

## BOOK REVIEW

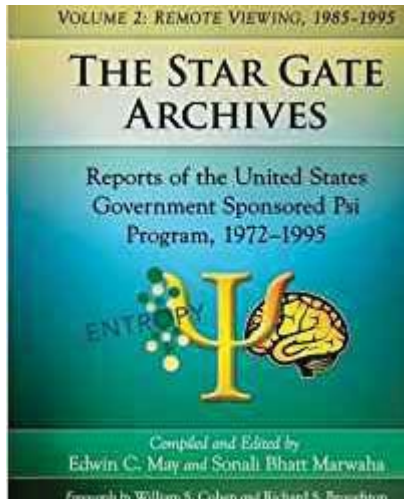
**The Star Gate Archives. Volume 2: Remote Viewing, 1985–1995** compiled and edited by Edwin C. May and Sonali Bhatt Marwaha. McFarland, 2018. 614 pp. \$95.00 (paperback). ISBN 9781476667539.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31275/2019.1533>  
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The parapsychological research by Harold Puthoff, Russell Targ, and their colleagues at SRI International during the 1970s and early 1980s was covered in my review of *The Star Gate Archives Volume 1* (Mörck 2018). This was an explorative period during which focus was on applications. Targ had to leave in 1982, and Puthoff, the director of research, left in 1985; one of the Editors, Edwin May, became the new director of research. During the 1980s and early 1990s much basic research was conducted and oversight increased. Among the members of the oversight committees were Daryl Bem, Robert Morris, Melvin Schwartz, and Philip Zimbardo. Comments from the Scientific Oversight Committee are attached to some of the reproduced documents. The names used for the program between 1985 and 1995 were Dragoon Absorb, Sun Streak, and Star Gate. Volume 2 consists of a collection of unclassified reports and declassified documents. The anthology also includes nine appendixes, a list of abbreviations, an extensive glossary, an author index, and a subject index. Brief comments about all reproduced documents can be found in the volume's Introduction.

### The Backstory

During the 1960s, U.S. intelligence agencies learned that parapsychological research was once again undertaken in the Soviet Union after a long hiatus. In America parapsychology was regarded as a taboo topic (Murphy 1963), but the fifth attempt by the Parapsychological Association to become affiliated with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) was successful in 1969. Subsequently, during the 1970s parapsychologists presented papers at AAAS symposiums (Ventola 2016) but continued to feel mistreated when they submitted papers to its journal *Science* (McClenon 1984, see also May 2009). Within the intelligence community parapsychology was controversial, but due to the developments in the Soviet Union it was deemed necessary to assess whether psychic abilities were of any real use.



The parapsychologist Richard Broughton recalls the 1970s: “. . . there was a palpable sense of excitement that real breakthroughs were not far off” (p. 2). Inspired by an article brought to their attention by Tart (1969), William Braud, Charles Honorton, and Adrian Parker conducted ganzfeld studies (more about those later). Tart (1969) also sparked interest in lucid dreams, that is dreams in which one knows that one is dreaming. Stephen LaBerge studied lucid dreams during the 1970s—his findings were too extraordinary for the journal *Science*

(Blackmore 2005:140).

In the 1980s books concerning an alleged psychic arms race between America and the Soviet Union appeared (e.g., Ebon 1983, McRae 1984), and Jack Anderson wrote about it in *The Washington Post*. There was a mixture of fact and fiction in the literature (Krippner 1984, McRae 1992). Due to congressional interest in parapsychology, a report was written (Dodge 1983)—this provoked Paul Kurtz, Chairman for the Committee for Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP), to claim “. . . it has never been clearly demonstrated that extrasensory perception has any practical applications nor has it been clearly demonstrated to exist in the laboratory” (Kurtz 1984:239). In 1984 CSICOP arranged a panel devoted to the psychic arms race, which made it clear that Philip Klass, Fellow of CSICOP and editor of *Aviation Week*, was as oblivious about what was really going on despite his contacts (Frazier 1985). However, now anyone sufficiently interested can learn many of the facts.

