Ehler Voss (Ed.)
Mediality on Trial

Okkulte Moderne

Beiträge zur Nichthegemonialen Innovation

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Mediality on Trial

Testing and Contesting Trance and other Media Techniques

Edited by
Ehler Voss

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I desired to learn about the shaman, whether it is true /
or (whether) it is made up and they pretend to be shamans.
Qā'sɛlīd

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Introduction

Ehler Voss

The Mediumistic Trial. Testing and Contesting the Thresholds of Agency, Consciousness, and Technology

> [With my book] I pleased the people who are rational thinkers, who wanna know the truth from my way of seeing it as a magician and as somebody who understands deception. I think my viewpoint is – how can I put it – it's unique because I have worked both sides of the street, you know. And the reason why I worked the psychic side of the street was to get information about how the systems work. So there's not too many, I can't think of any psychics, that don't do it anymore, that are willing to spill the beans, see, so I really had to infiltrate and get in there because you can't just go to these people and say, hey, teach me how to do this! They're very secretive about it. But as a magician, I knew there were secrets going on and I was really interested in that. So it had to be done, there was really no other way to do it. It's kind of like "undercover psychic", you know. And it was fun, too, I had a great time. So I don't regret any of it. I might have gone on a little too long, I think that's what kind of bothers people. It's like "Well, you can collect information for a couple of years, but NINE years . . . !" You know, but I did it for nine years, that's a good spell of time.

Richard, 66 years old, the son of a commercial photographer and a Los Angeles painter, worked for nine years as a fortuneteller for various clients, both on the phone and in direct contact, in addition to his job as a guardian of a public park in Hollywood, before he published a book that presents his story and the tricks of the trade and the trade of the tricks a few years ago. We are sitting in his small condo in a gated community in San Pedro. I am the anthropologist who is interested in the mediumistic trial of the 21st century; he is the magician who is part of a culture that – since the 19th century in many parts of the world at the border between religion and the secular, science, and amateurism – has been performing this trial and that is the topic of the present volume.

In my conversations with him, I often have to think of a classic and influential text in the history of anthropology presented by one of its founding figures. Under the title "I desired to learn the ways of the shaman", it opens Franz Boas' book "The Religion of the Kwakiutl Indians" from 1930 and leads us straight to the core of what this volume is about: the specific ways of testing the capabilities and potentials of human mediums and technical media and the attempt to identify the medium's agency from the 19th century to present times. In that text, a member of the Kwakwaka'wakw (formerly known as Kwakiutl) from British Columbia tells the story of his initiation to the shaman Qā'sɛlīd. "I desired to learn about the shaman, whether it is true / or (whether) it is made

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up and they pretend to be shamans." This is how the text begins. Skeptical of the shaman's practices, the first-person narrator's suspicions are confirmed during his apprenticeship: he learns the shaman's deceptive tricks, for example, of hiding tufts of feathers in his mouth and then extracting them at the right moment soaked with blood from his tongue (which he has bitten) and presenting them as an extracted disease, or collecting information about the sick in advance, in order to later present this information as proof of his own extraordinary abilities. However, over time, Qā'sɛlīd must realize that his pretended actions are nonetheless effective. Not only do they lead to healing the sick, but also to the death of another shaman.[1]

Claude Lévi-Strauss takes up this story and uses it as an example in his 1949 essay "The Sorcerer and His Magic". He reports on the transformation of the skeptic Quesalid (that is how he transcribes the name) into a skeptic of his own skepticism who in the end "seems to have completely lost sight of the fallaciousness of the technique which he had so disparaged at the beginning".[2] Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the story in which he compares and finally dismisses shamanic and psychotherapeutic practices became famous, and the figure of the shaman persuaded by his own deceptions has long occupied and inspired the explanations of medical anthropology. Later, however, Qā'sɛlīd's shamanic biography was also put on trial, exposing some of its distortions.[3] On the one hand, there is the identity of the shaman, who was neither the autochthonous shaman of Boas and Lévi-Strauss nor had a long shamanic career. It was George Hunt, one of Boas' main informants, who was born in 1854 as the son of an English immigrant and a Tinglit woman from the south of Alaska and grew up in Fort Rupert in the Kwakwaka'wakw region. At the age of 18, Hunt married into a respected Kwakwaka'wakw family, of which he apparently never felt completely a part and, due to his parents, probably always remained a kind of outsider, albeit a very respected one. Early on, he worked as a translator for the Norwegian ethnographer Johan Adrian Jacobson and towards the end of his life also for the photographing and filming ethnographer Edward Curtis. Hunt probably met Boas in 1888, and until his death in 1933 became a tireless collector of ethnographic data, collecting for Boas a large part of the texts and objects for him, and whose enthusiasm Judith Berman compared to that of many converts.[4]

1 Boas: The Religion of the Kwakuitl Indians, 1–56.

2 Lévi-Strauss: The Sorcerer and His Magic, 178.

3 Bermann: George Hunt and the Kwak'wala Texts; Berman: The Culture as It Appears to the Indian Himself; and following Berman's approach, also Whitehead: The Hunt for Quesalid.

4 Berman: The Culture as It Appears to the Indian Himself, 231.

On the other hand, it turned out that there are more versions of his biographical description, of which the skeptical version is only at the end. The first version from 1897/1900 – 30 years earlier – tells a classic story of initiation, and Boas assumed that this initiation already took place in 1870 or 1874.[5] So, instead of a transformation from skeptic to shaman, Hunt seems to have gone through a transformation from shaman to skeptic. In his posthumously published book "Kwakiutl Ethnography", Boas assumes that the skeptical version of 1930 was influenced by the presence of the colonizers.[6] Although actually believing, the Kwakwaka'wakw, knowing the colonizers' attitude, pretended a skeptical attitude only in order to avoid appearing irrational. Michael Taussig instead suspects a self-deception by Boas behind this assumption. He refers to the interpretations of the Kwakwaka'wakw religion by Irving Goldman and Stanley Walens, which show that the tricks of the shamans serve to penetrate the world of spirits with flowing movements and thus to force them to carry out the healing.[7] The word "fraud" should therefore better be substituted by mimesis or simulation, and "mimetic simulation is a way of keeping hidden things hidden while at the same time revealing them, of keeping secret things secret while displaying them".[8] And so, the text from Boas' book is not so much about shamanism as it is shamanistic itself. It is a model case of the skillful uncovering of a skillful disguise, a confession that in this case appears as an academically twisted anthropological text and thus a further form of the ritual as a vehicle for its execution. Neither Boas and Lévi-Strauss, therefore, took seriously enough the necessity for skepticism in Kwakwaka'wakw magic, conveyed by their rituals of exposure and unmasking, and thus understood neither the shamans' nor their own role correctly in the game of complex mixtures of skepticism and belief, which remains unresolved in the long run by the opening and closing of the secret.[9]

For the literary scholar Harry Whitehead, Hunt's story shows "how a real person becomes transformed into a kind of iconographic spectre, haunting the anthropological literature".[10] But that is not the end of the story for anthropology. Whitehead does not address the fact that the concept of the shaman or shamanism is one of those concepts that not only haunt anthropological literature, but also stepped out from it to become a tangible reality in the lives of

5 Boas: Kwakiutl Ethnography, 120–148.
6 Boas: Kwakiutl Ethnography, 121.
7 Goldman, Irving. The Mouth of Heaven; Walens: Feasting with Cannibals.
8 Taussig: Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism, 294–295.
9 Taussig: Viscerality, Faith, and Skepticism.
10 Whitehead: The Hunt for Quesalid, 149.

many people. The concept of the shaman impressively demonstrates the fusion of anthropology with its field through mutual reflections. If one deals today with shamanism as an anthropologist, one is confronted with a product of one's own discipline that went out of control, a concept that has expanded worldwide from its local restriction; and the term "shaman" is no longer used only as a name given by foreigners, but in many parts of the world also as a self-designation. The anthropologists are not only indirectly involved in the construction of shamanism because people are taking up their writings and concepts and integrating them into their religious practices; individual anthropologists also have even actively designed these practices.[11]

In shamanism, the questions of cultural and effective authenticity of practices overlap, creating a situation of constant experimentation that has been associated with the concept of "mediumism". It is about practices of trance and their interpretations – i.e., the interpretation of states characterized by a high focus of perception that are often associated with experiences of ecstasy, alterity, and a loss of control, memory, and identity.[12] The media theorist Erhard Schüttpelz has pointed out that the 19th century was characterized by a great transatlantic public controversy over the testing of the (trance) mediums' power, coupled with an attempt to institutionalize these trials. It was a time when imperialism and Eurocentrism were culminating with a sense of media-technological superiority. At the same time, a controversy was taking center stage in which practices that are usually categorized as primitive and backward were taken seriously. In this period, members of a white upper or upper middle class began to devote themselves to the ecstatics of the world as contemporaries, but combined with the superior claim to be able to define these phenomena for the entire world, a claim that has produced categorizations and institutionalizations that in part still exist today.[13]

Strong trance states, often also categorized as "altered states of consciousness",[14] are moments of crisis, usually showing the broad range of characteristics that Victor Turner described and generalized with the term "liminality" for rites of passage and reversal.[15] Trance states are confusing, both for the people in trance and for the spectators, and they cause categorization problems by

11 Voss: Von Schamanen und schamanisch Tätigen; Voss: Shamanism on Trial; Voss: California Dreamin, (the last two are translated for this volume).

12 For a discussion whether trance states are exceptional or rather to different degrees the normal way of being, cf. Crabtree: Hypnosis Reconsidered, Resituated, and Redefined.

13 Schüttpelz: Trance Mediums and New Media.

14 Ludwig: Altered States of Consciousness; Tart: Altered States of Consciousness.

15 Turner: The Ritual Process, cf. Schüttpelz: Trance-Medien/Personale Medien.

raising the question of the localization of agency. And no matter how one decides, there are always different answers to choose from and there are different situations within a situation: the attribution of agency jumps back and forth between visible and invisible entities, as well as between the trance mediums and the surrounding participants and observers who are drawn into the situation voluntarily or involuntarily and to different degrees.[16] Is it the living, the dead, or other spirits, forces, imponderables, or drugs that cause the trance; are they due to hallucinations, auto- or external suggestions, social contradictions, upheavals or oppressions, a physiological disease, or charlatanry? The attributions are manifold and variable, even during a trance and partly with one and the same person. Ioan M. Lewis[17] has convincingly shown that the attempts of various anthropologists to clearly separate the individual states in trance and sometimes even assign them to entire societies are missing the point, since this kind of modern "work of purification"[18] does not function even for a single ritual. Trance mediumism is underdetermined and therefore inherently controversial; the course of a trance is uncertain and the result remains open. No one knows in this situation what effect the trance (whether pretended or not) will have, whether it will turn to evil or good, whether it will trigger classic cycles of initiation to healership by controlling possession or disease, whether it will lead to healing or to manifestations of pathological states, or, as in the case of Qā'sɛlīd, even to the death of another person. No one knows whether the trance remains an ephemeral experience or leads to the founding of a religion that ultimately changes a region or perhaps even the whole world. The interpretations of a certain situation can change repeatedly in retrospect and be subject to different rationalizations, as the example of George Hunt and his different versions of his shamanic story shows. The scale is unclear at the moment of the trance, but often afterwards as well. And perhaps this aspect can even be generalized for all societies. The trance state is controversial and this controversy must be fought or negotiated, for which many societies have specialists who can guide through the confusion associated with the trance, diagnose the disorders and obsessions and tame or exorcise them, initiate new specialists, and often become controversial themselves, as Hunt's report, among others, shows. Trance specialists as specialists of ambivalence are usually ambivalent themselves and often become loved/feared trickster figures.[19]

16 Lewis: Ecstatic Religion; Schüttpelz: Animism Meets Spiritualism; Stocking: Animism in Theory and Practice.

17 Lewis: Religion in Context.

18 Latour: We Have Never Been Modern.

19 And sometimes even the spectators and researchers.

Richard, the magician quoted at the beginning who desired to learn the ways of the psychic and tried to confirm his suspicion that it was all charlatanry, has also become a controversial figure. One can talk with him for hours about tipping points in the séances, in which his performance with pretended trances took on a life of its own and led to impressive coincidences for him, which could have given cause to doubt his own disbelief. Yet he insists – at least since I have known him – that he has never believed that the practices of psychics could be based on anything other than chance or charlatanry, but has always belonged to the group of unbelieving skeptics – a self-attribution that, however, does not prevent him from appearing suspicious himself. Within the social movement of people who identify themselves as skeptics, as he does, there were repeated attempts to exclude him with various arguments: not only magicians are annoyed that he revealed secrets; along with other skeptics, quite a few of them hardly believe in his identity as an honest skeptic because his work as a medium has lasted so long.

That Richard causes difficulties of classification among the magicians becomes comprehensible against the background of the history of current stage magic. Tracing the legacies of the French illusionist Jean Eugène Robert-Houdin and the British anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor, both contemporaries of the long 19th century, Graham Jones[20] has outstandingly shown how entertainment magicians and cultural anthropologists, in a process of mutual mirroring, have established the asymmetrical distinction between stage magic and occult magic, the former being perceived as modern and secular because it explicitly admits to the skillful and science-based production of illusions, and the latter as primitive and religious because it either believes that it manipulates or pretends to manipulate forces (for good or evil) that are not scientifically approved and thus usually claimed to be supernatural. Therefore, magicians and their work of purification, which dismisses all the phenomena people often experience in altered states of consciousness as deceit or self-deceit, play – as we will see – a crucial role within the mediumistic trial and leads to an ambiguity of the term "magic".

But what do trance and the associated controversies have to do with the concept of the medium? We will also see that the connections and interferences between the concepts of trance, medium, and magic clarify their lack of clarity, since their vagueness mirrors their nature. Today we commonly associate the term "medium" with the technical communication between transmitters and receivers. Yet, this term likewise applies to those who communicate with realities

20 Jones: Magic's Reason.

that exceed the presumed domain of the material world. Insofar as one presumes a division between distinctly opposed categories of religion and the secular, technical media tend to be associated with the secular and human (trance) mediums tend to be associated with religion. The interest of the present volume, however, is in the ways the term "medium" marks an overlapping of – and thus problematizes – the aforementioned division between religion and the secular. A medium as the middle, the mediator, the agent is always in an area of in-between, it is neither one nor the other, or it is both at the same time: a medium is always in a muddle. The medium is between separation and connection, clarification and deception, production and reproduction, passivity and activity, materiality and immateriality, transcendence and immanence, religion and the secular – a characteristic that technical media and personal mediums have in common and that raises the question of their influence on the mediated. The problematic that arises from this overlapping concerns an interplay surrounding the medium, between doubt and promise. Doubt lies at the heart of mediality, since every medium carries with it a seed of doubt that is itself inseparable from investment in the medium's power: insofar as they communicate with an "other" realm, mediums offer the hope and promise of new possibilities and improved efficiency, and thus of a better life; yet they have simultaneously been under suspicion of altering (or even inventing) the messages they communicate. It is due to this simultaneity of promise and suspicion that mediumism has tended to evoke scientific, religious, and moral controversies. In this sense, we can speak of a mediumistic trial, i.e., a process in which a medium is tested for its potential and trustworthiness.[21]

This volume aims to contest the presumed division between religion and the secular, as well as between human mediums and technical media, through the lens of a problematic that arose in Europe at the end of the 18th century with Franz Anton Mesmer and his followers. Mesmer offered an approach that could not be reduced to the division between – and thereby offered a middle way between – religious and secular claims. In doing so, he started a heated public debate about the testing of the capacities and potentials of both humans in altered states of consciousness and technical devices. With the rise of Spiritualism, in the middle of the 19th century, the terms "medium" and "mediumism" have become a prominent way of addressing such controversies.

Amid the ongoing nature of the controversies surrounding the mediumistic trial, we can discern a tendency to "domesticate" mediumism by various strategies in public discourse. Such domestication can be schematized according to

21 Schüttpelz: Trance Mediums and New Media; Voss: A Sprout of Doubt.

three headings: archaization (attributing human mediumism to a premodern state of mind), psychological immanentization (reducing and restricting claims of magical agency to the operations of the individual psyche), and pathologization (distinguishing and treating such an individual as "abnormal" or "sick"). Yet, even as this domestication led to the dissolution of extensive public debates on mediumism, the testing of mediumistic potentials of humans in altered states of consciousness, as well as of technology, has not yet disappeared. In the 20th and 21st centuries, mediumistic trials continue to be conducted (e.g. in neuroscience, psychiatry, hypnosis, consciousness studies, parapsychology, mass psychology, esotericism, anthropology, modern art, and the skeptical movement), and they regularly produce new controversies and "trading zones"[22] for different claims and interests.[23]

A look at the history of the use of the terms "medium", "media", and "mediality", which are omnipresent in many sciences as well as in many everyday languages, reveals two formative theoretical approaches. One interprets the medium instrumentalistically as a tool subject to humans, and the other interprets the medium aesthetically as subjugating the human's perception.[24] In addition, there are numerous (although partly contradictory) approaches that have been summarized under the broad term "Science and Technology Studies" since the 1980s and that mediate between these extreme positions, in particular Actor-Network-Theory[25] and the approaches inspired by it, including the Siegen Actor-Media-Theory.[26] Media mediate and put other media into action and thus generate socio-technological mediator networks of human and non-human agents. There is no human interaction without media, so the distinction between technical non-human media (whether categorized as "old" or "new") and personal human mediums should not lead to the illusion that there are pure personal mediums. This separation is also part of the modern work of purification and the resulting hybridizations, i.e., the interferences between technical media and human mediums (sometimes more, sometimes less symmetrical) have already been researched very well.[27] From the perspective of an Actor-Network- or Actor-Media-

22 Galison: Image & logic.

23 Schüttpelz: Trance Mediums and New Media.

24 Hoffmann: Geschichte des Medienbegriffs.

25 Latour: Reassembling the Social.

26 Thielmann and Schüttpelz: Akteur-Medien-Theorie.

27 E.g. Behrend, Dreschke, and Zillinger: Trance Mediums and New Media; Hahn and Schüttpelz: Trancemedien und Neue Medien um 1900; Hoffmann: Geschichte des Medienbegriffs; McLuhan: Understanding Media; Meyer: Aesthetic Formations; Peters: Speaking Into the Air. Sconce: Haunted Media; Stolow: Deus in Machina.

Theory, things, bodies, and signs interact in any practice. What sets a medium, be it technical or human, in motion is always somewhere else, and each medium produces effects that have an effect in space and in symbolizations. The term "mediality" is often used – as in this volume – to highlight the impurity of each medium as an always mixed medium with co-constructive agency.[28] From such a media-network perspective, personal mediums and technical media each turn out to be semi-autonomous and to be adequately explorable only with praxeological approaches.[29]

For media studies, the concept, developed by Susan Leigh Star,[30] of "boundary objects", which allow cooperation without consensus has proved fruitful, and the ongoing relevance of the concept has only just been demonstrated by Nadine Taha and Sebastian Gießmann in their commented translation volume of Star's central texts.[31] The concept of boundary objects is also fundamental for this volume, through the reference to Erhard Schüttpelz's aforementioned article, in which he applies this concept to the transatlantic way of dealing with trance practices in the 19th century and describes with it the mediumistic controversy: in mediumism as a boundary object that is "both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites",[32] the mediality of both technical media and human mediums is on trial, with a variety of claims from a variety of approaches and purposes, and the controversial question centers on the localization of agency. According to Actor-Network-Theory, the controversy is the starting point of the analysis and the assumption that all positions are given already from the beginning of this controversy. Therefore, it is not the controversy that needs to be explained, but the stabilization of specific answers, which in this case go hand in hand with attempts to institutionalize them. The result is not a linear story, but a series of small regional stories with unexpected changes and various political exploitations from democratic and emancipatory[33] to elitist and fascist.[34]

28 Jäger, Linz, and Schneider: Media, Culture, and Mediality; Mitchell: There Are No Visual Media.

29 See the research at the Collaborative Research Center Media of Cooperation at the University of Siegen: www.mediacoop.uni-siegen.de.

30 Star and Griesemer: Ecology, "Translations" and Boundary Objects; Star: Cooperation without consensus in scientific problem solving.

