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COMPANIONS OF UNCERTAIN STATUS

Mary K. Roberts
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Abstract

Imaginary companions are conceptualized as phenomena of world construction and reconstruction, and parameters relevant to whether or not a person constructs a world with an imaginary someone are presented. Access to facts about three kinds of companions — imaginary companions of childhood, ghostly companions, and take-away apparitions — is provided using paradigm case formulations, and some "odd fellows" are discussed. Various explanations that have been given of the phenomena are reviewed and briefly critiqued.
Companions of Uncertain Status

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together.

(T. S. Eliot, 1963, p. 67)

In creating a world, a person sometimes goes beyond the bounds of the real world. His or her personal world is less restrictive than usual and includes the possibility of something non-ordinary. In each of the following examples, the person's world includes something that does not fit our usual constraints on what is real.

A young boy has several kings in his world. The kings live in back of the radiator where he can hear them arguing and chuckling together. Whenever he feels afraid, he has only to turn the valve of the radiator and they rush forth, giving him the courage to do whatever he needs to do (Wickes, 1966, p. 201).

A 63-year-old woman following the death of her husband often feels him lying beside her in bed. She is first aware of the heat of his body and then she turns to see him next to her. He says reassuring words to her, and his presence gives her great comfort (Sedman, 1966, p. 59).

A solitary sailor, seized by sickness during a storm, suddenly sees a tall man at the helm of his boat. At first he thinks that the man is a pirate, but the man assures him that he is a pilot and will guide the boat safely through the storm (Slocum, 1905, p. 39).
In the introductory section below, I will highlight some of the difficulties that such companions raise in light of our concept of the real world.

The Real World

Because everything has reality only insofar as it enters into human social practices, the real world is essentially a behavioral world. Physical objects like chairs and tables, atoms and planets, and so forth all exist as such because people have social practices and conceptual systems that involve distinguishing them from other objects and treating them accordingly.

People also distinguish "real" objects, processes, events, and states of affairs from "imaginary", "illusory", "hallucinatory", etc. ones and treat them accordingly. When a person appraises an object as being real, he or she is prepared to act in relation to that object. (Cf. "What a person takes to be real is what he is prepared to act on." [Ossorio, 1982b, p. 22]) But if a person appraises an object as being an illusion, hallucination, etc., he or she has made a judgment that it does not make sense to act in relation to that object.

Judgments about what is real and what is not are made within the limits of a person's understanding and in light of the particular norms, requirements, and social practices of the community that that person is operating within. What at one time persons take to be real they may later treat as illusory, mistaken, etc., and vice versa.
Because of the complex network of relationships and regularities that holds among objects, processes, events, and states of affairs in the real world, people may run into difficulties if they attempt to treat imaginary objects, processes, etc., in the same ways that they would treat real ones. For example, if they are acting in relation to some object that is not in fact real, it is unlikely that they will be able to bring off the interrelated sets of behaviors that go with that object.

To illustrate this notion, Ossorio (1981c) uses the example of "feeding alfalfa to an imaginary elephant" (pp. 14-15). If Wil says that there is an elephant over there, and Gil looks over and sees a table, Gil may challenge Wil's description and require that Wil back up his claim by treating the elephant in appropriate ways, e.g. by feeding him something. If Wil offers the elephant some paper and claims to be feeding him alfalfa, Gil will not accept this behavior as successfully backing up Wil's original claim. Wil's "elephant feeding" further violates the network of interrelationships that holds among states of affairs in the real world.

The logical interconnectedness of everything in the real world provides constraints on our behavior so that we cannot call something just any old thing and get away with it, and we cannot engage in just any old behavior and get away with it. Similarly in a given human game, the logical interconnections among players, elements, eligibilities, contingencies, etc. (codified in the
rules) provide constraints on our behavior. We cannot engage in just any old behavior and still be playing that game, because certain moves count as a violation of the rules.

The logical structure of the real world not only provides constraints on our behavior. It also makes our behavior possible. If there were no patterns, regularities or limits to the kinds of relationships that objects, processes, etc. could enter into, human behavior would be literally impossible. (Cf. No rules, no game.) Behavior involves distinguishing one thing from another, and what distinguishes one sort of object or process from another is the kinds of relationships it can enter into.

Accordingly, if Gil had heard some snuffling and had seen the paper disappearing from Wil's hand, Gil might have become a bit twitchy. It is unlikely that he could dismiss what he had heard and seen as merely a strange happening totally disconnected from everything else in the real world. Instead, he would take it that either he is hallucinating, or the real world is a very different place than he knows it to be.

To illustrate the significance that such an event may have in a person's world, Ossorio (1976) uses the image of a face materializing out of the wall and then receding back in (pp. 6-8). In discussing how such an experience can affect a person's whole world, he points out that seeing the face as real is like introducing a contradiction into a logical system. It changes the interrelationships within the whole system and not merely within
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an isolated part. If the face is real and I can behave in relation to it (e.g. if I can quickly reach out and touch the face before it recedes), my entire world is changed.

Depending on a person's degree of appreciation of issues of totality and logical structure, he or she will be more or less sensitive to how such a contradiction may wipe out behavior potential. At the extreme a contradiction in a logical system undermines everything because it reveals that the structure itself is unsound. (Cf. "What kind of world is this if a face can come out of the wall?") In less extreme instances, persons may continue to operate within a structure that has certain inconsistencies as long as they learn to manage these irregularities, compensate for them, etc.

Like the "Face in the wall", imaginary companions violate some of the consistency requirements of the real world. For example, an object in the real world can generally be perceived by all persons suitably placed, with appropriate differences between persons depending on their positions relative to the object. But with imaginary companions, collective perception is the exception rather than the rule (although it does occur). Likewise, in the real world objects that move away from us generally have to go somewhere, but imaginary companions need not be anywhere when they are not with us.

Because of such violations, behavioral scientists tend to dismiss imaginary companions as merely imaginary or hallucinatory,
and correspondingly to take it that behavior in relation to such companions does not really make sense. Scientific explanations that reflect this approach (reviewed in the final section below) tend not to increase our understanding of the phenomena.

In this paper, rather than emphasizing the ways in which behavior towards an imaginary companion does not make sense, the focus will be on understanding the sense that such behavior does make. The fundamental difference that an imaginary companion can make in a person's real world will be taken into account, as well as the ways in which people manage the inconsistencies that such a companion creates.

Conceptualization

In the conceptualization presented here, I use the term "imaginary companion" as a generic term for such companions, and answer four questions about them:

1. What kind of phenomena are these?
2. When is there a point in having a relationship to a companion who isn't literally real?
3. What status can individuals of this sort have in relation to a person's real world?
4. Under what conditions are such companions most likely to occur?

World + x Construction

Persons are inherently world creators. They not only construct worlds that give them behavior potential; they also
routinely reconstruct those worlds in ways that give them more behavior potential (cf. Roberts, 1985b). Such reformulation ordinarily occurs in response to a person's acquisition of new concepts and new social practices, in response to problem solving, and in response to the invention of new forms of behavior.

When a person invents a new form of behavior (e.g. a new game, art form, or conceptual-notational device), he or she may bring that invention to the larger community, demonstrate to others its viability as a social practice, and share it with them. The invention increases behavior potential for others as well as for its creator, and may also "call for far-reaching restructuring of our formulations of the world or parts or aspects of it" (Ossorio, 1982b, p. 89).

In creating a new social practice, a person creates something out of nothing. Processes in the real world can be created out of nothing in this way, but objects ordinarily cannot be. For example, ordinarily a person cannot create a companion out of thin air and expect to demonstrate its viability to others. Reality constraints on real world construction prevent us from simply making objects up.

Sometimes a person may be in the right frame of mind, however, and an imaginary companion may pop out (Athena-like) in his or her world. The creation of such a companion, like the invention of a new social practice, represents a world constructive or reconstructive achievement that may bring with it
a corresponding gain in behavior potential for its creator. In addition, the creation of the imaginary companion may call for some significant restructuring of the person's world to accommodate such a companion. At the very least the person must create a status that fits the kind of individual the new companion is.

In contrast to the invention of a new social practice, the creation of an imaginary companion is frequently not an achievement that a person can share with others. And although an imaginary companion may shake up some of its creator's notions about what is possible in the real world, it does not change our shared understanding of "the real world" in the way that, for example, a significant scientific invention does. (See Ossorio [1978a, 1981b] for a discussion of basic science in terms of the invention of new forms of behavior.)

In inventing new social practices, persons are playing by the "rules of the game" for real world construction, and their inventions are therefore eligible to count as significant achievements within that game. But in creating imaginary companions persons have gone outside the game, and hence their world construction counts differently.

Formally we may say that imaginary companions are phenomena of "world + x" construction and reconstruction. The x serves as a reminder that a person is operating outside the ordinary constraints of the real world in constructing this very specific
aspect of his or her world. For convenience I will not repeat
"world + x" throughout the paper, but the "+ x" is to be
understood when I write of imaginary companions as world
constructive and reconstructive phenomena.

Circumstances and Behavior Potential

Among the states of affairs that a person formulates as
elements of his or her real world are the circumstances that
provide that person with opportunities, limitations, and
motivations for behavior. (Cf. "A person's circumstances provide
reasons and opportunities to engage in one behavior rather than
another." [Ossorio, 1982b, p. 20]) The social practices that
there are in a person's community are included in his or her
circumstances. Without the availability of these behavior
patterns, a person would not be able to behave at all.

The particular individuals with whom a person interacts are
also included in a person's circumstances. Because so many social
practices are joint enterprises that can only be engaged in with
another person, the presence or absence of appropriate partners
and fellow participants makes a difference in which social
practices a person has the opportunity to participate in. And
because different people offer and evoke different potentials in a
person, the particular individuals in a person's world make a
difference in what potentials get actualized when a person
participates in social practices.
A person's circumstances also encompass the relationships that a person has to these individuals. Obviously the kind of relationship that exists between two people affects what possibilities they offer and evoke in each other. Depending on what relationship they stand in to each other, different potentials will come to the fore and be actualized.

States of affairs like having good fortune, wanting someone to confide in, facing an irreplaceable loss, being near death, and others are also counted among a person's circumstances. Each of these states of affairs offers a set of possibilities and limitations for behavior.

Last but not least for our purposes, imaginary companions may be classified as being included in a person's circumstances. The concept of a person's circumstances is usually a cover term for a range of ordinary real world facts like social practices, fellow participants, relationships, states of affairs, etc., but imaginary companions may be admitted as a special category. Like a person's other circumstances, an imaginary companion provides a person with reasons and opportunities for behavior.

Having placed imaginary companions among a person's circumstances, we may note that there is a point in having an imaginary companion when a person in the circumstances he or she is in has more behavior potential with that imaginary companion than without. This statement leaves open the question of whether persons' circumstances are generally adverse or generally positive.
when they have companions. It merely states that to have an imaginary companion is normally to have more behavior potential in whatever circumstances one is in. Both deficit-type explanations (e.g. "It's no wonder she feels his presence; she'd be lost without him") and enhancement-type explanations (e.g. "His radiator kings bring out the best in him") may be appropriate in accounting for imaginary companions.

The statement also involves no presumption of motivation. It does not say that persons are motivated to increase their behavior potential and therefore have imaginary companions. Rather, persons find themselves in circumstances that include individuals of this sort, and then do not choose less behavior potential rather than more. (Cf. "A person will not choose to actualize less behavior potential rather than more." [Ossorio, 1982b, p. 56])

Reality

To understand the special place an imaginary companion may have in relation to a person's circumstances and real world, we need a concept more fundamental than the notion of the real world. In Descriptive Psychology, that concept is the concept of reality. Formally reality is "the boundary condition on our possible behaviors" (Ossorio, 1978b, p. 35).

The basic reality question is simply "What can you get away with by way of behavior?" "Can you treat something as being so and carry it off successfully?" Rather than talking about a
person's behavioral possibilities by reference to the circumstances that provide persons with possibilities, we use the concept of reality to talk directly about behavioral possibilities and limitations.

If we remove imaginary companions from embeddedness in a real world and look at only certain of a person's interactions with an imaginary companion from the perspective of "Can he or she carry off the interactions?", imaginary companions may seem no different from real companions. Imaginary companions are real in the sense that they can be seen, and by some standards (or in some ways) persons can interact successfully with these companions.

But within the context of a person's real world, we cannot treat imaginary companions as simply real because they do not pass the consistency checks of the real world. Instead imaginary companions may paradigmatically be given a status of "real but not like other real objects". A person whose world includes such a status needs to learn to manage the complexities that the status creates. Because behavior towards an object that is "real but not in the way other things are real" hinges on in what ways the object is real and in what ways it is not, a person needs to be able to make and act on these distinctions. If a person is unable to do so, derision and ridicule by others may squelch the imaginary companion.

Lest this seem like a difficult or remarkable achievement, it should be noted that normal 3-5 year old children are able to do
so. For example, a child would probably not take Gil up on his challenge to treat an imaginary elephant as fully real. If Gil said "I don't see an elephant", a child might reply, "Of course not. He's only there for me." The child's remark would not be a disclaimer to the effect that the elephant is not real, but rather a statement of fact about how the elephant differs from other real things.

If a person insisted that the imaginary elephant was fully real, e.g. that there was no difference in reality status between the imaginary elephant and the kitchen table, we would say that that person was distorting reality. But is a person distorting reality if he or she distinguishes imaginary objects from ordinary real objects, and only behaves in ways that are appropriate for each kind of object? As long as a person has an ordinary degree of contact with our common reality, it may be more accurate to say that a person who behaves toward an imaginary friend has expanded his or her real world by adding an additional category of reality. (Of course this is not an option under an ideology that says that the ordinary real world is all there is.)

A person who expands his or her world in this way has a hybrid world made up primarily of ordinary real objects but with one or more non-ordinary real objects included as well. This is a fundamentally different world from the one that the majority of us operate in. To illustrate the extent of the difference, consider a person who was matter-of-fact about seeing a face pop out of the
wall. That person's world would already have to be very different from the world we know. Likewise a world in which an imaginary companion can pop in on a person is considerably less restrictive than the homebound, tables-chairs-and-apples world with which most of us are familiar.

Without the distinction between reality and the real world, we would be limited to the tables-chairs-and-apples world and have to explain away imaginary companion phenomena. But with the pragmatic notion of reality, we are able to account for the kind of place that an imaginary companion may have in relation to the real world.

The distinction between reality and the real world is also useful in understanding a set of developmental considerations that make the appearance of imaginary companions more likely in early childhood. A young child initially has a diversified reality rather than a single, coherent real world. In other words, a child has lots of things that are real to him or her, i.e. lots of things that he or she is prepared to act on, but these do not always fit together in the way they have to fit for a real world. A part of the job of parents is to put pressure on the child's reality constructions to conform to the requirements for a single, public real world.

The child's reality, however, may be more extensive or diverse than can be fitted into a single real world. Children acquire the ingredients for a real world in a piecemeal way, so
that when they go to put these ingredients together into a world, sometimes there are pieces left over, parts that do not fit into the structure of a real world. Just as with the pyramid that Ossorio (1986) takes apart to illustrate the Humpty-Dumpty problem, there may be too many pieces to fit together into a single meaningful whole.

If this is the case, when parents begin to impose the logical restrictions called for by the real world, children may simply throw out the non-fitting parts so that the reality constructions that are left hang together with the kind of consistency that the real world (and the parents) require. Under some conditions, however, parents are not completely successful at holding children to real world requirements for coherence and logical consistency. Children, instead of throwing out those ingredients that are real for them but do not fit in the parental world, may recreate some non-fitting parts in the form of imaginary companions.

