed within the framework of Western Christianity, it often appealed to people who were dissatisfied with established religion and searching for a new justification for their wavering faith. Providing an alternative form of spirituality to established religion, the movement frequently attracted liberal reformers and abolitionists, as well as those involved in the early feminist movement, as Spiritualism sometimes allowed women to gain authority and leadership roles that were denied by established religions and dominant society.⁷

In addition to its feminist and reformist aspects, a unifying and primary tenet of early Spiritualism was the belief that the living may contact the spirit world and that such communication was evidence of the immortality of the soul. According to Spiritualist eschatology, souls in the afterlife continue to evolve and progress through

successively higher spheres of spiritual existence, and these elevated souls mediate between visible and invisible realms and provide divine guidance to human beings. Particular emphasis was placed on direct and numinous experiences in the séance room and the ability of select mediums to contact the dead through deliberate rituals and revelatory experiences. Spiritualism developed during a time of increased tensions between religion and science, and followers of the movement seemed to mediate these tensions, often applying scientific concepts and terminology to a liberal theology based on Christian notions of the afterlife. Because many Spiritualists regarded their claims about the supernatural as fundamentally modern and scientific, they embraced new developments in technology, such as cameras, as a means of demonstrating the validity of their revelations and offering proof of the reality of spiritual forces and the survival of the soul. From its very inception Spiritualism was understood by its adherents through analogies based in technology, as the original phenomenon of disembodied raps upon the walls of the Fox cottage in 1848 had much in common with the tapping communication of the electromagnetic telegraph, unveiled just four years earlier by Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872). As Jeffrey Sconce notes, the invention of the telegraph “conceptually energized” the Spiritualist movement, and in the heady rush of the scientific eruption of the late 1800s, physics and metaphysics had not yet split: “talking with the dead through raps and knocks, after all, was only slightly more miraculous than talking with the living yet absent through dots and dashes; both involved subjects reconstituted through technology as an entity at once interstitial and uncanny.”⁸ Suddenly, in a new world where communication was no longer dependent on the physical body, and voices were emancipated from their sources across great distances, widely-held traditional beliefs about the soul persisting after death and communicating with the living were boldly confirmed by the Spiritualist assertions of empirical proof in the form of materializations and other physical manifestations.

By the early 1860s, the first reported examples of spirit photography occurred in the United States, with allegedly inexplicable images of people appearing on photographic plates in addition to the image of the person sitting for a portrait (Figure 1). These extra images were widely interpreted as spirits of deceased people, and photography was readily accepted as an apparitional technology, as it suddenly allowed spirits to be documented visually, and not merely felt or heard.⁹ Early spirit photographs took the form of *cartes-de-visite*, and were like other small portraits that were collected and shared among family and friends as social currency and sentimental banknotes of the time.¹⁰ During this same period, *cartes-de-visite* often depicted soldiers departing for the American Civil War (1861–1865), which then often quickly became memorial photographs of the dead as Civil War casualties continued to mount. It is no coincidence that spirit photography took hold of the public imagination in the years during and after the Civil War, as these photos of spirits offered immediate reassurance of the continued presence of the dead. The war also had a profound impact on the emerging field of photography, as corpse-strewn battlefields were visually documented by photographers such as Mathew Brady (1822–1896) and presented in newspapers for the first time, confronting mass audiences with images of death in a manner previously unimaginable. The association



Figure 1 William H. Mumler, “Mary Todd Lincoln,” ca. 1865. Photograph. This widely circulated photograph, in which the assassinated president Lincoln appears behind Mrs. Lincoln, was taken when she visited Mumler’s studio incognito.

of death and photography was further reflected in the common practice of post-mortem photography, in which it was socially acceptable for families to commission photographers to take pictures of their recently deceased loved ones, particularly children who died young (up until 1885, an estimated 40 percent of children died by age five), and these mourning portraits were kept in albums, carried around by family members, and sometimes displayed in the home.¹¹ As these various photographic practices indicate, a few decades after its invention, photography had become deeply associated with death and mourning. In this context, spirit photography fulfilled a human yearning for tangible proof of an afterlife and a visual connection with deceased loved ones at a time when the catastrophe of war and the prevalence of infant mortality left so many people attempting to cope with grief and loss.

Studios and séance rooms specializing in spirit photography became popular, and although the styles of early spirit photographs differ in terms of the number of spirit images and their placement, most initial pictures were an extension of portraiture, with translucent spirit faces or portions of bodies usually appearing behind or superimposed over the sitter. Popular beliefs held that cameras were able to act as mediums, capturing invisible entities or emanations on the photographic plate. Later, certain photographers or the sitters themselves acted as mediumistic “sensitives” and claimed to produce material apparitions that became visible to the camera or, in some cases, they psychically impressed images directly onto unexposed film through a process called “thoughtography.”¹² Sometimes spirits appeared in photographs as streaks of light, white spots, nebulous shapes, phantoms, or ectoplasmic materializations, often shown as an ethereal vapor or jelly-like membrane that was produced during a séance (Figure 2). In other instances, ectoplasm was photographed as a solid, milky white, life-like substance, that was said to smell like ozone and that was discharged from the body. The odd physiological manifestations of ectoplasm, exuding from the bodily orifices of mediums, became a regular part of some séances, and in some cases these ectoplasmic forms contained images of spirits within them (Figure 3). In these types of photographs, the body of the medium becomes a spirit-image producing system, both a camera and corporeal darkroom that develops and emits images of the dead. These various styles of spirit photography drew upon traditional Christian iconography and conventional visual styles of representing spirits, ghosts, angels, and the supernatural. Often in these photographs,