31 Star: Grenzobjekte und Medienforschung.

32 Star and Griesemer: Ecology, "Translations" and Boundary Objects, 393.

33 Braude: Radical Spirits; Strube: Sozialismus, Katholizismus und Okkultismus im Frankreich des 19. Jahrhunderts.

34 Black and Eric Kurlander: Revisiting the "Nazi Occult"; Sedgwick: Against the Modern World.

Using the terms “mediality”, “mediumism”, and “mediumistic trial”, this volume aims to address the specific ways in which the capabilities and potentials of technical media and human mediums have been tested throughout the 19th century and up to today. The controversies surrounding the testing of the medium are often addressed (as above) in the context of a North Atlantic public debate between religious and secular interests. Yet, such controversies are significantly entangled with the ways that mediumism has been discussed and tested in other regions of the world. Indeed, in its passage around the globe, and by way of colonial circuits, the terms of this controversy may themselves be subject to contestation, insofar as they remain circumscribed within a European (Christian and/or post-Christian) context. Thus, the colonial and/or racialized contexts of the mediumistic trial have to be taken into account as well. In looking at such controversies, this volume asks what kind of controversies arise from the encounter between different approaches, such as those of “religion” and “science”; whether they produce interferences between the categories of religion and the secular (which is often indexed via “science”); whether there are ways in which such interferences reach tipping points, according to which the differentiation between religion and the secular, or between human mediums and technical media, becomes undecidable; and whether there are ways in which such interferential points of undecidability serve to contest the presumed meanings of science and/or religion, of the this-worldly and/or the otherworldly, and of the nature of the medium itself.

The medium, which is always in the middle, and with it mediumism, is also in the middle of disciplines or disciplinary interventions, and so the articles in this volume are written from different disciplinary perspectives. However, just as in Michael Taussig’s interpretation Franz Boas became part of the shamanic complex of the Kwakwaka’wakw, we have to be careful not to become part of the mediumistic trial ourselves when we research it. In looking at this controversy, we must recognize that we, just like the actors themselves, are usually arrested in the cosmology of modernity with its work of purification of categories such as subject and object, nature and culture, religion and the secular. When it comes to the question of how trance practices and their trials are to be classified – whether they are religious, magical, or scientific, whether they are psychological or social, i.e., where subject and object are to be located, and what about them is to be considered nature and what culture – then we are already part of that controversy, which has no outside, because the observed actors themselves also put these categories on trial, which gives the controversy a specific shape and keeps it running. A way out seems to exist here only in the comprehension of the always-new attempts at purifying these terms and, in doing so, anthropologically taking into account our own co-constitutive part in

the research product. To recognize the underdetermination, impurity, and ambivalence of every medium and of every trance state also means to have to endure them and to resist the different demands to transform them into unambiguity. And this seems to me to be the task of anthropologists.

Fundamentally, anthropological activity can also be understood as a mediumistic activity in its own right, as some experts of ecstatic religion have already made clear.[35] As a mediator and translator between different worlds, often connected with the promise of having encountered higher wisdom and a better life, the co-constituting agency of the anthropological medium also repeatedly offers reason to investigate the influence of the medium on the message and to question its authenticity. This can be seen, for example, in the discussions about Franz Boas and his portrayal of the Kwakwaka'wakw. Boas himself critically considered an influence on his message when – as described above – he speculated on the interdependencies of the mutual observations in the field, even if these speculations are in turn rejected by Taussig as projections of a dubious self-perception. But hindsight is 20/20, as the dictum says. Do we really know more about George Hunt than Franz Boas did? Others point out primarily the impurity of the sources that are presented as pure. With George Hunt, Boas, as the anthropological medium, draws on an actor who is presented as pure, but whose closer examination reveals a long chain of translations that lets him appear as a medium of a medium of a medium. The de-individualization of the sources and the standardizations made by Boas based on these sources are perceived as problematic manipulations. This ultimately led to the universalization of specific peculiarities from the environment of George Hunt in Fort Rupert as representative of an entire culture, including the name "Kwaquitl", which has in the meantime been replaced, as already mentioned, by the more appropriate term "Kwakwaka'wakw" (which means those who speak Kwak'wala),[36] but do we really understand what happened in the narratives of Hunt, by comparing his versions of being a patient, a shaman, and the spokesperson of a skeptical public? Lévi-Strauss understood this triangle to be the most important clue in the shamans' trials of strength and trials of truth: he gave us a theory, taken up by many structuralists, that made an inarticulate void of suffering meet a discourse overflowing with articulation, with dance, song, mime, words, myth, and masks, in other words, a public medium. Where the lack of signification would meet the overflowing articulation of gliding signifiers under the skeptical eyes of an audience, healing and pacification would emerge. Seventy years after Lévi-Strauss, we read Hunt's account of Qā'sɛlīd and

35 Lewis: The Anthropologist's Muse; Lewis: Religion in Context.
36 Kasten: Masken, Mythen, Indianer.

the theoretical account of Lévi-Strauss with undiminished fascination. And we have to acknowledge that the strength of the modern narratives of disenchantment seems to lie in the precision with which we find out that the disenchantment proposed in so many mediumistic trials ever since, first, was never guaranteed outside of scientific secularism, and second, never became a stable part of secular science.

The Contributions

Describing how Mesmer's practices were put on trial by an official royal commission in Paris in 1789 and the effects of this trial, Karl Baier's contribution on *The Therapeutic Mediologies of Animal Magnetism* concentrates on the starting point of the great mediumistic debate (as it is conceptualized in this volume, following Schüttpelz). Against or rather in addition to a history of ideas approach, he adopts the term "mediology" to "designate all manner of theoretical reflections on human mediality and technical media, such as devices and pharmaceutics, that are considered to mediate the primal healing agent within a given medical or psychotherapeutic school". Examining the practices of Franz Anton Mesmer and his students Alexander Ferdinand Kluge and Dietrich Georg von Kieser, he shows how, in the mesmeristic tradition, agency shifts between human and non-human actors, how its weightings change again and again, and yet how the common ground of the controversies within mesmerism remains the indissoluble entanglement of human mediums and technical media during the therapeutic ritual that mediates healing-relevant entities. Baier describes in detail how the mesmeristic practitioners differ and how they respond to the royal trial and to each other. He depicts the controversies concerning the different hierarchization of human mediums and technical media, as well as the discussion of the materiality and immateriality of the assumed healing entities, i.e., especially the existence of the animal magnetic fluid that Mesmer posited. After walking through the mesmeristic landscape from France to Germany and from the end of the 18th century up to the first half on the 19th century, Baier's text confirms that all possible positions within the controversy were already present in the beginning of the great public debate on mediumism.

In *Quite as Powerful. The Mediumistic Controversy in the 19th Century*, Erhard Schüttpelz and I amplify on Schüttpelz's aforementioned article in which he outlined the concept of the great mediumistic debate of the 19th century. Using the example of James Braid's trial of a magnetic cure of one of his London friends, which he described in 1846, we point out that the 19th century

trials were controversies over orthopraxy. Braid did not question the effectiveness of his friend's cure. The crucial point of his triumphal and stage-ready trial was the substitution of one practice with another that achieves analogous and superior effects. He did not count on the persuasiveness of a consistent theory. The further theoretical specification was not decisive and the theoretical consequences of his test were only vaguely elaborated – a situation that becomes clear also in Baier's contribution. Mesmer, who was interpreted as someone who helped Enlightenment to triumph over the demonology of the Church, substituted the practices of the exorcist Gaßner, even if they obviously never met for a direct duel. The same fate as Gaßner now befalls Mesmer, or rather his practice. In Braid's demonstration, which can retrospectively regarded as a starting point for debates around the category of hypnosis, a therapeutic variation of the diverse mesmeristic cosmos now appears to be superstitious and is substituted by a new practice. But such a substitution trial does not always have to be friendly, as we show by referring to the example of Robert Houdin and the Isawiyya, a mystical Sufi order in Algeria, and his hostile construction of primitive magic to enforce colonial dominance.

In *A Case of Quasi-Certainty. William James and the Making of the Subliminal Mind*, Janny Li shows how the U.S. psychologist and philosopher William James became convinced of the powers of the Boston medium Leonie Piper, whose trance states he investigated over the last twenty-five years of his life in the context of his work with the American Society for Psychical Research. Nevertheless, James remained unsure about the exact location of the mediumistic agency, and he remained open to contradictory explications through either external spirits or through an immanent subliminal mind. The advocate of uncertainty himself caused a lot of uncertainty among his commentators, who struggle with the question of how one person can deal with two completely different realms – pragmatism and psychical research – at once. Instead of retrospectively judging James' research from the assumed winner's perspective and thus dividing his research into two unrelated approaches, she takes a symmetrical look at James, elaborates how both are part of one intellectual approach, and shows how his research is interwoven with political and moral aspects of his time. Thus, she provides an exemplary historical approach to understanding the mediumistic trial of the 19th century.

In *Educating the Mediums. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing's Work of Purification on Spiritualism*, I look at the Munich physician Albert von Schrenck-Notzing and his investigations of the spiritistic mediums Marthé Beraud and Stanislawa Popielska, whose results he presented in the book *Phenomena of Materialization*, which was first published in German in 1914. Spiritualism is one famous institution that emerged out of the transatlantic mediumistic controversy in the middle of the

19th century. In the eyes of most protagonists, spiritualism was a modern movement that was able to scientifically research what is usually categorized as religious or spiritual and thus a realm of belief and faith. Accordingly, they aimed to substitute the unreachable faraway heaven with a close and experimentally accessible "other side". But the spiritistic assumption of the existence of ghosts was partly regarded as still too religious. Against the backdrop of the controversy over spiritistic and animistic explanation, I describe how Schrenk-Notzing, who was familiar with the practices of mesmerism, spiritism, and hypnosis, tried to purify spiritism of what he conceived as still-existing religious aspects. He followed an animistic approach that accepts the existence and realness of spiritistic phenomena such as ectoplasm, but denies the existence of spirits, and instead locates the mediumistic agency within the medium itself, i.e., in the "soul" or the "psyche" of the medium. But even the laboratorization of his investigations and the corresponding attempts to train good research subjects as well as objects couldn't prevent fraud, fiction, and impurity from finally triumphing over his mediumistic trial.

In *"S. W." and C. G. Jung. From Mediumship to Analytical Psychology*, Sonu Shamdasani takes a look at Carl Gustav Jung and elaborates how his work circles from the beginning to the end on his experiences and experiments with the teenage medium Helene Preiswerk in Switzerland in the 1890s. Jung dubbed her "S.W.", and she later turned out to be his maternal cousin. Jung remained obsessed by "the girl" his whole life, since he continuously refers to her case in his work, and it seems that all his theories have to pass the trial of explaining the "phenomena" at the séances. Jung was first mesmerized by spiritualistic theories to explain the challenging phenomena his cousin exhibited in the séances. Only later, after she was found guilty of cheating, and after Jung's friends laughed at him, did he rework the case skeptically through a psychological perspective; and in doing so, he refers to various explanations such as somnambulism, hysteria, hypnosis, and psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, in his invention of the unconscious as a universal and timeless entity, which marks a crucial conceptual difference from Freud, an autonomous "other world" that is in contact with human individuals still knocks at the door. His period of self-experimentation from 1913 on, which resulted in the "Red Book" in which he aimed to study the collective dimensions of his own fantasies by provoking fantasies in a waking state and talking to the entities that appear, "directly recalls his earlier experiments with Helene Preiswerk, with the difference that now, Jung was his own medium". But in referring to various statements in Jung's later career, Shamdasani doubts that Jung's skeptical view remained consistent and stable and wonders whether Jung had pondered anew the veridicality of some of her demonstrations.

The case Ulrich Linse deals with in his chapter *The Braunau Trance Mediums and their Spiritualist Circle Between the Two World Wars. A Local Study*

is situated in Braunau after World War I–the Austrian town that became internationally known, among other things, for being the birthplace of Adolf Hitler and the physical trance mediums Willi and Rudi Schneider. Linse follows the development of their spiritistic practices from a small family circle that was in contact with Lola Montez, the dead mistress of the late Bavarian king Ludwig I, to publicly recognized séances in the 1920s in which several participants fell in trance and physical phenomena such as levitation, telekinetic motion, and materializations appeared. Many famous researchers visited the Schneider family to attend their séances, and the Schneiders were invited to be studied in their laboratories–even if, for example, Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, who extensively researched Rudi Schneider, finally wasn't able to exorcize their spiritistic behavior to get scientific proof of the produced phenomena. Instead of interpreting that case against the background of psychical research or parapsychology, Linse looks at the still understudied religious background of the Schneider family and inquires into the relation between the Catholic denomination and the spiritistic practices of the family members and their Austrian followers. Linse often refers to explanations that interpret the rise of spiritistic practices psychologically as a way to find comfort against the background of millions of deaths in World War I, but he does not find any convincing arguments that prove an often-claimed relationship between Catholic trance spiritism and the rising National Socialist movement.

In *Passing the Examination. The Mediumistic Trial and its Double in the Writings of Jeanne Favret-Saada*, Erhard Schüttpelz and I re-examine the work of the French anthropologist and psychoanalyst Jeanne Favret-Saada, who conducted research on witchcraft in western France between 1969 and 1972. On the one hand, we elaborate how, in the field of witchcraft, the localizations of agencies are deliberately kept in suspension and thus confusion and endless suspense appear as the core of witchcraft – a field of fragmentations and inconsistencies, of secrecy and ambiguity, of incomplete perspectives and changing positions that constantly offer non-believers the possibility of belief and believers the possibility of non-belief. On the other hand, the author herself, during her decades of dealing with witchcraft, created this balance of attributions mimetically by writing and acting, thus putting her work itself into a state of suspense that keeps both her and her readers caught up to this day. Writing about a specific mediumistic trial finally turns out to be the author's own mediumistic trial, and in a surprising event in the history of French psycho-analysis and post-structuralism, became part of a successful intervention with unforeseen healing powers.

In *The Angel in the Machine. Divine Legal Authorship in Channeled and Computer-Generated Works*, Andrew Ventimiglia contrasts in detail two cases in which legal scholars and copyright agents tried to identify the agency of human

and non-human actors involved, in one case, in the generating process of computer software and, in the other case, in a book composed by divine entities that was channeled by a human medium and published by the Urantia Foundation in 1955. He describes the complicated, controversial, and inconsistent fact-finding process of the jurists and in doing so demonstrates the limits of attempts to ascribe creativity to a single actor within socio-technical assemblages. Thus, copyright law appears not as an instrument to finally diagnose authorship (be it of a technical device, a spiritual being, or a human), but to veil the fundamental indeterminacy and distributedness of agency in creative processes.

Anna Lux looks at *The Return of the "Psychic Stars" in the 1970s and its Consequences for German Parapsychology* and traces in detail the rise and fall of Hans Bender, who founded the private Institute for the Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) in Freiburg, Germany in 1950 and who became a leading figure in German parapsychology after World War II. Since parapsychology sought to become a legitimate discipline within academia from the 1930s on, its protagonists switched more and more to quantitative methods and statistics, and thus the extensive research on human mediums producing materializations and levitations went out of fashion. When in the 1960s a new interest in "psychic stars" such as Uri Geller arose, Bender was considered an expert on everything paranormal in the public realm, science, and law; and in the mid-1970s, he was at the peak of his international popularity. He got funding from the German National Research Foundation to examine the "psychic epidemic" provoked by Geller. But he was also interested in finding a medium that could really perform telekinesis, and so he did experiments with some "mini-Gellers" from Germany who convinced him of their abilities but were later caught cheating. That resulted in a shifted discussion: the question whether the mediums were authentic or fraud was increasingly replaced by questioning the legitimacy of parapsychology itself. Lux shows how the controversial and borderless character of the mediumistic trial, as well as the dubious character of the mediums, remained stuck to him and plunged him into the abyss, since he experienced a dramatic collapse in his popularity and credibility within a few years. Her article is thereby a perfect illustration of the ambivalence of the mediumistic trial with all the tipping points that it results in for all involved actors.

Uwe Schellinger also deals with Hans Bender. In his chapter *Clairvoyance for the Security of the Republic. Gerard Croiset and the Search for Hanns Martin Schleyer*, he discusses Bender's role during the search for the President of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations, Hanns Martin Schleyer, who was kidnapped by the Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF–Red Army Faction) in Cologne in 1977. Drawing on extensive archival research, Schellinger presents fascinating details about the attempts by the police to involve human mediums, especially

Gerard Croiset, during their search for the kidnapping victim. Hans suggested Bender Croiset to the German Federal Crime Bureau (BKA), since Bender had known him for more than 25 years and was convinced of his extraordinary abilities. Schellinger reconstructs the involved actors' various interpretations of the case and analyzes the accompanying discussion in German print media. He highlights the incompleteness and inconsistency of the existing sources and traces such clairvoyant searches by the police back to a long history of "criminal telepathy" that appears as a distinctive version of the mediumistic trial in Europe.

With Anthony Enns, we move from Europe back to the United States. Depending on the reading direction, the text marks either the prelude to or the end of a series of contributions that deal with California as a hot spot of the mediumistic trial of the 20th century, where many corresponding institutions were invented, popularized, and globalized. In his contribution *Psychic Spies. Cold War Science and the Military-Occult Complex*, he asks about the reasons for the rise and fall of the extensively funded research on "thought reading" by the U.S. government between 1952 and 1995. He describes the controversial history of the research that has been becoming famous mainly for the experiments with "remote viewing" conducted by Russel Targ, Hal Puthoff, and later Edwin May at the Stanford Research Institute from the 1970s on. Enns questions common approaches that explain the history of extraordinary sciences with Thomas Kuhn's theory of paradigm shifts that regularly occur during periods when hegemonic scientific paradigms are caught in a crisis. Instead, he elaborates that scientific research is often much more influenced by social, political, and economic factors than by scientific facts, theories, and methods.

In her chapter *Mediators of Trance. María Sabina–Gordon Wasson–Bruce Connor*, Ilka Becker starts with Wasson's well-known contribution "Seeking the Magic Mushroom", published in LIFE Magazine in 1957, that describes his journey from California to Mexico to the curandera María Sabina and that is often referred to as the origin myth of the psychedelic movement, to explore the entangled role of various technical media and human mediums in the history of modern mushroom culture. She analyzes the development process of the text and its construction from a postcolonial perspective as a chamber drama in which conflicting orders of knowledge were staged and Wasson acted as a mediator between shamanic, scientific, and popular discourse. Wasson and his photographer Allan Richardson described their hallucinatory experiences, using their own culturally influenced vocabulary, as perceptions of a disembodied eye. By analyzing the still unnoticed role of photography in the setting, Becker elaborates how Richardson found a way of representing mediality and how the body of Sabina's son became the subject of the mediumistic trial by means of the photographic agencement. Through the othering of María Sabina by Wassson and

Richardson, shamanism was established as an economic and identitary resource for Native Mexicans; Bruce Conner, the artist and filmmaker who came to Mexico looking for mushrooms a few years later, was also part of the countercultural movement that colonized Native Mexico. But Connor did not follow an idea of authentic cultures, and this perspective resulted in a different way of dealing with otherness. Becker shows how Connor's films called into question the "modernist" distinction between supposedly activated senses in a waking state and passive senses in a state of trance. Instead of supporting the hierarchization of an active, intentional subject and a passive material object, she highlights that a psychedelic conception of perception is situated in between these distinctions and presents a model of distributed agency in which not only does the film become a trance medium itself, but also the viewer is not merely transformed by the medium but is himself or herself actively involved in the process of mediation that has a transforming effect on all involved agents.

The use of the concept of shamanism experienced a worldwide boom in the 20th century, and the associated expansion of self- and external attributions has triggered a controversy about the legitimacy of the term's various applications. Particularly controversial is the adaptation of the term to self-description by a white middle class, especially in Europe and the U.S. However, in my text *California Dreamin'. The Invention of Modern Western Shamanism as a Mediumistic Trial of the 20th Century*, I do not discuss the question whether such a use of the term is legitimate or not, but rather try to trace the tradition of "modern Western shamanism" and its associated practices. Drawing on the work of Mircea Eliade, Carlos Castaneda, and Michael Harner, I show that modern Western shamanism is based less in "old" and "foreign" practices, as is often assumed, than in "new" and "its own" spiritualistic assumptions and practices.

In *The Magus of Silicon Valley. Immortality, Apocalypse, and God Making in Ray Kurzweil's Transhumanism*, Egil Asprem introduces us to the world according to Ray Kurzweil, a successful Silicon Valley-based inventor, entrepreneur, and author who has been becoming one of the leading figures of the transhumanist movement. A core idea of the movement is that humanity is able to transcend its biological limitations through technology and that such transcendence is necessary for long-term survival. Asprem describes the history of this movement and its assumptions and traces them back to spiritualism and millennialism. In doing so, he shows how testing and contesting the capabilities and potentials of human beings and technical media are conceptualized in transhumanism and how the borders between humans and media, as well as between religion and the secular, merge.