Children are not the only people who create something imaginary when they have some reality "left over" that does not fit within the logical structure of a world. Mathematicians have done this, too. In solving quadratic equations such as $x^2 + 1 = 0$, mathematicians proceed as if there were a number $i$ whose square is $-1$. Such numbers do not fit within the real number system because the squares of both positive and negative real numbers are positive, and so these numbers were once given the status of "imaginary". But because it makes sense to act on
imaginary numbers (and electrical engineers routinely do so), imaginary numbers are now given the status of "real but not like other real numbers".

Parameters for World + x Construction

A variety of facts about a person's life situation (being-in-the-world) is relevant to the appearance, maintenance, and disappearance of imaginary companions. In order to deal with these facts in an organized and systematic way, a parametric analysis will be presented. (This conceptual-notational device, and also the paradigm case formulation to be used below, are discussed systematically by Ossorio [1981a].) This parametric analysis is not set forth as the only analysis that could be given. But it is set forth as being adequate in a way that no other formulation has been to date for systematizing the range of facts relevant to whether or not a person constructs a world with an imaginary companion.

Each of the parameters specifies one of the ways in which one person's life situation can be the same as or different from another person's with respect to the potentiality for having an imaginary companion. The parameters are:

1. Extent to which real world requirements for the systematic connectedness of everything press upon a person

2. Gain in behavior potential that comes from having a relationship to an imaginary companion
3. Degree to which circumstances facilitate the creation and maintenance of a companion

Just as a visible color may be singled out from the range of colors by specifying values for the parameters of brightness, hue, and saturation, particular instances of being-in-the-world-with-an-imaginary-companion (or without one) may be differentiated by designating values for each of the parameters above. For example, in sketching in values for the parameters in the case of the young boy whose world included radiator kings, we may note that:

1. The relative incompleteness of a young child's world allows for some leeway when it comes to the coherence requirement. Moreover, these particular companions involve minimal violation of the consistency requirement because they are so closely associated with ordinary physical objects and processes.

2. The faith-enhancing nature of the companions frees the boy to do as well as he can, and enables him to succeed when he might not otherwise if his self-confidence were not increased in this way.

3. The presence of the old-fashioned steam radiator, as well as exposure to tales of genies and their powers, may have facilitated the creation of these companions. Parental prohibitions over turning the radiator valves may have been contributory, too.
The parametric analysis also provides a way of dealing differentially with different kinds of conditions under which imaginary companions may appear. For example, the values of the parameters for cases of potential world + x construction by young children may be specified (more or less completely), and differentiated from the values for cases of potential world + x construction by older children, bereaved persons, explorers, etc.

Another possible use of the parametric analysis is to clarify patterns and regularities relevant to companion appearance that occur across life situation. These patterns may be expressed as contingencies connecting parametric values. As an example, note that the closer a person's circumstances come to making life impossible, the greater the behavior potential that an imaginary companion is likely to offer that person.

Finally the question posed above, "When are imaginary companions most likely to occur?" may be answered using the parametric analysis. Companions occur when the balance of the parametric values is in a favorable direction, and they are most likely to occur when the balance is in an extremely favorable direction. That is, when the real world requirements for the interrelatedness of everything are unusually relaxed or temporarily lifted; when a person's gain in behavior potential from a relation to an imaginary companion is maximal; and when circumstances are optimally conducive to companion formation.
In the sections below, the range of applicability of the parametric analysis will be explored further in understanding a variety of cases of world construction. Cases where imaginary companions appear in the worlds of children, bereaved persons, and the dying will be examined in turn.

Imaginary Companions of Childhood

A variety of imaginative activities of children have been included in studies of imaginary companions. As a Paradigm Case, I will take the case of an imaginary person who appears to a young child, can be seen and heard by the child, is interacted with openly over a period of time, and is created by the child with no external supports (with due respect to Calvin and Hobbes). The origination, status, significance, forms and elaborations, relative freedom from reality constraints, life span and departure of such a companion will be discussed below. In addition, characteristics of children who have imaginary companions will be discussed briefly.

In taking this approach, I will discuss the literature thematically rather than chronologically. Readers interested in a chronological overview of the literature are referred to the appendixes. Appendix A lists the major quantitative studies on imaginary companions, and Appendix B presents the major case studies.
There seems to be general agreement that the first appearance of an imaginary companion is "sudden" and "unexpected" (Hurlock & Burstein, 1932, p. 385; Svendsen, 1934, p. 993). It is not a matter of a child deciding to create a companion. Rather, as one child put it, imaginary companions "come... just naturally" (Vostrovsky, 1895, p. 396).

Observational studies of children place the first appearance of imaginary companions between 2½-3½ years of age (Ames & Learned, 1946, p. 160), with 93% of companions appearing before age 4 (Svendsen, 1934, p. 993). Retrospective studies with adults, however, indicate a much later time of onset. Among girls, the most frequently reported time is between the ages of 5 and 7, and for boys, the most frequently reported time is after the age of 10 (Hurlock & Burstein, 1932, p. 388). Nagera (1969), although attributing the Hurlock and Burstein late onset times primarily to infantile amnesia, also notes that in his own direct observations of children, ages 9½-10 seem to be a second peak time for imaginary companions (p. 167).

The range of late onset cases may be treated as a transformation of the Paradigm Case, with the reminder that the companion of an older child can be expected to be born of a different balance of the parametric values than a younger child's companion. The reason is that by the time a child is 5 to 7 years old, we expect that child to have enough of a world so that the
usual real world requirements would prevent the emergence of a companion. The companion would need to offer an unusually good opportunity, or life would have to be relatively intolerable, to allow an older child to accept an imaginary companion.

Status

Once an imaginary companion has appeared in a young child's world, the child begins to exploit the new behavior potential that comes from having that relationship. The child may engage in animated conversations with his or her companion, or they may enter into active physical play together. This is not a matter of the child fantasizing in his head. Rather, a child "carries out the same activities and plays the same games as with a real playmate" (Bender & Vogel, 1941, p. 64).

Although having an imaginary playmate brings the child an increase in status and behavior potential, the relationship is not always positive. Children experience a range of emotions in relation to their companions. For example, one child "let his head hang as if in shame" when his companion reproached him (Sperling, 1954, p. 253); another cried out "as if in great fear and pain" when her companion threw rocks at her (Swett, 1910, p. 107). Another was "horrified and cried" when his sister told him that his companion had died (Ames & Learned, 1946, p. 153).

In the Paradigm Case, the companion is treated as occupying physical space. Svendsen (1934) found that 83% of companions "were conceived of as occupying space" (p. 995), and Manosevitz et
al. (1973), based on parental report, found that 47% of companions needed space of their own (e.g. a place at the table, a seat in the car, or room in the child's bed). In addition, the companion may be seen and heard by the child.

The choice of a Paradigm Case companion who can be seen and heard fits with all the early research. Harvey (1918) notes that imaginary playmates "can be seen and heard as vividly as if they are living children" (p. 7). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) reach the same conclusion, stating that "in most cases, this comrade can be seen and heard as if he were real" (p. 388). Jersild et al. (1933) describe cases "in which the imaginary companion has so much apparent reality and permanence as to appear to be almost a self-sustained childish delusion endowed with hallucinatory vividness" (p. 103). Svendisen (1934) states that "there is clear indication that the experience is accompanied by visual imagery" (p. 997). Ames and Learned (1946) state that some children "may even seem to see the companion eidetically" (p. 156).

In fact there was no question that some children see their companions until Despert (1940, 1948) objected to the notion of normal children "hallucinating". Wishing to disavow that the experience of normal children was in any way comparable to that of schizophrenics, in her influential papers she stated "emphatically" that there was no evidence of true hallucinations or delusions in the normal preschoolers she studied. Although some subsequent writers have followed Despert's lead, excluding
imaginary companions from the category of childhood hallucination (e.g. Eisenberg, 1962; Rothstein, 1981), others have included them as hallucinatory phenomena (e.g. Weiner, 1961; Siegel, 1977).

Given that the Paradigm Case companion can be seen and heard by the child, what status does the child give to this companion? There are at least three options. First, the child may see the companion as simply real, in the way that ordinary physical objects are real. This is only plausible with very young children, for whom the distinction between reality and unreality is still shaky.

Second, the child may regard the companion as purely imaginary. Despert (1948) and Eisenberg (1962) favor this position. They believe that normal children deny any reality to their companions and see them only as "make-believe" or "pretend".

Adult recollections of imaginary companions do not support this position. Vostrovsky (1895) found that 81% of her respondents "speak definitely, in some way, of the reality of these companions to them" (p. 397). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) found that "as many as 81% of the girls and 60% of the boys testify that the playmate was real to them" (p. 386). Naglera (1969) quotes a 9-year-old's succinct appraisal of her companion: "I invented her... of course, she was real." (p. 191)

Therefore, the status option discussed in the conceptualization above will be taken as paradigmatic. In this
case, the child sees the companion as real but different from flesh and blood companions.

Circumstances

There is a wide variety of circumstances in which children are likely to gain behavior potential by having imaginary companions, and the examples to be presented below were chosen to illustrate this variety. Sometimes imaginary companions are purely expressive, enabling children to "do their own thing" in a way that they couldn't do otherwise given the circumstances they are in. Other times companions are more adaptive, helping children to operate in the parents' world in a way they couldn't otherwise. In either case companions are status-enhancing.

In the area of moral development, imaginary companions are primarily adaptive. Children are initially completely dependent upon their parents for decisions about what behaviors are right and wrong. An imaginary companion, however, may help a child to acquire competence in making his or her own decisions, and thereby to function more independently of his or her parents. (Cf. Munroe, 1894; Swett, 1910; Sperling, 1954; Fraiberg, 1959; Nagera, 1969).

For example, in a situation where the child is struggling with a desire to do something he or she knows is wrong, an imaginary companion may suddenly materialize on the scene. The companion may add sufficient weight on the side of "Do what's right" so that the young child gives ethical reasons appropriate priority without needing a reminder from his or her parents.
Alternately the companion may appear as the one who wants to "do the deed". The child is then in a position to remind the companion of ethical reasons for not doing it, and the two may negotiate the reasons for and against the behavior. Such companions help the child learn to use relevant perspectives in making judgments.

In general companions may arise whenever a child needs some additional reality in order to operate effectively in the adult world. Fraiberg (1959) describes a time in her niece's life when her niece was "very much afraid of animals who could bite... even the more harmless dogs of the neighborhood" (pp. 17-18). Adults wanted the child to treat the neighborhood dogs as non-dangerous, but the little girl could not see them that way. In response to this situation, Laughing Tiger "sprang into existence" and accompanied the child on all her forays. Laughing Tiger made it real to the little girl that the neighborhood dogs were not dangerous. With him by her side she was able to handle situations that otherwise she might not have been able to handle.

Imaginary companions may be status-restoring. Nagera (1969) recounts the case of a 3-year-old girl who had been in a war nursery during World War II. After she went home to live with her mother at the end of the war, a "brood of imaginary animals, cats and chickens" arrived, too. They accompanied her everywhere, and "made her walks very similar to those she had taken with the other toddlers whom she had to leave at the nursery" (pp. 187-188). In
this example the imaginary companions enabled the child to keep as much of her old world as she could, and helped minimize the amount of world reconstruction required when she returned home.

Handicapped children may use companions for status equalization. Singer (1973) reports that "almost all" of the blind children he studied had an imaginary companion, "invariably one who was sighted and more or less the same age as the blind child" (p. 38). The sighted companion had the ability to do many things that the blind child could not do, behaviors like reading others' mail, finding hidden things, and wandering freely about the school (Singer & Streiner, 1966, p. 480). The extra behavior potential the blind child gains with such a companion enables the child to be a "real kid" and not a freak.

I have saved until last the situation of the child who lacks playmates, and creates companions to have someone with whom to play. Unfortunately there is a tendency in the literature to write as if "normal" children use companions only to alleviate loneliness, and any other use is a reflection of child psychopathology (e.g., Manosevitz et al., 1973, p. 78). Imaginary companions may appear to normal children in a wide range of circumstances, including but not limited to loneliness, as vehicles for world construction or reconstruction.

Forms and Elaborations

Researchers have devoted a great deal of effort to collecting quantitative data on imaginary companions. Tabulations have been
made of the age and sex of companions, but no consistent patterns emerge across all the studies (Vostrotsky, 1895; Hurlock & Burstein, 1932; Svedsen, 1934; Ames & Learned, 1946; Manosevitz et al., 1973). This lack of consistency at the demographic level is not surprising. Companions are produced "top down" (cf. Ossorio, 1982a, pp. 3-5). The imaginary companion is the child's intuitive world reformulation, and this reformulation could be incarnated in any number of forms and still accomplish the necessary world reconstruction.

One consistent finding that does emerge in the quantitative studies is that companions are more likely to appear in human rather than animal form. The percentage of human companions ranges from 73% (Ames & Learned, 1946) to 89% (Manosevitz et al., 1973). Because it is likely that a child will gain more behavior potential from a relationship with another person than with an animal, it makes sense that children tend to choose human embodiments for their companions.

Researchers have also counted the numbers of imaginary companions that children have. The percentage of subjects who have more than one companion ranges from 28% (Svedsen, 1934) to 63% (Ames & Learned, 1946). The brood of cats and chickens discussed above is an example of multiple companions.

Sometimes the child's first companion may serve essentially as a wedge, opening the door for other companions. The child's first companion may violate real world requirements only
minimally, and may offer the child an opportunity to practice maneuvering in a world with an imaginary companion. Once the child has learned to manage in a world-with-a-companion, the child then is free to construct the kinds of companions who will give him or her the most behavior potential.

Green (1922), for example, describes a 3-year-old boy who initially had a companion named Mary. "Mary was a very vague and indefinite being" (p. 24). Within a few weeks however, Mary had acquired an imaginary mother who became the more salient companion for the boy. Svendsen (1934) suggests that such "elaboration along family lines occurs more frequently than parents are aware" (p. 994).

The multiplication of companions may also reflect the increasing differentiation of the child's world. Swett (1910) describes how as his daughter's ability to use ethical concepts increased, her companion changed from being one little girl "into an imaginary society of little girls" (p. 109). It is tempting to speculate that the society of girls reflected the increasing complexity of reasons that had come into play in the child's choices.

**Reality Constraints**

Normatively parents' worlds have a place for their child to have his or her own world. Parents may be fascinated by how their child puts things together, and may delight in seeing how their child's world develops from a simple, incomplete structure into
one of increasing complexity and comprehensiveness. Once a child has enough of his or her own world, imaginary companions may appear.

Most parents of young children accept and may even encourage children's interactions with their companions. Svendsen (1934) found that 90% of the parents in her study accepted or encouraged companions (p. 992). Almost 40 years later, Manosevitz et al. (1973) reported comparable statistics: "Parents encouraged the imaginary companion in 50% of the cases, ignored it in 43% of the cases, while only 7% discouraged the child's imaginary companion" (p. 76). The suggestion has been made that lower-class parents may be much less accepting of imaginary playmates than middle-class parents (Freyberg, 1973, p. 135), but Svendsen's study included "families of all social and economic levels" (p. 989).

