

Book Review
An Elusive Poltergeist Investigation

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The Elusive Force: A remarkable case of poltergeist activity and psychokinetic power
by Anna Ostrzycka and Mark Rymuszko (translated by Joel Stern), 2023. Anomalistic Books.
ISBN-13: 978-194950126. 174 pages. \$14.95.

In 1989, Anna Ostrzycka and Marek Rymuszko published *Nieuchwytna Siła* with Roj of Warsaw, Poland. This 102-page book included over 20 pages of supplemental photographs and images to support an extensive report of investigations of a potential poltergeist agent, Joanna Gajewska, that began in 1983 in Sosnowiec, Poland and continued through 1986 as the young girl and her family moved to different apartments in an attempt to escape the disturbing activity that seemed to follow them.

Joel Stern, having a background in translation from Polish to English, faithfully created an English version of this amazing story in 1989 with the plans for immediate publication. Those plans were delayed until 2023 when Anomalist Books recovered the translated text and published the translation as *The Elusive Force*. With a forward by Richard Broughton from 1991, this book presents a fantastic description of poltergeist phenomena that exceeds any individual investigation that has been described by parapsychologists in the past.

Joanna Gajewska, referred to as Joasia throughout the book, was a thirteen-year-old Polish school-girl in 1983 when she became ill with a very high fever. In April of that year, astounding paranormal events began to occur around the young girl, and her family sought help from a local physician and eventually the police department to assist them in understanding or eliminating the events which were growing in intensity and becoming dangerous for the girl and her family. The initial report reads more like science fiction than a scientific report.

At three o'clock in the morning while the girl was sleeping, "objects began flying through the air, mostly plates and glasses" (p.3), smashing into walls and furniture, leaving the room littered with dangerous debris. Lit matches were seen floating through the air and falling to the floor presenting a danger of fire in the room. Shards of glass and China rose from the floor and flew at the young girl producing cuts on her body, and the blanket covering her became electrically charged and would throw off sparks when anyone tried to remove it.

The family sought the assistance of their neighbor who later described the activity using calm and

measured language with the precision of a trained observer.

“...I returned there and saw glasses, plates, pots, and lots of other objects smashing into the wall. The noise was unbelievable.

Q. You saw objects flying?

A. Not flying, only when they hit the wall. Nobody was in the room; Mrs Gajewski and her daughter were standing with me in the doorway. Those dishes must've been flying incredibly fast, because you couldn't see them until they dropped.” (p. 4)

These phenomenal events caught the attention of the local media, and there was extensive journalistic coverage in many newspapers and other media outlets of the time. The authors, who were both journalists, describe the media coverage as sensationalist in tone, and they chose to report on the *real* story which would appropriately describe the activities and events.

In the beginning, most of the reports came from family members and other witnesses who discussed the incredible speed of the objects as they were propelled through the air, but some included reports of tea cups gliding through the air, full of liquid, leaving a trail of tea on the floor (p. 9). Faucets would unscrew by themselves, cords would wind themselves around electrical devices, and heavy furniture would spin in circles before toppling to the ground.

In May of 1983, Dr. Eustachiusz Gadula took an interest in the case and started an investigation into the activity and the health of the young girl. Dr. Gadula was the head of a medical facility, and he had an interest in paranormal events. With limited funding, he somehow was able to amass a team of experts in the field of metallurgy, radiology, medicine, and psychology to perform extensive investigations of Joasia. The reports from these professionals were not only astounding, but also amazingly consistent in tone, depth, and support for the unusual phenomena.

The research team continued to observe and report unbelievable events including objects passing through walls, the destruction of plumbing and other household objects, injuries to Joasia, and even medical instruments flying through the air producing a threat of harm to nurses and attendants during a medical procedure. When the team ran out of money in 1985, the investigation was reduced to limited visits with Dr. Gadula and continuing reports of activities from Joasia and her family members.

Despite nearly two years of detailed examinations and attention from top professionals in numerous fields, this book contains no references to published documents or articles. There are extensive interviews with named professionals including segments of transcripts from their interviews with the authors and other journalistic agencies. All of the people interviewed described incredible activity, most of which goes beyond activity that has been documented in the most active poltergeist cases described by parapsychologists. Although they observed events that would normally be considered impossible, the tone of each interview was strictly professional and each had a consistent level of detail that would normally be a sign of careful editing.

The activity reportedly continued until nearly 1990 when Joasia turned 20, changed her name, and began a life outside of the spotlight of the popular media. She had been invited to tour the world with Dr. Gadula to give lectures on the activity and describe the scientific investigation that had been completed, but she declined this offer in order to pursue a more private life.

This translation of the original book includes follow-up information through 2015 which includes a few paragraphs from an interview with Joasia in 1989 where she describes her acceptance of the activity as part of her life. The book has two appendices. The first appendix presents hypotheses and theories of poltergeist activity from academic experts, mostly in Poland. The theories discuss bio magnetic energies, small, localized Einstein-Rosen type black holes that appear spontaneously to allow object to slip through dimensional portals, quantum processes, gravitational waves, and examinations of cell potentials and brain activity. The final appendix is a discussion of PK with Dr. Gyorgy Egely, the inventor of the famous Egely wheel which has been used to observe potential PK effects in laboratory studies.