Based on my anthropological fieldwork in California among spiritualists, ghost hunters, parapsychologist, and skeptics, in the chapter *Fighting the*

Fakers and Fooling the Fighters. Skeptics between Triumph and Agony, or: The Birth of the Skeptical Movement from the Spirit of Magic, I describe and analyze a specific campaign by a group of skeptics against a famous psychic whom they consider a fraud. The group follows the tradition of the magician James Randi, who professionalized and institutionalized his role model Harry Houdini's practice of exposing allegedly fraudulent magicians. The group acts in the tradition of the Enlightenment and advocates science and rationality, since its members fear political and social damage if fraudulent ideologies and therapies prevail. I explain the skeptics' political motivation and show how during that campaign the boundaries between believing and knowing, fake and authenticity, magic and science, and good and bad blur, what reveals the magic of skepticism, and what makes it possible to finally turn the tables and interpret Randi as the greatest shamanic hoaxer ever, who succeeded in building a community of naive followers who help him get rid of all his competitors.

With Erin Yerby, we move to the East Coast. In her contribution *Mediating Spirits. Sensation, Form and the Body in American Spiritualism*, she focuses on the peculiar role of the body as medium and media in spiritualism. Drawing upon more than three years of fieldwork among spiritualists, she elaborates its doubleness. Regarded in spiritualism as the medium of all media, the body mediates between abstraction and sensation, inside and outside, movement and stasis, materiality and immateriality, religion and the secular and thereby leaves them undecided. The intertwinements of these categories in the spiritistic medium lead to paradoxes that are virtuously handled by the mediums but result in doubts and the necessity to test and verify the truthfulness of the spiritistic practices – not only for observers, but also for practitioners. The practice of mediumship engages a kind of fabulation, Yerby shows, blurring the lines between the boxed-in imagination and real presence; as one of the spiritualists she studied with put it: It will always feel like you are making it up, but you have to trust that everything is true, everything is real, and through trusting you will get what you give.

In their chapter *Mediating "Mystery". Pentecostalism, the Media, and the Social Production of Hope and Suspicion in the Brazilian Crime Debate* Carly Machado and Raquel Sant'Ana elaborate how religion, crime, and technology intersect in the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro and produce a range of materialistic imaginations. Mediality is understood here as the capability of mediating between different and separated realms or social worlds, i.e., between the body and technology, between prison and church, between criminals and law-abiding citizens, and between evil and good (God). This kind of mediality remains mysterious and turns the mediators into suspects. Thus, the Pentecostal pastor and exorcist Marcos Pereira, who has helped to successfully substitute a

religious explanation for crime and poverty for a sociological one, was taken to court one day; but his morality, not his mediumistic ability, was on trial. The circumstances of his conviction, as well as of his early release, remained mysterious; the attempt to exorcise the exorcist finally failed and led to the astonishing effect that his mediumistic power even increased.

In his chapter "*It is Easier To Stay Out Than Get Out". A Sweat Lodge Ritual, the Entangled Ethnographer on Trial, and Irony as a Stance for Anthropological Analysis*, Mirko Uhlig shows that the mediumistic abilities of ethnographic researchers can also be put on trial by local actors when they enter the field. Confronted during his fieldwork among shamans in Germany with specific expectations of the nature of anthropological mediality and confronted with doubts whether he was in a position to fulfill them, Uhlig accepts the duel and allows himself to be entangled in the academically colored epistemological discussions in the field, which he then tries to escape by writing – with all the pitfalls that irony provides as a hoped-for way out.

In *Shamanism on Trial. Acting in a Hall of Mirrors*, I discuss shamanism as an object of dispute and identify authenticity as the controversy's central category, which forces anyone who enters the field of shamanism to adopt a special stance toward it. Furthermore, I show how detecting authenticity in shamanism generally means asymmetrically distinguishing real from sham shamanism, how in this field academic and shamanic practices are inseparably interwoven, and how this historically resulted and currently results in different ways of understanding authenticity. Commonly, the history of shamanism appears as a history of Western imaginations, of a pure counterculture or of primitivism, as well as appearing as a history of symbolic struggles for different types of capital. In addition and indeed primarily, by applying a symmetrical perspective, the history of shamanism turns out to be a history of mutual mirroring and mimetic practices. Thus, the figure of the shaman, which is usually conceptualized as a medium of different spheres, allows one to understand the central role of authenticity as an inevitable, irritating, and partly bodily tangible actant in the field that creates a never-ending situation of doubting and testing shamanic authenticity in regard to cultural purity as well as efficacy.

In *"I know . . . but still." Popular Photography and the Mediation of Luck in Japan*, Heike Behrend deals with the generation of luck after practices of witchcraft were banned by the modern Japanese state. She focuses on the various ways photography is used to generate and mediate spiritual energies; and in describing the history of photography in Japan, which has been associated with "magic" from its beginning, Behrend elaborates photography's received doubleness as a scientific instrument, on the one hand, and as an entity that helps to get in contact with invisible spiritual beings, on the other hand. She finds an

omnipresent attitude of "I know . . . but still" toward the abilities of human mediums and technical media, which she also finds well presented in the work of Jeanne Favret-Saada on sorcery in Western France. "I know . . . but still" is an attitude that occurs everywhere, namely when a certain form of rationality has asserted itself that does not allow one to hold on to both sides of an opposition. She also detects such an attitude among visitors to a well at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo: "I know that a photograph of the well may not bring luck or fulfill my wish, but nevertheless I try . . . " Behrend herself is familiar with such an attitude from her fieldwork in Uganda and she adopts it on site also in Tokyo. She observes all sorts of different ways to produce luck, and "I know . . . but still" appears as a highly productive attitude enticing people to invent and test different procedures. Against the possibilities of digital photography and according to the classical concept of magic by contagion, corporal presence at the site and the individual act of photographing remain necessary to generate luck.

Based on anthropological fieldwork, in his text *Burdens of Proof. Obeah, Petroleum Geology, and its Mediums in Trinidad*, Brent Crosson juxtaposes the practices of petroleum geologists and spiritual workers. Both use the medium of sound to seek knowledge about what lies below the earth – one is looking for oil and the other is looking for natural and spiritual forces – and both refer to their practices as science. But while the geologists are socially accepted, the healers have been stigmatized for centuries; colonial anti-superstition laws have banned Caribbean ritual practices of mediumship and called them "obeah". Crosson presents a symmetrical analysis of a geologist's and a healer's science by looking for "partial connections" between them. He discusses the limits of science and religion as authorizing categories. Drawing on the healers' "experiments with power", he explores the entanglements of science, religion, and experimental trials in the Caribbean from the late eighteenth century to the present. Rather than reading the healers' talk of science as simply a legitimating mask, he argues that their experiments re-figure the conceptual boundaries of the scientific in the social and natural sciences and that practices usually defined as ritualistic or experimental are often reversed into their opposite. While the healer in her science has given up on proof, natural scientific evidence is often conflated with proof that results in a science closer to ritual than to experimental practice.

In her chapter *Sufi Practices, the Masters' Role and the Media of Legitimacy. On the Coincidence of Technical Media and Sufi Mediums*, Rukiye Canlı examines the interferences between human mediums and technical media in Sufism. As in the 19th century, human mediums are considered to have the same abilities as technical media. Based on fieldwork in Turkey, Switzerland, and Germany among members of the Turkish Mevlevi order, she demonstrates how new technologies alter religious practices and their spread through scaling processes. For Canlı, the

cameraman, as a hybrid of human and machine or rather body and device, symbolizes the coincidence of human mediums and technical media. The increasing media-event character of rituals such as the whirling dance called *sema* promotes their expansion, on the one hand, and doubts about their authenticity, on the other. The cultural authenticity and effectiveness of the whole ritual is thus regularly questioned. Thus, the human mediums are constantly on trial and have to prove their mediumistic abilities again and again. Floating agencies render the rituals ambivalent; in a process of ongoing accomplishment, their outcome is not determined; and through the same medium, the ritual can turn things into good or bad.

Graham M. Jones deals with French magicians among whom he conducted anthropological fieldwork for several years. In his contribution *Purity's Perils. The Trials of an Anti-Mediumistic Medium*, he analyzes the case of a young "Muslim French" magician whose televised performances were contested by other magicians in one of the longest threads ever on the largest Francophone magic website, a case that divided the French magic community into two camps. The discussion revolved around the level of his skill and whether he deserved his public success. Jones not only describes the impact of new digital media on the way magic is performed and assessed among current magicians. By focusing on race and ethnicity, he shows how the magician's body was racialized in the discussion and he elaborates the tension between commentators who try to elide race in order to focus on issues of skill and those who foreground race as an alternative to skill. Against the background of mostly white male Western magicians' long tradition of defining modern magic in opposition to the occult and of using magical practices to expose putatively primitive forms of magic by women and/or ethnic others, Jones interprets the controversy around that young magician as a trial of the Arab body, not just as a medium of magicianship, but also of French citizenship.

The volume ends with a description of my participation in an annual meeting of skeptics in Las Vegas whose climax is a mediumistic trial on stage conducted by entertainment magicians with an applicant who proclaims that he has paranormal powers and who is promised one million dollars if he is able to publicly demonstrate them. In *"I Believe in Science Now!" Skeptics Between Hope, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, I follow the dictum that a pure ethnographic description should already entail the theory, i.e., it should entail everything to be said with no need for explaining, summarizing, or theorizing it. The text describes the scenery as full of tipping points and conversions and as corresponding to all that we have learned about the mediumistic trial; so far, the borders between science, entertainment, business, information, delusion, manipulation, self-help, and religion and the secular remain porous and the

question who are the believers and the missionaries remains open for shifting interpretations. The adherents of the skeptical social movement who deny the existence of paranormal phenomena appear themselves to be completely obsessed by the paranormal. Thus, in my description, skeptics do not appear as spectators from the outside, but as an essential part of the mediumistic trial. Like Franz Boas in George Hunt's case, however, they find it difficult to see their part in the game of the mediumistic controversy, because they do not take seriously enough how magic and mediumism need skepticism for their work and functioning.

Even if the different texts assembled in this volume that address mediumistic trials are presented chronologically from the long 19th century into the present, from a symmetrical and nonlinear history of controversies, they can be read crosswise and in both directions with an oscillating view between past and present. Nevertheless, some thematic focuses and series emerge:

- the "classic" trial of the 19th century with its religious and secular, therapeutic and scientific ambitions and its institutional consequences,
- the culmination or containment of the mediumistic trial in California after World War II,
- an intercontinental awakening or re-awakening after 1989,
- and the question of the relationship between belief and skepticism that pervades all controversies, among both laypersons and experts, which ever since the 19th century promised to enable a reflexive debate on rationality and belief, and time and again dissolved into the frustrations of detecting deceit, the vagueness of evidence, or the ad hoc decisions of boundary work.

The classic trial of the long 19th century – with mesmerism, hypnosis, spiritism and lastly scientific occultism, psychical research, and parapsychology – went through four phases of institutionalization characterized by a series of orthopractical substitution trials and the intentions of naturalizing mediumistic effects to make them part of an immanent order. The transcendence of spirits was either experienced in this world through its effects, or this world was discovered to be without transcendence but not without unknown dimensions. All the trials were thereby connected with technical inventions that involved both new skills and new apparatuses. A scientific formation of occultism emerged from the last two institutionalizations (of hypnosis research and spiritualism), which, in view of its ambitions, striving at a scientific purification of mediumism, seems destined to remain trapped in an intermediate realm, ever since the late 19th century and until today (the last sequel in this volume being the closure of the Stargate project in 1995), a science that is neither allowed to live nor to die, but to fuel the ongoing interplay between faith and skepticism, scientific

faith and mundane skepticism as well as scientific skepticism and mundane belief (in derogatory terms called "superstition"). While anthropology still presents itself as an alternative to parapsychology in Favret-Saada's work after World War II, in California, anthropology too became part of a trial that fractalizes into various holisms within a setting of mutual observer positions, one of which always consists of academically influenced modern esotericism and its academically trained protagonists. After the fall of the Iron Curtain, shamanism, along with Pentecostalism, spiritism, and Sufism, becomes an ingredient of religious movements that rely heavily on trance practices, and – revitalized and reloaded – spreads intercontinentally, co-existing with a strengthening skeptical movement that in a slightly absurd fashion focuses not on the spread of religious fundamentalism or other charismatic religious movements, but on doing the boundary work for science that science doesn't bother to do. Thus, the various options of the classical trial remain, and the possibility of a trial can arise at any time and in any place. In this sense, we can say that the efforts toward "arguing from immanence" – the immanence of imponderable substances and forces, of the soul or of the body, or of empirical proof and laws of nature – that began with mesmerism have now been established in many parts of the world, even if traditional magical procedures are still being performed to be believed in and not to be believed in, and many new magical procedures have sprung from nearly all systematic efforts of achieving a disenchanted world. But we may well ask if by gaining a new world of immanences, certain other traits of the long 19th century were lost or, at least, diminished: Swedenborg's vision, Mesmer's optimism, Braid's self-confidence, the opening of a new bridge to heaven and liberal or socialist progress in this world and the next. We have to wait for the future to find out how the different strands of the mediumistic trial will intertwine in resuscitations of lost causes or in shocking and unprecedented escalations of present religious and secular, scientific and political tendencies.

The present collection of articles looks at different facets of the mediumistic trial, a crystal ball that can in no way be done justice to by a single volume. The explorations of this unpurified trial are far from complete, and it will continue to provide abundant material and the chance to further elaborate on articulating the patterns of this trial. The volume demonstrates how, in the case of the mediumistic trial, past and present can illuminate each other. To explore the time before the heuristic time frame considered here and to relate the early modern period to the mediumistic trial of the 19th to 21st centuries would be another daunting task for the future. And lest we forget, if anybody knew how to disentangle the mess and make sense of the agency involved in a mediumistic trial, she or he or * would be able to found a new religious movement or a new scholarly field, or a new heaven and a new hell.

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Mediumistic Trials of the Long 19th Century

Karl Baier

The Therapeutic Mediologies of Animal Magnetism

Reconnecting patients through different media with what is considered to be the source of wellbeing is a common concept among therapeutic systems all over the world. In this chapter, the term "therapeutic mediology" is used to designate all manner of theoretical reflections on human mediality and technical media, such as devices and pharmaceutics, that are considered to mediate the primal healing agent within a given medical or psychotherpeutic school.[1] The focus lies on the mediologies of three leading mesmerists of their time: Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815), the founder of the mesmeric movement who prepared the ground for the subsequent mesmeric mediologies, and two physicians representing the heyday of mesmerism in the romantic era, namely Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge (1782–1844) and Dietrich Georg von Kieser (1779–1862). The latter typify two opposite positions within the spectrum of romantic medical mesmerism. Kluge's *Versuch einer Darstellung des thierischen Magnetismus als Heilmittel* (1811) represents the pragmatic and empirical orientation of medical mesmerism that is influenced by earlier mesmeric physicians like Eberhard Gmelin (1751–1809) and Arnold Wienholt (1749–1804). On the other hand, Kieser's *System des Tellurismus oder thierischen Magnetismus* (1822) takes the stance of a philosophically oriented mesmerism influenced by Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling's philosophy of nature.[2] This line of thought dates back to Gotthilf Heinrich von Schubert's (1780–1853) highly influential *Ansichten von der Nachtseite der Naturwissenschaft* (1808).

Despite their methodological differences, Mesmer, Kluge, and Kieser belonged to the same community of discourse consisting of mesmeric physicians who were rooted in therapeutic practice while, at the same time, being open to

1 It seems that the term 'mediology' (fr. *médiologie*) was first coined by Régis Debray in 1979 in the context of a theory of cultural transmission. His concept became popular among English-speaking academics through the translation of his major work on mediology in 2004. Cf. Debray: Transmitting Culture. Without reference to Debray, Albrecht Koschorke investigated the "mediology of the 18th century" and made a first move to interpret mesmerism from a mediological point of view in his *Körperströme und Schriftverkehr* (1999).

2 Schelling developed his *Naturphilosophie* between the late 1790ies and 1801 in his writings *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (1797) and *Über den wahren Begriff der Naturphilosophie und die richtige Art ihre Probleme aufzulösen* (1801) as well as within the journal *Zeitschrift für spekulative Physik* (1800–1801) that he edited.

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physical, philosophical and theological topics concerning their field. In his reflections on somnambulism, Kluge refers to Schubert. And when it comes to the medical side of mesmerism, empirically oriented works, and especially Kluge's *Versuch*, are given a prominent place in Kieser's work. Compared with, for example, Schelling's disciple Carl August von Eschenmayer (1768–1852), he was much more empirical-oriented. Mesmer himself always tried to root his therapeutic practice in cosmological principles, albeit in a different, more physics-oriented way. In his later days, he responded to the discovery of magnetic somnambulism that had become a major influence for German romantic mesmerism and integrated it into his thought.

Besides outlining the mesmeric mediological approaches, the aim of this chapter is to bring attention to the body techniques and material culture of mesmerism that have been neglected within the academic study of animal magnetism.[3] For many scholars, the therapeutic body movements and devices may have looked very much like manifestations of sheer mesmeric folly. For those who were interested in mesmerism from the perspective of a history of ideas, the relationship between animal magnetism and earlier forms of *magia naturalis*, magnetic theology, the history of physics, etc. was of course more important than its material and bodily dimensions.

Before investigating the therapeutic mediologies of the three mesmerists, the conceptual frame of my analysis will be outlined. After that, a preliminary survey of mesmeric mediology will be provided that sketches the relationship between animal magnetism, human mediums, and technical media.

The Therapeutic Tertium

My investigation of mesmeric mediologies is based on Burckhard Peter's comparative analysis of different schools within mesmerism, hypnosis, and psychoanalysis. The German hypnotherapist distinguishes several sorts of healing agents and examines their interaction within the therapeutic process. He thereby offers a fresh view on how psychotherapeutic and psychosomatic treatments function from a practitioner's perspective.[4] His theory of the "therapeutic tertium" is of particular importance. According to Peter, most psychotherapeutic

3 There are only a few exceptions from this rule like the highly interesting chapter on the baquet in Schott, Magie der Natur, 630–640.

4 Peter: Ericksonsche Hypnotherapie und Peter: Therapeutisches Tertium und hypnotische Rituale.

and psychosomatic therapies assume decisive therapeutic factors that transcend the healing potential of the dyad of therapist and patient. He distinguishes between a negative anti-therapeutic tertium as the ultimate source of the destructive forces behind disease or suffering, and a positive therapeutic tertium as the origin of health.[5]

In tertium-centred types of therapeutic systems, both the positive and the negative tertia transcend the capacities of the relationship between healer and patient. They are not supposed to be voluntarily controllable. If healing should take place, the dyad of therapist and patient must get in touch with the positive tertium and let it act as a healing principle that overcomes the effects of the negative tertium. For reasons of simplification, the following analysis focuses on the positive tertium and its mediation.

According to his constructivist approach, Peter conceives the therapeutic tertium as a mental construct that is created to cope with the fact that one cannot directly control and heal mental and psychosomatic diseases – and yet, therapies time and again are successful. From his point of view, the tertium functions as an imaginary but nonetheless effective bridge between voluntary/communicable and involuntary/incommunicable psychological and psychosomatic processes. Although his approach has merit, yet I think one should try to keep the analysis less normative by using Peter's concept as an analytical tool to elucidate their inner structure without evaluating the truth claims of the respective therapeutic systems.

Furthermore, a closer look at Peter's theory reveals that, actually, it is not based on a trinity of healing factors but on the interaction of five agents:

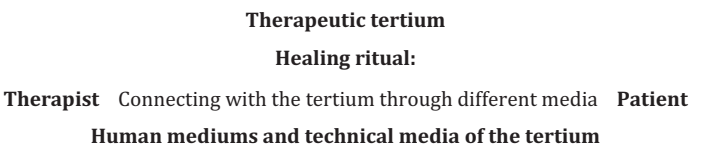


Figure 1: The system of healing agents according to Burkhard Peter.