Parents' acceptance of the phenomena allows the imaginary companions of young children to exist with relative freedom from real world requirements. While parents will confront older children about peculiarities in their worlds, and provide guidance so that the older child's world is not inconsistent, parents of young children may simply take pleasure in the child having a world, with the option of an imaginary companion an extra feature.

Of course there are some constraints on what the child can say about his or her companion. For example, if the plants are found uprooted, and the child says "Mary [my companion] did it", the parents will hold the child accountable. Specifically, what
the child says about the companion cannot generally be used to evade the rules that hold in the parents' household. But as long as the companion is not used for purposes of evasion, parents seem to respect whatever place the companion has in the child's world. (cf. Munroe, 1894, p. 184; Green, 1922, pp. 17-18; Svendsen, 1934, p. 996).

As part of this respect, parents let the child define how they are to be involved, if at all, with the companion. Usually parents are only allowed to be involved as facilitators to the child's plans (e.g. at the child's request, putting an extra sandwich in the picnic basket for the companion). They are not allowed to initiate interaction of their own with the child's imaginary companion. The exclusion of parents from high power activities with the child's companion makes sense in that it would be difficult for parents to treat an imaginary companion in ways that preserve the place the companion has in the child's world without some directions from the child.

Sometimes a child may invite other children to share his or her imaginary companion. Together children may create a consensual world in which the imaginary companion has a place. For example they may have tea parties with him or her, play tag, etc. (cf. Harvey, 1918, pp. 17-18). In these cases the companion's place in the consensual world seems not to jeopardize the place that the companion has for its original creator.
Hurlock and Burstein (1932) found that only 20% of children were willing to share their companions (p. 386). One reason why companions may not be shared more often is the danger of ridicule by siblings or playmates, which can result in a quick death for an imaginary companion. As an example here, Harvey (1918) describes an instance where an older sister eavesdropped on her younger sister's conversation with her imaginary friend McGunty, and gleefully related the conversation to the family. The younger sister was never able to see McGunty again. "She tried as hard as she could to bring McGunty back, and was very lonesome without her.... but McGunty's disappearance was permanent" (p. 21). Her sister's ridicule made it impossible for the child to carry off the relation to her companion anymore.

Parents may also bring an abrupt end to the life of an imaginary companion. Although parents generally respect the claims that children make concerning their companions, sometimes they may fail to appreciate the significance of a young child's behavior. Harvey (1918) gives the example of a child named Alice, whose companion May was squashed to death when Alice's mother inadvertently sat on her.

Miss Alice says that she screamed, and did her best to keep her mother from sitting down in the chair, but her mother laughed, not seeing anything in the chair, and sat down. Miss Alice was terribly distressed, and cried for half a day, but May was dead and never reappeared. (p. 15)
Given all the other creative solutions children generate in dealing with companion realities, it may seem that they should be able to get around the problem of companion-death-by-squashing. But in fact children have a hard time getting around it, and sitting on a child's companion tends to be fatal.

**Life Span and Departure**

Actuarial data on imaginary companions is difficult to obtain in part because many companions vanish uneventfully. Martin (1915) quotes a college student whose description of his companions' departure is fairly typical: "When they finally ceased one by one to come to see me I often regretted their absence and wondered what had become of them" (p. 253).

The start of school is the event most often cited in conjunction with companion departure. Smith (1904) asserted that the imaginary playmates of a young child usually continued "until the child began to go to school, or was otherwise brought into contact with children of the same age" (p. 475). Subsequent researchers have reiterated this idea (e.g. Hurlock & Burstein, Svendsen, and Ames & Learned).

Several factors may contribute to the reported connection between school entrance and companion exit. Some imaginary companions are called into being to fill empty playmate places in children's world. To the extent that children value their imaginary companions because they are fun to play with, they may realize the same value with living children. Once flesh and blood
companions are available, they may take the place of the imaginary ones. In such cases, the circumstance that brought forth the imaginary companion, i.e. no one with whom to play, no longer exists, and the imaginary companion vanishes.

The start of school also traditionally marks a transition point for children and their parents. It is the point where the child needs to leave the protection of home and adapt to the demands of the larger community. In anticipation of this break, parents may naturally increase their requirements on the child to speak and act in realistic ways. They may no longer give the school age child the same leeway as a younger child when it comes to imaginary companions.

Because of pressure from increased parental constraints or because of lack of need, some imaginary companions depart at the start of school. Many apparently do not. Although the researchers mentioned above all state the community position on school entrance/companion exit, they do not endorse it themselves. For example, Ames and Learned (1946) state their personal conviction as follows:

Though our present data do not yield this information, we believe that both imaginary animal and imaginary human companions continue in many children during the years from 5 to 10. As a rule these companions are kept entirely secret, or are shared with some other child, but are not divulged to parents. (p. 153)
In contrast to the school entrance account of companion departure, Bender and Vogel (1941) offer a more general view. They recognize that a variety of situations can be companion-evoking, and assert that companion departure is related to changes in whatever environmental situation evoked the companion. They feel that companions are "used during a time of need but immediately given up when the need no longer exists" (p. 65). According to Bender and Vogel, companions will only reappear if the environmental stress again becomes overwhelming.

Setting aside for a moment the fact that companions are born in positive as well as adverse situations, consider a companion engendered by a problematic situation. Once this companion exists, he or she may offer the child a new set of opportunities unrelated to the original problem. To the extent that the child exploits this additional behavior potential, the companion may be maintained even though the evoking situation has changed.

For example a companion may be born of loneliness or lack of playmates, but offer the child different behavioral possibilities from those that later become available in relation to his or her schoolmates. In this case the imaginary companion will not disappear just because "real" playmates are now available. In accordance with the maxim that a person will not choose to actualize less behavior potential rather than more, the child will naturally maintain both sets of relationships and enjoy the potentials each offers.
In addition, the child may have become attached to his or her imaginary companion, and have more behavior potential with the imaginary companion than with any substitute. Even though living playmates have become available to the schoolchild, they cannot take the place of the imaginary companion. If this sounds a bit farfetched, it is worth noting that Hurlock and Burstein (1932) found that 39% of their respondents "actually preferred these phantom playmates to any real companions" (p. 386).

The more important the behavior potential or relationship that the companion provides is to the child, the less likely that the companion will vanish because of situational changes or increased parental requirements. Instead, the companion will go underground. The child will cease to talk about the companion or play openly with him or her, thereby avoiding the possibility of derision for having an imaginary friend. But this also closes off the possibility of negotiation with parents or siblings about the companion's existence. The companion then becomes subject only to the ecology of the child's own world construction.

While some facilitation from circumstances may be required to create a companion, and some pressure from increased real world requirements may be required to eliminate one, very little is required to maintain one (cf. the Awkward Range for personal relationships, Ossorio, 1983). Whatever covert ways the child finds to continue to interact with his or her companion will tend to keep the companion real. Once undercover, the child's
companion may become less salient to the child, but the relationship will tend to continue for whatever behavior potential it offers.

Ames and Learned (1946) do not say what happens to covert companions after the child turns 10, but other writers have observed that imaginary companions may persist into adulthood. Kirkpatrick (1907) comments that "where the phenomenon continues, as it sometimes does, into adult life, it often takes the form of a continued story, in which the imaginary characters figure, and perhaps grow older as their creator does" (p. 139). Vostrovsky (1896) and Harriman (1937) give examples of this fantasy sort of continuance.

In other cases the imaginary companion continues to be visually present. Harvey (1918) discusses three such cases, but notes that such persistence is "unusual". "These three cases are about the only ones in the series of 109 that have been carefully studied, in which there is a persistence of the playmate experience into the adult years" (p. 16). Hurlock and Burstein (1932) found much higher rates of persistence. Based on questionnaire data from high school and college students, they found that "one-fourth of the girls and almost half of the boys have maintained this friendship up to the present time" (p. 389).

Many of the imaginary companions that Hurlock and Burstein studied were late onset companions, a strain presumably born in greater secrecy and more tailored to real world requirements than
the Paradigm Case companion. In addition, late onset companions are born at a time when the child's world and place are generally more solidified than those of a child about to leave the nuclear family for school. For these reasons, the companions that Hurlock and Burstein studied may have been more resistant to extinction than the ones Harvey studied.

Methodological differences may also account for the discrepancy in their findings, however. Hurlock and Burstein (1932) asked on an anonymous questionnaire "Does the playmate ever appear to you now?" (p. 390), but Harvey (1918) asked in face to face interviews "When did they cease to appear?" (p. 16).

Significance

The fact that companions may continue to exist through the school years and beyond has been a source of concern to some psychologists. Questions have been raised as to whether "children who create and then maintain their imaginary companions for a period of years finally become schizophrenic" (Bender, 1954, p. 51). Are imaginary companions "a precursor of contact disturbances as found in schizophrenia" (Despert, 1948, p. 532)?

At face value, there is some grounds for concern. When people have imaginary companions, their real world is different from the ordinary real world within which most people live their lives. People with imaginary companions effectively are playing with a wild card that other people lack. It makes sense to ask "Is this wild card a vehicle for stability and reality contact, or
is it a passbook to craziness?" A priori, we cannot say that it is one or the other.

Empirically what evidence there is suggests that an imaginary companion is generally a vehicle for stability. Bender (1954) did follow-ups in "early adulthood" on 14 people who had reported imaginary companions during psychiatric hospitalizations in childhood. None of the 14 had ever become psychotic.

Further analysis shows why children with imaginary companions would tend not to become psychotic. Part of the disability evident in persons diagnosed as schizophrenic is the inability to assign statuses to themselves and others, or to appreciate how stages and options fit into larger social patterns (cf. Kantor, 1977; Roberts, 1985a). However to have an imaginary companion the child must be able to create a script for that companion. Creating such a script requires some degree of skill at status assigning and some appreciation of social practices. By their very nature, the abilities reflected in the maintenance of an imaginary companion tend to set children apart from the schizophrenic category.

Of course there are no guarantees of success playing with a wild card, and things may not go well for the child with imaginary companions. Sometimes the child's relation to a companion may be a vehicle for pathology. Burnham (1893) warned that with children, "sometimes the phantoms of their own creation become unmanageable like the delusions of the insane" (p. 213).
In understanding why companions may become pathological, consider the situation where a child "adopts" a family in the neighborhood. The child gradually spends more and more time with his or her adoptive family, and gets more and more attached to them. Finally the child decides "I'd rather live over there", because the child has more status and behavior potential with the adoptive family than at home. Similarly, a child who creates an imaginary family or community may come to have more and more behavior potential with this imaginary group, and become absorbed with them to the exclusion of his own family, peer group, etc.

Several cases in the literature where the child's ongoing relationship with imaginary companions became pathological seem to be of this sort (Green, 1922, pp. 33-40; Wickes, 1966, pp. 171-174). In both cases, however, the children would have been diagnosed as neurotic rather than psychotic, and who is to say that these children would not have become more disturbed without their companions.

Even when children who have had imaginary companions go on to become psychotic, the imaginary companion may not be the vehicle for the loss of reality contact. Despert (1948) made the interesting observation that "in 2 children who had had imaginary companions prior to the onset of schizophrenia, the imaginary figures were not involved in the delusional structure" (p. 535). Her observation supports the notion that children become psychotic
in spite of their imaginary companions rather than because of them.

The review of facts about imaginary companions themselves is now complete. In the next section I will briefly review findings concerning which children have companions.

Children who have Imaginary Companions

Imaginary companions are not a rare phenomena. Estimates of the frequency of imaginary companions vary from 13% to 28% or higher, depending on the range of cases included by researchers (see Appendix A). Some of the early studies found that girls were more likely to have imaginary companions than boys, but the more recent studies (Schaefer, 1969; Manosevitz et al., 1973) indicate that boys and girls have an equal incidence of imaginary companions.

An only child is not more likely to have an imaginary companion than a child with siblings. Because of researchers' assumption that only children are lonely, and researchers' insistence that imaginary companions serve only to alleviate loneliness, the relationship between only children and imaginary companions has often been touted. As early as 1898, Bohannon declared that only children "very often indulge in imaginary companionship to compensate for inadequate real companionship" (p. 476). But in the two studies where comparisons are reported between children with imaginary companions and a control group of children without companions, significant differences are not found.
with respect to the frequency of only children (Hurlock & Burstein, 1932, pp. 383-384; Manosevitz et al., 1973, p. 74).

Some tendency for firstborn children to favor companions has been found (Svendsen, 1934, p. 991; Manosevitz et al., 1973, p. 74). The finding is explained in terms of the "no playmates" cliché. An alternate explanation is that the budding companions of firstborn children are less subject to being nipped than the companions of children with older brothers and sisters. A biting comment by an older sibling may check the emergence of a younger sibling's companion.

Imaginary companions are not limited to children with high IQ's. Remarks reoccur in the literature to the effect that "no stupid child ever had an imaginary playmate" (Harvey, 1918, p. 23) or "you never see it [an imaginary playmate] in a dumb child" (Pines, 1978, p. 106). But in fact, out of 12 cases on which Bender (1954) reports IQ data, 3 children would be classified as dull normal in intelligence and 2 as borderline. Likewise, Lukianowicz (1969) presents the case of a mentally retarded girl (IQ 68) who had imaginary playmates (pp. 325-326).

There is some tendency for companions to favor brighter children, although researchers who had access to school records state this finding cautiously. Svendsen (1934) reported that companions are "probably more prevalent" in children with superior intelligence (p. 990). Jersild et al. (1933) wrote that "children who were able to describe definite make-believe playmates had a
higher average I.Q. than the children who were unable to do so'' (p. 106). Jersild (1968) leaves open the possibility that lower IQ children may have companions but be unwilling to disclose them to an experimenter (p. 396).

Managing a real world that has a special category of reality in it — real but not like an ordinary material object — may require a certain level of intelligence. The greater complexity of such a world presents problems that may be difficult for a child without the requisite intelligence to handle. An imaginary companion who appeared to such a child might be eliminated by the reality constraint that "It's not a physical object", unless the child's need was extremely great. This would mean that there is a decreasing probability of imaginary companions at the lower end of the IQ distribution, accounting for the slightly higher mean IQ for the imaginary companion group.

Finally, imaginative children are not more likely to have imaginary companions, despite over 90 years of assertions that imaginary companions are a matter of imagination (Burnham, 1893 to Cornelius & Yawkey, 1985). It has yet to be shown either conceptually or empirically that the phenomena of imaginary companions has anything to do with imagination.

Writers over the years who have classified imaginary companions as imaginative phenomena have always had anomalies to explain, for example, cases where the most highly imaginative children do not have companions (e.g. Brittain, 1907, p. 170). A
more striking "irregularity" is the finding of Singer and Streiner (1966) that blind children are more limited than sighted children on every measure of "imaginativeness" except imaginary companions. In none of these instances is an explanation offered. Notice that treating companions as world constructive and reconstructive phenomena creates no anomalies of this sort.

One finding about children who have imaginary companions that has received empirical support is that these children "have leanings toward literary creativity" (Schaefer, 1969, p. 748). As part of an extensive biographical inventory, Schaefer asked 800 high school students if they ever had any imaginary companions. He compared students who had been recognized as creative in various fields by their teachers to control students matched for sex, year in school, and grade point average. He found that for both sexes, students creative in the literary field reported imaginary companions significantly more often than their matched controls. Harriman (1937) and Myers (1979) have presented case material consistent with Schaefer's finding of a relation between imaginary companions and literary creativity.