Evaluation

Poltergeist activity in the United States is normally described as a result of recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis (RSPK) originating with a poltergeist agent. Many modern poltergeist reports focus on identifying the agent of the activity and determining the origins of the events, but the main focus of modern poltergeist investigations is the elimination of activity to relieve the experiencers and their families of the anxiety and stress that accompanies these unexplainable events. It is a research philosophy that puts people first and addresses the needs of the experiencers before the ambitions of the researchers.

From a shower of stones which frightened the Roman army around 218 B.C. to a case reported in 1525 at a house of nuns, early reports included flying objects, noises, and touching by unseen entities (Gauld & Cornell, 1979). Continued investigations into the modern era describe objects that seem to move on their own and sometimes break or shatter (e.g., Pratt & Roll, 1958; Roll & Joines, 2013), and more recent explorations discuss electrical interference and malfunctioning devices (e.g., Morris, 1986; Kruth & Joines, 2016). These activities and events have been carefully observed, recorded, documented, and published in peer-reviewed journals by trained observers. There is no doubt that poltergeist activity occurs and many cases appear to be the result of a PK agent who is at the center of the activity.

The story of Joasia Gajewska began in 1983 and throughout six years of intense observation and examination, this story contains nearly every aspect of the poltergeist phenomena that have been observed in the published literature. It also provides speculation about the mechanisms for the poltergeist including the popular notion that these events occur with greater frequency in teenage girls as they approach puberty. Although each of the reported phenomena have been described in other cases (objects moving independently, water appearing spontaneously, loud noises, metal bending, furniture moving, injuries to the suspected agent), the extensive number and variety of events in this case are more reminiscent of a science fiction film from the 1970s than a professional scientific report.

Summaries and translations: There have been a number of English summaries of this investigation published since the original report in 1989, but nearly every one contains only a few sentences and has been produced as a result of a summary of the original publication. Two longer published reports by pro-

fessional researchers (Broughton, 1991; Bugaj, 1996) were produced from an unpublished version of this translation (Stern, J. personal communication) or from popular reports in the Polish media and interviews with the original author (Bugaj, 1996).

In a phone conversation in 2023, the translator, Joel Stern, confirmed that the translation was completed in 1989 but was not published at that time. The translation was true to the original language and tone, including a direct translation of all of the interviews and discussions with witnesses and investigators. There are times where an editor might modify the language of a translation or remove references to make the book more accessible to the intended audience, but Stern indicated that the text of the translation was true to the original Polish publication and that there were no references removed. An examination of the original publication in Polish shows no references and cites no articles that are not included in the translated edition.

Conclusions

The case of Joasia Gajewska is one of the most phenomenal reports of long-lasting poltergeist activity that has ever been published. Because the authors are journalists, their presentation of the activity is neatly described from its inception with a childhood illness in 1983, through the intense investigation of paranormal phenomena by leading researchers and scientists for nearly two years, to its conclusion in 1989 where Joasia comes to accept the activity as a normal part of life. It reads like a well-structured work of fiction that is peppered with transcripts from interviews with some of the leading scientist in Poland who all confirm and are mystified by the events that they observed.

A case of this magnitude should have been explored by researchers in great detail over the decades since it was reported, but it seems to have been bypassed by paranormal enthusiasts and professional scientists around the world. Though I do not speak Polish, my exchanges with Polish-speaking researchers and colleagues indicate that they found no professional publications produced by any of the scientist that were quoted in this book and that none of them have independently reported on events that they described as some of the most phenomenal and unexplainable activity that they have ever observed. If it were not for the popular media descriptions of these events, there would be no independent supporting documentation for the activity described in this book.

Unlike others who are quick to dismiss a book of this sort as an extremely creative fictional account that is sure to capture a popular audience with its journalistic writing style and extraordinary paranormal phenomena, my instincts do not allow me to completely dismiss that which is unknown or previously unobserved. A number of people have professed to have seen incredible events associated with Joasia, and if only a few of them are accurately described, they are worthy of further investigation.

Unfortunately, this book does not provide any supporting evidence for the incredible events. There are no publications referenced and there has been no independent investigation of the case which confirmed the descriptions included in this publication. As an academic work, this book would be rejected by nearly any professional peer-review process as a series of interesting stories that have not been professionally researched and reported.

It is possible to examine these events as a qualitative description of the experiences of Joasia and the people who surrounded her from 1983-1989, but in the context of other reported events, formal qualitative analyses would have to compare these reports with other poltergeist reports. I will leave it to others who might wish to perform a more formal analysis to determine if this case is appropriate to include in a study to learn more about the poltergeist phenomena.

The story of Joasia Gajewska is captivating and will engage the curiosity of many paranormal enthusiasts who are unfamiliar with poltergeist investigations. To a professional researcher of these phenomena, the story is mildly engaging and could be interpreted as a missed opportunity.

Any phenomena that is this extreme could have been captured on film even in the 1980s, and professional reports should have been completed in order to provide integrity to the story. Without the necessary components to produce a scientifically supported report, many people will interpret this story as nothing more than a work of fiction that will harm the work of professional poltergeist investigators due to the extreme exaggeration and narrative presentation that is more designed to entertain than to inform.

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