Peter refers to the figure-ground principle of perception from Gestalt psychology. He defines the therapeutic tertium as medium in the sense of an ambient medium, that is, a kind of quasi-spatial background that encompasses therapists and patients, while it simultaneously functions as an element within which both

5 Additionally, in Peter: Ericksonsche Hypnotherapie, 7 neutral tertia are mentioned as a third kind of tertium, but they don't play a significant role within Peter's theory.

live similar to the surrounding air that they breathe. From this modality, he distinguishes the tertium as a figure, that is, a concrete medium used within the therapeutic ritual to refer to and connect with the invisible tertium *per se*.

I am not completely convinced of his Gestalt-psychological approach. Of course, the therapeutic tertium is sometimes conceived of as an ambient medium (with some conceptualizations of animal magnetism as a good example), but this is not necessarily the case. Peter rightly points out that therapeutic tertia function as hidden agents that are difficult to access and often are referred to via mediating symbols within the therapeutic ritual. However, there is no need to conceptualize the relationship between hiddenness and mediated presence in line with the figure-ground principle exclusively. Therefore, I consider it inappropriate to base a general theory of the therapeutic tertium on it. Instead of speaking of "figures" and "ground," I simply distinguish the tertium itself from its human mediums and other intermediaries that function within the therapeutic setting as transmitters of the healing principle.

The mediation of the therapeutic tertium is of crucial importance for the healing procedures within the tertium-centered type of therapy.[6] The ritualized relationship between therapist and patient enacts figural representations and imaginations of the tertium to render its healing power present within the given situation. The ways in which the tertium and its activity are understood determine the roles of other agents within the healing process and the understanding of the process *in toto*.

Animal Magnetism as Therapeutic Tertium

Therapists who work within the tradition of Franz Anton Mesmer assume that they heal through a therapeutic tertium called animal magnetism (fr. *magnétisme animal*; ger. *animalischer Magnetismus* and, sometimes, more precisely *Lebensmagnetismus,* "magnetism of life" or *vitaler Magnetismus*, "vital magnetism"). Mesmer originally conceptualized this agent as a natural force that resembles mineral magnetism (and also electricity, light, and fire) on a more subtle and covert level. According to Mesmer, animal magnetism functions as life force within organisms (especially their nervous systems) and connects them with the universe. It can be emitted from living human bodies for healing purposes.

The views about the nature of this healing agent varied within the mesmeric community. Animal magnetism was usually located somewhere in-between mind

6 Peter: Ericksonsche Hypnotherapie, 7.

and matter, being finer than usual matter but also too physical to be pure consciousness. Mesmer himself understood it as modification of a cosmic fluid of exceedingly subtle oscillating particles whose streams pervade the universe. Other mesmerists thought of it as a purely energetic phenomenon that manifests itself within different material substances, including living beings. A third party was not even certain about its existence and considered it to be at least a helpful idea that supports the physician's personal psychic healing power.[7]

According to Mesmer's therapeutic concept, sick persons have to be charged with animal magnetism in order to regain their health. The patients do not lack it completely, as every living organism, whether healthy or not, is animated by it. But in order to be cured, an additional amount of animal magnetism has to be implemented into the ill body. This surplus would be able to remove the congestions of the natural flow of the therapeutic tertium within the body and especially within the nerve fibers – congestions that, according to Mesmer, are directly or indirectly responsible for all kinds of diseases.

In his late opus magnum *Mesmerismus* (1814), the result of collaboration with the romantic physician Karl Christian Wolfart (1778–1832), he introduced the immobility (*Ruhe*) or solidification (*Festigkeit*) of matter as antagonist of the ever-changing "fire of life" or "principle of life," i.e. the fluid. From this point of view, death is the final expiration of the movements of the fluid within the body of a living being and, thus, the victory of the principle of immobility.[8] Solidification and immobility oppose the fluid; but they do not function as negative therapeutic tertium. According to Mesmer, in a healthy human body both principles interact harmoniously. Their proportion naturally changes in the course of life until the second principle ultimately takes over and the person dies. If one would like to identify a negative therapeutic third within Mesmer's system, that would be the imbalance of both principles in the form of an untimely restriction of the flow of life energy. As far as I can tell, all schools of

7 Pattie: Mesmer and Animal Magnetism, 221: „As early as 1784, Puységur was convinced of the importance and indeed the necessity of psychological factors: the magnetizer must exercise his will; he must strongly desire and will the cure of his patient. [. . .] Some of the members of Puységur's branch of the Society of Harmony in Strasbourg turned from physical to psychological explanations. They were by no means sure that the fluidic theory was relevant to the observed facts". Puységur indeed emphazised the trust, good will and benevolent attention of the magnetizer. But for him this so called „psychological" factors had a bodily dimension and functioned very similar to the effects of mineral magnets. Thus, he was still close to Mesmer's therapeutic approach and also did not neglect the fluidal interaction within the therapeutic relationship. Cf. Sziede: Mesmers sechster Sinn, 41–45.

8 Mesmer: Mesmerism, 163–164.

Mesmerism follow a model of balancing the life force within the patient. The second generation of mesmerists – but not Mesmer himself (although he paved the way for this) – consider an excess of life force within certain parts of the body as something that has to be removed by certain therapeutic interventions.

The idea of healing by transmission of an all-pervading natural healing agent that is primarily radiating from the magnetizer's body, but nevertheless is not a human phenomenon *per se*, implied that the therapeutic tertium could theoretically also be stored and emitted by inanimate media. Indeed, from the very beginning, Mesmer embarked upon both paths: the invention of methods to transmit animal magnetism through the body of the therapist and the use of specific substances and apparatuses as technical media.

The discovery of the therapeutic the potential of a sleep-walking kind of consciousness, called 'magnetic-' or 'artificial somnambulism' and 'magnetic sleep' by Mesmer's most important disciple Amand Marie Jacques de Chastenet de Puységur (1751–1825), added a third kind of medium to mesmeric mediology. Magnetized patients at times became what we would today call trance mediums. Within the culture of this second wave of animal magnetism, paranormal powers, such as telepathy, thought-reading, intuitive diagnosis of their own disease and the diseases of others, communication with the dead, the visit of heavenly realms, and even ecstatic union with god were ascribed to the somnambulists.

In Mesmer's therapeutic concept, involuntary non-verbal bodily reactions of the patients like sweating, trembling, weeping, shrieking and convulsive movements played a crucial role as manifestations of a cathartic crisis caused tertium that has been transferred into their bodies. The somnambulic mediums, on the other hand, articulated themselves mainly through the medium of speech. Again, animal magnetism as tertium enabled this speech and its healthy effects, but it now functioned as cause of enhanced states of consciousness and the verbally articulated insights that arose from them.[9] Reflections about the relation between this kind of mediumship and the other mesmeric mediums and media form an integral part of mesmeric mediology. The remainder of this chapter investigates this topic against the backdrop of changing theoretical presuppositions.

9 Neumeyer: Magnetische Fälle, 261; Weder: Kleists magnetische Poesie, 77–78.

Mesmer's Methods to Transmit and Reinforce Animal Magnetism

Mesmer emphasized that animal magnetism would not necessarily need a medium to be transported through space, even if the magnetizer would send it from a long distance. Because of the supreme subtlety of the cosmic fluid, its vibrations would permeate every other form of matter without any resistance.[10] Fluidal interactions would be as close to total immediacy as any kind of communication can be. The fluid had the function of a cosmic mediator, a primordial medium that connects everything with everything at utmost speed and thereby produces harmony within the universe. Human mediums and technical media are used to support the healing power of the fluid by transferring a surplus of it in case disturbances of the harmonious flow within the human body make this necessary.

Mesmer invented his therapy in 1774/75 while experimenting with the medical use of magnets and devices that generated electricity. He finally concluded that he himself would be the major source of the mysterious agent that removed the illness of his patients, be it magnetic, electric, or, most likely, another, more subtle factor. Most mesmerists, as well as later historians of mesmerism, considered this to be Mesmer's crucial discovery. It resulted in the conception of a hierarchy of media with the animated (human) body on top, followed by plants and then by inanimate substances, especially water, iron, and glass.[11]

The hands, and to a minor degree also the gaze and breath of the magnetizer, were the preferred media. Mesmer's favorite setting for individual therapies became a paradigm within the whole movement. The therapist should sit face-to-face with the patient, bringing his feet and knees and that of the patient in touch with each other.[12] The healing session would start with the therapist establishing a magnetic harmony between patient and therapist, the so-called "rapport."[13] For this purpose, the magnetizer for two or three times should move his hands from the shoulders or the head of the patient downward to his/her thumbs or to the pit of the stomach. This was followed by strokes that created magnetic streams from the head to the feet. These "grand courants" were

10 Mesmer: Abhandlung über die Entdeckung, 51–52: „Schon die Erfahrung lehrt den Ausfluß einer sehr feinen Materie, welche alle Körper durchdringt, ohne ein merkliches von ihrer Tätigkeit zu verlieren. [. . .] Sie wirkt auch in der Entfernung ohne Beyhülfe eines anderen vermittelnden Körpers."

11 Beaumorel: Lehrsäzze des Herrn Mesmer, 61.

12 Mesmer: Mesmerismus, 177. See also Beaumorel: Lehrsäzze des Herrn Mesmer, 79–80.

13 Mesmer: Mesmerismus, 180.

considered to have a general healing effect on the patient.[14] The next part of the ritual focused on specific painful and afflicted regions of the body, the investigation of the causes of the disease, and their removal through certain strokes and the laying on of hands. To discover the cause of the disease, Mesmer recommended placing the hands in the region of the belly, and especially below the diaphragm to connect with the nerve centers in this region.[15] To end the ritual, again certain movements of the hands were performed. The mesmeric strokes were performed in such a way that the mesmerist's hands were moved at a small distance from his/her body. The strokes could also slightly touch the patient's body, but Mesmer considered this to be a less effective method.

Several of Mesmer's therapeutic rituals differed from this standard setting. At times, the patients themselves and/or other attendants of the ritual (family members, other physicians, friends, etc.) functioned as human mediums by forming a "magnetic chain" of several people touching each other to reinforce the animal magnetism. Within the most popular form of mesmeric group therapy, patients were seated in circles around the *baquet* (see below) with their bodies as close as possible and their hands, legs, and feet touching each other. Additionally, a rope was looped around their bodies. Through this tactile connectedness, the patients would be subsumed into one large body, in which "the magnetic fluid continuously circulates and is reinforced through all points of contact."[16]

Furthermore, Mesmer was still far from conceiving of animal magnetism as a purely interpersonal issue. He continued to appreciate non-human tools as auxiliaries. As we know from a report by Ernst Seyfert, during the first year after his discovery, Mesmer still used mineral magnets and an apparatus to electrify his patients.[17] Mesmer himself notes that he only stopped using these technical media in 1776, because he wanted to counter misconceptions of his therapy that interpreted it as a mere variation of already existing magnetic and electrical cures.[18] However, this did not mean that he refrained from the application of technical media. He only started to develop devices that were better

14 Ibid., 180–182.

15 Ibid., 182.

16 Mesmer: Mesmerismus, 187.

17 Kerner: Franz Anton Mesmer aus Schwaben, 19–45.

18 Kupsch: Franz Anton Mesmer, 232. Probably the controversy between him and the exorcist Gaßner who did not use technical media within his healing sessions also contributed to Mesmer's decicision to skip mineral magnets and electrifying machines. Cf. Baier: Mesmer versus Gaßner.

tailored to his concept of animal magnetism and slightly differed from earlier mineral magnetic and electric therapeutic equipment.

One of his favourite technical mediums was the iron stick ("conductor," as Mesmer called it) that he waved like a magic wand to enhance his personal magnetism and to better direct it toward certain parts of the patient's body that needed magnetic support. In a similar way, music and mirrors served to intensify the streams of animal magnetism within Mesmer's group therapeutic assemblies.

A second kind of technical medium stems from Mesmer's belief of being able to transfer his healing power to inanimate substances, which, for a certain time, would store the intensely vibrating fluid that he transmitted to them.

> I observed that the magnetic and electric matters are almost one and the same thing, and other substances propagate both. I found out that not only steel is capable of absorbing the magnetic power. I magnetized paper, bread, wool, silk, leather, stones, glass, water, different metals, wood and men. Everything that I touched became magnetic to an extent that these substances produced the same effects on the patient, as do the magnets.[19]

The magnetized objects were meant to supply the patients with animal magnetism independent from the healers' presence and also without mental concentration on the patients, as was the case in mesmeric distance healing. Thus, the invention of the physician as major magnetic medium went hand in hand with the invention of new technical media.

In his Paris years, when the high number of patients made it impossible to treat each one individually, Mesmer developed an apparatus, the *baquet*, a wooden tub-like device from which several patients could draw animal magnetism at the same time. The vat was filled with fragments of glass, gravel and iron and/or bottles with magnetised water. Bent iron rods protruded from the *baquet*. They were directed toward the patients whose diseased parts of the body were also connected with the rods through strings. This apparatus resembles devices in use at the time to store and transmit electric charge. The Leyden bottle and other instruments played an important role within the research on electricity, but also inspired the imagination of poets and eventually became the latest fad within European high society – the amazing sparks and electric shocks that could be produced with them added a welcome diversion to its parties.

Another invention of Mesmer was "the magic or magnetic box," a kind of mini-*baquet* consisting of a box that contained a bottle filled with magnetized substances (again water, glass splinters etc.). The boxes were used for the treatment of patients who were not able to attain the healing assemblies or whose

19 Mesmer: Erstes Schreiben an einen auswärtigen Arzt, 8.

diseases were conceived of as demanding a continuous supply of animal magnetism.[20] They were placed on the patients' bodies or underneath their beds.

Magnetized water was of special importance in Mesmer's system. As we already saw, he used magnetically charged water for his *baquets* and for the bottles within the magnetic boxes. He also had his patients take a bath in magnetized water or wash themselves with it.[21] As a substitute of or addition to usual medicine, Mesmer also prescribed the drinking of magnetized water.

At the beginning of the 1880s, he introduced another non-human medium: the magnetized tree charged with animal magnetism by the mesmeric physician. The *baquet* as well as the magnetized trees and magnetized water functioned as substitutes for the therapist's radiation of animal magnetism. Both allowed the collective treatments of a larger number of people and the continuation of the healing ritual in the absence of the magnetizer. They were also used as a cheaper version of mesmeric therapy for the poor.

The most important reason for the blossoming of a rich mesmeric material culture and the great diversity of therapeutic techniques within the mesmeric movement was the fact that Mesmer supported a creative approach toward the mediation of animal magnetism. He was explicitly opposed to defining fixed rules for healing practices and detailed construction plans for technical devices. Everybody had the right to change them according to his/her intuition, the circumstances, and the individual conditions of the patients. Mesmer was afraid that detailed rules and their strict observance would produce hostile prejudices against his therapy and could eventually be perverted into mere superstition or mere repetition of the "blind empiricism" of religious ceremonies. Instead of a rigid system, he propagated a kind of intuitive healing performance art based on what he thought to be a scientific cosmology and rational medical principles.[22]

20 Beaumorel: Lehrsäzze des Herrn Mesmer, 89.

21 Ibid., 95–96, 104.

22 Mesmer: Allgemeine Erläuterungen, 44: "Ein jeder kann, vermöge der erlangten Einsicht, sich auf das Studium derselben [der magnetischen Therapie, KB] legen, und von sich selbst erlernen, sie abzuändern und den Umständen und verschiedenen Lagen der Kranken anzupassen. Es hat blinder Empirismus und ungeprüfte Anwendung meiner Verfahrensart, Vorurtheile gegen diese neue Methode und voreilige Kritiken, welche man sich über dieselbe erlaubte, veranlaßt. Diese Verfahrensarten, die übrigens zu keiner positiven Weise gemacht werden können, [. . .] würden, wenn sie nicht aus Vernunftgründen abgeleitet wären, als abgeschmackte und lächerliche Grimassen erscheinen, die in der That unmöglich Glauben verdienen könnten. Ja in eine positive Vorschrift eingezwängt, würden dieselben durch zu ängstliche Observanz ein Gegenstand des Aberglaubens werden können; und es ist wohl keine zu gewagte Behauptung, wenn ich sage, daß ein großer Theil der religiösen Zeremonien des Alterthums Überbleibsel dieses Empirismus zu sein scheinen."

For this reason, Mesmer only gave examples of what mesmeric practice might look like. Detailed technical instructions are not at all prioritized in his writings. He focuses on the theoretical principles, the *Vernunftgründe* of his practice. Based on them, according to Mesmer, a limitless number of practices and apparatuses could be developed.[23] The way in which he describes the construction of his therapeutic devices often resembles cooking recipes that only tell the reader what to do without giving any reasons for the procedure. He simply asserts that they will mediate the fluid and that the result will speak for itself. Now and then he offers vague explanations, for example, for the construction of the *baquet*, underlining that it concentrates and intensifies the animal magnetism that was transferred to it or stirred up within the *baquet* by the mesmeric physician.

Mesmeric tools and especially the *baquet* were travesties of coeval tools, like the Leyden jar, that were used to produce, store, and transfer electricity or magnetism. They borrowed most of their plausibility from the common cultural knowledge about these machines. A more detailed interpretation of the efficiency of the *baquet* as a kind of 'empty medium' is given in the next section.

Originally, somnambulic mediumship was not part of Mesmer's therapeutic system. Although he might have known the altered states of consciousness induced by mesmeric practice, he did not mention them in his earlier writings and obviously did not consider them to contribute to the therapeutic process. After magnetic somnambulism had become very popular in mesmeric circles, he developed an explanation of it on the basis of his theory. Mesmer postulated the existence of an inner sense whose perceptions only become conscious when the outer senses are deactivated. This sense perceives the world through the cosmic fluid that runs through the nerve fibers. Therefore, the organ of the inner sense is the nerve system as a whole. Stimulated by magnetization within magnetic therapies, the inner sense in some cases overpowers the outer ones. Then, the all-pervading fluid becomes a medium of knowledge that goes far beyond the reach of the outer senses: telepathy, unexplainable knowledge about the past, precognitions, and the clairvoyant diagnosis of one's own disease and the disease of others may occur.

Animal Magnetism on Trial

The growing popularity of mesmerism in France threatened the representatives of academic medicine and the *ancien regime*. In spring 1784, King Louis XVI

23 Mesmer: Mesmerismus, 115.

(1754–1793) established two Royal Commissions. One was chosen from the Royal Academy of Sciences and from the Paris Faculty of Medicine (with Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790) and Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier (1743–1794) as its most famous members), while the other one was drawn from the Royal Society of Medicine. Both commissions published their reports in August 1784. As the report of the Royal Society of Medicine was largely repeating the results of the first commission, I focus on the report of the first commission also known as the Bailly report, because the astronomer Jean-Sylvain Bailly (1736–1793) has been considered to be its editor.

A well written, thoroughly argued assessment, the Bailly report eventually became a landmark event in the history of science. As Jessica Riskin puts it:

> In addition to being the first recorded instance of the use of a placebo and of, in modern terms, a method of blind assessment, the mesmerism investigation was the first known formal investigation of scientific fraud. It was therefore a crucial episode in the history of psychology, medical testing, experimental practice, and state authority to police scientific conduct.[24]

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to interpret the report in detail. Instead, only some main lines are briefly examined.[25]

In their investigations, the members of the commission collaborated with the mesmerist Charles Deslon (1750–1786), a former student and supporter of Mesmer who at that time had become his rival. Before they started with detailed observations and experiments, they participated in his group treatments and were very impressed by the dramatic "crises" that the patients underwent:

> Nothing is more astonishing, than the spectacle of theses convulsions; without seeing it, it cannot be imagined: & in watching it, one is equally surprised by the profound repose of some of these patients & the agitation that animates others; the various reactions that are repeated, the fellow-feeling that sets in. [. . .] Because of these constant effects, one can not help but acknowledge the presence of a great power which moves & controls patients, and which resides in the magnetizer.[26]

Nevertheless, they decided that the usual group treatments should not be the object of their inquiry because of the large number of effects that take place there ("one sees too many things at once to see particular things clearly", 335)

24 Riskin: The Mesmerism Investigation, 119.

25 For further analysis see Riskin: The Mesmerism Investigation; Chertok and Stengers: *A Critique of Psychoanalytic Reason*, 1–26; Lanska and Lanska: Franz Anton Mesmer.

