

14 Languages Spoken Through Medium

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Like many mediums, George Valiantine apparently began losing some of his powers after a dozen or so years of producing awesome phenomena. As a result, he was accused of being a charlatan and his reputation was thereafter tainted. It is, however, difficult to read the accounts of Valiantine's mediumship by many credible and intelligent men and believe that he was anything but a true medium before his powers began leaving him, or before low-level spirits began controlling him.

It was reported that at least 14 languages, including Portuguese, Italian, Basque, Welsh, Japanese, Spanish, Russian, Hindustani, and Chinese were spoken by spirits through his mediumship.

In a 1931 book, *Psychic Adventures in New York*, Neville Whyment, Ph.D., a professor of linguistics at Oxford and London Universities, told of his sittings with Valiantine during an extended visit to the United States in 1926. Whyment had lived in the Far East for several years and had mastered a variety of Oriental languages. He had come to the United States to study the languages of the American Indian. According to an article in the April 6, 1927 edition of the *New York Herald-Tribune*,

he spoke more than 30 languages. An Internet Google search confirms that Whyment was indeed a world-renowned explorer, author, philologist, and linguist.

While in New York City, Whyment was invited to the Park Avenue home of Judge and Mrs. William Cannon. Some months after that dinner party, on October 15, 1926, Whyment and his wife received another invitation to visit the Cannon home. Mrs. Cannon explained that she needed someone with knowledge of Oriental languages to do a little interpreting for some people interested in discussing psychical research.

"It is important to state here," Whyment wrote, "that we did not know until we arrived at the Cannon apartment that we were being invited to a spiritualist séance." Mrs. Cannon later explained to Whyment that she was afraid he would have declined the invitation had she told him what it was all about. She told him that a voice had been breaking through in previous sittings in what appeared to be Chinese. Whyment added that he had no idea that the Cannons had any interest in spiritualism or psychical research and he had no real interest in the subject.



Dr. Neville Whyment

Other guests arrived for the Cannon's "spiritualist study circle." Upon entering the dining room, Whymant observed chairs set around a center space. One of the chairs was occupied by Valiantine, whom he described as a stout, genial figure. It was explained to Whymant that Valiantine was a direct-voice medium and that his vocal cords did not produce the voices or sounds he would hear during the séance. Rather, an aluminum trumpet, which was placed in the center of the circle of chairs, would be used by the spirits in amplifying their otherwise weak or whispered voices. The medium, Whymant was told, simply provided the ectoplasm from which the spirits molded vocal cords and larynxes.

It was all very new to Whymant and his wife. "It was obvious we knew nothing of recent developments in the psychic arts," he continued the story. "We were even unable to understand the jargon of the new cult."

Valiantine appeared to Whymant as "the simpler kind of American citizen." He clearly did not belong to the upper-class of people who had gathered for the séance.

The Whymants and an American physician were the only newcomers. They were invited to examine the room before the doors were closed. "There was no appearance or suspicion of trickery, but I mention these things to show that I was alert from the beginning, and I was prepared to apply all the tests possible to whatever phenomena might appear," Whymant went on. It was explained to him that light could injure the medium and thus the lights would have to be turned off. Moreover, no one could leave his or her seat as it might break the "circle of power" and reduce the possibility of good

results. Whymant noted that the trumpet had phosphorous paint on it, so that its movement in the darkness could be followed.

As soon as the lights were turned off, the group recited the Lord's Prayer and then sacred music was played on a gramophone in order to "bring the vibrations into harmony with those of the spirit world."

"Suddenly into the sound of the singing came the sound of a strong voice raised in greeting," Whymant recorded. "It seemed to rise up from the floor and was so strong that for some moments I felt convinced that I could actually feel the vibrations of the floor." The voice, Whymant was informed, was that of Dr. Barnett, the spirit leader of the circle, who opened it and closed it at will. Shortly thereafter, another voice "totally different in timbre and quality" was heard. This voice, the newcomers were informed, was that of Blackfoot, an American Indian of the tribe of that name, who was the keeper of the "spirit door." Some whispered messages to regular members of the circle from deceased relatives or friends then followed.

Whymant was then startled by a very strong voice singing "Christo di Angelo" at "full lung force." The voice seemed to soar up to the ceiling and hover there. "Speaking at first in pure and clear Italian, the voice soon dropped into a Sicilian dialect of which I knew nothing," Whymant further noted. The voice then provided a Sicilian ballad, after which more personal messages, some of a very intimate nature, followed. Whymant wrote that he felt almost like an eavesdropper in listening to the messages.