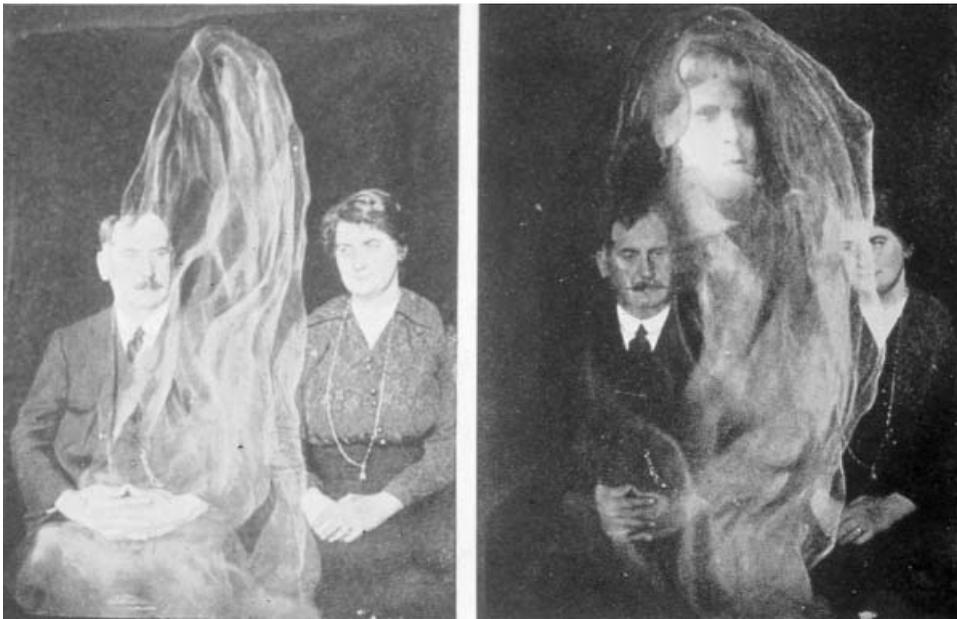


Figure 2 A “psychic arch” or “ectoplasmic bag,” within which a spirit appears; on the left, an ectoplasmic veil materializes above Mr. Wm. Jeffrey and his daughter, while on the right, an image of Mr. Jeffrey’s deceased wife appears through the ectoplasm, ca. 1920. Spirit photographs by William Hope.



Figure 3 The medium Mary Marshall during a séance, 17 June 1932, producing nasal ectoplasm with various images in it, including the face of Spiritualist enthusiast Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in the upper portion. Photograph by Dr. Thomas Glendenning Hamilton. The Hamilton Family Photograph Collection, courtesy of the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, Winnipeg, Canada.

there is a visual separation marking the spirit as “other” and belonging to a separate plane of existence, with the iconic suggestion of haloes, glowing auras, semi-transparent shrouds, luminous clouds, and bursts of divine light (Figure 4). The images of spirits were sometimes shadowy, other times translucent, and occasionally framed by arcs of ectoplasm resembling veils, mantles, or haloes. The familiar visual styles in spirit photographs contributed to the belief in their veracity, connecting the images to previously established traditions of religious iconography.

As the interest in spirit photography was flourishing during the late 1860s, several noted photographers were publicly tried as hoaxers, including the pioneer of spirit photography William H. Mumler (1832–1884) and the famous French spirit photographer Édouard I. Buguet (1840–1901), who was found guilty of fraud in 1875. Although beliefs about spirit photography were challenged and often ridiculed, they persisted among people, and in 1895 the discovery of X-rays and the production



Figure 4 Spirit photograph, ca. 1909, by Edward Wyllie. Wyllie of Los Angeles, California, was a spirit medium. This photograph typifies his style with a sitter surrounded by the translucent heads of several “extras” on each plate.

of the first radiographs by Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (1845–1923) seemed to bring scientific support to the cause of spirit photography, proving the possibility of rendering the invisible visible through a form of photography. The onset of World War I (1914–1918) brought about a further resurgence in the popularity of spirit photography as the massive loss of life on the battlefield created a new generation of mourners, some of whom used photography in attempt to communicate with loved ones (Figure 5). For many people at the time, spirit photography and Spiritualism in general offered a more conclusive and effectively consoling vision of the afterlife than was offered by most Christian denominations, which tended to de-emphasize personal eschatology and denounce communication with the dead. Throughout World War I and afterwards, beliefs about paranormal photography continued to thrive and were promoted by the efforts of the physician and author Sir Arthur



Figure 5 Mr. J. H. D. Miller and an unidentified woman (presumably Mrs. Miller) with an image recognized as the spirit of their deceased son Hardy, appearing through a wreath of ectoplasm, ca. early 1920s. Hardy was killed in World War I. Photograph by William Hope.

Conan Doyle (1859–1930), a firm believer in spirit photography. Conan Doyle not only helped establish the Society for the Study of Supernatural Pictures in 1918 and wrote a book on the subject (*The Case for Spirit Photography* [1922]),¹³ but he was also largely responsible for bringing the alleged photographic documentation of the Cottingley fairies, by two young girls in 1917–1920, to public awareness.

Today, the Cottingley fairy photographs and the majority of spirit photographs look like obvious hoaxes or clever photographic manipulations, and as noted, a number of spirit photographers were caught faking their images and numerous forgeries were exposed. Yet again and again, a community of believers, many of them educated and influential citizens, proclaimed their belief in the reality of these photographs and testified about the identifiable and authentic portraits of departed loved ones they had received.¹⁴ What explains the acceptance of such photos and the unwavering belief about the power of photography to reveal the otherworldly?

In the nineteenth century, the technical aspects of photography were known to some, but there remained a relative lack of knowledge about the photographic process at the popular level, and for millions of people photography seemed to be an extraordinary, mysterious, and seemingly supernatural technology.¹⁵ At the time, non-Spiritualists as well as Spiritualists contemplated the revelatory and religious possibilities of photography, as did professional photographers and other photographic experts. For example, Judge James Bradwell, the chairman of the Photographic Congress held at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893 in

Chicago, speculated that the camera might soon allow humanity to “view the forms of our departed friends, and solve the problem of immortality and life.”¹⁶ The belief that photography could lift the veil between visible and invisible worlds is related to the fact that the photographic process appears to dematerialize reality, producing traces of things and disembodied images detached from originals. As Tom Gunning observes, this ability of photography to produce a phantom double of its subject suggests traditional beliefs about separable souls, shadow souls made visible, and the *Doppelgänger*, and gives photography an uncanny quality.¹⁷ At the same time, photography also is viewed as a scientific instrument of truth that provides tangible evidence in its documentation of reality. Spirit photographs reflect dual notions about photography as a medium of objectivity as well as one of apparitional power. In this way, photography and existing beliefs concerning spirits were completely compatible, a syncretism of science and the supernatural, invoking the uncanny visual experience of doubling and phantoms.

In his study of the uncanny, Nicholas Royle characterizes it, following Sigmund Freud (1856–1939),¹⁸ as not just an experience of the ghostly and mysterious, or a sense of the supernatural, but of something strangely familiar, or a weird intermingling of the familiar with the strange; an experience associated with margins, borders, and the liminal; hauntings and secret encounters; darkness, death, and disembodiment; “something that should have remained secret and hidden but has come to light.”¹⁹ Spirit photography embodies these features, as it conjured the uncanny in a blur of numinous ghosts and familiar loved ones, their spectral images haunting the photographic print alongside the living, seemingly present but not there, somehow revealed by a new and apparently mediumistic technology.

Roland Barthes in *Camera Lucida* locates the peculiar and uncanny power of photography in its inherently indexical nature, as it “always carries its referent with itself,” image and object, simulacra and physical reality “united by an eternal coitus.”²⁰ Because a photograph can never be separated from the moment and fact of existence to which it refers, and because that referent is always bounded in an irretrievable past moment, there exists “that rather terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead.”²¹ For Barthes, all photographic portraits are in effect *memento mori*, reminders of inescapable, impending death. Every photograph also is an attempt at immortality, freezing a particular moment in time and holding it forever, and yet the very act of stopping a moment effectively re-invites the stillness of death. Every photograph is a picture of a corpse. In this sense photographs are always about the dead, and spirit photography brings the dead back to life, reflecting and epitomizing this convergence of death, memory, and immortality.