26 Franklin et. al.: Report of the Commissioners, 334–335.

and because they did not want to bother "distinguished patients" with their interviews and careful observations.[27]

Instead, they decided to focus on treatments of small groups and the magnetization of individuals separated from the emotionally-charged atmosphere of Deslon's usual group treatments, as both allowed them to isolate the observable changes of the condition of mesmerized persons. The aim of the investigation was to proof or refute the view that animal magnetism is mediated to the patients by the different mesmeric techniques and devices: "The question of existence is primary; the question of utility is not to be addressed until the first has been fully resolved. Animal magnetism may well exist without being useful but it cannot be useful if it does not exist."[28]

As the fluid itself turned out to be inaccessible by direct sensory perception, the only way to answer the first question was an evaluation of the perceivable effects of the mesmeric treatments. Are at least some of them only explainable by assuming the existence of animal magnetism as an agent? At first, the commissioners let themselves be treated by Deslon or one of his disciples while sitting around a *baquet* in a private room. The experiences within this experimental situation differed significantly from those within the usual group treatments. Calm and silence reigned; no crises appeared: "None of them felt a thing, or at least something that could be attributed to the action of magnetism."[29]

The next step of their investigation consisted of experiments with fourteen sick persons, some of them "from the lower class," the others being members of the high society, "more enlighted, more able to give account of their feelings."[30] Five of them reported to have felt effects during the treatment and nine none at all. A closer look at the experiences of those who felt changes within their body led to the conclusion that only the effects felt by three lower class people might have been caused by animal magnetism, while the others were easily explainable by other reasons.

> These facts permitted the Commissioners to observe that magnetism has seemed to be worthless for those patients who submitted to it with a measure of incredulity; that the Commissioners [. . .] did in no way feel the impressions felt by the three lower-class patients, & they must have expected that these impressions, even supposing them all to be real, followed from an anticipated conviction, & could have been the effect of the imagination.[31]

27 Ibid., 335.
28 Ibid., 335.
29 Ibid., 340.
30 Ibid., 343.
31 Ibid., 344.

This interim result changed their further procedure. The commissioners now wanted to find out up to what point imagination could be the cause of all or at least a part of the effects attributed to animal magnetism. Here, only three examples from this new series of experiments can be mentioned.

A woman that claimed that she could experience effects like warmth or pain within the magnetized parts of her body was blindfolded. The parts of her body that actually have been magnetized without her knowledge did not respond at all whereas, when she was made to believe that she was being magnetized while blindfolded, she reported the usual phenomena although no magnetization had taken place.

The use of magnetized trees was also put to test. For this purpose Deslon selected a twelve-year-old boy whose sensitivity to animal magnetism had already been proven. While the boy was in the house of Franklin, Deslon magnetized a tree in the garden. Then, the blindfolded boy was brought out and was told to hug four trees in succession, one of which would have been magnetized (whereas actually the tree that Deslon had treated was not among them). His symptoms became more intense from tree to tree and finally at the fourth tree that was twenty-four feet away from the magnetized one, he had a crisis. His limbs stiffened and he lost consciousness. In a similar way, it was proven that the drinking of magnetized water is ineffective if the patients do not know that it is magnetized, whereas non-magnetized cups of water produced the usual effects if they were considered to be magnetized.

These and other experiments let the commission conclude that animal magnetism was not the real cause of the changes that patients underwent within magnetic treatments. The effects of touch, imagination, and imitation would be sufficient to explain the effects attributed to animal magnetism.[32] Furthermore, there could be reason to believe that "the theatrical play of imagination" (ibd.) would be the most important of these three causes: "We have seen by the experiments cited that it suffices on its own to produce crises. Pressure, touching appear therefore to serve as preparations; it is through touching that the nerves are unsettled, imitation communicates and spreads the sensations."[33] The commissioners refuted the counterargument that although imagination may be capable of producing crises, animal magnetism would also excite them without the help of imagination by referring to Occam's razor. New causes, they argued, "are not to be postulated unless absolutely necessary."[34]

32 Ibid., 359
33 Ibid., 360.
34 Ibid., 352–353.

The commission's critique did primarily aim at the crises that used to appear within the group treatments and also seemed to be learned there by imitation. They affirmed the curative effects of imagination, faith, and hope as probable causes of the obvious successes of mesmeric therapy. Furthermore, they considered that, just as in usual medical treatments and not only with regard to mesmerism, very often it is nature itself that cures and not the remedies prescribed by the physicians. "But when the imagination produces convulsions, it acts through violent means; these means are almost always destructive."[35] The habitualization of the crises through regular participation in therapeutic meetings around the *baquet* would be an additional danger. Therefore, group treatments, in which the means of animal magnetism are used, "can in the long run have only disastrous effects."[36]

The commission discovered an interesting borderline case of mediality without conceptualizing it as such: the 'empty medium' or 'media placebo.' This is a technical or human 'medium' that combines a gesture of transference with the lack of an observable mediated content and, yet, causes the effects that the therapists who use it attribute to the mediation of the therapeutic tertium. The commissioners explained these effects through the "theatrical play" of imaginations and expectations. In doing so, they located their origin entirely within the persons who believe in the mediality of the 'empty medium.' But the play of imagination partially depends on the performative ("theatrical") qualities of the media that allow them to function as a kind of teammates. Both the finger of the magnetizer that is pointing at you, as well as the bent iron rod of the *baquet* that emerges out of the hidden inside of the vat and is directed at you, have the performative quality of addressing and virtually touching someone – and through this, they are apt to change the bodily self-perception of the addressed person and stimulate the imagination of the transmission of a hidden power that affects the body. Besides the expressivity of the medium itself, additional factors contributed to the 'filling' of its empty mediality and thus to the enactment of the *baquet* as an effective part of mesmeric therapy: similarities with well-known functioning media; narratives of the mesmerists; the public debate on mesmerism; the dynamics of interpersonal relationships within the treatments (e.g., the mimetic behaviour that the commissioners already thematised); and last but not least the ritual context.

The results of the commissions were a heavy blow against Mesmer's view of animal magnetism as therapeutic tertium, his group therapy, and the supposed curative power of the crises that he aimed to evoke. More than 20,000

35 Ibid., 361, see also 362–363.
36 Ibid., 363.

copies of the reports were spread rapidly all across France. The public opinion about his cure changed from support to ridicule, as one can see from many satirical writings and stage plays of the time.[37] But, of course, the mesmerists would not give up easily.

They countered the criticism by pointing out that the commissions failed to clarify the nature of imagination. For them, a mysterious immaterial force seemed to be an implausible cause for the observable dramatic effects of animal magnetism.[38] Pamphlets in favor of mesmerism argued that, by means of animal magnetism, many diseases could be healed that imagination would never be able to influence. Additionally, successful cures of very small children or adults in a desperate, almost comatose state would not be explainable by the theory of imagination and imitation.[39] On the other hand, did not contemporary physiology attribute imagination to an ethereal medium running through the fibers of the nerves, much like Mesmer's animal magnetic fluid? Maybe imagination would be nothing more than just a synonym for the activity of animal magnetism.

For Deslon at least, the results of the commission did not mean a major theoretical setback. Some years earlier he had already written: "But if Mr. Mesmer had no other secret than that of making the imagination act to produce health, would that not be a marvellous benefit? If the medicine of imagination is the best, why shouldn't we practice it?"[40] And luckily, the new mesmerism developed by Marquis de Puységur in the same year the research of the commissions took place (1784), abandoned Mesmer's crises and emphasized the psychological factors of mesmeric therapy.

The current debate about animal mesmerism was still unsettled in France when the French revolution put a temporary end to it. At the turn of the century, animal magnetism in France had lost most of its momentum. The center of the mesmeric movement shifted to Germany.

Kluge's Systematization of Mesmeric Mediology

Carl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge's *Versuch einer Darstellung des animalischen Magnetismus als Heilmittel*, first published in 1811, is the best treatise on the

37 Pattie: Mesmer and Animal Magnetism, 185–198.
38 Riskin: The Mesmerism Investigation, 137–140.
39 Pattie: Mesmer and Animal Magnetism, 173–175.
40 d´Eslon: Observations sur le magnétisme animal. London & Paris 1780, 46–47, quoted according to Pattie: Mesmer and Animal Magnetism, 105.

medical use of animal magnetism of his time.[41] The widely read book has been reprinted in two editions (1815, 1818) and was translated into several European languages.[42] According to Alan Gauld's seminal work on the history of mesmerism and hypnotism, Kluge's work is

> one of the most useful books in the whole history of animal magnetism. It encapsulated the literature of the subject – and by no means only the German literature – at a time when in Germany at least, the magnetic movement was trying to achieve some degree of scientific and medical respectability.[43]

The book represents an upcoming new genre of mesmeric literature that relies heavily on case studies published in earlier decades and tries to systematize them.[44] At the time of its publication, Kluge already was a high-ranking military doctor. Later he became director of the Charité in Berlin.

It is significant for the state of affairs of medical mesmerism within the era of romanticism that Kluge sets himself distinctly apart from the founder of animal magnetism. He blames Mesmer's arrogant character and imprudent political behavior.[45] The mesmeric doctrine is described as a mixture of truth and madness.[46] Mesmer's most fundamental error would have been the wrong principle 'one sanity, one cause of disease and one remedy.'[47] Kluge also criticizes Mesmer's view of the human body as a kind of magnet with two poles (feet/head), a central axis running through the spinal cord and several minor magnets that form additional poles (left arm/right arm, thumb/little finger, etc.), a theory that the experiments of the Bailly commission had already debunked.[48] Within the mesmeric therapeutic practice, only two similarities between animal magnetism and mineral magnetism would be observable. The magnetization

41 The only comparable manual that I know is Joseph Ennemoser: Anleitung zur Mesmerischen Praxis, written in the late romantic era.

42 Without giving references, Barkhoff mentions translations into English, French, Italian and Russian (Barkhoff: Magnetische Fiktionen, 93). Mielich adds Dutch, Swedish and Danish to this list, also without bibliographical data (Mielich: Karl Alexander Ferdinand Kluge, 17).

43 Gauld: A History of Hypnotism, 99.

44 Neumeyer: Magnetische Fälle um 1800, 264.

45 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 55–60.

46 Cf. ibid., 53: "Dieses auf Wahrheit und Wahn zugleich beruhende System."

47 Cf. ibid., 57: "Er [Mesmer, KB] ging nämlich von dem falschen Grundsatze aus: *Es gibt nur Eine Gesundheit, Eine Krankheit und auch nur Ein Heilmittel*" (emphases by Kluge).

48 Franklin et. al.: Report of the Commissioners, 345. Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 69–71 blames the commissionaries for having been biased against animal magnetism from the very beginning of their investigations and therefore not having been able to see its truth behind the surface of quackery. But he nevertheless adopts some of their points of criticism.

would in both cases depend on strokes in one direction and it would be nullified by strokes into the opposite direction.[49] These phenomena, according to Kluge, could be explained through the condition of the human organism (without reference to magnetism).[50]

His therapeutic concept follows "the animal magnetism improved by Puységur."[51] Kluge appreciates Puységur's calm treatment that replaces Mesmer's convulsive crises (which, in his view, only contributed to the bad reputation of animal magnetism) by the different stages of somnambulism. For him, Puységur strikes a balance between two extremes: On the one side, Mesmer's school that focuses on intense physical interventions and the creation of heavy bodily reactions; on the other side, the "spiritualistic school" of Chevalier de Barberin, who considered the will and faith of the magnetizer to be the only agents of animal magnetism, and abandoned the bodily transmission of a healing force completely.[52] Puységur's mesmerism would successfully connect both the physical and psychical treatment.[53] Kluge himself contributed to the Puységurian theory of magnetic somnambulism by developing a detailed classification of the different stages of somnambulism that became quite influential within the mesmeric community.

As already mentioned above, Puységur and his followers made the therapist's good will and positive attitude toward the patient a crucial therapeutic factor. They considered the universal fluid to be nothing more than a hypothesis, and had no interest in deducing mesmeric therapy from unproven cosmological principles. Nevertheless, they maintained the idea that, within the therapeutic relationship, the therapist's body functions as medium of a healing power that resembles mineral magnetism. At least within the initial stages of therapy, the Puységurists worked with the laying on of hands on the head and/or stomach and different passes very much in line with old-style mesmerism. Only strong therapeutic interventions, like the intense rubbing of different parts of the body or the strong pressure of fingers on the lower abdominal area, which belonged to Mesmer's repertoire, were abolished.[54] The sensation of heat in the

49 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 47–48, 329.

50 Ibid., 90.

51 Ibid., 76.

52 Ibid., 64–67.

53 Ibid., 55: "Eine dritte Schule bildete die unter der Direction des Marquis von *Puységur* entstandene *Société harmonique de amis réunis* zu *Strasburg*, welche sich [. . .] vorzüglich dadurch auszeichnete, daß sie auf eine glückliche Art die physische und psychische Behandlung miteinander vereinigte, und so zwischen dem Mesmer'schen und Barbarin'schen Magnetismus das Mittel hielt." (Kluge's emphases)

54 For this and the following see Puységur: An essay of instruction, 65–66.

hollow of the hands of the therapist and the transference of this heat into the body of the patient were important. Additionally, the *baquet* and magnetized trees were used. As in Mesmer's writings, technical details, like the differentiation between the altering effects of different movement of the hands or detailed construction plans of devices etc., did not matter. Once the higher grades of somnambulism would be reached, the fluid or psychical healing power would flow in-between therapist and patient without any of these mediations.[55]

Kluge assumes that the animal-magnetic fluid exists, but he leaves open the question of its nature. It would remain uncertain if the fluid would be something that is produced by a chemical process within the organism and belongs exclusively to the living body, or if it would be a part of a world-soul that according to the views of the ancients animate the whole nature, or if it would be identical with or similar to the electric, galvanic, or magnetic fluids.[56] Whatever it might actually be, in any case it would function as a mediator between body and spirit.[57] Without categorically excluding cosmological or metaphysical interpretations, Kluge himself conceived the fluid as a physiological phenomenon closely connected to the nervous system.

The lack of methodology in Mesmer's and Puységur's work was not helpful for Kluge's project to establish animal magnetism as a scientific, academically recognized medical treatment. Luckily, he could rely on German mesmeric physicians like Arnold Wienholt (1749–1804) and Eberhard Gmelin (1751–1809), who had already started a kind of systematization by developing a special terminology for and classification of the mesmeric therapeutic techniques. Their line of investigation was based on physiological and vitalistic theories about the activities of a life force within, around, and in-between human bodies. With regard to mesmeric practice, Puségur influenced both. Their physiological Puségurism recently had been strengthened by the work of the famous physician, physiologist, and pioneer of psychiatry Johann Christian Reil (1759–1813). Like Schubert before him, Kluge used Reil's refined version of Eberhard Gmelin's concept of two antagonistic nerve systems, the cerebral system and the ganglia system, to explain the somnambulic states of mind.[58]

55 Stieglitz: Ueber den thierischen Magnetismus, 345.

56 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 220. The German romantic discourse about the platonic concept of a world-soul was mainly influenced by Schelling: Von der Weltseele.

57 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 221.

58 Barkhoff: Magnetische Fiktionen, 97–98.

Kluge's Systematic Mediology

Kluge distinguishes a "simple treatment" as the fundamental method of mesmeric therapy, where no devices are used, from a "composed treatment" that combines the simple treatment with the use of tools. Very much like Mesmer's mediology, his therapeutic system is based on the primacy of the therapist as medium of the therapeutic tertium. Several technical media are considered to be mere extensions of the healer's body. But, as we will see, his classification of media also takes into account a certain agency of non-human media.

The so-called "manipulation," that is, the use of the hands as medium, is of pivotal importance within the simple treatment.[59] Like in Mesmer's writings, two other body techniques are mentioned in passing: breathing on the patient (*Adspirieren*) and looking into the eyes of the patient with a firm gaze (*Figieren der Augen*). He also mentions the concentration of thought on the absent patient (*Figiren der Gedanken*). Kluge believes that this "pure psychic treatment" is effective, but does not recommend it because, through it, the patient might get acquainted to the more subtle influences of animal magnetism and may develop a kind of hypersensitivity. Because of this, the mesmerist should only use his or her physical potential in the sense of the magnetism mediated through his/her body.[60]

He differentiates between three forms of manipulation. Magnetic passes are performed with direct contact or from a small distance. Only in the case of very sensitive patients are the passes performed from a longer distance. Besides this, the most basic technique is the laying on of hands on different parts of the body (*figirte Manipulation*) in the form of a gentle touch, a pressing, or massage. Additionally, he knows certain distant operations of the hands different from passes: the techniques of sprinkling (*Spargiren*), compressing (*Comprimiren*), and fanning (*Ventiliren, Calmiren*).

The passes should always be directed from the center to the periphery of the body (i.e., downward and outward). The opposite way of moving them (upward as well as from periphery to center), the so-called *Gegenstriche* ("counterstrokes"), would create negative reactions like anxiety, unease, and cramps. They should therefore be avoided.

The passes are differentiated according to the parts of the hands that are turned toward the patient. They can be performed with the palms or fingertips

59 Kluge's description of the manual techniques comprises 79 pages (see Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 324–394) whereas his treatment of technical devices takes him only 30 pages (see ibid., 394–424).
60 Ibid., 201–205, 299, 327.

(*Volar-Manipulation*), the sides of the hands (*Marginal-Manipulation*), or the back of the hand (*Dorsal-Manipulation*). Most important is the *Volar-Manipulation* that directs life energy into the different parts of the body with the help of the palms (*Palmar-Manipulation*) or fingertips (*Digital-Manipulation*).

Kluge's Simple Treatments

Methods of Treatment	**Variations**		
Vagirende Manipulation Manual treatment based on strokes with body contact or close to the patient's body	**Volar-Manipulation** Palms or fingertips directed to the patient Palmar-Manipulation (palms): heating Digital-Manipulation (fingertips): cooling	**Marginal-Manipulation** Sides of the hands directed toward the patient Removing excesses of the fluid or reducing its flow	**Dorsal-Manipulation** Back of the hands directed toward the patient No magnetic effects, used to move the hands back to their inital position after a stroke
Manipuliren mit Contact Manual treatment with local body contact	**Manipuliren mit sanftem Contacte** (Manual treatment with soft contact) The laying on of hands in the form of a soft touch	**Manipuliren mit starkem Contacte** (Manual treatment with strong contact) Massage	
Manipuliren in Distans Manual treatment from a larger distance	**Spargiren** (Sprinkling) The fingertips are brought close to the palms and then they are moved fastly towards the patient as if one would sprinkle him/her with a certain liquid	**Comprimieren** (Compressing) One starts with fingertips close to each other and pointing towards the patient. Then the hands approach the patient with the palms pushing forward so that, in the end, they form one flat surface with the fingers	**Calmiren, Ventilieren** (Fanning) Fast movements of the hands as if one would like to create a kind of breeze

(continued)

Methods of Treatment	Variations		
Einfache magnetische Behandlung ohne Manipulation Simple magnetic treatment without the use of the hands	**Adspiriren** Breathing on different parts the patient's body	**Figiren der Augen** (Fixation of the eyes) Looking into the eyes of the patient with a firm gaze in order to induce magnetic sleep	**Figiren der Gedanken** (Fixation of thoughts) Distance healing by concentration of whole-some thoughts on the absent patient

As already mentioned, the composed treatment is a combination of direct treatment by the therapist and the use of outer tools that are understood as supplementary to the manipulations. Kluge's mediology comprises two categories of technical media and thus articulates a distinction that had not been clearly drawn before him: 1) Agents that directly or indirectly reinforce the animal magnetism that radiates from the therapist (*Verstärkungsmittel*). They are used to enhance and direct the therapeutic tertium in situations in which the magnetizer is present and acts as the primary medium of the therapeutic tertium; and 2) magnetic substitutes (*Substitute*), that is, media that are able to store animal magnetism for the sake of distributing it in situations where the magnetizer is absent.[61]

Kluge's Categorization of Technical Tools

Technical Tools	Variations	
Verstärkungsmittel (Media to reinforce animal magnetism) Technical devices and other factors that reinforce animal magnetism within the immediate encounter between therapist and patient	**Direct wirkende Verstärkungsmittel** (Direct reinforcements) Conductor Isolatorium Electricity Mirrors Music	**Indirect wirkende Verstärkungsmittel** (Indirect reinforcements) Physical and psychological influences that strengthen the vitality of the therapist: Rapport with helpers, self-magnetization, connecting with the stars at midnight, healthy lifestyle

61 Cf. ibid., 394–424.

(continued)

Technical Tools	Variations
Substitute (Substitutes) Technical devices that are able to raditate animal magnetism by themselves in the absence of the therapist	Magnetized water Magnetized glass Magnetic battery (*baquet*) Magnetic tree

The first sort of tools consists of things that we know already from Mesmer's practice like the conductor, electricity, mirrors, and music, and adds the electric insulator (*Isolatorium*) that has been introduced into German mesmerism by Gmelin and Wienholt.