### Introduction

In one of the Forewords, former Senator William Cohen remarks that “Information is power and we should remain dedicated to exploring just how powerful mankind’s mind is—and can be” (p. 1). Broughton has also written a Foreword, in which he puts the research in context. The Forewords and May’s brief Preface are the same as in Volume 1. However, the Editors have written a new Introduction and stress that “. . . in the history of psi research, the Star Gate program is the largest funded sustained research program, with substantial oversight” (p. 15). Some claim that it was a CIA

program but this is simply not true—the CIA ceased funding the research in the 1970s. During the period covered by Volume 2, 1985–1995, most funds came from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command (USAMRDC). The closure of the program in 1995 receives little commentary in the Introduction, but much has already been written about it (e.g., May, Rubel, & Auerbach 2014).

After the closure of the program, the *Journal of Scientific Exploration* published articles about the research that had been conducted (Vol. 10, No. 1, <https://www.scientificexploration.org/journal/volume-10-number-1-1996>). Most skeptics paid little attention to the research; however, Marks (2000) wrote critically about it. In addition, Wiseman and Milton (1998, 1999) commented on a study that is reproduced in Volume 2 (pp. 495–502; Lantz, Luke, & May 1994)—May (1998) responded. The controversy concerned who did what and possible flaws. It reminds parapsychologists of the need to carefully document how a study is conducted.

### **The Research**

The focus in Volume 2 is on remote viewing (RV) research. According to the Glossary: “RV refers to the methodological procedures used in an experimental design in which a percipient attempts to describe [a target or] the surroundings of a target that is distant in time and space” (p. 606). The anthology is a hefty (614 pages), wide-ranging tome; it is not possible to cover everything in this review. The papers are arranged chronologically, but it is not necessarily a good idea to read them in that order. The book includes papers about how to evaluate RV, target pools, meta-analyses, experiments, overviews, and protocols. Several lines of research were pursued—I provide commentary about some of them.

An important question was naturally whether the quality of RV can be enhanced with training. In Volume 1 the reader was exposed to the psychic Ingo Swann’s training methodology; in Volume 2 we get an account from another RVer, Gary Langford. Unfortunately, despite the research conducted, the usefulness of RV training remains unclear and Swann’s training has been subject to severe criticism (May, Rubel, & Auerbach 2014).

### **The Personality Assessment System**

In the 1980s, the researchers collaborated with David Saunders, known for his UFO research and his work on the Personality Assessment System (PAS). The PAS is a complicated instrument, originally developed within the CIA by John Gittinger (Marks 1979). It is “. . . a comprehensive

interpretive framework for profiles of subtest performances that have been generated by the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)” (p. 114). The PAS did not have a great following in academia and was still undergoing changes in the 1980s. The researchers at SRI International wanted to use the PAS to learn more about what characterizes good RVer. Both Volume 1 and 2 include papers about this. Saunders (1986) summarized the findings in a presentation at an annual convention of the Parapsychological Association. A brief critical review of the PAS was written by a consultant, Ralph Kiernan. The researchers’ reaction to this suggest that they were a bit protective of the PAS (see p. 107, p. 123). However, a later review concluded that the main value of the PAS was “descriptive, rather than predictive, until a larger database of reliable psi performers is accumulated” (p. 130); Saunders agreed (p. 133). In the Introduction the Editors conclude: “Personality assessment measures have not proved to be effective methods for identifying people with good remote viewing skills” (p. 16).

### **Mass Screening**

The Editors argue that the best method to identify good RVer is to test them. However, the results of two reproduced mass screening studies, from the late 1980s, suggests that one should not expect to find many people who test well. The participants were tested in two stages, first in a group setting, then individually—“this screening procedure is a labor-intensive and time-consuming method” (p. 355). In the first study 196 individuals were tested in a group setting and 19 were invited to participate in further testing (the exact numbers vary)—9 underwent further testing, and the results, although non-significant, suggested that 3 of them might be good RVer. In the second study 256 individuals were tested in a group setting—8 were good enough to warrant further testing. No information about the potentially good RVer is provided. Once good RVer have been identified, the Editors recommend May’s (1994) guidelines for RVer certification, which are reproduced. However, given the results, the trouble for many researchers might well be finding individuals worth working with.