The child who has an imaginary companion is in some respects a playwright, creating a script for his or her companion. In general the better the script, the more behavior potential gained in relation to a companion. By contrast, someone not good at creating scripts would probably not gain as much behavior potential from a relation to a companion, and the imaginary
companions might not endure. Someone who as a child is good at writing scripts for a companion is also likely to be better than average as a teenager in creative writing, so the relationship Schaefer found is not surprising.

Researchers have looked at a range of other personal characteristics to try to create a profile of a child likely to have an imaginary companion, but no such personality profile emerges across studies (Jersild, 1968, p. 396). The search for the companion-prone personality was presumably motivated in part by a desire to understand why less than one-third of children have imaginary companions and two-thirds do not.

The parametric analysis frees us from the need for relatively ad hominem or ad hoc explanations. When children do not have companions, it is because circumstances were not conducive; there was too much pressure from real world requirements; or there was not enough gain in behavior potential. The analysis also enables us to understand the facts that have been observed with some regularity about children who have imaginary companions. To review: Firstborns are more likely to maintain companions because they are not subject to the imposition of real world requirements by older siblings. Bright children are more likely to maintain companions because they are not limited by the "It's not a physical object" constraint. And children with creative writing ability are more likely to have companions because they are able
to create greater behavioral possibilities in the scripts they make up for their companions.

**Ghostly Companions**

Since Marris (1958) published his observations on grief in young widows from London's East End, "sensing the presence" of the deceased person has gained greater acceptance as a part of normal grief. For example Parkes (1965), in a description of "typical grief", writes that "the sufferer is preoccupied with thoughts of the dead person who is commonly felt to be present" (p. 14).

Likewise Caplan (1974) writes of the "normality" of widows' "illusions that the dead husband is still present in some form" (p. viii).

Although ghostly companions are more acknowledged now as a normal part of grief, relatively little has been written about the origination, status, life span, range of cases, or incidence of such companions. I was able to find only five reports of case studies dealing with ghostly companions. Sedman (1966) describes the bereavement hallucinations of several British psychiatric inpatients; Matchett (1972) and Shen (1986) describe mourning hallucinations among Hopi Indians; MacDonald and Oden (1977) examine post-death visions among native Hawaiians; and Hoyt (1980-81) gives examples of mourning presences among psychotherapy outpatients.

The facts about ghostly companions that are presented below have been garnered primarily from bereavement research.
Appendices C and D give an overview of the studies used; only reports of grief in non-psychiatric populations are included. Because these studies deal primarily with the grief of widows and widowers, most of the examples below are of ghostly spouses.

Origination and Status
As with imaginary companions of childhood, the first appearance of the deceased spouse seems to be involuntary and unexpected. It is not generally a matter of the surviving spouse trying to conjure up his or her deceased partner. Rather the deceased partner simply appears. Gorer (1965) offers an example from a 48-year-old shopkeeper:

I was upstairs after the wife died and I was watching television for the first time after she died; and all of a sudden I could see my wife as plain as anything, sitting in one of those chairs. I flew downstairs and never went in that room again.... It was very frightening. (p. 57)

Rees (1975) offers a similar example from a woman widowed 5 years: "Once he [her deceased husband] came to the door when I was preparing lunch and I saw him. It was an awful shock" (p. 69).

Because of the vivid detail and extreme clarity of such visions, it may seem to the perceiver for a moment as if the deceased person had actually come back to life. In the two examples given, the experience is like seeing the "Face in the wall" ("What kind of world is this if the dead return?"). The
vision is upsetting and disruptive to the person's sense of the world as an orderly place.

For other adults the experience is not disruptive. For example Sir Walter Scott, on seeing a vision of his deceased friend Byron, immediately realized that he was hallucinating. Scott (1830) reports that he "felt no sentiment save that of wonder at the extraordinary accuracy of the resemblance" (p. 44). After the vision resolved, he tried "with all his power" to recreate it but was unable to do so.

Most bereaved persons do not take the position of a mere observer of such a vision nor do they react with fear. Instead they seem to welcome the vision, and find it a source of comfort and solace. Rees (1971), in a study of the entire widowed population of a well-defined area in Wales, found that 78% of widowed persons who had visual hallucinations of the dead spouse felt helped by them, and 73% of widowed persons who had illusions of the deceased spouse's presence felt helped by this experience (p. 40).

On seeing the phantom spouse, some people have impulses to engage in behavior towards him or her. Sometimes such impulses are resisted, as reported by Parkes (1970b). He describes a London widow who noted "If I didn't take a strong hold on myself I'd get talking to him" (p. 194).

Other people do engage in such behavior, as described by Lindemann (1944) in his classic paper on grief:
A young navy pilot lost a close friend; he remained a vivid part of his imagery, not in terms of a religious survival but in terms of an imaginary companion. He ate with him and talked over problems with him, for instance, discussing with him his plan of joining the Air Corps. (p. 142)

Rees (1971) found that men are more likely than women to speak with the dead spouse: 19.7% of men, as compared to 9.3% of women, report speaking to their deceased spouse (p. 38).

In addition to talking with their phantom spouses, some people are reluctant to be away for long periods of time from them. Parkes (1972) reports that several widows "expressed the feeling that they must hurry home whenever they went out because their husband would be waiting. One of these terminated a visit to her sister prematurely because she felt that she had left her husband too long" (p. 50). Similarly Rees (1975) reports on a woman widowed 9 months who resisted pressure from others to move from her home. She stated that she was unwilling to leave her deceased husband: "I often hear him walking about. He speaks quite plainly. He looks younger, just as he was when he was all right, never as he was ill" (p. 69).

Those who have a relationship to a ghostly spouse may also decline to remarry on account of this relationship. Rees (1971) reports that one widow he spoke with broke off an engagement because she felt that her phantom husband was opposed to it (p. 39).
People who are comforted by the presence of their spouses, or who behave towards them, do not deny the fact that their spouses are dead in body. Parkes (1972) found almost no correlation (.08) between "difficulty in accepting the fact of loss" and a widow's sense of her husband's continued presence. Likewise he found a non-significant correlation (.22) between "difficulty in accepting the fact of loss" and illusions and hallucinations of the deceased husband during the first month after his death (p. 208). If people accept the fact that their spouses are dead, how do we account for their continuing behavior towards the spouse?

Following the loss of a spouse, the natural reaction is world reconstruction to try to achieve a condition in which there is not a loss (Ossorio, 1975). As a result of such reconstructive efforts, a person may find himself or herself in a world in which a phantom spouse appears. Some people may find such an appearance upsetting and do things to prevent recurrences, as in the case of the shopkeeper who never "felt" in the room where his wife appeared again. Similarly, a woman who "could not get away from the notion that her husband was still sitting in his chair" decided to sit in his chair herself (Parkes, 1972, p. 51). (The fate of her imaginary husband has some resemblance to the fate of May, a childhood imaginary companion discussed earlier [supra, p. 33]). In cases such as these, it seems unlikely that the ghostly companion would survive in the person's world.
But people who find the appearance of the spouse helpful may create a special status for the envisioned spouse. This status may be one in which the spouse "is dead in body but not in spirit". Just as with childhood imaginary companions, if the person acts in any way whatever in relation to the ghostly spouse, and if the person learns to manage the complexities that having such a spouse creates, the ghostly spouse is likely to become an established part of his or her world.

When this is the case, the person does not have as great a loss of behavior potential. In some essential respects things are as they would be if the spouse had not literally died. Because his or her spirit remains, the surviving spouse is able to preserve some of the possibilities that were uniquely shared with his or her life partner, but also to acknowledge the partner's bodily death.

Life Span

The available literature indicates that a relationship to a ghostly spouse may last a long time. Parkes (1970a), who followed 22 London widows through the first 13 months of bereavement, reported that 55% of these widows still felt the presence of their spouses at the end of his study (p. 464). Likewise Glick, Weiss, and Parkes (1974), who followed 49 young Boston widows through the first year of their bereavement, note that "the sense of the persisting presence of the husband did not diminish with time. It seemed to take a few weeks to become established, but thereafter
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seemed as likely to be reported late in the bereavement as early" (p. 147).

Rees (1971), who interviewed widowed persons as long as 40 years post-bereavement, confirmed the longevity of relationships to a phantom spouse. He reports that post-bereavement hallucinations "often lasted many years but were most common during the first 10 years of widowhood" (p. 37). If the relation to a ghostly spouse is taken, for example, as the last 10 years of a 40 year marriage, this longevity may be less surprising.

One factor that may contribute to the enduring nature of such relationships is that they are often kept secret. Not telling anyone about a ghostly companion gives such a companion exemption from ordinary reality constraints. Rees (1971) found that 72% of Welsh widows and widowers had never disclosed their experiences to anyone prior to his study, and Olson, Suddeth, Peterson, and Egelhoff (1985) found that 54% of widows in nursing homes in North Carolina had not discussed their experiences with anyone prior to their study.

Of course there is a risk of detection when a widow or widower engages in overt behavior toward the ghostly companion. Glick et al. (1974) present the "cover story" of one of their Boston widows:

My neighbor next door knocked at the door one day and I was talking a blue streak, yelling out as though Burt [her deceased husband] was in the bathroom. She says, "You got
company?" I says, "No." She says, "Who are you talking to?"
I says, "Oh, just my wandering thoughts again." (p. 148)

Range of Cases

The description of a ghostly companion presented thus far may be taken as a Paradigm Case. In the Paradigm Case the deceased spouse appears unexpectedly, looking and sounding just as he or she did in life, and is a source of comfort to the surviving spouse. The surviving spouse interacts secretly with the phantom spouse, and their relationship endures over time.

Although this Paradigm Case picks out some of the cases of ghostly companions, there are a range of other cases that differ from the Paradigm Case in potentially important ways. These additional cases may be represented as transformations of the Paradigm Case in a paradigm case formulation. Such transformations include:

1. Change the deceased person to a parent, grandparent, sibling, friend, or other relation.

Widowed persons are not the only ones to have ghostly companions. Children may continue to relate to their deceased parents (Sherman & Beverly, 1924, p. 167; Childers, 1931, p. 112; Keeler, 1954, p. 117); adolescents to their dead siblings (Balk, 1983, p. 146); young adults to cherished grandparents (Hoyt, 1980-81); and so forth.
T2. Change the embodiment of the deceased from his or her familiar human form to any form recognizable as embodying the deceased's spirit.

Just as the gods in ancient Greece could take on any shape they desired in interacting with mortals, the bereaved are not limited to human forms in embodying the spirits of their deceased relatives. One of my clients, a 75-year-old widow whose husband had died 3 years previously, occasionally felt the presence of a fine old dog by her bedside. She knew by the dog's loyalty and protectiveness that this was her husband, staying near her even though parted from her by death.

T3. Allow for some initial shock, fear, or discomfort on seeing the deceased, with the relationship only later becoming comfortable.

For a person to take the presence of a deceased spouse matter-of-factly, his or her world would already have to be different from the world most of us take for granted. Hence it would not be surprising if a person initially reacted with some discomfort to "seeing a ghost". But as long as the person did not actively try to prevent reappearances of the ghost, he or she might "learn to love 'em". Even though the person's world initially had no place for this sort of phenomenon, the person might be able to restructure the world enough so that the ghostly spouse could have a place as a protector, guide, companion, or whatever.
T4. Change the initial experience to one of illusions of the deceased rather than hallucinations.

Sometimes a person's initial sense of the dead spouse's presence is not based on a hallucinatory experience, but rather on the misperception of some existing sight or sound. For example, a rustle of the curtains at night may be taken as the wife's nightgown, or a creak on the stairs as the husband's footfall. Although such misperceptions may be fleeting and easily corrected, they may help make the possibility of the dead spouse's presence real. (Compare Don Juan's use of illusions in teaching Carlos a new sense of reality [Castaneda, 1972]).

T5. Allow for awareness of the deceased's presence without seeing and/or without hearing him or her.

A person may experience the feeling that someone is present without actually seeing and hearing him or her. And when that someone is as familiar as a spouse, the person does not need to see or hear the other to identify with inner certainty who it is that is there. Accordingly widowed persons often feel the presence of their deceased spouses without seeing or hearing them. Notice that when this is the case, the spouse may be present without being placed in any particular position in space, as one widow describes: "He's not anywhere in particular, just around the place; it's a good feeling." (Parkes, 1972, p. 58)

The deceased may also be seen without being heard, and heard without being seen. For example Rees (1975) describes a man
widowed 16 years who may not have seen his deceased wife, but certainly heard her: "I find hearing her breathing disturbing, but I like the feeling she is in the house." (p. 69)

T6. Eliminate the requirement that the surviving spouse engage in overt behavior towards the phantom spouse.

When the phantom spouse is present as described in T5, there may not be any behavior called for on the part of the surviving spouse. Like the extra companion who sometimes accompanies explorers, the ghostly spouse may help the living spouse master a sense of loneliness or danger but not invite interaction.

T7. Eliminate the requirement that the relationship is an enduring one.

Although relationships to ghostly companions tend to be long lasting, this is not necessary. Some may involve only a few brief encounters, and others may be of short duration, just long enough to help the surviving spouse through the initial adjustment to the loss. One of the widowed persons interviewed by Rees (1975) reported hearing "sounds of consolation for the first three months" (p. 69), but the relationship apparently ended after that.

T8. Change the experience from "involuntary" to "cultivated".

Some bereaved persons deliberately cultivate a sense of the deceased person's presence. In his landmark study Marris (1958) described how some widows "talked to his [the deceased husband's] photograph and imagined that he advised them, clung to all his
possessions and returned to places that they had frequented together" (p. 15). Because in the Paradigm Case the ghostly companion appears spontaneously and cannot be readily controlled by the surviving spouse, it would be interesting to know what difference such cultivation makes to the life and status of a ghostly companion.

T9. Change the location of the deceased to "inside" the surviving spouse.

Just as childhood imaginary companions may be experienced as being inside the body rather than outside (Wickes, 1966), so may ghostly companions. As one woman reported: "It's not a sense of his presence, he is here inside me. That's why I'm happy all the time. It's as if two people were one.... I don't think I've the will power to carry on on my own so he must be" (Parkes, 1970a, p. 459). Correspondingly, Hoyt (1980-81) describes 2 cases of bereaved persons "giving up the ghost", that is, letting the deceased person go back "outside" as a part of grief.

Incidence

Given the paradigm case formulation (PCF) presented above, it would be interesting to have frequency data stratified along the lines of the Paradigm Case and the transformations (cf. Ossorio, 1981a, p. 91 on the PCF stratified sampling design). But because research on ghostly companions has not been guided by a systematic formulation of this sort, it is not possible at present to report the relative frequency of each group of cases in the paradigm case
formulation. Some incidence figures are available for selected groups of cases, however, and these are reported below.

Ten percent seems to be a reasonable estimate of adults who "see", "hear", or "feel" their deceased spouse. Support for this estimate comes not only from the bereavement studies included in Appendix D, but also from Palmer's survey of a randomly selected sample of adult residents of Charlottesville, Virginia. Palmer (1979) found that 9.9% of the 354 townspeople in his sample "had, while awake, a vivid impression of seeing, hearing, or being touched by" a deceased person (p. 231).

A higher percentage of adults may have the experience included by T5, "Allow for awareness of the deceased's presence without seeing and/or without hearing him or her". Based on the bereavement studies summarized in Appendix C, slightly less than 50% seems to be a reasonable estimate of the proportion of widowed adults who have experienced the presence of their deceased spouse in some form or another.