Technical devices of the second sort transmit the tertium to animated beings that enter their atmosphere. (As Gmelin before him, Kluge thinks that animal magnetism surrounds things and living beings like a halo.) In order to become agents of animal magnetism, the substitutes have to be charged with the fluid by physicians. After this procedure, which differs from one sort of device to the other, they are able to produce essentially the same effects than the magnetizing physician, albeit in a weaker way. All substitutes that Kluge describes were already introduced by Mesmer: magnetized water and glass, the magnetic battery as Kluge calls the baquet, and, of course, the magnetic trees.

The third form of mesmeric mediality, the voice of the somnambulistic trance medium as mediator of wholesome insights, is treated in a differentiated way. Very much like other mesmerists within the romantic era, Kluge concedes the possibilities of error and fraud but nevertheless affirms the reports that attribute paranormal perceptions and abilities to the magnetic somnambulists. Their competence as therapeutic mediums encompasses the ability to diagnose diseases (one's owns and those of others with whom the medium came in magnetic rapport), anticipate the course of disease, and give therapeutic prescriptions.[62] In a typical manner, he only quotes selected references and ignores reports of unsuccessful experiments and remaining insecurities.[63]

With regard to the highest stages of somnambulistic trance, he is more cautious than the romantic philosophers and theologians of his age from Schubert onward. Nevertheless, probably influenced by the romantic milieu he was living

62 Weder: Kleists magnetische Poesie, 81.
63 Barkhoff: Magnetische Fiktionen, 95.

in, Kluge evaluates them less negative than the skeptical Eberhard Gmelin, who warned that it would be harmful for the patients as well as for the whole mesmeric movement if the somnambulists would be used as oracles who reveal higher truths.[64] Kluge accepts phenomena like telepathic communication between magnetizer and patient, visions of the heavenly world and the after-life, and the transformation of the somnambulist through the union with god, but sets up boundaries of their scientific explanation. As these phenomena would already belong to the spirit world, they would transcend the realm of knowledge of the natural sciences that is restricted to insights based on sensual perceptions.[65]

At the current state of science, even an explanation of the more earthly but still extraordinary insights of the magnetic somnambulist (like their ability to diagnose diseases) would be impossible. Presumptions and probabilities would be the highest reachable goal.[66] In this regard, he favors the physiology of the nervous system and especially two of Johann Christian Reil's ideas. Following Reil, Kluge thinks that the nerves are not containers but conductors of a sensitive atmosphere, a subtle fluid, or stream of life that surrounds them. This stream does not move inside but alongside the nerves.[67] As already mentioned above, he furthermore adopts the theory of two basic nervous systems, the cerebal- and the ganglia system from Reil.[68] Kluge supposes that the mesmeric treatment charges the ganglia system with the subtle fluid and concentrates it within the solar plexus.[69] This process would finally lead to an awakening of the solar plexus as center of an altered state of perception.

Non-Human Media as Agents *Sui Generis*: Kieser's Animistic Concept

The therapeutic mediologies of Mesmer and Kluge center on the human magnetizer as main transmitter of the therapeutic tertium. The efficiency of the technical media depends on the personal magnetism of the mesmerists who use the devices to reinforce it or to store and radiate it outside face-to-face situations. In both cases, the technical medium functions as a kind of expansion of the

64 Weder: Kleists magnetische Poesie, 100.
65 Weder: Kleists magnetische Poesie, 88–89.
66 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, 213.
67 Ibid., 217–220.
68 Ibid., 223–234.
69 Ibid., 276–278.

magnetizer's body. Dietrich Georg von Kieser challenged this paradigm in his *System des Tellurismus oder Thierischen Magnetismus* (1822) and related articles in the periodical *Archiv für den Thierischen Magnetismus* (1817–1824). The *Archiv* was at that time the most important journal of animal magnetism.[70] Commentators often criticize the verbose, baroque, and quite redundant style of Kieser's writings and especially of *System des Tellurismus*, which is more than a thousand pages long.[71] Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to dive into his very special mesmeric world and have a closer look at some of his innovative ideas.

A professor of medicine at the University of Jena, pioneer of psychiatry, and president of the Leopoldina, the German Academy of Natural Sciences, Kieser was a leading representative of philosophically oriented romantic medicine.[72] According to the subtitle of *System des Tellurismus*, it is meant to be a handbook "for investigators of nature and physicians." Whereas Kluge's sole intention was to treat animal magnetism as a therapeutic method for physicians, Kieser also addresses physicists and philosophers who investigate nature.

Actually, he bases the theory and practice of mesmerism on speculations about polarity as basic structure of the universe that were common in Schelling-inspired medicine and philosophy. In Kieser's system, every natural process is built upon the interaction of a positive, solar and a negative, telluric (from lat. *tellus*=earth) power that manifest themselves in countless ways. The principle of life would be nothing else than the "organic tension" between those opposites that generates an oscillating movement, similar to the constant succession of day and night.[73]

Insofar as this oscillation is identical with life itself, the whole of nature is alive. One could call Kieser's philosophy an integral animism: "All things in this world are *alive* and *organic*. [. . .] In relation to a *higher wholeness* they are necessary, integrative and organic parts or *organs* of this wholeness. But with regard to themselves they have to be conceived as *living organisms* with a higher or lesser degree of independence (individualisation)."[74] Because of

70 For the close relationship between the Kieser's *Archiv* and his treatise on Tellurismus see Scheuerbrandt: Die Stimme der Natur. Kieser was the main contributor and *spiritus rector* of the *Archiv*. He also functioned as editor, together with three other important scholars, namely Friedrich Nasse, Carl August von Eschenmayer and Gottfried Daniel Nees von Esenbeck.

71 Gauld: A History of Hypnotism, 144 and Barkhoff: Magnetische Fiktionen, 119.

72 For Kieser's life and work see Brednow: Dietrich Georg Kieser.

73 Brednow: Dietrich Georg Kieser, 41–43.

74 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol. 1, 3. For the contemporary discussion of animism as a category within cultural and religious studies see Albers and Franke: Animismus.

these essential relations that derive from the primal polarity, everything is driven by an inclination toward assimilation to the greater whole and, at the same time, by an instinct of self-preservation. Whenever two entities get in touch with each other, an organic vital process of mutual interaction takes place, in which one entity functions as ruling, positive, solar pole whereas the other one constitutes the ruled, negative, telluric pole.

Like all other modes of being, human life differentiates itself according to the primal polarity. Kieser distinguishes a night life (darkness, sleep, dream, emotion, imagination, passivity, femininity, submission, connectedness) manifesting the telluric force, and a day life (light, waking state, ordinary sense perception, reason and will, masculinity, domination, independency) enacting the solar force. This anthropological polarity mirrors Schubert's polarity of a light-side (reason and will, ordinary sense perception) and dark-side (pre-rational figurative thought, emotion, intuition) of knowledge, as well as Reil's antagonism between the sphere of the cerebral nerve system as organ of consciousness and the nerve system of the ganglia in the lower trunk as organ of the unconsciousness. Being a theoretician of mesmerism and the somnambulistic states, Kieser emphasizes the telluric side. For him, the mesmeric treatment is an intentionally enhanced form of telluric life. Animal magnetism and the somnambulistic states are considered to be manifestations of the power of the encompassing spirit of the earth (*Kraft des allgemeinen Erdgeistes*).[75]

This does not mean that he neglected the solar life or that he even propagated a kind of return to a paradisiac telluric nature. Similar to other mesmerists of his time (Windischmann, Eschenmayer, Ennemoser), for Kieser enlightenment and romanticism are not contradictory to each other. They all wanted to use the romantic turn toward the night side of life in order to create a higher form of enlightenment and the enhanced dominance of male European rationality.[76] Kieser is very outspoken about this. The somnambulists that are ruled by the telluric force represent the oriental "childhood days of mankind," whereas the male mesmeric therapist stands for the masculine and occidental age of science and reason.[77] The the nocturnal clairvoyance of the somnambulists as highest form of emotional life and basis of the religions of the "old world" has to be transformed into the scientific knowledge of the day that rules the "new world."[78] He openly criticizes other romantic supporters of mesmerism (like Gotthilf

75 Ibid., 92.
76 Scheuerbrandt: Die Stimme der Natur, 246–247.
77 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol. 2, 283.
78 Ibid., 284–285.

Heinrich von Schubert, Johann Friedrich von Meyer, and Franz von Baader) for rating religious views higher than scientific knowledge.[79]

With regard to the description and categorization of the different kinds of interaction between the mesmeric physicians and their patients, Kieser very much follows the lines of Kluge's system. He complements it, makes some terminological changes, and adds further differentiations. The real innovative element of his theory is the importance he attributes to the inanimate nature as agent of the therapeutic tertium (tellurism/animal magnetism) and, in particular, his use of the non-magnetized *baquet* as therapeutic tool.

He supposes that metals, water, and other natural phenomena (e.g., plants) possess an unknown power that is not identical with mineral magnetism, chemical, and other physical properties but springs from their "organic totalities."[80] The power of the spirit of the earth, tellurism, would manifest itself as mineral spirit, plant spirit, etc. In a unconscious, mythic way, these powers would have been already treated in folk tales about sylphs, goblins, mermaids, gnomes, and the like.[81] The truth of mythical stories about nature spirits could be reformulated in the language of modern physics if the usual non-organic physics would be complemented by a kind of higher "organic physics," which investigates these living powers within nature.[82] In this regard, Kieser approvingly quotes the early romantic physicist and philosopher Johann Wilhem Ritter (1776–1810): "It almost seems that in relation to the developed organic life the dead substance gets the outlook of life as if – released from its fetters – it would at least for a little while show effects and powers in relation to life that are higher than those in relation to its equals."[83]

This reference is highly significant. Ritter's late work is the most important source for Kieser's concept of organic physics and his idea of the agency of inanimate substances. Ritter and Kieser were both deeply impressed by the effects of minerals on those who sense them intuitively (*Metallfühler*) with the help of dowsing rods or pendulums.[84] In line with Ritter, Kieser thought that

79 Ibid., 290. For a critical evaluation of Kieser's rationalistic agenda see Gruber: Die Seherin von Prevorst, 80–85.

80 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol 1, 110.

81 Ibid., 111.

82 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 25.

83 Ritter: Der Siderismus, 15: "Daß aber, dem entfalteten Organischen gegenüber, der todte Körper selbst den Schein des Lebens anzunehmen, und, wie erlöst von seinen Banden wenigstens auf Augenblicke Wirkungen und Kräfte auf das Leben äussern müsse, die höher sind, als die er gegen seines Gleichen übte, scheint es beinahe." Referred to in Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 26.

84 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 29 calls the experiences with dowsing rod and pendulum "diese, ein höheres Leben der anorganischen Körper verkündenden Erscheinungen".

these kinds of phenomena would be the best indicators of a "higher life of the inanimate things."[85] Of course, both do not represent a straightforward animism. They respect the approach of modern physics, but nevertheless suppose the existence of "higher forces" that only appear within the interaction between human beings and nature.

During the last years of his short life, Ritter lived in Munich, where he was in close contact with Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling and Franz von Baader (1765–1841).[86] He not only studied the phenomena of somnambulism, but engaged himself in the end of 1806 (encouraged by Schelling and Baader) into experiments with the famous dowser Francesco Campetti in Tyrol. At the beginning of 1807, he returned together with Campetti to Munich, were many private séances with the dowser took place. Ritter's experiments with divining rods and pendulums attracted a great deal of attention and were discussed in several periodicals.[87] For a short period of time, their use became a fashion within the networks of romantic intellectuals. Ritter and the mesmerist Nasse, who later functioned as co-editor of Kieser's *Archiv*, claimed important similarities between the reactions of sensitive persons in the subterranean presence of metals or water and the effects of animal magnetism. On the other hand, they argued, magnetized somnambulists would react intensively on the presence of certain metals etc., just like the dowsers do.[88] Animal magnetism and the use of dowsing and similar technologies started to converge.

The craze ended only one year later, mainly because several articles in the *Annalen der Physik* criticized that the experiments insufficiently excluded sources of error, especially subconscious movements of the hands. A commission of the Academy of Science that should clarify the case was dissolved at the end of 1807 because of controversies with Ritter.

Around ten years later, from 1818 onward, Kieser's *Archiv* takes up the case again. Several articles deal with pendulum and dowsing rod and connect with

85 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 29.

86 Wetzels: Johann Wilhelm Ritter, 44–53.

87 Cf. the articles of Klinkenstroem: Beitrag zur Geschichte der Wünschelrute and Klinkenstroem: Die Stellungnahme der 'K. Akademie der Wissenschaften' zu den Experimenten Ritter's mit Campetti.

88 Kluge: Versuch einer Darstellung, although written only shortly after the debate, is only briefly mentioning dowsing (see ibid, 250–251). He refers to the recent discussions and irenicly assumes that the truth will be found somewhere in the middle between the opinions of the opposing parties. The whole debate only interested him insofar, as it helped him to support one of his favourite ideas, the existence of what later occultists would call the 'human aura'. According to Kluge, the ability of some persons to feel metals or water hidden in the earth is only explainable by supposing the existence of a sensitive atmosphere that surrounds the whole human body and connects it in a hidden way with its surrounding.

concepts developed within the earlier romantic research on these topics. Kieser himself complains that both the practice of dowsing (at least in the northern parts of Germany) and the research on it have been almost forgotten and he makes a plea for starting the experiments again.[89] Pendulum and dowsing rod differ from the mesmeric therapeutic media. They do not function as transmitters of the therapeutic tertium but as sensors of its presence. In the case of Kieser, they make the all-pervading influence of the spirit of the earth perceivable and, thereby, nourish his view of nature as animated. He assumes that the sensitivity of dowsers might be a state of conscious somnambulism or a capacity of somnambulism that might, at least for some people, be active during the normal waking state.[90] Iron and other substances would obviously cause somnambulistic states. The pendulum and dowsing rod would therefore also indicate altered states of consciousness.

Consequently, he blurs the boundaries between human mediums and technical or natural media of animal magnetism (or, in his terminology, of tellurism, the powerful spirit of the earth). Within the mesmeric movement before Kieser, the terms "somnambulist" and "magnetizer" have been used exclusively for human beings. Now, the human magnetizer is but one among many others. Insofar as minerals and plants radiate their own telluric energy, Kieser does not hesitate to call them "magnetizers." In case they have been magnetized, he speaks of "non-organic somnambulists."[91] Somnambulism can be caused through human interaction or through the organic influence of metals, water, etc. Accordingly, he understands the *baquet* as a kind of unconscious, unintentional magnetizer.[92] Kieser thinks that the operative substances within the vat are identical with those that affect people who react sensitively on subterranean metals or water veins. The *baquet* is a fullfleged magnetizer, an agent empowered by its own mesmerizing life force. Accordingly, Kieser introduced the non-magnetized *baquet* into the repertoire of therapeutic media. Its name "sideric *baquet*" alludes to the term "siderism" that Ritter used to refer to the higher powers of metals. In Kieser's view, it would only be counterproductive to magnetize the *baquet* before its use or to combine its use with an interaction between the physician and his patients, because a human magnetizer would only disturb the effect of the sideric baquet.[93]

Kieser thinks that the animal magnetism that radiates from a human magnetizer is of a supreme order compared to mineral or plant-based telluric forces.

89 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 23 (footnote).
90 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 27–28.
91 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol. 1, 310.
92 Kieser: Das magnetische Behältnis, 32.
93 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol.1, 441.

There is a hierarchical order within his animistic world. But this does not mean that in all cases human magnetism should be preferred. The use of both kinds of media has its advantages and disadvantages.[94] With regard to the patient, the sideric *baquet* is more secure concerning disturbances and incorrect treatment because of diseases, emotions, moral impurity, or concentration lapses of the human magnetizer. For the physician, the use of the sideric *baquet* means a facilitation of his work, because his presence is not needed for the treatment. Moreover, it protects the physician from the danger of being too much influenced or even dominated by the patient. On the other hand, the power of the sideric *baquet* is less vivid and intense than the telluric force radiated by human beings. Additionally, the will of the human magnetizer is able to direct the telluric power more precisely toward certain organs or parts of the body and concentrate it there. The physician has to consider all these factors in order to decide in each case which kind of treatment would be preferable.

Kieser's upgrading of the *baquet* did not prevent its final decline within the mesmeric movement. The development of the *baquet* stagnated. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Joseph Ennemoser (1787–1854) notices that *baquets* would only rarely be used. Some mesmerists would say that they are unnecessary; others would even argue that their use would be defamatory because mesmerists who work with them would be considered to be charlatans.[95] The magnetic healers who were responsible for the revival of mesmerism at the end of the century preferred manual therapy. Those of them who were still interested in technical devices replaced the old-style *baquets* with new tools, like the sun-ether radiation-apparatuses of the chemist Oskar Korschelt (1853–1940). The *baquet* became the forgotten prototype of a great many "empty media" used within alternative therapies until today.

Conclusion

In order to analyze the therapeutic mediologies of mesmerism and to foster the understanding of therapeutic systems and processes in general, I suggested a theoretical model based on Burckhard Peter's concept of the therapeutic tertium. This model allows differentiating several basic therapeutic agents. Furthermore, it conceives healing rituals and the whole therapeutic process as events that aim at connecting therapists and patients through specific media with the supposed

94 Kieser: System des Tellurismus. Vol. 1, 444–447.
95 Ennemoser: Anleitung zur mesmerischen Praxis, 209–210.

therapeutic tertium, that is, a source of health that transcends the capabilities of the healers and their clientele as well as those of their interpersonal relationship.

From this theory follows that therapeutic mediologies must alter according to the different ways in which the therapeutic tertium is construed. In the main section of this chapter, I examined this implication by investigating three mesmeric mediologies. It turned out that, at least within the history of mesmerism, a strong connection exists between the conceptualization of the therapeutic tertium, therapeutic mediology, and the healer-patient-relationship.

Mesmer regarded the therapeutic tertium as a subtle fluid that consisted of extremely small particles that pervade the universe and preserve the cosmic order. In his later works, he tended to understand animal magnetism as a purely energetic phenomenon. As already Kieser clearly saw, he never overcame this theoretical ambiguity. According to Mesmer's inclination towards modern physics and technics, technical devices were quite important for him. His openness to new techniques and tools, if they would only corresponded to his general physical principles, encouraged the creativity of his disciples. Mesmer's shifting between corpuscular physics, energy physics, and vitalism also allowed mesmerism to develop into different directions.

The Bailly report seriously challenged Mesmer's claim that a cosmic fluid exists and is transmitted to the patients by several media within mesmeric treatments. From a mediological point of view, the report – for the first time in the history of modern science – takes some steps in order to explain the effectivity of "empty media."

For Kluge, who knew about the results of the Bailly report and the new direction mesmerism took with Puységur, the nature of the animal-magnetic fluid is still unknown. Most probably it would be a kind of sensitive atmosphere that runs along the nerve fibers and also encircles the whole human body connecting it with the surrounding. In his systematization of mesmeric techniques, the interaction between therapist and patient is central. Technical media are, compared to Mesmer, of minor importance. Especially, his detailed description of a whole range of manual treatments shows how subtle the medium of bodily interaction between healer and patient within German mesmerism had become.

Kieser embedded his therapeutic practice within a Schelling-inspired *Naturphilosophie*, which envisions the therapeutic tertium as the immaterial activity of the telluric life process. His theory was inspired by earlier experiments of German romantics with dowsing rods and pendulums. It could be described as a modern form of animism. Kieser's view of tellurism/animal magnetism challenged the predominance of the human magnetizer and caused an upgrading of non-human media as independent agents within the therapeutic process.

Their new importance is reflected in Kieser's discussion of the pros and cons of equipment-based mesmeric medicine.

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Erhard Schüttpelz and Ehler Voss

Quite as Powerful. The Mediumistic Controversy in the 19th Century

When in London lately, I had the pleasure of calling upon an eminent and excellent physician, who is in the habit of using mesmerism in his practice, in suitable cases, just as he uses any other remedy. He spoke of the extraordinary effects which he had experienced from the use of magnets applied during the mesmeric state, and kindly offered to illustrate the fact on a patient who had been asleep all the time I was in the room, and in that stage, during which I felt assured she could overhear every word of our conversation. He told me, that when he put the magnet into her hands, it would produce catalepsy of the hands and arms, and such was the result. He wafted the hands and the catalepsy ceased. He said that a mere touch of the magnet on a limb, would stiffen it, and such he proved to be the fact.