Although evoking the uncanny and summoning the dead, spirit photographs are rarely horrifying or abject. The phantoms have a friendly if eerie familiarity, with the dead and the living posed side-by-side, sometimes even cheek-to-cheek, bonded visually as one, and showing the continued communication and love between the living and the departed (Figure 6). Most spirit photos reflect traditional beliefs about what folklorist Gillian Bennett calls the “good dead,” those benevolent and familiar spirits who are trusted, welcomed, and viewed as a community of loving dead that



Figure 6 Mrs. R. Foulds of Sheffield, England, with a spirit image of her mother that was recognized by all family members, February 1920. Photograph by William Hope.

bridge the gap between the spiritual and mundane worlds.²² Spirit photographs frequently depict the faces of the good dead hovering above their loved ones, or gently leaning against them, or looking over their shoulders, as watchful guardians as if to protect and guide them. Extending personal and family relationships after death, these photographs often are a form of family portraiture and mourning image combined in one, uniting the living with dead children, spouses, parents, and friends (Figure 7).

The moment of creating a spirit photograph often was an intense ritual event, involving direct and personal experiences and the immediate recognition of the spirits of dead, as their familiar faces suddenly materialized. At some spirit photography sittings, the photographer or others in attendance would gently lay their hands on the photographic plates; sometimes Bibles were passed around, and people prayed and sang hymns, and trance states and ritualized performances were common. In a representative case from the early 1920s in England, a Mr. J. H. D. Miller visited



Figure 7 Mrs. Charlotte Grant, who identified the spirit images as that of her deceased son Alex who died twenty-six years earlier at age three, and who she said had never been photographed, 1909. Photograph by Edward Wyllie.

the home of William Hope of the Crewe Circle (a group that held weekly photographic *séances*), with the hope of contacting his son Hardy, killed in World War I (see Figure 5). Miller describes his visit in detail: after prayers were said and a hymn was sung, he participated in developing the photographic plates in the darkroom in order to be certain there was no fraud involved: “I poured off the liquid and held the dish under a running tab until the plates were washed. On one of them I saw there was a head beside my own. Holding it to the light, I knew it was that of my son, and I felt not only astonished, but more gratified than I could express.”²³ Other narratives express a similar sense of awe and experiences of the numinous that were associated with the appearance of spirits of loved ones on photographs.

The use of spirit photography as evidence of the afterlife and as a palliative for grief is frequently expressed in the personal endorsements written by those who

believed in the photographers of the time, such as the following letter, written around 1922 by Mrs. E. Pickup to William Hope after a visit to his studio:

No words of mine can express my gratitude to you. ... The extra one is my dear husband, and just as I prayed he might come—an exact copy of the one I have at home and the one I liked best. Every detail is so clear and correct, even to the dimple in the chin. What could be more convincing. ... That visit will remain imprinted on my memory as one of the brightest days of my life. I am sure after such evidence as this and the way in which you carried out your work, I need never suffer the pangs of loneliness again, because I believe that God has taken him to a higher sphere. He will guide me and watch over me. ... I don't know that I could ask for anything more.²⁴

In this and other instances, spirit photographs provided genuine consolation to the bereaved and had a therapeutic effect, as tangible images that helped with the healing of grief after the death of a loved one. Such images provided not only assurance of the afterlife, but as this particular description indicates, the experience of spirit photography was also sometimes “imprinted” onto the memories of believers—an echo of the process of imprinting an image onto the photographic plate, revealing again how deeply suffused the Spiritualist understanding of their phenomena was with the techniques and discourse of photography. Considering the uncanny qualities and the contexts in which spirit photographs were produced, it is not difficult to understand why they were so widely accepted and cherished—reconciling as they did ideas about science and religion, producing technological proofs of immortality, and putting consoling images of deceased loved ones into hands of the living.

Apparitions and Miraculous Photography

According to various scholars, the story of supernatural photography ends by the 1930s, because of the exposés of fraudulent photographers, the overall demise in Spiritualism and materialization phenomena, an increase in photographic literacy, and the seeming banality of such images.²⁵ But supernatural photography did not die; it was transformed and it continues to thrive at the popular level, with new photographic practices emerging in recent decades. Although studio portraits with faces of departed loved ones are now uncommon, photographs of all sorts of alleged paranormal phenomena are now pervasive. As cameras have become widely available and increasingly affordable over the years, emphasis has shifted away from studio portraits of spirits to pictures taken by amateurs out “in the field,” who have documented supernatural and otherworldly phenomena: images of Christ, angels, other divine beings in nature, in the clouds, or on the objects of everyday life; ghosts in cemeteries and poltergeists in the home; spiritual energies in churches and at vodou ceremonies; auras, souls, demons, psychic thoughtographs, UFOs, devic nature spirits, crop circle luminosities, and mysterious orbs, among other things.²⁶ The abundance of images and associated beliefs about paranormal photography

illustrate that ideas about the ability of cameras to reveal supernatural forces continues to be an enduring and significant aspect of contemporary popular belief and culture.

Of the various vernacular traditions that emphasize photographic documentation of the supernatural, perhaps the most widespread today involves the use of cameras at Marian apparition sites by the Roman Catholic faithful to create miraculous photographic images. In the 1980s when I first observed and documented the use of cameras to record miraculous phenomena at the Bayside apparition site in Flushing Meadows–Corona Park in the borough of Queens, New York City, I initially assumed the practice was idiosyncratic, or a local, emergent Catholic folk tradition. Today, twenty-five years later, not only do local traditions of miracle photography seem to exist at the majority of active Marian apparition sites, but as Paolo Apolito and William A. Christian, Jr., have observed, this practice is now an established feature of an international Catholic visionary culture, with thousands of miracle photographs reprinted and circulated globally.²⁷

Like similar practices at other Marian apparition sites, the use of photography is central to the religious experiences of many of the devotees of the Bayside shrine. Referred to as “miracle photos” or “Polaroids from Heaven,” the photographic images produced are regarded as divine communications offering insights of prophetic and personal relevance, with some of the photos believed to contain allegorical and apocalyptic symbols that reveal the redemptive role of the Virgin Mary in the last days. Like Marianists throughout the world, Baysiders have incorporated visual technologies into their devotional practices and sanctified the image-making and apparitional qualities of photography. As a technological innovation on previous Catholic traditions of miraculous and revelatory images, miracle photography offers insights into the dynamic nature of religious traditions, and the popular desire for direct religious experiences and tangible manifestations of the divine.²⁸

The Bayside phenomenon began 1968, the day that Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated, when Mrs. Veronica Lueken, a homemaker and mother of five children from Queens, New York, experienced a perfume of roses in her car as she prayed for the dying New York senator. Then, on 7 April 1970, the Virgin Mary appeared to Lueken in her home, instructing her to establish a shrine on the grounds of the Saint Robert Bellarmine Church in Bayside, New York, and promising to make a personal appearance if rosary vigils were held there (Figure 8). Beginning in summer 1970, vigils were held at the Bayside shrine. Lueken transmitted several hundred missives until her death on 3 August 1995. She claimed that she repeated the Virgin Mary’s messages word-for-word (like a “voice-box”), although she often would add her own descriptions of what she saw in her visions. In 1975 the apparition site was moved from Bayside to Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, because of the objections of the residents around Saint Robert Bellarmine Church to the Saturday night vigils. Despite the new location, the visions are still referred to as the “Bayside apparitions,” and Lueken’s followers continue to call themselves “Baysiders” (Figure 9).