### **Precognition**

In some studies, performance on real-time RV trials was compared with performance on precognitive RV trials. Joseph McMoneagle (1997) has acknowledged that he was RVer 372; he participated in one of these experiments. At the time he had expressed a strong preference for the outbouncer protocol which requires a person to travel to the target and act as a beacon. Some refer to this person as a sender, but the researchers at

SRI International thought this term was inappropriate (see Targ, Puthoff, Humphrey, & May 1980)—his purpose is just to define the target area. When the experiment was conducted in 1987, McMoneagle was an experienced RVer and had “demonstrated significant RV performance” (p. 179) in prior studies with the outbunder protocol. However, this time he was less successful. Post hoc, the researchers suggest that the study was underpowered; they also note that feedback was given after more than two hours, in earlier studies feedback was given sooner. Two other experiments were conducted, with four RVer participating in each, in which performance on real-time trials was compared with performance on precognitive trials. Unfortunately, in one of them there was little evidence of psi. In the other, the level of feedback was varied; although there was evidence of psi for two RVer, the result is perplexing. One RVer appeared to perform worse and one seemed to perform better when the amount of feedback increased. Disappointing results, especially given the amount of time required for these two later experiments—each RVer “. . . had to produce 70 remote viewings in approximately 80 days” (p. 181).

### ***Psi and the Brain***

The researchers followed up on earlier work: EEG studies with the psychic Hella Hammid (originally brought in as a control subject). They conducted a conceptual replication, though using new stimuli and participants. Additionally, this time an MEG (magnetoencephalography) was used. In simple terms, a participant (the sender) is exposed to stimuli, in this case sinusoidal grating light flashes, and another participant’s (the receiver’s) brain activity is expected to react. The papers concerning this line of research are technical and the results are confusing. There were 8 participants in the first study conducted at Los Alamos National Laboratory; two papers cover this (oddly, the descriptions and the designations of the subjects are inconsistent). The environment was not particularly psi-conducive, the subjects had to lie facedown on a wooden table in darkness for about 30 minutes. One thing was clear, the receivers could not tell when the senders were stimulated. The other results were either inconsistent or could have been due to an artifact, electromagnetic interference. A replication study was conducted in 1992: “. . . the 1988 study did not replicate” and “earlier results appear to be spurious” (p. 452). The researchers later suggested that the stimulus might have been inappropriate (p. 480). Finally, an EEG study was conducted: Data from 21 out of 70 trials had to be discarded, and although there was evidence for psi no changes in brain activity were observed. These experiments must have been very costly to conduct and the results were disappointing.

### **Hypnosis**

Three explorative studies were conducted in the late 1980s to examine if hypnosis could be used to enhance the quality of RV. In total, four RVer participated, but just one or two in each study, and two different protocols were tested. One protocol brings to mind old attempts to induce traveling clairvoyance by hypnosis. Unfortunately, except for one RVer, the effect sizes post-hypnosis were negative and non-significant. More interesting is that the Stanford Hypnotic Susceptibility Scale was used to assess hypnotizability; three RVers “. . . rated in the highly susceptible range and one in the medium to high range” (p. 312). In addition, several good RVers who did not participate also scored high. Perhaps this is characteristic of good RVers? This makes sense if engaging in RV puts the RVers in an altered state of consciousness.

### **Lucid Dreams**

In the early 1990s, the researchers collaborated with Stephen LaBerge and conducted a pilot study to examine whether percipients could gain access to targets through lucid dreams. Three experienced lucid dreamers and four RVers participated; all slept in their own homes. The targets were in sealed opaque envelopes and were provided to the participants one at a time. After having had a lucid dream during which the target was observed, the percipient wrote down her perceptions and made drawings and then submitted the target envelope and her response to May—he then sent her the target as feedback and a new target envelope. Marks (2000) wrote: “This procedure is an abomination of a study, and . . . can be ruled out on methodological grounds” (p. 90).

Careful reading reveals that the percipients were originally expected to provide responses to six targets and that the study ran for six months. Given this, the fact that three percipients were experienced lucid dreamers, training to induce lucid dreams was provided, and the DreamLight (a lucid dream induction device) was utilized, the result is disappointing—just 21 trials had been completed when the study was terminated. One percipient quit because DreamLight gave him migraine headaches (Smith 2002). However, there was significant evidence for psi that encouraged a follow-up in a sleep laboratory. McMoneagle (2002) has written about this and how unnerving it can be for the percipient to experiment with lucid dreams, but perhaps some researchers wish to continue this line of research.