Concerning the cases included by T7, "Eliminate the requirement that the relationship is an enduring one", data from Greeley's survey of a representative sample of the U.S. population may be suggestive. Greeley (1975) reported that 51% of the 110 widowed adults in his sample had felt that they "were really in touch with someone who had died". Eighteen percent reported having such contact "once or twice", 21% having such contact
"several times", and 12% of widowed adults having such contact "often" (p. 39).

Notice that these figures are only suggestive concerning the length of the relationship because a widow(er) might sense that the deceased spouse was present over the years without ever feeling "really in touch" with him or her. Or a person might have a day-to-day sense of the person's presence with only rare moments of being "really in touch". Greeley (1975) acknowledges the ambiguity of the question (p. 36), and the need for "specific and detailed descriptions of the phenomenon" (p. 42).

Adults who have Ghostly Spouses

In addition to collecting frequency data, researchers have investigated the relationship between phantom spouses and a variety of factors in the lives of men and women. Across all the studies, only one factor — marital harmony — emerges consistently as contributing to the presence of a ghostly spouse.

As the data of Marris, Rees, and Parkes show, marital harmony increases the likelihood of a ghostly spouse appearing. Marris (1958) found that only one of five women (20%) who "admitted their marriages had been unhappy" felt the presence of her husband in the house, compared to 35 of 67 women (52%) who described their marriages as happy (pp. 21-22). Rees (1971) reported "a complete absence of post-bereavement hallucinations" among the 11 widows in his study who stated that their marriages were unhappy (p. 39). Parkes (1972) found a significant correlation (.48) between "few
illusions of the dead person during the first month" and the frequency of quarreling in a marriage (pp. 216-217).

Recall that one of the parameters relevant to whether or not a person constructs a world with an imaginary companion is the gain in behavior potential that comes from having such a companion. To the extent that a couple had a good relationship, the surviving spouse has more behavior potential to lose when the partner dies, and more to gain back if the partner reappears in some form. Thus it is not surprising that ghostly spouses are more likely when a marriage has been happy.

Residing in a nursing home may also increase the likelihood of having a phantom spouse. The study by Olson et al. (1985) of widows in nursing homes revealed notably high incidence rates for visual hallucinations of a deceased spouse (see Appendix D). In light of the parametric analysis, the Olson et al. results are not surprising. A woman in a nursing home generally does not have much behavior potential. Thus, if her spouse is present with her in any sense, he will bring to her a significant increase in possibilities. And because requirements for real world consistency are relaxed significantly when a person is institutionalized, there is little to keep a widow in a nursing home from seeing her dead husband.

Two factors that do not appear to affect the likelihood of a ghostly spouse are sexual status (male or female) and change of residence. Just as boys and girls have an equal incidence of
imaginary companions in childhood, men and women have an equal incidence of ghostly companions as adults. The proportions of men and women reporting bereavement hallucinations or illusions of presence were comparable within each of three bereavement studies: 6% of men compared to 7% of women (Clayton, Halikas, & Maurice, 1971, p. 601); 50% of men compared to 45.8% of women (Rees, 1971, p. 38); 25% of men compared to 18% of women (Glick et al., 1974, p. 267).

Likewise, change of residence does not seem to influence whether or not a person has a relation with a phantom spouse. A learning theory explanation might suggest that the house a couple shared provides "cues" for visions of the deceased spouse, and removing the living spouse from such cues would stop the visions. Rees (1971) reports that 43.7% of his widows and widowers had experienced a change of residence after bereavement, and this change did not affect the incidence of hallucinations (p. 40).

Inconsistent patterns of results emerge across studies for the factors of age and sudden spousal death. With respect to the age at which a person is widowed, Rees (1971) found that persons who were 60 years or older when widowed were more likely to have visual hallucinations and more likely to converse with the dead than those widowed at a younger age. He also found that people widowed below the age of 40 were the least likely to be hallucinated (pp. 38-39). Olson et al. (1985) report a curvilinear relation, with women in the younger (30 to 39 years)
and older (70 to 89 years) age ranges more likely to have hallucinations than those in the middle age group (40 to 69 years) at the time of their bereavement (p. 545). Marris (1958), whose widows ranged in age from 25 to 56 (with 38% of his widows under 40), found that age did not make a significant difference to a woman's sense of her dead husband's presence (p. 22). Likewise, Clayton et al. (1971) found no significant differences in hallucinations for people over 60 and under 60 at the time of their spouses' death (p. 601).

With respect to the suddenness of a partner's death, results are also mixed. Parkes (1975) reported that the length of time a person has to prepare for a spouse's death has a significant influence on the person's subsequent sense of the dead spouse's presence. In his Boston study, he found that 61% of bereaved persons who had only a short time to prepare experienced spousal presence, as compared to 19% of those who had a "long" (defined by Parkes as "more than 2 weeks") time to prepare (p. 134). Rees (1971), however, found that neither "suddenness of death" nor "relatives expected death" had a significant effect on the incidence of hallucinations (p. 40). Likewise Clayton et al. (1971) report that the length of a spouse's terminal illness did not make a significant difference in subsequent hallucinations (p. 601).

One factor that has not been examined is the relationship between having an imaginary companion as a child and having a
phantom spouse as an adult. Although Harvey (1918, p. 22), Harriman (1937, p. 370), and Siegel (1977, p. 73) have all suggested a possible connection between childhood imaginary companions and a subsequent belief in spiritualism, no one has investigated the connection between imaginary companions of childhood and imaginary spouses of widowhood. It seems reasonable that the childhood experience would increase the likelihood of the bereavement experience, because a person who has learned to maneuver in a world + x as a child may more easily accept a ghostly spouse in his or her adult world.

Significance

The reality contact of persons who have phantom spouses has been called into question. For example both Marris (1958) and Hobson (1964) classify "a sense of the dead person's presence" as an instance of "loss of contact with reality", and Glick et al. (1974) describe a widow's sense of companionship with her dead husband as a "momentary lapse of realism" (p. 149).

More generally concern has been expressed about the adjustment of widows who continue to have affective ties to their deceased spouses. Glick et al. (1974) state that widows seem to have "special problems in recovery" when the dead husband's presence is "persistent and emotionally important" (p. 149). Likewise, Bornstein, Clayton, Halikas, Maurice, and Robins (1973) note that women who are depressed 13 months post-bereavement are
more likely to have hallucinations than their non-depressed counterparts.

The issue of psychosis has also been raised in connection with phantom spouses, especially for those people who "see", "hear", or "feel" their deceased spouse. According to DSM-III-R, hallucinations are symptomatic of organic mental disorders, schizophrenia, affective disorders, or brief reactive psychoses, to name a few. Uncomplicated bereavement is noticeably lacking from the list of possibilities included under "hallucinations" in the DSM-III-R Symptom Index (American Psychiatric Association, 1987, pp. 538-539).

Some of these concerns are best understood against the background of Freudian theory. Freud, in his classic paper "Mourning and Melancholia", described the "work of mourning" in terms of the detachment of libido bit by bit from the lost object. According to Freud (1957b), reality testing demands that all libido be withdrawn from its attachment to the object. The work of mourning is completed only when the ego has severed its attachment to the object and freed its libido. Freud noted, however, that this work is not accomplished without opposition. "This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis" (p. 244).

Are ghostly spouses a vehicle for unresolved grief, loss of reality contact, and psychosis? What evidence there is suggests
that this is generally not the case. The evidence includes the following:

1. With only two exceptions, all the examples presented in this section are from non-psychiatric populations. (The two exceptions are the young navy pilot described by Lindemann, and the 75-year-old woman to whom a fine old dog appeared.)

2. Parkes' (1972) correlation data (supra, p. 51) suggests that widows with ghostly spouses do not have any special difficulty accepting the fact of loss, and that their reality contact is not problematic in this way.

3. The researchers who express concern about the adjustment of widows with ghostly spouses also note that none of these widows are psychotic (Bornstein et al., 1973, p. 566; Glick et al., 1974, p. 147).

4. Widows and widowers themselves report that the experience of the phantom spouse is comforting and helpful (Rees, 1971, p. 40; Glick et al., 1974, p. 147; Olson et al., 1985, p. 545).

5. Persons are not distorting reality if they add an additional status ("dead in body but not in spirit") and only behave in ways that are appropriate to that status.

If a person accepts the Freudian dogma that a person must sever his or her attachment to the deceased completely, then there is an issue of unresolved grief for people with phantom spouses. But another way to formulate the question of unresolved grief is...
to ask "Is the person trying to live and behave in the same way that he or she would if the deceased were alive?" Merely to replay an old way of life with a phantom spouse might well lead to problems in adjustment, including but not limited to depression.

An image used by Descriptive therapists in helping persons with pathological grief is "Putting on Hamlet" (P. G. Ossorio, personal communication, 1984). In the image, a repertory company has been putting on Hamlet successfully for some months when the only man who plays Hamlet suddenly disappears. In spite of his disappearance, the company decides to continue to put on their well-rehearsed play. Although no one plays Hamlet, everyone goes on with the show just as if Hamlet were there. The result is that Hamlet is more noticeable by his absence than he ever was by his presence.

The alternative of course is for the company to put on a different play, a play that does not call for Hamlet. Likewise for persons with pathological grief, the alternative is to "put on Macbeth" (i.e. any play that does not require the deceased person). Notice that this alternate play may include a special part for the dead person as a ghostly companion, but this part will be different in important respects from the part the person played while alive. To what extent widows and widowers with ghostly spouses "put on Hamlet" as opposed to putting on a different play is an empirical question. Its answer would
increase our understanding of both normal and problematic uses of phantom companions.

In addition to raising issues concerning the pathological significance of ghostly spouses, questions concerning their paranormal significance may also be raised. In closing this section, let me note that none of the "ghosts" discussed here meet the criterion for study by parapsychologists. According to Stevenson (1982), parapsychologists are "only concerned with those [apparitions] that convey information not normally available to the percipient" (p. 341). If there are ghosts of this sort, the world construction explanation presented here would not be a sufficient explanation for them.

Take-Away Apparitions

Visits by the dead, coming to "take away" the dying, have been reported all through history. For example, in first century England such visits were described by the Venerable Bede (cf. Finucane, 1984, pp. 42-43). A classic essay on the subject was written in Victorian England by Frances Power Cobbe (1882, pp. 245-266), and a variety of case studies have been compiled since then by parapsychologists (Gurney & Myers, 1889, pp. 459-460; Myers, 1903, pp. 339-342; Bozzano, 1906; Hyslop, 1907, 1918a, 1918b; Barrett, 1926; Rogo, 1978).

The most recent studies involve large-scale surveys of physicians and nurses concerning their observations of deathbed visitors. Osis (1961) presents data on 135 cases in which dying
persons in the United States are reported by their attending
physician or nurse to have had hallucinations of persons. Osis
and Haraldsson (1977) report data on 216 cases from the
Northeastern United States and 255 cases from India. In
discussing these cases, Siegel (1980) notes the similarity between
take-away apparitions and imaginary companions of childhood (p.
923).

Paradigm Case

The following description of an Indian high school student,
whose mother had died when he was 2 or 3 years old, may be taken
as paradigmatic.

He was conscious of his surroundings and talked to his father
until the last moment. Then, with one hand holding his
father's and the other pointing toward where he saw his
mother, he said, "Don't you see my mother? See! My mother
is calling." Then he died — stretching forward to his
mother, almost falling out of bed. (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977,
p. 99)

As illustrated in this case, people who see take-away
apparitions generally maintain normal awareness of and response to
their environment. Osis (1961) notes that in 79% of his cases,
people "hallucinated only the apparition and otherwise normally
perceived their surroundings" (p. 71). Osis and Haraldsson (1977)
report that in 66% of their cases, persons maintained normal
orientation for time and place (p. 103).
Particularly striking is the way in which dying persons may alternate their attention and conversation between an apparitional visitor and the living people at their bedside. Hyslop (1918b) gives the example of a school age child who "scowled a little impatiently [at her deceased grandmother] and said 'Yes, grandma, I'm coming, but wait a minute, please.'" The child then turned back to her family to say goodbye (p. 624).

There can be little doubt that take-away apparitions seem real to the dying. In fact dying people may summon all their remaining strength to respond to such visitors. The person who has been too weak to talk may speak to the apparition in a voice "strong and clear", and the person too weak to lift himself in bed may rise "clear up from the pillow" to embrace such a visitor (cf. Barrett, 1926, p. 47; Hyslop, 1918b, p. 611). In India persons on their deathbeds have been reported to resist a take-away apparition with their last ounce of strength (cf. Osis & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 67).

The dying may entreat the living to see their visitors, and be "surprised", "fretful", or even "indignant" when those around them cannot see them (cf. Bozzano, 1906, p. 72; Cobb, 1882, p. 256). They may become upset when the living inadvertently brush their visitors aside. Barrett (1926) cites an instance where a woman went to see her dying sister: "As she sat down on a chair by the bedside, the invalid exclaimed, 'Oh, don't J—!' Oh, you have sent Mother away, she was sitting there!' and she continued
to seem much distressed" (p. 30). (Apparently sitting on the dead is not fatal in the way that it is for childhood imaginary companions.)

Range of Cases

The Paradigm Case presented above helps to identify some portion of the cases of take-away apparitions. Each of the transformations introduced below picks out some additional cases and clarifies the way these cases differ from the Paradigm Case.

T1. Change the age and sex of the dying person.

In the Paradigm Case the dying person is a young man, but take-away apparitions do not discriminate on the basis of age or sex. In the United States men and women are equally likely to have deathbed hallucinations, and such hallucinations occur throughout all age groups (cf. Osis, 1961, p. 48; Osis & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 74).

T2. Change the take-away apparition to a spouse, stranger, religious figure, or other eligible person.

Mothers are the most frequently seen take-away figures, but other relatives "appear" in the United States in the following order of frequency: spouse, offspring, sibling, and father (Osis, 1961, p. 63). In addition, strangers may come to take away the dying, especially the reluctant ones (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 93), and God, Jesus, angels, devils, and other religious figures may also be seen.
Osis and Haraldsson (1977) found some interesting cultural differences in the identity of take-away figures: (a) Americans are generally met by dead persons (66%) rather than by religious figures (12%), whereas Indians choose religious figures (48%) rather than dead persons (28%) to take them away; (b) Americans choose apparitions of the previous generation (41%) and of their own generation (44%) about equally, but Indians prefer to be met by previous generation apparitions (66%) rather than by their contemporaries (29%); (c) American men generally are received by females (83%), whereas nearly all Indian men have members of their own sex (89%) "to guide them to the other world" (pp. 91-98).

T3. Allow for some surprise, fear, or other reaction upon seeing the take-away apparition.

Although generally the dying accept the appearance of the dead with happiness, sometimes they express other reactions. For example, one man was surprised to see an old friend, and his dying words were "Why [he named the person] what are you doing here?" (Osis & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 36). The last words of another man, who may have expected wings and harps, were "Why; they're all plain people" (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 608).

T4. Allow for unusual locations of the take-away apparition.

Take-away apparitions are perceived as being located in "external objective space" (Jaspers, 1963, p. 69), but they may be seen in spaces not ordinarily occupied by the living. Sometimes the take-away visitor appears "above the bed", and the dying
person may be described as "gazing at the ceiling" at his or her visitors (Hyslop, 1918b, p. 624).

T5. Add music to the take-away experience.