I now told him, that I had got a little instrument in my pocket, which although far less than his, I felt assured would prove quite as powerful, and I offered to prove this by operating on the same patient, whom I had never seen before, and who was in the mesmeric state when I entered the room. My instrument was about three inches long, the thickness of a quill, with a ring attached to the end of it. I told him that when put into her hands, he would find it catalepsize both hands and arms as his had done, and such was the result. Having reduced this by wafting, I took my instrument from her, and again returned it, in another position, and told him it would now have the very reverse effect – that she would not be able to hold it, and that although I closed her hands on it, they would open, and that it would drop out of them, and such was the case,-to the great surprise of my worthy friend, who now desired to be informed what I had done to the instrument to invest it with this new and apposite power. This I declined doing for the present; but I promised to do so, when he had seen some further proofs of its remarkable powers. [. . .] I then requested her to look at the point of the fore-finger of her right hand, which I told the doctor would send her to sleep, and such was the result; and, after being aroused, I desired her to keep a steady gaze at the nail of the thumb of the left hand which would send her to sleep in like manner, and such proved to be the fact.

Having repaired to another room, I explained to the doctor the real nature and powers of my little and apparently magical instrument – that it was nothing more than my portmanteau-key and ring, and that what had imparted to it such apparently varied powers was merely the predictions which the patient had over-heard me make to him, acting upon her in the peculiar state of the nervous sleep, as irresistible impulses to be affected, according to the results she had heard me predict.[1]

1 Braid: Power of the Mind over the Body, 31ff.

Note: A preliminary version of ideas presented in this chapter was published in German as "In jeder Beziehung ebenso wirksam. Die mediumistische Kontroverse im 19. Jahrhundert". In *Theorien der Passivität*. Kathrin Busch and Helmut Draxler (eds.), 97–108. München: Fink.

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Orthopraxy

This triumphal and stage-ready demonstration of therapeutic superiority that the Scottish physician James Braid presented in his 1846 essay on "Power of the Mind over the Body"[2] is not directed against the effectiveness of his nameless friend's practices. Both are seemingly able to evoke at will the same physical phenomena in their mostly female patients: to put them into a sleeplike state and wake them again and make their limbs rigid and loose again. Braid acknowledges his friend's ability; he does not suspect a trick; and he does not find such manipulations objectionable. What rouses Braid is his friend's explanation of his practices and thereby the practice itself. Where his friend attributes the evoked effects to an invisible force controllable with magnets, Braid sees the source of the bodily changes in the human "mind", to wit, the patients' mind. He reports and he demonstrates: I can do this with other practices, i.e., without a magnet, solely with a key, and I don't even need the key, but can do this with my mere finger and my mere word. The point is to test whether one practice can be replaced by another and a test of what is "right" and can be adopted and what about it leads to "false" conclusions about the assumed causes and results of the activity.

To terminologically generalize these two characteristics: Braid's question is "orthopractical" in nature, i.e., it aims at the best practice and its explanation; and his demonstration becomes a "substitution trial" through his declared conviction that another practice, with all its misunderstood reasons and consequences, can be "substituted" by his own practice, with the right reasons and consequences. The practice is exchanged, and with it also the theory, but in the foreground stands the correction of the practice, the substitution of one practice by another that achieves analogous and superior effects. His own practice should be "quite as powerful" and possibly even more powerful.

The further theoretical specification is not what is decisive, i.e., the open questions of agency are neither clarified nor made more precise, and no complete intellectual or theoretical scaffolding is offered. For example, Braid discusses only summarily the question of what is to be understood by "the mind" whose effectiveness he demonstrates; sufficient to him is his conviction that there is a "mind" that refutes or helps practically overcome the materialism of the claimed imponderables and that can be focused through "concentration". Without a doubt, here we find a testing of patients' passivity and susceptibility to activation – Braid sets up an experiment, and there is no reason to exclude his trial from the experimental history of medicine and psychology, especially since they helped found a field

2 Ibid.

of experimental research that persists to this day, namely "hypnotizing" and "hypnotism". But in its explanatory act, this trial does not rely on the persuasive power of a consistent teaching, and not even on the theoretical identification of an already completely outlined psychological or physical force, but on the persuasive power of the demonstrable substitution of already existing practices.

Substitutions

With his trial and the publication of his notes on it, Braid tried to replace one practice with another, unknown practice that first appeared in a public trial of substitution and that, through its stabilization, could later be understood as the starting signal and foil for a series of major debates. The practices Braid called "hypnotizing" he himself had initially gotten to know and learned as "mesmeristic" and "magnetizing" practices. The 19th-century hypnotists, spiritualists, and hysteria researchers went through the school of physical mesmerizing techniques.[3] In regard to the practices themselves, therefore, all the "mediumistic" procedures and controversies of the long 19th century stand in continuity with the practices of the "animal magnetism" developed as a therapeutic method by the doctor Franz Anton Mesmer, who came from Lake Constance and later practiced in Paris. Mesmer explained his practices since the 1780s with the doctrine of "animal magnetism", in which he asserted the existence of a usually invisible, all-perfusing and thus universal force that was finer and more all-pervasive than electricity, which had been used for quite some time. This "fluid" could be influenced, strengthened, accumulated, and transferred by magnets as well as by the person of the "magnetiseur", so that the suspected illness-producing blockage of the fluid in his patients' bodies could be brought to a healthy flow again.

Just as Braid, in a gesture of scientific enlightenment, turned against what he considered the mesmerists' superstitious and irrational assumption of an "imponderable agent", before him Mesmer, too, had presented himself with the gesture of an enlightener whose theory of the fluid could disprove the popular exorcists, in particular. Mesmer and his method first became famous by means of a targeted media campaign, in which he was staged as a protagonist of the Enlightenment – in particular, a Catholic-Church Enlightenment – that would stand up to the popular practices of demonology and belief in the Devil.[4] A kind of showdown was staged between one of the last great exorcists of Southern Germany and Mesmer

3 Baier: Meditation und Moderne.

4 Ego: „Animalischer Magnetismus" oder „Aufklärung ".

as a representative of the Enlightenment. In its course, the exorcist Gaßner and Mesmer apparently never had a personal encounter. The lower classes attended Gaßner's exorcisms so massively that the Church, political, and economic responsibilities of his clientele became mixed-up and confused. Mesmer was thereupon invited to perform several show treatments on the premises of upper-class viewers, in whose course he was to demonstrate that the therapeutic effects of an exorcism were also possible using the "magnetic" forces of nature he had discovered. This duel at a distance was carried out with a flood of publications on both sides; the transregional and interdenominational range of its publications made the Enlightenment side the victor of this controversy, and Gaßner's bishop ultimately banned him to a remote country parish.

Contemporaries already staged and assessed Mesmer's duel with Gaßner as a symbolic victory – a clear triumph for the Enlightenment because now demons would no longer be exorcised from people, but the belief in demons itself.[5] In retrospect, this victory appears full of ambiguities, since it was this media campaign that launched Mesmer's fame and thereby legitimized the spread of mesmeristic practices – with all their Enlightenment and non-Enlightenment, romantic and religious, natural philosophical and medical consequences. What remains conspicuous is that we find in the Mesmer-Gaßner controversy important components of the later mediumistic controversies, especially their "orthopractical" and "substitutive" orientation: as in the aforementioned later example of Braid, Gaßner's abilities to treat his patients are not fundamentally doubted, yet Mesmer is able to achieve the same things with his patients without requiring Gaßner's theory or the invocation of heavenly and hellish powers.

It can all be done without the Devil and exorcism; the effects can be achieved and explained with other reasons: it is a natural "fluid". The duel at a distance between Mesmer and Gaßner thereby turns out to be the first trial conceived entirely "orthopractically". It is true that the journalistic opponents traded numerous theological arguments – resorting to a Catholic, Christian, or Enlightenment "orthodoxy" – but on the side of Mesmer's adherents, the orthodox arguments could not form a substantive consensus, if only because of the heterogeneous journalistic alliance between Enlightenment, Protestant, and Catholic forces. But even without a substantive consensus, they were able to agree on Mesmer as their favorite.[6] While the consensus among Gaßner's followers consisted in an until then undisputed orthodoxy favoring the exorcism procedure and the Catholic belief in demons, the consensus of Mesmer's party invoked the

5 Hauschild: Der Böse Blick, 27ff.

6 Ego: „Animalischer Magnetismus" oder Aufklärung, Chapter. 1.

effectiveness of the orthopractical substitution itself. In the context of the substitution trial, the genuineness of the effects of exorcist activities, for example making symptoms appear and disappear, was in no way denied, which concurs with the exorcism's old experience that every exorcism contains an evocation, and vice versa.

Mediality

As a result of the practices Mesmer developed and the controversies they triggered at the end of the 18th century, the mediumism of hypnotized, somnambulant, and trance mediums formed a common boundary object between secularizing and revelation-seeking, scientific and magical, medical and aesthetic interests and group formations. This situation demands an explanation that, in principle, would have to extend to address the controversies themselves. Mesmer's theory of the fluid offered contemporaries hardly anything new; rather, it seemed like a combination of old components in a new practice. In his terminological presentation of the magnetic "fluid", he invoked the already known imponderables electricity, gravity, heat, and light. The theoretical explanation Mesmer produced was unable to either convince or disquiet his contemporaries; the turmoil that his practices caused in Vienna and Paris arose from the boundary-crossing palpability of his demonstrations and from the "orthopractical" claims that he technically conveyed and publicly staged.

Nonetheless, Mesmer's therapeutic intervention became a turning point in terminological history of a term that, as far as we can determine from his writings, never played a role for Mesmer himself: the "medium". For with the conception of animal magnetism as a "fine" and "imponderable" natural force and substance, his practices and their theoretical explanation fit into the then conventional conception of an intermediate and mediating realm between Man and God, and every "magnetic" practice and physical technique held out the promise of plunging into this intermediate realm.[7] The metaphysical history of the "intermediate" realm between Man and God in question, or to be more precise the relevant history of a centuries-long intersection among metaphysics, cosmology, and science[8] from early modern times to the late 19th century, is still mostly unwritten, and the history of the term "medium" is also only in its beginnings. Stefan Hoffmann[9]

7 Schott: Hieroglyphensprache der Natur.
8 Cf. Faivre: L´Ésotérisme, 9f.
9 Hoffmann: Geschichte des Medienbegriffs.

summarized some essential components of the history of the term "medium": Aristotle's theory of perception calls the air a "diaphanous medium" with light-refracting characteristics; these refractions and their media are later recognized throughout nature, which, as Creation, stood midway between Man and God anyway and especially through these "media" became God's mediator. Between 1600 and 1800, the expansion of the term "medium" to include nature and the increasing assumption of a mechanization of natural forces therefore intensified the assumption and investigation of imponderable forces and fluids that, not yet but potentially, could be determined precisely, like ether and electricity, and which could permeate the physical and the psychological equally, due to their character as fine substances. This materiality, but also this permeation and its potential revelatory quality, were to be understood through natural philosophy and natural science; and the technical instruments and technical media of natural knowledge, especially when based on refractions, as with the lenses of the camera obscura and the laterna magica, elsewhere simultaneously seemed the means of a "natural magic".

Mesmer's practices promised direct access to a new, all-permeating imponderable; and they instantly demonstrated the power of their psychosomatic permeation. Only after Mesmer's techniques were established and a broad discussion of "animal magnetism" were personal mediators termed "mediums" because of their abilities, and indeed they now found themselves in a slightly shifted "middle". To a small but irreducible extent, in the form of Mesmer's practices, the "intermediate realm" between Man and God, between immanence and transcendence, became a common basis for secular and religious themes and positions: they could be understood as a site of natural scientific and natural philosophical investigations as well as a site where new revelations would occur.

1784 became a decisive year for the formation of this boundary object. First, in this year, a Royal French Commission, in collaboration with numerous established scientists, publicly examined the truth value of Mesmer's postulate of a new imponderable and rejected it. Second, in this year, Puységur, an adherent of Mesmer's, discovered unusual perceptions and clairvoyant abilities, for example to diagnose illness, in the patients he mesmerized and put into a "somnambulant" state. A conscientious framing is appropriate for this founding act, which has been repeatedly invoked since then in the literature and in science history, especially as the founding act of the unconscious and of modern psychotherapy.[10] As already in the "duel" between Mesmer and Gaßner, Puységur's "discovery" of somnambulism and the abilities it enables is also, from the beginning, a contribution to a

10 Ellenberger: The Discovery of the Unconscious; Crabtree: From Mesmer to Freud.

controversy held in the public media. As in the case of the controversy between Mesmer and Gaßner and later in Braid's intervention, the explosive force of Puységur's description lay in presenting an "orthopractical" protocol that claimed a new effectiveness, but also an improved method of "animal magnetism" that was available to any well-meaning practitioner. While Mesmer had recommended and practiced abreacting psychosomatic blockages with a powerful "crisis", Puységur's procedure recommended putting the patient in a "somnambulant" state and thereby in a longer-lasting state of heightened receptivity. The "mediumism" of Puységur's patients stems from this emphasis on and controlled arousal of a somnambulant receptivity.

Only with the recognition and testing, protocolling, and publication of the "somnambulant" abilities that until then hadn't interested Mesmer, at least not publicly, is the central foundation created for the 19th century's bafflingly profuse series of examinations and trials that can be categorized only coarsely as controversies over mesmerism, spiritualism, hypnosis, and hysteria. In the focus of the examinations, evocations, and therapies always stood "mediumism" itself, i.e., the personal mediums' medial ability to act and experience; and since spiritualism, at the latest, the examination took place in the name of the term "medium". The modern mediums' ability to act and experience has thereby always remained controversial; and on a closer look, individual trials and experiments, for example Braid's aforementioned "substitution trial", make it possible to state that, in particular, it was the receptivity discovered by Puységur that remained at the center from the beginning to the end of the controversial categorizations and classifications. A medium's receptivity had to be "orthopractically" produced, and then one could start on the more difficult task of localizing the resulting agency and of categorizing its course. The localizing and categorizations remained always controversial and debated. The realm of possibilities from early mesmerism remained until the end of the 19th century: unknown, imponderable natural forces could be attributed to mediumistic receptivity and its initiative to act, to ethereal and fluid substances, or to a particular human ability (like the initiator's special receptivity) that made it possible to accumulate and address these natural forces. This ability could be identified with a natural force or with an elitist or egalitarianly distributed ability to deal with such a force; it could be equated with an ability to manifest great figures immanent in this world, nonhuman and supernatural powers, or nonhuman persons tied to the person of the medium, also in the form of a transcendent "private revelation" or "higher knowledge".[11] And, as already at the beginning of the mesmerist debate, but

11 Zander: Höhere Erkenntnis.

more strongly in the spiritualist controversies and their criminological investigations, it could be attributed to a charlatanism and self-deception of the medium, his impresario, or his scientific observer.

Reflections

What stood on the test bench with the medium's "orthopractical" receptivity and the categorization of his initiative to act shifted in the series of relevant controversies. If we view the 19th century from the parallax of its pre- and post-history, we can sum up that the issue of the great series of mediumistic debates was, on the one hand, what was up for discussion in modern research, and on the other hand, the "intermediate realm" between Man and God and a whole series of modern categories that were first discussed and defined by the participants in the mediumistic debates and that then, toward the end of the 19th century, were consolidated theoretically and institutionally: the imponderabilities and fine-material substances, fluids, electricity, ether (in mesmerism and afterward), spirits and revelation, heaven and hell (not only in spiritualism), hysteria (in hysteria research), magic, trance, the unconscious, animism, suggestibility, mass-psychological "contagion", artistic inspiration, and esoteric imagination. All these phenomena and their terms, whether in quotation marks or not, could be made visible and questioned in a mediumistic trial, were protocolled and checked in the form of a mediumistic receptivity and its manifest consequences, and were purified through the rejection of their fallacious parts.

Here, another variant of the "substitution trial" should be enough to indicate the outline of a revised and thereby all the more timely history of mediumism. This variant is no longer characterized by a friendly exchange, as in Braid's case, and, unlike Mesmer and Gaßner's duel, no longer characterized by an institutionally secured respect, but in open hostility that could, however, subsequently turn into friendship and respect. In 1856, the popular French magician Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin traveled to the recently conquered French colony Algeria to use the performance of some of his most impressive conjuring tricks to annul the authority of Sufi "holy men", called "marabouts" in French at the time, and their brotherhoods.[12] Robert-Houdin and his supporters' aim was to outdo the magical imaginative world of the Sufi adherents with modern stage magic and to demystify the politically suspect "tricks" and prestidigitation of the brotherhoods, in particular of the 'Isawiyya. This encounter did not remain one-sided, because in return,

12 Jones: Modern Magic and the War on Miracles in French Colonial Culture.

'Isawiyya troupes were invited to France to perform their spectacular magic feats at World Fairs and on variety stages. In this way, the magic art of Robert-Houdin ventured to measure itself against its double in magic, first with a spectacular performance of tricks that sought to appear "as magic" to the inhabitants of Algeria and second by intentionally debunking them as purely mechanical acts and transparent bluff – and in a third step, through what Robert-Houdin strove to make a universal substitution trial. All the "wonders" that the 'Isawiyya had made to appear during their trance ceremonies and trance performances were to be exposed as sleight-of-hand tricks, for example the eating of pieces of glass, stones, and cacti and the insensitivity to pain and poison exhibited during the trance state toward snakes, scorpions, glowing-hot stones, and razor-sharp blades. But except for a cautious version of eating glass, Robert-Houdin did not carry out the relevant acts himself; they were merely verbally analyzed as deception; and the 'Isawiyya repeatedly performed them on Paris stages, while secular magic artists sharply observed their tricks. Mesmerists and spiritualists, too, visited the 'Isawiyya's performances and found in them clear evidence of the abilities of "magnetic sleep" (i.e., of the possibilities of somnambulant treatment) or of a spiritualists explanation for them; and these two parties rejected the basic imputation that all of the 'Isawiyya's trance states and trance occurrences could be reduced to prestidigitation and obvious absurdity.[13] In this way, the substitution trial that Robert-Houdin strove for and staged in Algeria led to a decades-long mirroring and hybridization between Islamic mysticism and secular magic art, between trance and show business, Enlightenment and tourism, scientific disenchantment, occultism, and folklorization – in other words, in precisely that "intermediate realm" between secularizing and revelation-seeking strivings whose illusions Robert-Houdin wanted to "exorcise" and that his "exorcism" invoked with uncontrollable consequences. Three remarks on this:

First. The encounter and the forced "duel" that Robert-Houdin sought with the 'Isawiyya did not remain a unique case. Since the 19th century, there has been a constant confrontation between secular magic artists and the magicians and mediums they visit and whom they seek to test and to debunk with scientific explanations. In other words, since the mediumistic trial of the 19th century, there has been an unending productivity of debate – and of personal "duels" – between show magic and "real magic", between disenchantment and mediumism, especially in the modern categorization of and research on perceptual illusions, or, for that matter, in categorizations of the brain. After all, the psychological explanations of what the brain does to us in making sleight-of-hand tricks possible are

13 Ibid., 89–93.

much more sophisticated than any sleight-of-hand could be. The secular version of explaining the illusions of the brain makes the brain the most profound sleight-of-hand agent that we could imagine. Thus, explaining the sleight-of-hand tricks of religious magicians and imitating them in secular magic relies on explanations that expose the credulity of our brains and our credulity toward the teachings of psychological experiments that are supposed to be scientific extensions and substitutions of both secular magic and religious sleight-of-hand. This connection was forged during the mediumistic controversies of the 19th century.

Second. Robert-Houdin and his allies tried to reduce the actions and results of the 'Isawiyya to the intentionality of sleight-of-hand tricks. They did not ask how the 'Isawiyya themselves would categorize their actions, which therefore remained mostly undocumented in the files of the 19th century. As the anthropologist, historian, and participating observer of modern magic shows, Graham Jones, has elucidated,[14] one can nonetheless presume that the 'Isawiyya themselves, then as now, understand their ceremonies as the arousal of a certain "receptivity", a receptivity that alone enables them (in a manner simultaneously orthodox and orthopractical) to conjure up and manage the spectacular processes or "wonders". The point was and is to win and receive divine charismatic power (Baraka) that should prove itself in them, the participants in a "hadra", and in their everyday consequences. Thus, the only people who treated non-European visitors as equals and without any form of condescension when they visited European or American cities seem to have been mesmerists, spiritualists, and other seekers of universal religious forms of mediumistic agency.