The Bayside apparitions address a litany of subjects, but the most prominent are the evils of contemporary society, corruption within the Catholic Church and the Vatican, the urgent need for worldwide atonement, and especially, the approach of an



Figure 8 Veronica Lueken, the “seer of Bayside (New York),” in ecstasy, 10 February 1975, with “miraculous shafts of light” flowing to her head, believed to illustrate the way the Virgin Mary communicates messages and graces to Lueken. Photograph from a newsletter published by Saint Paul’s Guild, Graniteville, Vermont.



Figure 9 Bayside Holy Hour, 26 November 1978, showing the Virgin Mary appearing in the sky above the apparition site at Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, New York. Photograph courtesy of Apostles of Our Lady, Inc., Lansing, Michigan.

apocalyptic scenario. The apparitions assert that “a worldwide Warning, Miracle, and fiery Chastisement in the form of a ‘Ball of Redemption’—a comet which will strike the earth, and along with World War III and other disasters, will remove three-quarters of mankind—are very near at hand.”²⁹ The signs of the end are everywhere, according to the apparitions: nuclear weapons, natural disasters, famine, AIDS, pornography, communism, rampant murder, abortion, drug abuse, and terrorism, among other things. The coming worldwide cataclysm, referred to as the “Great Chastisement,” may be averted through personal penance, prayer, and a return to traditional Catholic teachings.

Although the Bayside apparitions have certain idiosyncratic elements, they also have clear antecedents in previous Marian prophecies, particularly the apparitions at Fatima (in 1917), and the ecclesiastically unsanctioned visions at San Sebastian de Garabandal, Spain (1960–1965); San Damiano, Italy (1964–1981); and Necedah, Wisconsin (during the 1950s).³⁰ In these apparitions, the Virgin Mary warns of imminent divine chastisements to be unleashed because people are so sinful and have rejected God. The Bayside apparitions, possibly the most apocalyptic of Marian visitations, represent an intensification of the eschatological and conspiratorial themes of this modern Marian worldview, with Mary appearing in the roles of intercessor and nurturing mother, intervening on behalf of her children to rescue them from the apocalyptic punishments of an angry God.³¹ Like the messages delivered at other Marian apparition sites, the Bayside communications express an “avertive” or “conditional” apocalypticism, asserting that doomsday is at hand but may be forestalled if human beings behave in ways ordained by God. For Baysiders, Lueken’s visions and the practice of miraculous photography reveal the divinely prescribed means to avoid imminent worldly catastrophe.

Baysiders are explicitly encouraged to use photographic technology to document the supernatural occurrences at the apparition site, and a booklet distributed by the shrine organization states that “in view of the fact that the [Book of] Apocalypse itself makes extensive use of symbols, Heaven seems to be using the same method by communicating with symbols in the miraculous pictures” (Figure 10).³² According to the shrine’s literature, the Virgin Mary has directed Baysiders to use “Polaroid or other self-developing cameras, since these pictures develop on the spot and therefore eliminate later accusations of tampering with the negatives.”³³ On the occasions when I was present at the apparition site, I observed Baysiders taking photographs throughout three-hour evening vigils, although most began taking pictures once Mrs. Lueken entered a trance state of divine ecstasy (Figure 11). As she described the approach of Jesus and Mary in the heavens, Baysiders fervently snapped photographs of the night sky and the shrine. The sound of clicking and fluttering camera shutters and then the whirl-buzz of film being ejected from hundreds of Polaroid cameras could be heard all over the apparition site. Once the sheets of Polaroid film are dispensed from the cameras, images begin forming almost immediately, and the photos are completely developed within sixty seconds, as the photographers and other anxious Baysiders look on. The symbols and figures manifested on the photos include streaks and swirls of light; images representing Mary, Jesus, various saints, angels, and demons; the “red bear of communism”; the “Fireball of Redemption”;



Figure 10 Photograph believed by some Baysiders to depict “Exterminatus,” an apocalyptic angel of death, revealed in photographic emulsion as a skull-faced figure on horseback brandishing a sickle who will soon take those who are not in a state of grace, ca. 1977–1979. Photograph courtesy of Apostles of Our Lady, Inc., Lansing, Michigan.

“Exterminatus”—an apocalyptic angel of death (see Figure 10). Dotted lines and beads of light appear in many of the photos; these are said to be the Baysiders’ rosary prayers ascending to heaven. Some Baysiders wrap rosary beads around their cameras, or tape rose petals believed to have miraculous powers to the sides of the cameras in order to enhance the possibility of taking a miracle photo. These rose petals are said to have been blessed by Jesus and Mary during previous apparitions at the site. Several individuals I spoke with also told me that they had their cameras blessed by a priest.

Assorted Internet sites, publications, videocassettes, and DVDs contain reproductions of some of the more famous miracle photos, which Baysiders often show to the public during lectures and audiovisual presentations. Non-Baysiders have difficulty seeing the miraculous imagery in the photos and may laugh at the



Figure 11 Veronica Lueken in trance, ca. 1975. The streaks of light are believed to be miraculous. Photograph from a newsletter published by St. Paul's Guild, Graniteville, Vermont.

pictures, but many Baysiders believe that the photos defy all scientific analysis, that they are proof of the miraculous nature of Lueken's visions. Rationalistic explanations attribute the imagery on the photos to accidental double exposures, long hand-held exposures, damaged film, dust, moisture, lens flare, camera straps, fingers on the lens, and the fact that Baysiders often take the photos at night, often without a flash. This results in a slower shutter speed, thus exposing the Polaroid film to the various light sources on the apparition grounds and creating unusual photographic imagery. For the skeptical, the Baysiders' misunderstanding of photography combined with the psychological process of pareidolia has resulted in the sacralization of the Polaroid process.³⁴ Baysiders confidently deny these rationalistic explanations and openly discuss their own views about how the photos are miraculously created. One explanation that I often heard was that the Holy Spirit enters the camera and "directs" the content and symbolism of the photos. Other explanations are that the "Hand of God" creates the images, or that Mary, Jesus, the saints, and previous visionaries actually draw the images inside the camera. By whatever means the photos are created, they are considered by Baysiders to be "graces" bestowed for private revelation. As one Baysider put it, "Our Lady gives us the miracles on the photos. These are her gifts to us."