When the dead appear they are occasionally accompanied by music. All the collections and reviews of cases contain at least some mention of this phenomena (Cobbe, 1882, p. 263; Myers, 1903, pp. 339; Bozzano, 1906, p. 72; Hyslop, 1918b, p. 586; Barrett, 1926, pp. 96-104; Rogo, 1978, p. 23). Osis and Haraldsson (1977) report that music occurred in about 6% of their cases, and that people are serene and peaceful when they hear it (p. 167).

T6. Add a vision of relevant objects or environments to the take-away experience.

Some people not only see apparitions coming to meet them. They also see the gateway through which they must pass ("The door is opening wider and wider, and when it is open wide I shall be going through it." [Barrett, 1926, p. 49]); the barrier that they must cross over ("Just wait, Mother, I am almost over. I can jump it. Wait, Mother." [Bozzano, 1906, p. 73]); or the vehicle that will carry them from this world ("Tom, bring the boat nearer; I can't get in." [Barrett, 1926, p. 33]).

People may even see the world to which they are going: "The dying wife was in full view of the two worlds at the same time, for she described how the moving figures looked in the world beyond, as she directed her words to mortals in this world." (Bozzano, 1906, p. 73)
T7. Change the timing of the apparitional visitor.

The experience of a take-away apparition occurs not only in *articulomortis*, but also in the hours and days prior to death. Osis and Haraldsson (1977) found that in the Northeastern United States only 9% of such visions occur at the moment of death, while 60% precede death by more than 24 hours (p. 216). In the days before death, apparitions may offer assurance that "I'll be here when you come"; apparitions may promise to guide the dying person through the coming transition; they may offer comfort and solace; they may nudge the living to "come on"; etc.

A classic case in the literature is that of Daisy Dryden, a daughter of missionaries who died at age 10. For the three days prior to her death, she was in the regular company of her younger brother, Allie, who had died seven months before. Whenever Daisy felt uncertain about how her life would be in the "next world", she would ask Allie, and he would explain to her about heaven (Hyslop, 1918a).

T8. Change the purpose of the apparition.

Not all apparitions seen in life-and-death situations welcome the dying. Sometimes the hallucinatory figure "rejects the patient and forbids him to enter post-mortem existence" (Osis, 1961, p. 74). Although not everyone would describe this as an instance of "rejection", the cases in which a person is sent back to life are an important subset in the paradigm case formulation.
T9. Allow for an outcome inconsistent with the purpose of the apparition.

Not too surprisingly, being sent back to life by an apparition does not guarantee that a person will live, and answering a call to death, even from one's mother, does not necessarily mean that a person will die. The outcome may be at variance with the vision (cf. Osis & Haraldsson, 1977, p. 149).

Parapsychology Cases

A discussion of take-away apparitions would not be complete without some mention of "Peak in Darien" cases. When Cobbe (1882) wrote her classic essay on deathbed visions, she proposed that the dying stand on a "peak in Darien" from which they have a glimpse of the world beyond. From this vantage point, the dying may see friends who have gone before them unbeknownst to them. (The phrase is taken from a poem by John Keats, in which Keats describes how Cortez' men first saw the Pacific Ocean from a mountaintop in Darien.)

Cobbe and others believed that the dying saw only dead persons, so it was impressive to them when people on their deathbeds saw someone of whose death they were ignorant. Such cases seemed to meet the parapsychologists' criterion for communication of information to which the dying person had no access by ordinary means.

When Osis (1961) did his first survey, however, he found that dying people hallucinate the living as well as the dead. About
26% of his cases involved hallucinations of the living. As he states, "this cuts the ground from under the 'Peak in Darien' cases" (p. 64). He notes, however, that the purpose of the hallucinatory person is well matched to its status of "living" or "dead": Hallucinations of the living do not involve take-away purposes (p. 65). If this finding is borne out, that would give support to the Peak in Darien cases.

Parapsychologists were also interested in cases where the take-away apparition was collectively perceived. One case, frequently cited in review articles (e.g. Gauld, 1977, p. 606; Roll, 1982, p. 161), occurred at the death of Horace Traubel, biographer of Walt Whitman. A Col. Cosgrave was keeping watch at Traubel's bedside, where he and Traubel both saw Walt Whitman appear (Prince, 1963, pp. 144-150).

Several additional facts should be added, however. The collective perception occurred at about 3 a.m. on September 6, the third night that Cosgrave had kept a death watch with Traubel. At least since August 28, Traubel had been talking to those present about seeing Walt, hearing his voice, etc. But by September 6, Traubel was unable to speak due to paralysis. Given these facts, the compellingness of the case as an instance of collective perception vanishes. Nonetheless the fact that Col. Cosgrave saw Walt needs to be explained.
Analysis

When people approach graduation, they begin to lose their attachment to their high school or college world before their time there actually ends. Likewise, people approaching death begin to lose their attachment to this world before their time here comes to an end. By the time death is imminent, a person could hardly be related to the world in the same old way anymore (cf. Cumming & Henry, 1961). Ordinary real world requirements do not carry the same weight for the dying as for the living.

At the same time, being dead is unthinkable from an Actor perspective. People cannot really see themselves as having no further possibilities for behaving. The prospect of death creates a situation where a person has to have a world + x, i.e. a world in which behavior will continue to be possible. (Cf. "If, for a given observer, the real world is such that it would leave him in an impossible position, he will not see it that way. Instead, he will see it as a world that does have a place for him, and he will act accordingly." [Ossorio, 1976, p. 12a])

Given these facts, it is not surprising that people in extremis construct worlds-with-imaginary-companions. At this point in life, a person who has a relationship to a take-away apparition has "everything to gain" by virtue of this relationship, and little to constrain him or her by way of real world requirements.
It is also not surprising that people see objects or worlds in addition to imaginary companions. Non-religious people may draw on universal symbols of transition and use them in their world + x construction at the time of death (e.g. a boat to carry the person over). Religious people, who already have guidelines about what the "next world" is like, may simply expand their current world construction to encompass that "next world", however they believe it to be.

In the Paradigm Case, persons at the moment of death "choose" the take-away apparition over the living people beside them. From the perspective of the dying, going with the take-away apparition is more to the point than staying with the living. From the perspective of the observers at the bedside, reaching out to the take-away apparition may represent a final self-affirming act, in which the person uses up all his or her remaining potential rather than dribbling it away.

In the days prior to death, take-away apparitions may be status-enhancing in a variety of other ways. For example, the apparition who promises "I'll be here" gives a person a connection to whatever is on the other side, and hence behavior potential. The apparition who promises to be a guide through the valley of death increases behavior potential, because a person has more possibilities with a guide who knows the territory.

Apparitions also appear in situations of indecision and uncertainty, in which a person is faced with the issue of "Will I
live? Will I die?" Recall how imaginary companions in childhood sometimes appear in situations of moral indecision. By suddenly materializing on the scene, such companions help the child give appropriate weight to relevant circumstances and corresponding reasons in making his or her decisions. Take-away apparitions may serve a similar function, frequently reminding people "Your children need you", "You have unfinished business", etc. Alternately, apparitions may invite the person to leave behind all worldly cares, and the person may affirm for himself his reasons for living. Dialogues with take-away apparitions tend to be short and to-the-point, clarifying whatever is most salient in a life-and-death situation.

Take-away apparitions may also be part of a person's attempt to face the reality of death. Being in the company of someone who has departed is a simple way of claiming (some sort of) membership in the community of the dead, and may help make the imminence of death more real.

One noteworthy aspect of the take-away experience is the presence of music. Reviewing music cases from both the take-away literature and the near-death literature, it seems that music occurs when a person is released, e.g. from extreme pain (Noyes & Kletti, 1976b, p. 105); from cares and worries (Lundahl, 1982, p. 170); from anxiety (Kletti & Noyes, 1981, p. 10); from hassles with lawyers (Myers, 1903, p. 339); etc. Words may simply be inadequate to express the relief that comes when a person is at
last free of all mundane care, and hence music is used to express this relief.

Other aspects of the take-away experience — dying persons' lack of surprise at seeing the dead, their expectation that those around them should also see their visitors, and their lack of concern at some of the unusual locations of their visitors — may be understood in light of the relaxation of persons' reality constraints at the time of death.

Genuine Peak in Darien cases (if these exist) may also be understood in that light. Because ordinary reality constraints simply do not carry that much weight with someone dying, it is possible for a person in that state to be receptive to ideas that do not fit our usual reality, and to be free to respond to such information. The formulation therefore allows for the possibility that someone dying might realize by non-ordinary means that a loved one had died, and hallucinate that person as a take-away apparition. The cases on record, however, do not press strongly for such an explanation.

Cases of collective perception raise the issue of why an observer at the scene might also create a world-with-an-imaginary-companion. The parametric analysis may be used in understanding the survivor's creation just as well as the dying person's. For example, in the case of Col. Cosgrave seeing Walt Whitman:

1. The dying Traubel had been treating Walt's presence as real for 10 days, and this may have loosened up Cosgrave's givens
and options enough so that Walt's presence became a real possibility for him, too. Realizing his own mortality as he watched Traubel die ("My time is coming, too") may also have contributed to a loosening of reality constraints.

2. The assurance that Traubel would be joining Walt, the person he had valued most in life, may have helped Cosgrave to "let go" of Traubel and to go on with his own life.

3. Keeping a death watch alone throughout the night is a circumstance that may facilitate companion construction.

Some parapsychologists, of course, would take the position that collective perception of take-away apparitions is not simply the product of individual world construction, but rather is based on some sort of extrasensory input that influences what both people see. Once again the formulation allows for this possibility, but the available case material does not offer much support for it. Given that children may share their imaginary companions, perhaps adults faced with the presence of death may do the same.

Near-Death Experiences

There is a body of literature on near-death experiences (NDEs) which is related to, but separate from, the literature on deathbed visions. Because of space considerations, a thorough review of the near-death literature will not be presented here. Brief mention will be made, however, of some of the relationships
between spirits and presences seen in NDEs and take-away apparitions.

NDEs occur in at least three different contexts: (a) Persons may be suddenly in danger of death, e.g. climbers who fall from the face of a cliff or soldiers who fall in battle; (b) Persons may be unconscious and physiologically near death, e.g. cardiac arrest victims who are resuscitated; (c) Persons may believe their demise is imminent in the absence of physical proximity to death, e.g. during meditation.

The first set of cases — those involving potentially fatal accidents — have been studied by Noyes (1972) and Noyes and Kletti (1972, 1976a, 1976b). These authors report that after a period of intense mobilization in which accident victims do everything they can to save themselves, they generally shift to a detached position: they feel "like observers rather than participants in the events taking place" (1976a, p. 24).

Apparitions tend not to appear in these situations. Crookall (1961), who compared a group of accident victims to people facing "natural death", noted that none of the accident victims had "pre-death visions of discarnate friends" (p. 22). He explains this finding on the grounds that in unexpected death, "there is no time to 'call' friends who have 'gone before'" (p. 66).

An alternative explanation is that even though persons are faced with death, such circumstances are not conducive in other ways to companion creation. Because a person in such
circumstances first exhausts all Actor possibilities, the components of an accident-related NDE tend to be Observer phenomena, such as panoramic life review, feelings of oneness with the universe, etc. (cf. the Actor-Observer-Critic Schema, Ossorio, 1981d, pp. 58-59). Imaginary companions, however, are primarily Actor phenomena. As illustrated throughout this paper, imaginary companions appear in circumstances in which persons are likely to gain behavior potential by having them. Falling from a cliff, for example, is not such a circumstance.

The second group of NDE cases involves persons who have undergone medical emergencies and may have temporarily lost vital functioning. Upon regaining consciousness, persons describe having a range of experiences in this situation, such as states of bliss (Hunter, 1967); drifting in outer space (MacMillan & Brown, 1971); visions of paradise (Moody, 1975); being in hell (Grof & Halifax, 1977, p. 140); nothingness (Schnaper, 1980); and others. Encounters with deceased loved ones or with presences are also reported (Moody, 1975, pp. 55-58; Ring, 1980, pp. 67-68; Greyson & Stevenson, 1980, pp. 1194-1195; Sabom, 1982, pp. 46-50; Pasricha & Stevenson, 1986).

In understanding the range of experiences that people have during NDEs, dreaming in the world reconstruction sense may be taken as a model (cf. Roberts, 1985b). The particular details of the NDE simply reflect a person's formulation of what is happening to him or her "after death", i.e. in this strange world $+ x$. 

When a person is in this state, an interaction with a spirit or presence may have much the same significance as an interaction with a take-away apparition when a person is fully conscious, e.g. an affirmation of life's value, guidance in unfamiliar territory, reassurance that the person will not be alone, encouragement to "let go", etc.

Odd Fellows

Imaginary companions may appear to normal adults in a range of circumstances other than bereavement and death. For example, hospitalization experiences appear to be conducive to companion appearance even when people are not at death's door. Forrer (1960) notes that "benign hallucinations in people hospitalized for medical or surgical reasons are not infrequent", and gives as an example a woman who "saw" her mother sitting beside her bed (p. 95). Seifert and Clarke (1979) observe that people may not mention "a friendly visitor to a lonely sickbed for fear of being thought psychotic" (p. 56).

To my knowledge there is not a body of literature on sickbed companions in the way that there is for childhood companions, ghostly spouses, or take-away apparitions. The only study that I was able to find was published by an experimental psychologist describing his personal experience in the hospital prior to surgery (Goldstein, 1976).

Goldstein hallucinated a steady stream of relatives and friends visiting a patient in an adjacent room; his roommate's
wife caressing his roommate in the early morning light; two men in constant attendance at a bed nearby; and his own wife coming to visit him at a very early hour. Although Goldstein shies away from giving personal significance to his hallucinations, they seem to be an affirmation that people care about patients in the hospital, that others are concerned about what he and his fellow patients are going through.

Goldstein gave his imaginary people sufficient reality status so that he acted in relation to them. For example he reports that he did not click on the lamp in his hospital room for almost 30 minutes so as not to interrupt his roommate's morning caresses, even though he knew the situation was "absurd" (1976, p. 424). (Goldstein, by the way, waited 5 years before publishing his account in order to be sure that his hallucinations were not harbingers of psychosis.)

Imaginary companions are also reported by sailors, mountaineers, and arctic explorers when facing arduous conditions. ("When the going gets tough, the tough get imaginary companions.") Summaries of these reports are given by Lilly (1956); Solomon, Leiderman, Mendelson, and Wexler (1957); La Barre (1975, p. 14); Siegel (1977); and Seifert and Clarke (1979). One of the most famous cases, that of Captain Slocum's imaginary pilot, was presented in the introduction to this paper. A second example comes from Hannes Lindemann, who sailed alone across the Atlantic. Lindemann (1958) several times talked with a boy "from the west"
who appeared on his boat. The boy "knew where we had to go" and reassured Lindemann that he was on course (pp. 158-159; p. 171).

Imaginary companions may be collectively perceived by explorers, as described by Sir Ernest Shackleton in an account of his final trek in Antarctica with two other men. The men were exhausted at the start of the march, and knew that the country over which they crossed was considered impassable. They had to leave behind three men, two of whom were too weak to go further, so six lives depended on the self-discipline they could summon to get through.

Shackleton (1921) reports:

During that long and racking march of 36 hours over the unnamed mountains and glaciers of South Georgia it seemed to me often that we were four, not three. I said nothing to my companions on the point, but afterwards Worsley said to me: "Boss, I had a curious feeling on the march that there was another person with us." Crean confessed to the same idea.