The group then heard the “sound of an old wheezy flute not too skillfully played.” It reminded Whymant of sounds he had heard in the streets of China. All the while, Whymant kept an eye on Valiantine, who sat directly across from him a few feet in the dark room, which still had enough light to see movement.

When the flute-like sound faded, Whymant heard a “voice” directed at him through the trumpet say in an ancient Chinese dialect: *Greeting, O son of learning and reader of strange books! This unworthy servant bows humbly before such excellence.*

Whymant responded in more modern Chinese: *Peace be upon thee, O illustrious one. This uncultured menial ventures to ask thy name and illustrious style.*

The “voice” replied: *My mean name is K’ung, men call me Fu-tsu, and my lowly style is Kiu.*

Whymant recognized this as the name by which Confucius was canonized. Not certain that he heard right, Whymant asked for the voice to repeat the name. “This time without any hesitation at all came the name K’ung-fu-tzu,” Whymant wrote. “Now I thought, was my opportunity. Chinese I had long regarded as my own special research area, and he would be a wise man, medium or other, who would attempt to trick me on such soil. If this tremulous voice were that of the old ethicist who had personally edited the Chinese classics, then I had an abundance of questions to ask him.”

At that point, the “voice” was difficult to understand and Whymant had to ask for repetition. “Then it burst upon me that I was listening to Chinese of a purity and delicacy not now spoken in any part of

China.” Whymant came to realize that the language was that of the Chinese Classics, edited by Confucius 2,500 years earlier. It was Chinese so dead colloquially as Sanskrit or Latin, Whymant explained. “If this was a hoax, it was a particularly clever one, far beyond the scope of any of the sinologues now living,” he continued.

Apparently the communicating spirit recognized that Whymant was having a difficult time understanding the ancient dialect and changed to a more modern dialect. Whymant wondered how he could test the voice and remembered that there are several poems in Confucius’ *Shih King* which have baffled both Chinese and Western scholars. Whymant addressed the “voice”: *This stupid one would know the correct reading of the verse in Shih King. It has been hidden from understanding for long centuries, and men look upon it with eyes that are blind. The passage begins thus: Ts’ai ts’ai chüan êrh...*

Whymant had recalled that line as the first line of the third ode of the first book of *Chou nan*, although he did not recall the remaining 14 lines. “The ‘voice’ took up the poem and recited it to the end,” Whymant wrote.

The “voice” put a new construction on the verses so that it made sense to Whymant. It was, the “voice” explained, a psychic poem. The mystery was solved. But Whymant had another test. He asked the “voice” if he could ask for further wisdom.

Ask not of an empty barrel much fish, O wise one! Many things which are now dark shall be light to thee, but the time is not yet... the “voice” answered.

Whyment addressed the “voice”: “...*In Lun Yü, Hsia Pien, there is a passage that is wrongly written. Should it not read thus:...*?”

Before Whyment could finish the sentence, the “voice” carried the passage to the end and explained that the copyists were in error, as the character written as *sê* should have been *i*, and the character written as *yen* is an error for *fou*.

“Again, all the winds had been taken out of my sails!” Whyment wrote, pointing out that the telepathic theory, i.e., the medium was reading his mind, would not hold up since he was unaware of the nature of the errors.

There were several additional exchanges between Whyment and Confucius before the power began to fade. Confucius closed with: *I go, my son, but I shall return...Wouldst thou hear the melody of eternity? Keep then thy ears alert...*

Whyment also recorded that prior to the dialogue with Confucius, his wife’s father communicated in his characteristic drawl, reminiscent of the West County of England.

Whyment attended 11 additional sittings, dialoguing with the “voice” claiming to be Confucius in a number of them. At one sitting, another “voice” broke in speaking some strange French dialect. Whyment recognized it as Labourdin Basque. Although he was more accustomed to speaking Spanish Basque, he managed to carry on a conversation with the “voice.”

“Altogether fourteen foreign languages were used in the course of the twelve sittings I attended,” Whyment concluded the short book. “They included Chinese, Hindi, Persian, Basque, Sanskrit, Arabic, Portuguese, Italian, Yiddish, (spoken with great fluency

when a Yiddish- and Hebrew-speaking Jew was a member of the circle), German and modern Greek.”

Whyment also recorded that at one sitting, Valiantine was carrying on a conversation in American English with the person next to him while foreign languages were coming through the trumpet. “I am assured, too, that it is impossible for anyone to ‘throw his voice,’ this being merely an illusion of the ventriloquist,” he wrote.

Not being a spiritualist or psychical researcher, Whyment did not initially plan to write the book. However, tiring of telling the story so many times, he agreed to put it in writing, asking that with the publication of the book that others not ask him to tell the story again.

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