Although many of the Baysiders' photographs document the presence of Mary, Jesus, and the saints at the apparition site, others are believed to predict apocalypse, determine the will of God, or reveal information about future or present events, and thus are a form of divination. Assorted publications and Web sites provide a guide to

the main symbols that appear on the Polaroids, similar to a divinatory chart, giving Baysiders a basis for deciphering the miracle photos. The types of symbols are divided into four categories: numbers, letters of the alphabet, concrete symbols, and colors. For instance, the number 2 symbolizes a man or woman; the number 3 means warning; 4 means “evil man” (or woman); 5 and 6 represent “principle demons released from hell” that are now on earth; 7 symbolizes Christ; 8 is the Eucharist or priesthood; the letter *M* means Mary; *W* is for worldwide warning. The Greek letters *psi* [ψ] and *omega* [Ω] indicate that the end of the world is at hand. Concrete symbols include demon’s heads, rats, and snakes (often in the form of cobras), which represent the forces of hell, and colors: blue shows the appearance of Virgin Mary; pink, Jesus Christ; green, Saint Michael; and purple means suffering or sorrow.³⁵ As was the case with Spiritualist photography, there is a distinctive iconographic symbolism and visual language that is familiar to Baysiders, and as soon as the Polaroids are emitted from their cameras, they are scrutinized for recognizable signs of supernatural communication and presence. The forms and shapes that the Spiritualists interpreted as ectoplasmic materializations and the etheric emanations of the good dead are viewed by Baysiders as arcs of divine light, the radiance of saints, or apocalyptic fireballs of destruction. Yet Catholic miracle photography may reflect the influences and traditions of earlier spirit photography, as the glowing and diaphanous figures wrapped in veils, and the strange blurs and bursts of light in spirit photos seem to be echoed in the Baysiders’ images of ascending prayers and streaking fireballs and divine beings cloaked in transparent auras. But, unlike the conventionally black-and-white photos of the Spiritualists, the color Polaroids of the Baysiders are saturated with an added spectrum of interpretive possibility.

Some of the well-known Bayside photos are believed to have determinate symbolism and to predict specific events (such as the “Jacinta 1972” photo that is said to contain the exact date and hour of the coming Chastisement), but the meanings of many photos are formulated in situational context at the apparition site. The symbolism on the photos is undecipherable to non-Baysiders, and sometimes the meaning of the cryptic symbols is not completely apparent even to Baysiders themselves. After I took a Polaroid photo at the apparition site, for instance, various people at the site offered somewhat general interpretations of its meaning. One person stated that the scrawls on the side of the photo represented the Baysiders’ rosary prayers, repeated at the apparition site, ascending to heaven. But this individual was unable to decipher the other imagery on the photograph. Later, another Baysider confidently deciphered various images on the photo. This person had previously asked me about my religious background and knew that I was not a Baysider and that I did not necessarily believe in miraculous photography. He proceeded to identify various symbols in the photo, such as the Baysiders’ rosary prayers ascending to heaven, as well as a symbol of the Freemasons, identified as enemies of the Church, and a green streak representing Saint Michael. The photo indicated that evil forces were battling for my soul and that Saint Michael could protect me. After explaining this imagery, he discussed the Bayside apparitions at length, his own initial doubts about them, and Veronica Lueken’s miraculous abilities. He also said that he did not understand some symbolism in the photo, but

that Veronica would be able to tell me what it meant. He advised me to examine the photo further and contemplate its meaning. Like a religious Rorschach test, the ambiguous imagery on miracle photos allows for a variety of attributed meanings and discussions which reflect both the theology of the shrine and the dominating concerns of individuals at the apparition site.

Although some photographs are diagnostic in nature and provide information about one's current spiritual state, others are predictive and reveal information about the fate of the world. On another visit to the apparition site, during an afternoon vigil, I noticed that many people were taking photos of the sky. I decided to try this and took several pictures of the sun with a Polaroid SX-70 camera. My Polaroids contained an image of a white orb surrounded by a blackened sky (Figure 12). People began gathering around me and attempted to interpret the photos. One person exclaimed loudly, "It's the Fireball—the Fireball of Redemption!" The photos were



Figure 12 The sun in the afternoon at the Bayside apparition site (Flushing Meadows–Corona Park, New York). Baysiders interpreted this photograph, taken with a Polaroid SX-70 camera, as a miracle image of an apocalyptic “Fireball of Redemption,” surrounded by a darkened sky representing the “spiritual darkness of America.” Photograph © Daniel Wojcik.

passed around and scrutinized. I was temporarily treated as if I, or perhaps my camera, had special divinatory powers; and several people waited for me to take more photos, which I did. In this instance, photo-divination reaffirmed Mrs. Lueken's predictions of imminent worldly destruction by a divinely sent comet, provided a means to discuss the imminence of future disasters, and momentarily afforded me a certain degree of social status. Although the predictive and diagnostic images on miracle photos are not necessarily interpreted as explicit prescriptions for behavior, the imagery may motivate people to pray, proselytize, or engage in other activities believed to be spiritually efficacious. Miracle photography thus is a means of spiritual instruction that reinforces the messages of the Bayside apparitions, with the photographic process used as a technology of prophecy that provides the lens through which God's plan is unveiled.

Occasionally Baysiders take photographs believed to contain images of dead loved ones, like Spiritualist photographs, such as the photo one Baysider told me had revealed an image of his deceased wife in heaven, which ultimately cured him of a prolonged depression that occurred after her death. Yet unlike spirit photography which emphasized this sort of individual eschatology (the existence of an afterlife, the progress of the soul, communication with the departed), most miraculous photography among Baysiders and devotees at other apparition sites often is focused on cosmic eschatology—the destiny of the world, a final apocalyptic battle, the fate of humanity, the creation of a millennial age. However, for Spiritualists and Marianists alike, photography exposes endings and discloses otherworldly presence, mediating the present moment with the future and the afterlife. Miraculous or Spiritualist, supernatural photography reveals issues of ultimate concern, whether the fate of the soul or the fate of the world, personal loss or larger societal crises, uncertainties regarding human mortality or fears of impending worldly destruction.