(p. 164)

Because of the men's reluctance to talk about the "fourth man" in their party, it is hard to get a clear picture of what part the companion played. However the fact that the companion played a positive part is strongly indicated by Shackleton's remark that "Providence guided us" in connection with their companion (p. 164).
The Actor-Observer-Critic Schema may be used in understanding their fourth man (cf. Ossorio, 1981d, pp. 58-59). In the way that children sometimes improve their self-control by embodying the Critic in an imaginary companion, these explorers strengthened their self-discipline by embodying the Observer in an imaginary companion. The externalized Observer knew what the men were going through, and monitored the conditions and their progress along with them. The additional reality provided by this companion may have made it easier for the men to keep doing what they had to do to survive.

A variety of other difficult situations may be conducive to imaginary companions in normal adults (cf. Siegel, 1984). But adults' imaginary companions are not limited to adaptive ones. Just as with the imaginary companions of childhood, some adult companions are purely expressive, enabling adults to "do their own thing" in a way that they could not do otherwise.

The visions of William Blake are a classic example. In the years from 1819-1825 Blake drew a series of portraits of historical figures who "appeared" before him. Varley, a fellow artist and friend who was present at these "sittings", reported that Blake could not control his visions but rather had to draw whoever appeared. At times Blake ran into difficulties, like those he encountered while drawing Sir William Wallace:

Having drawn for some time, with the same care of hand and steadiness of eye, as if a living sitter had been before him,
Blake stopped suddenly, and said, "I cannot finish him —
Edward the First has stept in between him and me." (quoted in Keynes, 1971, p. 131).

Although nineteenth century accounts depict Blake as a lunatic in Bedlam (e.g., Boismont, 1860, pp. 86-88), modern Blake scholars take the position that Blake was "deliberately leading on his credulous friend" (Keynes, 1971, p. 134) and "humouring" Varley (Butlin, 1971, p. 58). Perhaps Blake simply had the great and famous for imaginary companions, and these relationships enabled him to do some extraordinary drawings.

Another example of an expressive companion is the daemon or guiding spirit of adults. Socrates, for example, "heard and obeyed an inner voice which knew more than he did" (Dodds, 1966, p. 185). And Carl Jung had his guiding spirit Philemon, who first appeared to him after his break from Freud in 1913. Jung (1965) states that Philemon "seemed to me quite real, as if he were a living personality. I went walking up and down the garden with him, and .... he conveyed to me many an illuminating idea" (pp. 183-184).

Jung (1965) goes on to relate that:
More than fifteen years later a highly cultivated elderly Indian visited me, a friend of Gandhi's, and we talked about Indian education — in particular, about the relationship between guru and chela. I hesitantly asked him whether he could tell me anything about the person and character of his
own guru, whereupon he replied in a matter-of-fact tone, "Oh yes, he was Shankaracharya."

"You don't mean the commentator on the Vedas who died centuries ago?" I asked.

"Yes, I mean him," he said, to my amazement.

"Then you are referring to a spirit?" I asked.

"Of course it was his spirit," he agreed.

At that moment I thought of Philemon.

"There are ghostly gurus too," he added. "Most people have living gurus. But there are always some who have a spirit for teacher." (p. 184)

Explanations

Explanations as to why normal people have imaginary companions run the gamut from physiological to transcendental. In this section I will review some of the major constructs that have been used in accounting for the imaginary companions of children and adults.

Brain Excitation

In the nineteenth century the British neurologist Hughlings Jackson proposed that the higher levels of the brain ordinarily inhibit the activity of lower brain centers. Hallucinations occur when this inhibitory mechanism is impeded, thereby releasing subcortical brain activity.

At least two of Jackson's contemporaries proposed related explanations in accounting for imaginary companion phenomena.
Clarke (1878) stated that the visions of the dying occur when the sensori-motor apparatus of the brain is "deprived of a coördinating centre" (p. 271). Without the controlling force of the brain, "old sensitized plates (cells) of memory" are reactivated and reproduced in the form of visions (p. 265). Harvey (1918) attributed the appearance of childhood imaginary companions to the "unusual strength of the centrally initiated impulse" within the brain of a child who sees an imaginary companion (p. 23).

In the twentieth century Louis West developed Jackson's ideas into the "perceptual release" theory of hallucinations and dreams. According to West (1975), "a sustained level and variety of sensory input normally is required to inhibit the emergence of percepts or memory traces from within the brain itself" (p. 301). If sensory input is decreased below a certain threshold, memory traces may be released and experienced as hallucinations. Likewise if arousal within the brain is increased above an optimal threshold (e.g. by drugs or overwhelming emotion), hallucinations may occur.

Siegel (1977, 1980) has applied West's perceptual release theory in explaining the imaginary companions of children, explorers, and the dying. He postulates that there is a shift in attention "from outward dimensions to inner private events" when people have companions. An impairment in brain functioning occurs with this shift, related to central nervous system excitation and
functional disorganization of the part of the brain that regulates incoming stimuli. In accounting for the common themes that occur in death visions, Siegel (1980) adds that these "arise from common structures in the human brain and nervous system, common biological experiences, and common reactions of the central nervous system to stimulation" (p. 927).

Wish Fulfillment

Freud (1953) hypothesized a mental apparatus consisting of the perceptual (Popt.), mnemonic, unconscious (Ucs.), preconscious, and motor systems, and he proposed two methods whereby this apparatus operated. In the reality-based method "there is a continuous current from the Popt. system flowing in the direction of motor activity" (p. 544). Whenever a need arises, a wish from the unconscious is activated which revives an image of a satisfying object from the mnemonic system. This image in turn guides motor activity so that satisfaction is found in the external world.

In earliest infancy, however, the system operates in the reverse direction. When the mnemonic image is revived, it is transmitted to the perceptual system where it appears as the hallucinatory fulfillment of the wish. Freud described the reality-based method as "progressive", i.e. moving towards the motor end of the apparatus, and the infantile method as "regressive", i.e. moving backwards toward the perceptual end (p. 542).
Freud used these distinctions in explaining dreams, visions, and hallucinations. He believed that the "force" behind all these phenomena is the infantile wish activated in the Ucs. When regression occurs in the mental apparatus, the unconscious wish is seen as fulfilled just as it was in early infancy.

In accounting for why the reality-based method of operating is abandoned in such cases, Freud stated that "it is a question of changes in the cathexes of energy attaching to the different systems" (p. 543). With dreams regression may be "facilitated by the cessation of the progressive current which streams in during the daytime from the sense organs" (p. 547). With visions and hallucinations the absence of this "accessory factor" must be made up for by other factors. For example the unconscious mnemonic images must possess "great sensory force", and the resistance opposing the progress of the image along the normal path must be intense (p. 547).

Freud's idea of wish fulfillment has been used by a variety of authors in explaining imaginary companions. For example, Ehrenwald believes that hallucinatory wish fulfillment is "responsible for the frequently reported visions of the patients' departed friends or relatives at their bedside" (p. 235). Twemlow and Gabbard (1984-85) suggest that beings who appear when people are near death may "represent infantile wishes for merger experiences with parental figures or relatives who have already died" (p. 231). Bach (1971) notes that when children share
imaginary companions, they are "brought together by a shared unconscious wish", and their companion represents the fulfillment of this shared wish (p. 161).

Archetypal Activation

Jung hypothesized that in addition to a personal unconscious, which contains memory traces from a person's individual life, there is also a collective unconscious, which contains the memory traces of the human race. People have encountered certain situations repeatedly through the ages, and their experiences in these situations have been engraved in the collective unconscious in the form of archetypes. An archetype is a universal form charged with energy. Under certain conditions an archetype may be activated, leading to its personification in consciousness. These personifications "always possess a certain degree of autonomy, a separate identity of their own" (Jung, 1965, p. 187). If they can be integrated into consciousness, archetypes help in the process of individuation.

Jung identifies isolation from other people as one circumstance conducive to the activation of archetypes. He notes that "our normal relations to objects in the world at large are maintained by a certain expenditure of energy" (1968, p. 49). If we are cut off from others or from our surroundings, there is a retention of energy in the psyche. This results in an animation of the psychic atmosphere as a compensation for the loss of contact with others. The collective unconscious is activated and
"produces something similar to the illusions and hallucinations that beset lonely wanderers in the desert, seafarers, and saints" (p. 49).

Wickes (1966) adds imaginary companions to this list, describing them as "products" of the collective unconscious (p. 204). Krishnan (1981) adds take-away apparitions. He notes that apparitions appear to have a will of their own because they are "products of the unconscious, which, as Jung has shown, is autonomous" (p. 10). Grosso (1981) offers the reminder that people see take-away apparitions of people they know, and suggests that "personal and transpersonal elements apparently co-exist" in such experiences (p. 55).

**Sensory Deprivation**

When Bexton, Heron, and Scott (1954) published the first report of hallucinations resulting from sensory deprivation (SD) procedures, isolation and lack of stimulation received renewed emphasis in discussions of some imaginary companions. The companions of explorers in particular were classified as sensory deprivation phenomenon (cf. Lilly, 1956; Solomon et al., 1957).

Take-away apparitions have also been discussed in this light. For example Zuckerman (1970) reports that state anxiety and a reclining position may facilitate hallucinations in some subjects. Siegel (1980) links the deathbed to these SD conditions (p. 925). Greyson and Stevenson (1980) report that take-away figures are more likely to appear as part of an NDE occurring at home or
outdoors rather than one occurring in a hospital or other public place (p. 1195). They explain this finding in terms of the "relative lack of sensory stimulation" at home or outdoors (p. 1196).

Notice that the circumstance of sensory deprivation relates to the three explanations discussed thus far. In the Jackson-West theory of hallucinations, a decrease in sensory input allows for the release of memory traces in the brain. In Freud's model, the cessation of the sensory stream facilitates the emergence of Ucs. memories. In Jung's theory, isolation facilitates the activation of racial memories. SD conditions should therefore be ideal for "releasing" the imaginary companions stored within us.

In fact the empirical research on sensory deprivation fails to show such a relationship. The hallucinations closest to an imaginary companion were reported by Curtis and Zuckerman (1968), who devote an entire article to one subject who "saw something that looked like the shape of a shoulder and felt the presence of someone in the room" (p. 256). They note, however, that this subject had become psychotic by the time of this experience.

The most complex hallucinations obtained in SD studies with normal subjects are scenes of a cartoonlike character, e.g. "a procession of squirrels with sacks over their shoulders marching 'purposefully' across a snow field" (Bexton et al., 1954, p. 74). Zuckerman (1970), in a review of 15 years of sensory deprivation
research, concludes that "most SD hallucinations are fleeting, impersonal phenomena of little dynamic significance" (p. 144).

**Fantasy in the Service of the Ego**

Freud himself did not find the wish fulfillment explanation he had proposed in 1900 sufficient in accounting for visions and hallucinations, and in 1917 he reexamined the issue of why people accept such perceptions as real. Freud (1957a) knew that hallucinations must "be something more than the regressive revival of mnemonic images that are in themselves Ucs." (p. 231). He therefore proposed that in the face of intolerable reality, the ego "breaks off its relation to reality; it withdraws the cathexis from the system of perceptions", allowing hallucinations to be accepted as real (p. 233). He concluded that hallucinations were possible in schizophrenia "only when the patient's ego is so far disintegrated that reality-testing no longer stands in the way" (p. 234).

In contrast to his emphasis on ego disintegration in the case of hallucinations, Freud kept the simple version of wish fulfillment in his treatment of fantasy. In a paper on daydreams, Freud (1959) wrote that "a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one. The motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality" (p. 146).

Ego psychologists have (therefore?) treated childhood imaginary companions not as hallucinatory phenomena, but rather
simply as fantasies (e.g. Fraiberg, 1959, p. 22; Murphy, 1962, p. 124). Nagera (1969) makes this quite explicit: "Like ordinary
daydreams, the imaginary companion fantasy is an attempt at wish
fulfillment .... The fantasying person remains fully aware of the
unreality of the fantasies that are being indulged in" (p. 194).

Ego psychologists postulate that imaginary companion
fantasies help the developing ego of the child gain control over
id impulses, master difficult situations, and cope with the
requirements of the external world. In explaining how this is
possible via fantasy, Fraiberg (1959) states: "It becomes easier
to tolerate the frustrations of the real world and to accede to
the demands of reality if one can restore himself at intervals in
a world where the deepest wishes can achieve imaginary
gratification" (p. 23). Nagera (1969) reiterates this idea both
by stating that imaginary companion fantasies "are temporary
measures compensating for a frustrating or difficult external
reality" (p. 189), and by ending his paper with Fraiberg's
explanation.

Like the imaginary companions of childhood, take-away
apparitions have been discussed as fantasies. Twemlow and Gabbard
(1984-85) link take-away apparitions to the fantasy that "there is
an ultimate rescuer (mother) who will prevent disaster" (p. 231).
They suggest that this fantasy serves as a defense against the
reality of death.
Arlow (1966), another ego psychologist, seems to give greater reality status to imaginary companions. In an explanation of depersonalization he distinguishes between the participating self and the observing self, and describes how the ego connects impulses that are dangerous or punishment-incurring with the participating self. The ego repudiates these impulses by dissociating itself from the participating self and by treating this self "as an object existing in the external world" (p. 476).

In a brief mention of imaginary companions, Arlow notes that imaginary companions may reflect a similar defensive splitting of the self. The ego wards off anxiety by associating unacceptable impulses with the imaginary companion, and by treating the imaginary companion as an object "which one can observe, describe, and even criticize, that is vulnerable to anxiety and punishment" (p. 476). Arlow's formulation of imaginary companions was elaborated by Myers (1976). Myers, however, seems to revert back to the traditional ego analytic approach of treating imaginary companions as fantasies.

Narcissistic Guardians

Heinz Kohut proposed that there is a separate line of narcissistic development running parallel to the phases of libidinal development described in traditional psychoanalytic theory. According to Kohut (1971), the original forms of infantile narcissism are the "grandiose self" and the "idealized parent imago". During development these undergo progressive
transformation until the grandiose self becomes a secure sense of self-esteem, and the idealized parent imago becomes the ego ideal.

This developmental process is aided by a series of self-objects. Self-objects are invested with narcissistic cathexis (as opposed to object libido) and serve to maintain inner equilibrium in the face of narcissistic injuries. Self-objects, like transitional objects as described by Winnicott (1953), are experienced as part of the self and exist in the "transitional zone of experience".

According to Winnicott (1953), inner and outer reality are two parts of the life of a human being, and the transitional zone of experience is a third part, "to which inner reality and external life both contribute" (p. 90). The transitional zone is "unchallenged in respect of its belonging to inner or external (shared) reality" (p. 97), and exists as a "resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related" (p. 90). The arts, religion, imaginative living, and creative scientific work all belong to this intermediate area of experience.

Kohut (1971) describes the imaginary companions of childhood as self-objects and notes that they may protect children from threats to their self-esteem (p. 252). Benson and Pryor (1973), Benson (1980), and Klein (1985) develop this idea. According to Benson (1980), imaginary companions are created by children, experienced as part of the self, and are under the complete and
total control of their creators. They exist in the transitional zone of experience and "permit the growing young person some immunity from the too soon and too stark realization of his limitations" (p. 262).