### **Applications**

At this point the reader might well wonder if any good came out of the Star Gate program. The Editors provide their answer in the Introduction. Among the claimed successes, they include “a host of practical applications” and “a research methodology” to elicit “high quality psi nearly on demand” (p. 22)—bold claims; however, they provide no details. McMoneagle is world-renowned as a good RVer and not without reason (e.g., see McMoneagle & May 2004), but is it really because he learned to RV with an encouraging monitor? Frankly, there is much evidence for psi and RV, but I have certainly not seen convincing evidence for these two claimed successes.

Two trials with McMoneagle (conducted in 1987 and in 1988) remind the reader of why intelligence agencies tasked RVerS. The reproduced papers about them are brief, but include transcripts and drawings. In both cases, the outbouncer protocol was used once again. McMoneagle got some feedback after the first trial, but he did not get to see the targets until approximately six months after the first trial, and about one month after the second trial. The reason for the six-month delay is unknown—the monitor started the first RV session by saying that they had extensive photos and information about the site in a safe (p. 236). Although McMoneagle produced some erroneous data, some descriptions and drawings are certainly interesting. All data could not be analyzed, because most of the tape recordings from three of the eight RV sessions were lost due to technical problems. Furthermore, the results are difficult to evaluate, partly because the person acting as the beacon was not at the site of interest (Site 300 at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory) during two real-time RV sessions. Nevertheless, the results are sufficient to make intelligence agencies ponder the usefulness of RV. In addition, the results made the researchers start examining the influence of entropy on RV performance. That said, May notes:

Long-standing difficulties in applying the RV phenomena to intelligence applications are at least twofold. In a lengthy response, those elements of genuine intelligence significance must be identified *a priori*. Second, even excellent examples of remote viewing do not necessarily imply intelligence usefulness. (p. 327, emphasis in the original)

### **Ganzfeld Studies**

The amount of parapsychological research that was conducted thanks to subcontracts is noteworthy. A list of subcontractors is given in an appendix; among them were William Braud, Julian Isaacs, Charles Honorton, and Rhea White. In 1967, Honorton left J. B. Rhine and the Institute for Parapsychology; he went on to work at Maimonides Dream Laboratory. In

1979 together with James S. McDonnell he established the Psychophysical Research Laboratories in Princeton, New Jersey. However, PRL had to close in 1989. Honorton joined Robert Morris at the University of Edinburgh in 1991. While there, he and Morris received subcontracts for ganzfeld research. Honorton explains:

A homogeneous visual field (ganzfeld) is produced through diffusion of a bright light source over translucent hemispheres covering the receiver's eyes. Homogeneous auditory stimulation is produced by white noise through headphones. (p. 529)

The idea was that this would help the subject get into a psi-conductive state. The Editors have reproduced five reports about ganzfeld research. The first report is a meta-analysis by Honorton, apparently unpublished. The remaining papers are a research protocol, a report by Morris on a study that was still ongoing (the completed study was presented by Morris, Dalton, Delanoy, & Watt 1995), and two papers that were later published in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (Dalton et al. 1996, Honorton 1997).

### Summary

These expensive *Star Gate Archives* volumes are not meant to just include the best evidence, rather they are meant to show “the good, the bad, and the indifferent” (p. 5). Perhaps the most important contribution from the research concerns methodology, protocols, how to construct target pools, and how to evaluate RV. The researchers started with the assumption that psi exists and tried to find out how it works and how psi can be useful. Arguably, they discovered both dead ends and lines of research perhaps worth pursuing further. In hindsight, it seems unfortunate that relatively little research was devoted to the influence of feedback on RV performance. If RV is in reality mainly due to precognition of feedback, its value for intelligence agencies seems limited. To some extent modern technology may well have made RV redundant, but it remains a fascinating phenomenon. The Editors have come to believe that psi may actually just be precognition; they briefly mention their Multiphasic Model of Precognition and share their thoughts about how parapsychology should advance:

We strongly believe that as we shift focus from an experiential person-centric perspective to a signal-based information-centric perspective, the seemingly difficult problems of the precognition experience become relatively easy to explore. A truly interdisciplinary team is needed to explore the physics and neuroscience domains. (p. 22)

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