Like the Spiritualists, the Baysiders and the Catholic faithful at other apparition sites have ritualized the revelatory qualities of photography. The Polaroid process in particular exemplifies the apparitional aspects of photography, as images appear to materialize out of thin air, instantaneously, and seemingly of their own accord. Since the introduction of the Land Camera in 1948, Polaroid photography frequently has been referred to by commentators and in the popular press as a “magical” process.³⁶ The invention of the affordable Polaroid SX-70 camera put this process into the hands of the general populace in 1972. References to the magical qualities of Polaroid photography evoke dual meanings of the term *magic*, as a simulation of a supernatural effect and the invocation and use of supernatural power or presence through ritual techniques. The magical and apparitional quality of Polaroid photography is conveyed by Jean Baudrillard's description of the process:

The ecstasy of the Polaroid is ... to hold the object and its image almost simultaneously as if the conception of light of ancient physics or metaphysics, in which each object was thought to secrete doubles or negatives of itself that we pick up with our eyes, has become a reality. It is a dream. It is the optical materialization of a magical process. The Polaroid photo is a sort of ecstatic membrane that has come away from the real object.³⁷

Unlike other images (such as drawings and paintings), photographs appear to contain an essence of the original object, and Polaroids in particular are imbued with an aura of authenticity because of their instant appearance. As Roland Barthes observes, “Photography never lies: or rather, it can lie as to the meaning of the thing, being by nature *tendentious*, never as to its existence. ... Every photograph is a certificate of presence.”³⁸ Miraculous photography, for Baysiders and other Catholic practitioners, has emerged as a folk devotion that venerates the authority of photographic images as authentication of supernatural presence. The filmic membranes released from their cameras are regarded as documentation of an intensely felt, numinous realm. As tangible miracles, the photographs affirm the beliefs of devotees and prove that God is active in their lives. Similar to the Virgin Mary’s role of mediatrix between heaven and humanity, the camera is a mediator between the sacred and its visible manifestation.

Roman Catholic folk piety and Marian devotion in particular traditionally have emphasized the importance of sacred images, holy objects, and miraculous manifestations, and accepted the changing nature of iconography.³⁹ While the shroud of Turin is the most famous miraculous image in Catholicism, other legendary images include Veronica’s veil and the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe that appeared on Juan Diego’s cloak (for more about the Guadalupe image, see Roberto Lint Sagarena’s article in this issue). These objects are regarded as “true images” not made by human hands, but divinely created and believed to have been imprinted by emanations of divine energy or divine light. The shroud of Turin, for example, is believed by some to have been created by a luminous glow radiating from Christ’s body or by a burst of divine power at the moment of the Resurrection. Descriptions of the creation of such images suggest the features of photographs, as emanations and luminous imprints, and like these previous divine images, miraculous photographs also appear free from human influences. Polaroid photography, as an image-making system with seemingly incarnational qualities, is compatible with this tradition of miraculous images, and its use by believers constitutes a creative reworking of the tradition at the popular level. At Marian apparition sites throughout the world, the supernatural is believed to participate in the image-making process, reproducing proofs of itself through the technological medium of photography.

Within Roman Catholicism, the relationship of the sacred to the material world is expressed through the concept of sacramentality, which asserts that the divine may be manifested in all things, that “the invisible and spiritual God is present through the visible and the material, and that these are in turn made holy by that presence.”⁴⁰ As a vernacular expression of this sacramental view of the world, miraculous photography exemplifies the emphasis on hierophanies, the numinous manifestation of the sacred, which is central to much popular religious belief and to folk Catholicism in particular.⁴¹ Miracle photography, as a means of materializing the sacred and engaging the presence of God in one’s life, has become a folk sacrament believed to bestow graces from heaven and reveal the divine in everyday life. The use of cameras in a sacramental manner transforms the act of photography into religious ritual, offering direct encounters with the sacra, those religious mysteries revealed in a

liminal state.⁴² In the ritual context of the apparition site, the camera makes visible the divine signs, prophetic messages, and spiritual knowledge held to be sacred. Comparable to the liminality of the apparition site, as a threshold where heaven and earth converge, the camera becomes a technology of liminality, a portal between the supernatural and natural. Not only does the camera capture a numinous reality, but the Polaroid film also is infused with sacrality and the inherently invisible is rendered tangible, providing a means of instantaneous participation in the miraculous. Unlike examples of paranormal photography that are idiosyncratic or accidental documents of the supernatural taken by one individual, miraculous photography at Marian apparition sites involves communities of believers, often bonded by a sense of *communitas*, who deliberately seek to document supernatural phenomena in a sacred context. The faithful become “photographic seers” and are able to capture what artists and sculptors throughout history have attempted to depict visually—the interaction of a spiritual, immaterial power with the material world, the incarnation of sacred in matter. In this way miraculous photography fulfills an essential function of religion: it makes the invisibility of the sacred and religious ideas visible and tangible, and allows them to be experienced physically in a specific context.

Yet as Paolo Apolito observes in his provocative analyses of contemporary Catholic visionary culture, the widespread use of photographic technologies at apparition sites may represent a significant change in the meaning of believers’ relations with the divine. With photography, Apolito asserts, the ancient tradition of precaution in approaching the supernatural has been replaced by easy technical attempts to capture and possess the sacred; photographers at apparition sites, like *paparazzi*, invade supernatural realms that were once private or at least difficult to access, forcing divine beings to appear on film, and creating images of the sacred for enjoyment, spectacle, and devotion.⁴³ Although recognizing the appeal of miraculous photography, Apolito says that the sacralizing use of cameras runs the risk of making supernatural encounters banal and weakens the authentic visionary experience, yet he also notes that photographic technology may allow for the democratization of the supernatural, a renewal of charisma, and a resulting “reenchantment of the world.”⁴⁴

In response to concerns that photographic technology may dilute the power of the sacred, reproducing and reducing the divine to banal simulacra, from the emic perspective of believers at apparition sites, photography expands the presence of the sacred, produces proofs of divine blessing and concern, and is a meaningful way that millions of the faithful experience God in the age of mechanical reproduction.⁴⁵ Contrary to Walter Benjamin’s conclusion that the cult value of the aura fades with the photographic reproduction of images,⁴⁶ miracle photography increases the aura of the sacred by replicating its signs and spreading its emanations. Similar perhaps to the reproduction of sacred power associated with saints’ relics, photography allows for a proliferation of transportable sacred objects which are put into albums, shared with friends, and disseminated through reprints. Like relics, miracle photos are sometimes believed to emanate spiritual power, their surfaces supernaturally inscribed and “touched” by Mary, Jesus, the saints, or the Holy Spirit. The spiritual force associated with miracle photos, like relics, also suggests the concept of sympathetic magic—that objects and images once in contact or resembling each

other continue to influence each other at a distance through a secret sympathy.⁴⁷ One Baysider, for example, took a picture of his album of miraculous photos and that picture contained miraculous beads of light, interpreted as the blessings and graces that are conveyed through the photos in his album: pictures of miracle photos produce more miracle photos, in an expanding reproduction of supernatural power.