Benson (1980) adds that "all people, throughout the life cycle, are similarly faced with threats to their very sense of existence. It seems likely that the creation of narcissistic guardians may be found in all stages of the life cycle" (p. 263). To my knowledge take-away apparitions and ghostly spouses have not been identified as narcissistic guardians. But death has been seen as the ultimate narcissistic injury, and the loss of a person's "better half" as a severe narcissistic wound. Take-aways and ghostly spouses might therefore be included as narcissistic guardians by Kohutian theorists.

Vacuum Activity

Ethologists believe that the study of behavior patterns in species other than Homo sapiens may increase our understanding of human behavior, because humans are governed by the same biological principles as nonhuman animals. For example Bowlby has described how crying, searching, and protest behaviors are common across species who maintain attachments to their own kind. He believes that these instinctive behavior patterns have evolved to help the separated parties find each other and ensure their survival.

Instinctive behavior patterns may be divided into appetitive and consummatory sequences. Ethologists have noted that when
appetitive behavior is frustrated, consummatory behavior may occur even in the absence of the sought after object. "Sooner or later, in partial or complete form, the missing behavior sequence may take place in vacuo" (Parkes, 1972, p. 58).

Parkes has used the notion of vacuum activities in accounting for the behavior of widows and widowers. He postulates that "there is a sensori-motor 'set' which predisposes the individual to seek for and to find something, however tenuous, towards which consummatory behavior can be directed" (1970b, p. 198). He describes widows and widowers as engaging in the appetitive behavior of seeking for their deceased spouse. When this behavior is frustrated, they "find" the deceased spouse. Like the male stickleback who carries out its fertilization dance in an empty tank, or captive starlings who engage in fly-catching when no flies are present, widowed persons engage in consummatory behaviors in vacuo.

Postmortem Survival

Central to the hypothesis of postmortem survival is the notion that there is a world beyond this world where souls may continue to exist after death. In that world persons may inhabit a "subtle body" which survives the dissolution of their fleshly body, or they may exist as purely mental entities (cf. Gauld, 1977; Roll, 1982; Stevenson, 1982). Either way persons in the afterworld maintain some interest in their loved ones in this world.
Osis and Haraldsson (1977) hypothesize that at death people become aware of the afterworld. Through ESP the dying perceive that the souls of the deceased have come to help them make the transition to the next world. Take-away apparitions seem real "because of their correspondence with a kind of external reality that is not within reach of the perceptual organs" (p. 55).

Osis (1961) acknowledges that it is difficult to explain deathbed hallucinations of religious figures using the hypothesis of postmortem survival, because "in external reality the nonexistence of an anthropomorphic God, angels and devils is quite clear" (pp. 64-65). To my knowledge he does not offer an alternative explanation for these figures.

Critical Review

When people have imaginary companions in their worlds, there is some shift away from ordinary reality constraints, but most reality constraints continue to be operative. People cannot just say any old thing about their imaginary companions and get away with it. If they try to, the members of their community (family, peer group, colleagues, etc.) may treat what they say as laughable, incredible, out of touch, etc., according to the standards appropriate for the person's age, position, circumstances, etc.

Likewise when theorists create scientific explanations of phenomena, there are some reality constraints on what they may say. Theorists cannot just make up any old thing, or their
explanations may be criticized as being implausible, irresponsible, etc. The following four questions reflect some generally accepted standards for formally adequate scientific explanations:

1. Is the explanation plausible?
2. Can the explanation encompass all of the cases of the phenomena in question?
3. Does the explanation do justice to the observational facts that define the phenomena?
4. Does the explanation contribute to our understanding of the phenomena in non-trivial ways?

In general it seems obvious that the explanations of imaginary companions surveyed above are not of sufficiently high quality to warrant detailed attention. Instead examples will be given to illustrate the kinds of criticism that are applicable in light of the four questions stated here.

The explanation of narcissistic guardians may be taken as an example of the failure to meet the criterion of plausibility. According to this explanation imaginary companions are experienced as part of the self, are under the complete and total control of their creators, and are experienced as existing in an "imaginary realm". Even on the most superficial reading this explanation is implausible. Only in occasional instances are companions experienced as part of the self (e.g. the widow who said of her ghostly spouse "It's as if two people were one."); they are not
generally under the complete control of their creators; and they are usually experienced as existing in the real world. The explanation therefore does not have even *prima facie* validity. It does not qualify as an explanation of the phenomenon of imaginary companions but rather is an account of some other phenomenon.

The explanations of vacuum activities and postmortem survival may be used to illustrate the failure to account for the full range of cases. Both are ad hoc, designed to explain some particular cases without consideration of the wider range of related phenomena. Notice that the postmortem survival explanation even leaves some cases of take-away apparitions unexplained, not to mention other sorts of imaginary companions.

The notion of fantasy in service of the ego is exemplary of the failure to do elementary justice to the facts. In order to illustrate this, consider the following five facts about imaginary companions:

1. Hallucinations of imaginary companions resemble normal perceptions. Paradigmatically imaginary companions may be seen and heard as if they were living people. Such companions are therefore different from individuals that a person merely fantasizes about.

2. People engage in actual behavior in relation to their imaginary companions. This behavior paradigmatically takes place in the real world and not merely in someone's head.
3. Relationships to imaginary companions may last for many years.

4. Companions sometimes act in opposition to a person's wishes, e.g. take-away apparitions who come to get someone who does not want to die; childhood companions who scold children; etc.

5. Positive circumstances as well as adverse circumstances may be conducive to imaginary companions.

Redescriptions of companions as merely fantasy phenomena, or as temporary measures, wish fulfillments, or compensations for frustrating reality are inadequate to account for these facts.

The criticism of triviality may be raised in connection with any of the theories that redescribe imaginary companions in terms of otherworldly, hypothetical constructs, whether these be brain excitations, Ucs. memories, archetypes, etc. To explain imaginary companions by reference to hypothetical events in the world of physiology, to a hypothetical mental apparatus in the world of psychoanalysis, or to hypothetical energy forms in the collective unconscious, contributes little of value to our understanding of imaginary companions in the real world (cf. Ossorio, 1978b, pp. 188-204). In the absence of specific empirical evidence, the references to hypothetical processes or entities have much in common with homunculus explanations; they amount to little more than saying "There's this inner hypothetical thing that makes it happen and that's why it happens".
There is some irony in using imaginary entities to explain imaginary companions. Given the hypothetical nature of such constructs, as well as the suspension of real world requirements that seems to be in effect when they are used, the section on explanations might have been entitled "Imaginary Explanations". This was not done because the behavior potential that imaginary companions engender seems more meaningful than that engendered by imaginary explanations.

The critique presented here was designed to be illustrative but not exhaustive. All of the explanations fail in more than one of the ways that have been mentioned. In contrast, the conceptualization of companions as phenomena of world + x construction and reconstruction does not appear to fail in these ways. It is of sufficient scope, plausibility, and responsiveness to account for the facts people report about their companions. The notions of relaxing reality constraints and increasing behavior potential leave little question as to why a person might have an imaginary companion.

Operating with this understanding may make it possible to deal more sensitively and competently with children, the widowed, the dying, and others who have a companion of uncertain status.
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Appendix A

Empirical Studies of Imaginary Companions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<th>Data source(s)</th>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Incidence (%)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brittain</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Repeated interviews</td>
<td>13-20</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurlock &amp; Burstein</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>701</td>
<td>High school and college student questionnaire</td>
<td>15-40</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jersild, Markey, &amp; Jersild</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>Child interviews and school records</td>
<td>5-12</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svendsen</td>
<td>1934</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>Child, mother interviews and school records</td>
<td>3-16</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ames &amp; Learned</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>Parent interviews, behavioral observation, and clinic records</td>
<td>2-10</td>
<td>21.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schaefer</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>High school student biographical inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manosevitz, Prentice, &amp; Wilson</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>Parent questionnaire</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Case Studies of Imaginary Companions
## Appendix B

Case Studies of Imaginary Companions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data source(s)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Additional function(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Munroe</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Personal observation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ethical ideal towards which child is striving</td>
<td>Provide entertainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vostrovsky</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Personal reminiscences and observation reports</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Good playfellow; friend in need of help</td>
<td>Aggrandize the self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swett</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Personal observation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Supporting actor in child's moral drama</td>
<td>Tempt, castigate the child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harvey</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>Reports by psychology students</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Idea that becomes as vivid as a percept</td>
<td>Provide playmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>Contact with normal children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Daydream</td>
<td>Permit expression of instinctive motives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wickes</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>Work as a school psychologist</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Archetypal personification</td>
<td>Aid in the process of individuation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriman</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>Reports by psychology students</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Reflection of a creative impulse</td>
<td>Compensate for companion deprivation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bender &amp; Vogel</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>Observations on a child psychiatric ward</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Positive mechanism used in time of need</td>
<td>Compensate for deficits in parent-child relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piaget</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Personal observation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Symbolic game</td>
<td>Assimilate reality without the need of accommodate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Appendix B (Continued)

Case Studies of Imaginary Companions
## Appendix B (Continued)

### Case Studies of Imaginary Companions

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
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<th>Data source(s)</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Additional function(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sperling</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Child psychoanalysis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prestage [sic] of the superego</td>
<td>Preserve the illusion of omnipotence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fraiberg</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>Personal observation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Means for problem-solving</td>
<td>Master childhood fears; control naughty impulses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murphy</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Research on children's coping</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Coping device</td>
<td>Provide support during mother's absence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagera</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Child assessment; adult psychoanalysis</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Fantasy attempt at wish fulfillment</td>
<td>Compensate for losses; &quot;prop&quot; the superego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bach</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Personal observation; adult psychoanalysis</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Element in series of nipple-feces-penis-child</td>
<td>Preserve omnipotence; deny helplessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson &amp; Pryor</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>Retrospective report; adolescent psychotherapy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Narcissistic guardian</td>
<td>Provide &quot;self-mirroring with approval&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Myers</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>Adult psychoanalysis</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Splitting of the self-representations</td>
<td>Ward off anxiety</td>
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<tr>
<td>Klein</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Parental report</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Transitional self</td>
<td>Externalize and mirror aspects of the self</td>
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Appendix C

Experience of the Dead Person's Presence
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Incidence (%)</th>
<th>Mean time since death</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marris</td>
<td>1958</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>Young or middle-aged widows from London's East End</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hobson</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Widows in a small market town in the Midlands of England</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>[1/4-4 years]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yamamoto, Okonogi, Iwasaaki, &amp; Yoshimura</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Tokyo widows of men killed in car accidents</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>42 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>London widows referred for longitudinal study by GP's</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1 month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>London widows referred for longitudinal study by GP's</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>Entire widowed population of a well-defined area in Wales:</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>[Up to 40 years]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Widows</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Widowers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>Widowed in Boston:</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>[2-4 years]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Faced an unexpected death</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Death with longer notice</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Balk</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Illinois teenagers who had lost a sibling</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>23.6 months</td>
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<tr>
<td>Olson, Suddeth, Peterson, &amp; Egelhoff</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Residents of two NC nursing homes: Widows</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>[Not given]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Widowers</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix D

Bereavement Hallucinations
### Appendix D

#### Bereavement Hallucinations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Significant Incidence&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Incidence&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gorer</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>Cross section of Britishers who had lost a relative</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clayton, Desmarais, &amp; Winokur</td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Relatives of patients who died in St. Louis hospitals</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkes</td>
<td>1970</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>London widows interviewed 1 month post-bereavement</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.1&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>Entire widowed population of a well-defined area in Wales</td>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>14.0&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>226</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 20 years</td>
<td>16.8</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>67</td>
<td></td>
<td>&gt; 20 years</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clayton, Halikas, &amp; Maurice</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>Surviving spouses in St. Louis interviewed at 1 month</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bornstein, Clayton, Halikas, Maurice, &amp; Robins</td>
<td>1973</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Surviving spouses in St. Louis interviewed at 13 months</td>
<td>Depressed</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>76</td>
<td></td>
<td>Non-depressed</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glick, Weiss, &amp; Parkes</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Young Boston widows studied longitudinally</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson, Suddeth, Peterson, &amp; Egelhoff</td>
<td>1985</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Widows residing in two NC nursing homes (mean age = 80)</td>
<td></td>
<td>47.8&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>May include visual, auditory, and tactile hallucinations.  
<sup>b</sup>Visual hallucinations only.
Author Notes

The quality of this paper has been significantly improved by the critical comments of Dr. Peter G. Ossorio, and I gratefully acknowledge his help.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Interlibrary Loan Department of Norlin Library for their help in obtaining many hard-to-find books and articles for me.

Address: Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Program, 10400 East Alameda Avenue, Denver, Colorado 80231.
Footnotes

1 Some theorists also distinguish between hallucinations and pseudo-hallucinations. Hallucination has been defined since the time of Esquirol as a perception that occurs in the absence of a corresponding external stimulus. Pseudo-hallucination, however, has been given contradictory definitions. Jaspers (1963) defined pseudo-hallucinations as "not really perceptions but a special kind of imagery" (p. 68). According to Jaspers, pseudo-hallucinations are seen by an "inner eye" and occur in "inner subjective space" (p. 69). Sedman (1966), on the other hand, defined pseudo-hallucinations as perceptions "recognized by the subject not to be a true perception" (p. 45). Hare (1973) and Taylor (1981) comment on the incompatibility of these definitions and attempt to clarify the concept.

2 Nathan A. Harvey (1918) was recognized as an authority in the field of imaginary companions for many years. It may have been more than coincidental that Mary C. Chase named her imaginary white rabbit "Harvey" when she wrote her play by that name in 1943/1944. Unfortunately Mrs. Chase is deceased, and her husband does not know where she got the name (Robert L. Chase, personal communication, June 1, 1987).

3 At least one author (with tongue-in-cheek) suggests that marital disharmony contributes to apparitions. Thomas Nashe, who published an essay called "The Terrors of the Night, or, a Discourse on Apparitions" in 1594, notes:
A number of men there be yet living, who have been haunted by their wives after their death, about forswearing themselves, and undoing their children, of whom they promised to be carefull fathers; whereof I can gather no reason but this, that Women are borne to torment a man both alive and dead. (cited in Finucane, 1984, p. 95)

4The studies by Osis (1961) and Osis and Haraldsson (1977) have been criticized for sampling bias. Osis had only a 6% response rate from 10,000 physicians and nurses surveyed nationally in 1959-1960, and a 20% response rate from 5000 physicians and nurses surveyed in the Northeastern United States in 1961-1964. The representativeness of the data for the U.S. population as a whole is not a particular problem here, however, because the data is used only to contribute to a fuller description of the phenomena.

5An irony of the SD research is that the original study of Bexton, Heron, and Scott (1954) was not on sensory deprivation; it was on brainwashing. At that time the researchers were not permitted to report that their subjects listened to "propaganda" records dealing with "telepathy, clairvoyance, ghosts, poltergeists, and psychical research" after they had been in isolation for about 18 hours (Heron, 1961, p. 11). Even under these conditions, not a single imaginary companion was reported.

6There is a series of case studies in which hallucinations are described as hysterical or conversion symptoms (Levinson,
1966; McKeeney, 1967; Fitzgerald & Wells, 1977; Modai, Sirotta, Cygielman, & Wijsenbeek, 1980). In part because of Freud's hypothesis of ego disintegration in cases of hallucination, the authors of these case studies go to some lengths to affirm that their patients' egos were intact. Two of the authors liken hysterical hallucinations to the imaginary companions of childhood (e.g. Levinson, 1966, pp. 20-21; Fitzgerald & Wells, 1977, p. 382).