

CONSCIOUSNESS BEYOND DEATH: NEW AND OLD LIGHT ON NEAR-DEATH EXPERIENCE

By Michael Tymn. White Crow Books. 2025. 172 pp. £12.99.

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Michael Tymn, a long-standing supporter of survival research, has collected 23 articles from his blog, examining both historical and contemporary reports of near-death experiences (NDEs). Gathered within the book are writings and interviews which aim to show that NDEs point to more than unusual brain activity, instead offering evidence for the persistence of consciousness beyond bodily death. Consistent with his earlier books, such as *The Afterlife Revealed* (2011) and *Dead Men Talking* (2013), Tymn explores this view through a mix of personal accounts and historical sources.

Tymn's argument is clear—NDEs are not hallucinations, fabrications, or cultural projections. Rather, they represent authentic encounters with another dimension of existence, made clear during moments when the soul temporarily separates from the body. His evidence is drawn from a wide range of sources, both past and present, with particular attention to recurring themes such as out-of-body experiences, tunnel passages, encounters with luminous beings, and life reviews. Tymn suggests that these patterns have persisted across centuries, and offers strong support for the survival of consciousness.

STRENGTHS

One of the book's strengths is its recovery of historical material. Tymn reminds us that such reports stretch back far earlier, with several chapters documenting 19th- and early 20th-century testimonies that closely resemble modern accounts, offering continuity for researchers interested in long-term patterns. This broad perspective challenges the idea that NDEs are purely modern phenomena shaped by media or medical culture.

Another strength lies in Tymn's approachable writing style. Free of technical jargon and written in a conversational tone, the book is accessible to general readers while still being of interest to specialists. Tymn's respect for experiencers is evident throughout—he listens to their voices rather than reducing their reports to medical or psychological explanations. This gives the book a personal quality that many readers will find both engaging and respectful.

Tymn also offers a level of criticism aimed at what he sees as the “materialist paradigm” influencing modern science. He argues that many scientists dismiss views that the mind or soul carries on after the body, not because of lack of evidence but because of their underlying beliefs that shape how they explain the world. In doing so, he sees himself as someone with a broader belief in the movement that consciousness is more than just brain activity, which encourages more open and inclusive ways of understanding mind and body experience.

Even with his acknowledged limitations as not being a researcher, scientist, academic, or having had an NDE himself (p. 2), a reader can see how Tymn’s book can make a relevant contribution to psychical research. It places experiencers’ voices at the forefront, when often these can be overlooked or reduced within mainstream discussions. By drawing attention to the recurring experiences of NDEs, Tymn encourages researchers to consider these accounts not only as psychological expressions but also as possible indicators of a deeper level of reality that goes beyond the physical world.

The recovery of historical material is another important note. By linking modern NDE reports with earlier testimony from the history of the Society for Psychical Research and spiritualist traditions, Tymn broadens the timespan of survival research. This perspective invites renewed attention to archived sources and forgotten accounts, where genuine details and different recurring generational patterns could be explored further.

Of equal note is Tymn’s emphasis on the ethical and life-changing characteristics of NDEs. Many who undergo such experiences describe lasting shifts in values, worldview, and sense of meaning. Highlighting this ‘after-effect’ can be valuable not only for psychical research but also for fields such as transpersonal psychology, studies of transformative experiences, and end-of-life care, where the integration of such has real practical importance.

WEAKNESSES

While the scope and clarity of Tymn’s arguments are admirable, some aspects of the book will appeal more strongly to certain readers than others. The narrative style, while readable, does not provide the kind of methodological detail or structured criteria that some researchers might expect. For example, cases are not always evaluated in terms of reliability, selection process, or compared across different cultures. For readers seeking such research with more analytical depth, this may feel less rigorous; however, for those drawn to reading more into individual experiences and also with a historical perspective, it enhances the flow and accessibility of the book.

Tymn gives some attention to sceptical views such as oxygen deprivation or neurochemical explanations, but does not develop these further. This means that the book cannot serve as a comprehensive survey of all perspectives; its strength lies in presenting a robust mind survival explanation, leaving readers to pursue alternative viewpoints elsewhere. In addition, most of the

cases featured come from Western, predominantly Christian or spiritualist traditions. While this focus offers depth and familiarity, it leaves less room for exploring how NDEs appear in other cultural or religious contexts, such as Hindu, Buddhist, or Islamic traditions, which sometimes reveal very different themes. Including such perspectives could have broadened the book's universal appeal.

CONCLUSION

Consciousness Beyond Death may not have the methodological detail of formal academic studies, but it does offer a wholehearted and wide-ranging exploration and a level of comfort to the reader of whether there is any type of life after death. The book's narrative style may feel less rigorous to those seeking strict empirical analysis, yet its historical scope, subjective understanding, and willingness to challenge current beliefs ensure it has a place as another valuable contribution to survival literature.

Tymn does not claim to provide final answers about life after death. Instead, he argues clearly and with a strong stance that the testimonies of those who come close to dying deserve careful and serious attention. This book is both a thoughtful overview and an invitation to revisit the NDE and to consider what it may be telling us—not only about death, but about the nature of consciousness itself.

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REFERENCES

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