In addition to their status as sacred objects, miraculous photographs also are sacred mementos that then become accessories to personal devotion and the recollection of past religious experiences. During a return flight after my attendance at one of the anniversary celebrations of Lueken's visions, many of the Baysiders I traveled with spent much of their time sharing photos, discussing them, and analyzing their prophetic meaning. Some had dozens of photos and had already put them into albums that were circulated among passengers on the airplane. Although religious encounters at apparition sites may be subjective and elusive, and individuals who experience the sacred often may have trouble describing their experiences or may even doubt the actuality of the experiences over time, photographic technology preserves an image of these experiences on film, providing sacred souvenirs for future reflection and discussion.

Miraculous photography among Baysiders and those at other Marian apparition sites gives expression to beliefs threatened by scientific and rational criticism, and confirms the reality of the supernatural through the active performance of a form of religiosity characterized by the faith that miracles readily occur. For believers, photographic technology is both mystified and sanctified, providing a means to engage in a discourse with heaven and bridge the gap between the sacred and profane. Like spirit photography, Catholic miraculous photography is an expression of vernacular religiosity—it is religion as it is lived, as human beings experience, understand, interpret, and practice it.⁴⁸ Although frequently devalued or ignored by scholars who tend to focus on institutional religion and official theological texts and forms, the study of vernacular religion provides essential insights into the complexity and creativity of religious expression, the ways that people seek meaning in their lives and create religious worlds, and how individuals experience and establish relationships with the sacred and supernatural, whether with the souls of departed loved ones, the Virgin Mary, God or the gods, animistic spirits, or other divine beings or forces. Based in personal experiences and situated in meaningful places, religious practices such as miraculous photography may be modified and creatively adapted to express specific needs and concerns. This dynamic, personal quality accounts for both the longevity and persistence of certain vernacular religious ideas, as well as the emergence of new beliefs and practices, whether miraculous photography, miraculous videography, or miracles on the Internet.

A number of commentators, including religious authorities, scholars, and journalists, continue to lament, mock, or condemn the practice of supernatural photography, arguing that it is irrational or inappropriate, and some have confidently predicted that it will vanish in the near future with increased education and understanding of photographic processes. These predictions about the demise of supernatural photography seem to be out of focus, considering the history and relationship between photography, supernatural beliefs, and experiences of the

sacred, and the personal and religious needs that such photographs often fulfill. Among the followers of some Marian apparition sites, the practice of taking miracle photos has come to play an even more important role in recent years since the death of the visionaries associated with these sites. Now that messages are no longer directly conveyed by the seer through apparitions, photography increasingly is emphasized as a way to communicate personally with heaven and experience the sacred at the apparition site. Beliefs about spiritual and miraculous photography have thrived for nearly a century-and-a-half and religious traditions involving photography will not only persist, but new vernacular practices will also emerge with the development of new visual technologies. The camera as we know it now and in its future manifestations will continue to function as an apparitional apparatus, providing the lens through which tangible proofs of the supernatural are revealed.

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- 1 See Rolf H. Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow: The Role of Photography in Certain Paranormal Phenomena: An Historical Survey*, trans. Timothy Bell and John Gledhill (Munich: Nazraeli Press, 1995); Tom Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny," in Patrice Petro, ed., *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995): 42–71; Andreas Fischer and Veit Loers, eds., *Im Reich der Phantome: Fotografie des Unsichtbaren* (Ostfildern-Ruit: Cantz, 1997); Martyn Jolly, *Faces of the Living Dead: The Belief in Spirit Photography* (West New York, NJ: Mark Batty Publisher, 2006).
- 2 Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000).
- 3 Joe Nickell, *Camera Clues: A Handbook for Photographic Investigation* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994).
- 4 Mark Alice Durant and Jane D. Marsching, *The Blur of the Otherworldly: Contemporary Art, Technology, and the Paranormal*, Issues in Cultural Theory 9 (Baltimore: University of Maryland Baltimore County, 2005).

- 5 Clément Chéroux et al., eds., *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 12–15.
- 6 Although Spiritualists usually date the beginning of their movement to the activities of the Fox sisters in 1848, historians have shown that the movement had multiple origins and influences, including Swedenborgism, Harmonialism, Mesmerism, Fourierism, and Methodism, among other traditions. For further discussion of the Spiritualist movement historically and in various contexts, a sampling of more recent publications include Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon, 1989); Bret E. Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997); Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003); John J. Guthrie, Jr., Phillip Charles Lucas, and Gary Monroe, *Cassadaga: The South's Oldest Spiritualist Community* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000); Stan McMullen, *Anatomy of a Seance: A History of Spirit Communication in Central Canada* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004); Alex Owen, *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004 [1989]); Eric Leigh Schmidt, *Hearing Things: Religion, Illusion, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); and Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- 7 Ann Braude in *Radical Spirits* argues that Spiritualism challenged gender and power relations and served as a means of progressive social reform; in *The Darkened Room*, Alex Owen explores similar issues, but says that the movement was not entirely empowering for women, and that it often trapped them within existing essentialist definitions of femininity. Robert S. Cox in *Body and Soul* tends to agree with Owen and examines some of the internal tensions and conservative aspects of the movement, as well as issues of race and diversity within the broader context of the history of emotions.
- 8 Sconce, *Haunted Media*, 28.
- 9 The first individual to take up ghost photography and make a career out of it was William H. Mumler (1832–1884) of Boston whose photographs caused a sensation, and he soon opened a studio that was visited by prominent people from around the country. Of his many spirit photographs, his best-known portrait is of Mary Todd Lincoln, who visited Mumler after her husband Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in 1865; in the photo a spirit image of Lincoln appears behind her with its hands placed on her shoulders.
- 10 Jolly, *Faces of the Living Dead*, 15.
- 11 Jay Ruby, "Portraying the Dead," *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 19, no. 1 (1988–1989): 16–17; Jay Ruby, *Secure the Shadow: Death and Photography in America* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).
- 12 Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow*, 107; Cyril Permutt, *Photographing the Spirit World: Images from Beyond the Spectrum* (1983; repr., Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, England: The Aquarian Press, 1988), 88–113.
- 13 Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Case for Spirit Photography* (1922; repr., New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923).

- 14 For accounts of gullibility, fraud, and the techniques of photographic manipulation, see Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow*, 126–43. A representative account of the belief in spirit photographs is illustrated in the case of Edward Wyllie of Los Angeles, who was exposed as a fraud on several occasions, yet one individual, A. K. Venning, who believed, stated, “In fact, even if Mr. Wyllie should proclaim himself a fraud and show how it was all done, I should not believe him, because I know that I have received things through his mediumship that nobody on this side of the veil knows anything about but myself. The best tests I have received have always been too private for publication.” (cited in Fred Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs: The Extraordinary Story of Spirit Photography* [New York: Harmony Books, 1978], 29).
- 15 Andrew Glendinning, ed., *The Veil Lifted: Modern Developments of Spirit Photography* (London: Whittaker, 1894); Gunning, “Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations.”
- 16 Glendinning, *Veil Lifted*, 159.
- 17 Gunning, “Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations,” 43–45.
- 18 As Freud writes of the uncanny, “many people experience the feeling in the highest degree in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts”; Sigmund Freud, “The Uncanny,” trans. James Strachey, *Pelican Freud Library* 14, pp. 335–76, trans. James Strachey (1919; repr., Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), 335–76, at 364.
- 19 Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 3, 2–3.
- 20 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1981), 6.
- 21 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 9.
- 22 Gillian Bennett, *Traditions of Belief* (London: Penguin, 1987), 50–81.
- 23 Miller cited in Gettings, *Ghosts in Photographs*, 95.
- 24 Doyle, *The Case for Spirit Photography*, 106.
- 25 Chéroux et al., eds., *The Perfect Medium*; Krauss, *Beyond Light and Shadow*, 13.
- 26 Permutt, *Photographing the Spirit World*; Robert Rickard and Richard Kelly, *Photographs of the Unknown* (London: New English Library, 1980); Melita Denning and Osborne Phillips, *Voudoun Fire: The Living Reality of Mystical Religion* (St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn Publications, 1979); Leonore Sweet, *How to Photograph the Paranormal* (Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads Publishing, 2005).
- 27 For discussions of Catholic visionary culture and the uses of photography, see Paolo Apolito, *Apparitions of the Madonna at Oliveto Citra: Local Visions and Cosmic Drama*, trans. William A. Christian, Jr. (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998), 15–16, 204–15; Paolo Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna: Religious Visionary Experiences on the Web*, trans. Anthony Shugar (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 101–21; William A. Christian, Jr., “Believers and Seers: The Expansion of an International Visionary Culture,” in D. Albera, A. Blok, C. Bromberger, eds., *L’anthropologie de la Méditerranée* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose/Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l’homme [collection L’atelier méditerranéen], 2001), 407–14. See also the work of Lisa Bitel (in this volume), and Peter Jan Margry, “La terra di nessuno dei devoti: Devozioni informali tra localismo e transnazionalismo nell’ Europa contemporanea,” *Sanctorum: Revista dell’associazione Italiana per lo studio della santità, dei culti e dell’agiografia* 1 (2004): 153–78.

- 28 Portions of this discussion of the Baysiders' use of photography appeared in another form in Daniel Wojcik, "'Polaroids from Heaven': Photography, Folk Religion, and the Miraculous Image Tradition at a Marian Apparition Site," *Journal of American Folklore* 109 (1996): 129–48. For a history of the Bayside apparitions and discussion of the apocalyptic and traditionalist themes associated with the shrine, see Michael W. Cuneo, *The Smoke of Satan: Conservative and Traditionalist Dissent in Contemporary American Catholicism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 152–77, and Daniel Wojcik, *The End of the World As We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), 60–96.
- 29 *Our Lady of the Roses, Mary, Help of Mothers: An Introductory Booklet on the Apparitions of Bayside* (Bayside, NY: Our Lady of the Roses, Mary, Help of Mothers Shrine, n.d.), i.
- 30 Like the vast majority of Marian apparitions, the Bayside apparitions have not been approved by the Catholic Church. After an investigation in 1973 and again in 1986, the Diocese of Brooklyn declared that it had no basis for belief that Veronica Lueken had seen the Virgin Mary, and it issued a statement directing the faithful to "refrain from participating in the 'vigils' and from disseminating any propaganda related to the 'Bayside apparitions'"; Bishop Francis Mugavero, "Declaration Concerning the 'Bayside Movement,'" in Rev. James J. LeBar, ed., *Cults, Sects, and the New Age* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1989), 209–11.
- 31 For further discussion of the apocalyptic themes of Marian apparitions, see Apolito, *Apparitions of the Madonna at Oliveto Citra*, 136–46, and Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna*, 79–99; William A. Christian, Jr., "Religious Apparitions and the Cold War in Southern Europe," in Eric R. Wolf, ed., *Religion, Power and Protest in Local Communities: The Northern Shore of the Mediterranean* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1981), 239–66; William A. Christian, Jr., *Visionaries: The Spanish Republic and the Reign of Christ* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996); Élisabeth Claverie, *Les guerres de la vierge: une anthropologie des apparitions* (Paris: Gallimard, 2003); Thomas A. Kselman and Steven Avella, "Marian Piety and the Cold War in the United States," *The Catholic Historical Review* 72 (July 1986): 403–24; Ann Matter, "Apparitions of the Virgin Mary in the Late 20th Century," *Religion* 31, no. 2 (2001): 125–53; and Sandra L. Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 245–70.
- 32 *Our Lady of the Roses, Mary, Help of Mothers: An Introductory Booklet on the Apparitions of Bayside*, 9.
- 33 *Our Lady of the Roses, Mary, Help of Mothers: A Book about the Heavenly Apparitions to Veronica Lueken at Bayside, New York* (1981; repr., Lansing, MI: Apostles of Our Lady, Inc., 1986), 22.
- 34 Pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon in which an individual identifies something recognizable and significant in an otherwise vague and arbitrary stimulus (an image, a sound); examples include the "man in the moon," the face of Jesus seen in the burn marks of a tortilla, or the Virgin Mary's face on a grilled cheese sandwich.
- 35 *Our Lady of the Roses, Mary, Help of Mothers: A Book about the Heavenly Apparitions to Veronica Lueken at Bayside, New York*, 22.
- 36 The cover of the issue of *Life* magazine that introduced Edwin H. Land's Polaroid SX-70 camera to the public, for instance, is entitled, "A Genius and his Magic Camera" (27 October 1972).

- 37 Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London and New York: Verso, 1988), 37.
- 38 Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, 87.
- 39 Victor W. Turner and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 140–71.
- 40 Richard P. McBrien, “Roman Catholicism,” in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12 (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 441.
- 41 Hierophanies, according to Mircea Eliade, involve a disclosure of the transcendent through matter and represent a numinous realm of an entirely different order from the profane world; Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1959): 11–12.
- 42 For a concise discussion of the sacra and liminality in relation to ritual and rites of passage, see Victor W. Turner and Edith Turner, “Religious Celebrations,” in Victor Turner, ed., *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 201–19.
- 43 Apolito, *Apparitions of the Madonna at Oliveto Citra*, 208–9.
- 44 Apolito, *The Internet and the Madonna*, 3–13.
- 45 In his well-known discussion of simulacra, Jean Baudrillard claims that the rage of the iconoclasts was based in the realization that icons were dangerous simulacra that threatened to replace and efface the concept of God, revealing perhaps that there is no God, only captivating simulations of God; see Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of the Simulacra,” in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 255–56.
- 46 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in Hannah Arendt, ed., *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (1936; repr., New York: Schocken, 1969), 217–51.
- 47 For a classic discussion of the concept of sympathetic magic, see James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (1922; repr., London: Macmillan, 1976), 12–55.
- 48 Leonard Norman Primiano, “Vernacular Religion and the Search for a Method in Religious Folklife,” *Western Folklore* 54, no. 1 (1995): 44.