Third. The "will to substitution" that manifested itself in the substitution trials outlined here – is it a legacy of the Enlightenment? Is it the scientific experimentalization that promises to make every procedure reproducible and to treat it scientifically only if it can be separated from its context? Is it an exorcism that, like every exorcism, contains a conjuring and effects new conjurations? Is it the striving for a new institutionalization and founding of its possible orthodoxy, a project kindled by the underdetermination of an orthopractical preparation? The trials briefly outlined here show that these categorizations do not necessarily exclude each other.

Dizziness

As the aforementioned examples, coarse characterizations, and lists demonstrate, the mediumistic history of the long 19th century has all the makings of a

14 Ibid., 93.

grand, a dizzyingly vast story with a plethora of phenomena that have repeatedly cast not only their contemporaries, but also the contemplators of their history, into states of disorientation and inability to categorize. It will be all the more important in the future to understand the great mediumistic debate not only in the context of its metaphysical-cosmological prehistory, on the one hand, and on the other, to reduce it to a prehistory of what, in the course of the controversies, has consolidated itself most successfully and hence appears to us in retrospect as a solidly anchoring viewpoint – a "prehistory" of the modern psychotherapies, of the unconscious, of esotericism, of theories of suggestibility and mass psychology, and of modern art – but also to focus on the controversies themselves and their experimental productivity. Only by examining the tricky orthopractical duels, substitution trials, and efforts to persuade will a history be possible that asks how individual positions could emerge from the controversies themselves and their controversial components, positions that remained transitory or consolidated as "anchorings"; but also how the duels led to new controversies, some of which are still powerful and effective today.

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Janny Li

A Case of Quasi-Certainty. William James and the Making of the Subliminal Mind

> Such is the human ontological imagination and such is the convincingness of what it brings to birth. Unpicturable beings are realized, and realized with an intensity almost like that of a hallucination. They determine our vital attitude as decisively as the vital attitude of lovers is determined by the habitual sense, by which each is haunted, of the other being in the world. A lover has notoriously this sense of the continuous being of his idol, even when his attention is addressed to other matters and he no longer represents her features. He cannot forget her; she uninterruptedly affects him through and through.
>
> William James, *Report of the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena* (1886)[1]

> Our duty is not the founding of a new sect, nor even the establishment of a new science, but is rather the expansion of Science herself until she can satisfy those questions which the human heart will rightly ask.
>
> Frederic William Henry Myers, *Science and a Future Life* (1901)[2]

Some Promise of Life Beyond

In the late summer of 1885, William and Alice James attended a séance with Leonora Piper. Leonora Piper, pregnant with her second child, was a reluctant medium who had slowly begun to take strangers in her parlor. She slowly drifted into a trance and began to list a string of names, finally settling correctly on "Gibbens," Alice's maiden name. It seemed as though she had difficulty pronouncing – or, perhaps more accurately, hearing – the words.[3] Before coming out of her trance, she asked about a dead child. Piper fumbled for a name. "Herrin?" Despite these incongruities, William James believed "the *facts predicated* of the persons made it in many instances impossible not to recognize the particular individuals who were talked about" (emphasis in original).[4] As Piper added details to the names, James weighed the chances of blatant fraud or a lucky guess. Or, perhaps, he allowed himself to imagine the most improbable scenario: that this young medium might be "possessed by supernormal powers."[5]

1 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 16.
2 Myers: Science and a Future Life, 119.
3 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 100.
4 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 80.
5 Ibid.

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Two months prior, American psychologist and philosopher William James and his wife, Alice Gibbens James, had lost their youngest son. Herman James, affectionately known as "Humster," died at the age of one after contracting pneumonia.[6] The day after his son's funeral, James wrote to his cousin, "it *must* be now that he is reserved for some still better chance, some promise of life beyond Earth" (emphasis in original).[7] James had no intention to prove the existence of an afterlife, no plans to consult a medium about his son. "That he ended up doing both," as Deborah Blum notes, "William James would always consider a strange and remarkable coincidence."[8] In James's lifetime, he would witness vast changes to the scientific and spiritual landscape of America, including Manifest Destiny and the territorial expansion of the nation through telegraphic communication and railroads, the Third Great Awakening, and the abolition of slavery. Séances provided an unexpected window into nascent debates – concerning biological determinism and the human experience of free will – that shaped how the "mind" and the "body" were being reimagined in America in the nineteenth century.

A deep public fascination with the occult followed in the wake of Charles Darwin's and Alfred Russel Wallace's theories of evolution by natural selection. With the intellectual anxieties produced by new discoveries in geology, biology, and astronomy were generating for conventional religions, thousands of converts turned to spiritualism[9] as a means to provide an even more *rational* basis for questions of faith and the ultimate purpose of human life.[10] Spiritualism gained traction as a popular religious, therapeutic, and political movement because it provided a technically plausible system of explanation for seemingly occult occurrences, "transforming the supernatural into the preternatural."[11] Not surprisingly, the movement attracted the scorn of both prominent scientists as well as church leaders, who condemned spirit mediums as the "nemesis of the pulpit."[12] Spiritualists shared the basic tenet that human consciousness, or the soul, survived bodily death. Through psychic mediums, séances, and dramatic displays of apparitions, table tipping, slate writing, and the use of other

6 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 96.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Scholars have counted between thousands to millions of members participating in the spiritualist movement, possibly with membership peaking at eleven million at the movement's heyday in the 1870s. Albanese: A Republic of Mind and Spirit, 220. For more on nineteenth century spiritualism, see Oppenheim: The Other World; Winter: Mesmerized.
10 Hess: Science in the New Age, 19.
11 Sconce: Haunted Media, 28.
12 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 20.

technologies like Ouija boards and planchettes, spiritualists believed that they could achieve direct communication with the spirit world and provide empirical proof for the existence of an afterlife. In an era of widespread intellectual and moral upheaval, spiritualism – alongside the dawn of new disembodied telegraphic communication[13] – made possible the "fantastic splitting of the mind and body in the cultural imagination."[14]

The late nineteenth century marked a historical moment when the human mind had become of greater importance than bodily structure.[15] Twenty years after they founded their competing theories on natural selection, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, much to their own surprise, found themselves embroiled in a high-stakes debate over the origin of humans. Wallace had controversially declared natural selection insufficient to account for humans, and specifically for the origin of consciousness and the higher intellect and moral sensibilities of the human mind. Instead, he proposed that the evolution of human consciousness must be guided by a higher power: an intelligent designer "in definite directions and for special ends."[16] Wallace attributed this "supreme intelligence" to mysterious forces that he encountered through his involvement with spiritualism.[17] He believed that if science denied the possibility of a higher intelligence, a universal moral force, the result could be a widespread amorality

13 Jeffrey Sconce argues that spiritualists attempted to gain scientific authority and public legitimacy by aligning themselves with the principles of "electrical science." This was an attempt to distinguish mediumship from more "superstitious" forms of mystical belief in the previous century. "It was the animating powers of electricity that gave the telegraph its distinctive property of simultaneity and its unique sense of disembodied presence, allowing the device to vanquish previous barriers of space, time, and in the spiritualist imagination, even death. More than an arbitrary, fanciful, and wholly bizarre response to innovation of a technological marvel, the spiritual telegraph's contact with the dead represented, at least initially, a strangely 'logical' application of telegraphy's consistent with period knowledges of electromagnetic science, the experimental frontiers of physics/metaphysics." Sconce: Haunted Media, 28.

14 Sconce: Haunted Media, 27.

15 Fichman: An Elusive Victorian, 155.

16 Kottler: Alfred Russel Wallace, 145.

17 Slotten: The Heretic in Darwin's Court, 6. In the 1870s, Wallace emerged in the public eye as the champion of spiritualism, ardently defending psychic mediums against the scientific community and the wider public. To be clear, Wallace did not attribute this moral force to God. As Deborah Blum points out, he continued to view organized Christianity's way of explaining the world antiquated and unconvincing. However, Wallace worried that without God or a supreme force, or at least a belief in one, individuals would find it difficult to distinguish between right and wrong, especially without assurance of future reward or punishment. Eric Slotten insightfully argues, "[Wallace] had omitted a soul from the monster he created – an omission he discovered belatedly and hoped to remedy." Slotten: The Heretic in Darwin's Court, 6.

that might threaten the social fabric. As George Stocking argues, Wallace shifted the focus of the anthropogenesis debate from the physical to the mental and moral evolution of humans.[18]

"The purpose of *On the Origin of Species*," as Louis Menand argues, "was not to introduce the concept of evolution; it was to debunk the concept of supernatural intelligence – the idea that the universe is the result of an idea."[19] To a certain extent, Darwin also found natural selection inadequate to account for all aspects of evolution.[20] He supplemented natural selection with a new theory on sexual selection and traced human behavior to its animal origins. Positing a predominantly deterministic scheme of explanation, Darwin and other scientific materialists reduced all phenomena, including human thought, to laws of matter and motion. Materialist accounts of science disregarded volition, effort, free will, and even consciousness itself as illusory. This disregard was perceived by many within and outside of the scientific community as a threat to the traditional bases of morality.[21] As Lorraine Daston suggests, this perceived tension between the moral necessity of free will and a mechanistic law-governed mental science played a central role in framing mind-body conceptualizations within the scope and limitations of late Victorian science.[22]

Debates between creationists, evolutionary teleologists, and scientific materialists over the nature of the human mind, then, became a means to address larger intellectual, ethical, and moral anxieties concerning God, the afterlife, and the perennial concern of where humans stood in the "great chain of being." If the mind was not simply "molecular changes in protoplasm," as argued by T. H. Huxley and other Darwin proponents, then who or what was responsible for humankind's higher mental and moral faculties? And if the mind was not restricted to biological processes, then could human consciousness survive bodily death?

In this chapter, I consider the relevance of William James's psychical research to emergent theories of the human mind and, more specifically, to the making of a subliminal consciousness. In particular, I show how James connected biologically determining aspects of his psycho-physiological data with an ethically meaningful doctrine of free will and personal "truth" to formulate provisional theories of trance phenomena. The emergence and enduring legacy of debates between biological determinism and the human experience of free

18 Stocking: Victorian Anthropology, 149.
19 Menand: The Metaphysical Club, 121.
20 Fichman: An Elusive Victorian, 157.
21 Daston: British Responses to Psycho-Physiology, 192.
22 Ibid.

will, often recast as nature-nurture debates, is a deep and rich area of scholarship for many anthropologists, historians of science, and science studies scholars.[23] Séances and seemingly fringe trance phenomena have the power to illuminate intersecting tensions between the growing hegemony of scientific materialism and the rising religious sentiments about the reality of God, free will, and a purpose-driven universe within nineteenth-century American society.

Throughout his career, James maintained an ambivalent relationship with Darwinian thought.[24] On the one hand, he advocated a "science of religion,"[25] subjecting *all* beliefs to public scrutiny or the kind of critical selection analogous to natural selection – a "survival of the humanly fittest," or the survival of the fittest belief.[26] On the other hand, James believed that natural selection had produced, in humans, organisms gifted with the capacity to make choices, or what he would call the "will to believe."[27] The "will to believe" presented to James a moral imperative, a vote in the evolving constitution of the universe: "When we choose a belief and act on it, we change the way things are."[28]

In their respective ways, Darwin and Wallace each sought to formulate an all-encompassing theory to account for the origin of consciousness and the evolution of the mind. This was not the sort of consciousness-making that James participated in. Nor is it the focus of this chapter. Rather, I focus on James's contribution to theories of mind through a seemingly fringe aspect of his scientific career (psychical research) to a fringe part of the mind (the subliminal consciousness). I present an alternative way of knowing the mind, not through

23 For example, see Shapin and Schaffer: *Leviathan and the Air Pump*, MacCormack and Strathern: *Nature, Culture, Gender*, Haraway: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, Latour: *Have Never Been Modern.*

24 Lorraine Daston: British Responses to Psycho-Physiology, 205 also suggests "James oscillated between a deterministic and an autonomous theory of will throughout his career. It has been convincingly argued that his eventual decision in favor of the latter can be attributed to biographical as well as intellectual factors."

25 James: Varieties of Religious Experience. James shifted from a doctrine of "separate spheres" marking off religion and science as distinct classes of truth to a "science of religion." His "science of religion" transformed all private beliefs into expressed and tangible actions, behavioral and emotional changes, and practical consequences that could be measured and tested along with other forms of belief, including scientific beliefs, which are rooted in personal experiences. David Hollinger writes that the goal of James's "science of religion" is to "test saintliness by common sense, to use human standards to help us decide how far the religious life commends itself as a kind of human activity." Hollinger: Damned for God's Glory, 14.

26 Hollinger: Damned for God's Glory, 14.

27 Menand: The Metaphysical Club, 220.

28 Ibid.

great scientific debates or grand totalizing theories, but through the vicissitudes of James's explorations on the margins of consciousness.

Over the last twenty-five years of his life, William James investigated the trance states of Boston medium Leonora Piper as part of his work for the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR). William James referred to Piper as his "white crow," the single exception that could destroy the universality of the general rule that all crows are black.[29] For James, Piper's trance phenomena destroyed all of the basic premises held by the mainstream scientific community on the divisibility of the mind and the physical limits of human consciousness.[30]

Trance phenomena are particularly salient to thinking about the reality of the unseen because they are known through their material effects, not by an intrinsic or pregiven nature. Throughout the course of his investigations, James came to believe in the genuineness of Piper's "supernormal" knowledge. What he was uncertain about, though, was the source of her extraordinary powers. To make sense of his direct observations and empirical data, James vacillated between two primary theories to account for this source: "spirit-return" (the postmortem survival of consciousness) and the subliminal mind (and altered states of consciousness). More confounding, still, was whether the survival and subliminal theories were mutually exclusive. Perhaps James's research articles and reports were not explanatory devices but rather an analysis based on a logic of associations and deferral of conclusions, an inevitable call for more research.

This chapter, then, is an account of how William James grappled with what I call "quasi-certainty" as a means to access debates over the reality of biological determinism and free will. It is an account of how James held in productive tension the biological and mental processes studied in his psychical research with a "will to believe" advocated in his pragmatism.[31] I define quasi-certainty

29 Taylor: Shadow Culture, 169

30 James did not set out to disprove existing theories of the mind. In fact, when he initially began his psychical and physio-psychological research, he also believed in the dominant theory held by the scientific and medical communities that the mind could only be divisible into two states of consciousness: the waking and sleeping states. It was only later, through his investigation of trance phenomena, that he argued that the mind could be divided into multiple states of consciousness.

31 The question of whether or not it was trance phenomena that caused James to reject the increasing materialism of science around him or if, by contrast, it was his determination to fight increasing materialism that biased the interpretation of his findings is an important one. As an anthropologist, however, I do not believe that I am in a position to laud or condemn James. The answer to this question, I propose, largely depends on what James called, "one's

as a mode of knowing through associations and deferrals. Quasi-certainty arises when some elements are certain – that is, unequivocally known – but other elements remain unknown amidst larger uncertainties and ambiguities. I link quasi-certainty to a mode of knowing that emerges from effect-cause relationships – rather than cause-effect relationships – in which material effects and practical consequences are known without knowledge of their origin or cause. Seen in this light, James's quasi-certainty echoes the inductive reasoning and empiricist discourse of Darwin and other scientific materialists. Further highlighting his ambivalent relationship to Darwin, he described the efforts of psychical research: "When Darwin met a fact which seemed a power to his theory, his regular custom, as I have heard an ingenuous fried say, was to fill in all round it with small facts, and so mitigate the jolt, as a wagoner might heap direct round a big rock in the road, and thus get his team over without upsetting."[32] James's provisional and piecemeal theories began with the empirical and observed effects of trance phenomena and tried to generate the most-likely hypotheses through a continuous chain of verifying experiences.[33] As a parallel mode of practice, verifying experiences acted as the driving force of quasi-certainty – propelling and modifying the relationships between the known and the unknown. Further, quasi-certainty allowed James to deny trance phenomena an *a priori* essence. This shifted James's focus to unfolding conjunctive and disjunctive associations – between past and current experiences – in order to access his objects of inquiry.

James's quasi-certainty privileged two kinds of open-endedness: an open-endedness that relies upon intra-experiential relationships as a productive force, generating ever-more nuanced hypotheses and provisional theories, and an open-endedness that creates the conditions of possibility for a personal "truth" founded upon subjective experiences and beliefs. James's reliance on

general sense of dramatic possibility" – that is, what one can imagine is possible in the universe. This sense, then, can lead readers to view James's quasi-certainty favorably or unfavorably as pseudoscientific self-delusion. Rather, the goal of this chapter is to examine the limits and affordances of quasi-certainty – as a mode of knowing through associations and deferrals – and illuminating the connections between James's psychical research and his pragmatic philosophy. Though it should be noted that many psychologists, notably Joseph Jastrow, participated in detecting fraud amongst mediums, and Hodgson and James were no exception. In fact, James spent the early part of his psychical research revealing fraudulent mediums in Boston. Moreover, James and Hodgson spent a great deal of time attempting to debunk Piper at the beginning of their investigation. For more on Jastrow, see Tanner: Studies in Spiritualism.

32 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 101.

33 Quasi-certainty as a mode of knowing is inspired by abduction or a mode of knowing. For a more detailed analysis of abduction, see Peirce: Essays in the Philosophy of Science; Saunders: CT Suite; and Helmreich: Alien Ocean.

this logic of associations and deferral can be attributed to the limits of psychical research and the indeterminacy of paranormal phenomena. But it can also be attributed to James's personal temperament: his willingness to dwell in uncertainty and his fear of premature conclusions that might foreclose potential lines of inquiry. Regardless, his logic of associations and strategy of deferral as well as his commitment to open-endedness were concerns that he maintained throughout his psychical-research career. These concerns were also omnipresent in his pragmatism and were later formalized in his method of "radical empiricism" and theory of pragmatic "truth" in the last years of his life.

By examining the quasi-certainty within James's theories of the subliminal mind, I hope to demonstrate that his psychical research (and the demand for psycho-physiological facts) and pragmatism (and the demand for free will) were not distinct, unrelated concerns in his life; they were in actuality coeval, co-emergent, and intimately intertwined facets of his thinking. And I aim to capture the meaning in James's own vacillations between theories of spirit-return and the subliminal mind. I argue that James's refusal to transcend his object of inquiry – that is, his engagement with the gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions of Piper's trance phenomena – afforded him the opportunities to make certain insights into the depth and potential of the human mind. This chapter, then, is a case study of how James engaged with quasi-certainty to access the subliminal mind. It is a grounded account of how meaning-making occurs through continuous chains of verifying experiences and shifting relationships between the known and the unknown, bringing to the fore personal desires, moral convictions, and pragmatic truths.

William James and Psychical Research

William James is celebrated as the founder of American psychology and the philosophical tradition of pragmatism. He is considered by many scholars to be one of the most influential thinkers of the nineteenth century.[34] "There has been," however, "much uncertainty in the minds of William James's readers and particularly that portion in them interested in psychical research as to his conclusions on this subject to which he gave so much thought."[35] As Virginia Pierson suggests, psychical research was something that deeply preoccupied James for the

34 James: Writings, 1878–1899; James and Kuklick: Writings 1902–1910.
35 Pierson: Extracts from the Letters of William James, 5.

over a quarter century.[36] Throughout his psychical-research career, he served both as president and vice-president of the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) and was an active member on their Committee on Work, the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena, the Committee on Experimental Psychology, and the Committee on Hypnotism.

The uncertainty over James's private thoughts on his psychical research can be attributed to the fact that he only published two articles on the topic for the general public: "What Psychical Research Has Accomplished" (1892) and "The Confidences of a 'Psychical Researcher'" (1909).[37] He relegated the majority of his psychical research to summaries, notes, and interpretations printed exclusively in the journals and proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) and, subsequently, the ASPR.

Henry James Jr., William James's eldest son, described his father's early interest in psychical research as born from an "instinctive love of sportsmanlike fair play," not a desire to definitively prove or deny the existence of an afterlife.[38] In other words, James's interest was sparked by what he saw as the growing materialist bias of the scientific community and their outright refusal to treat the claims of spiritualism as valid objects of inquiry. Fearing that the advance of modern science threatened to render the role of religion in society obsolete, James developed a theory of pragmatic truth that treated God and other supernatural phenomena as "real" insofar as they fulfilled personal needs and produced practical consequences. In particular, James's method of "radical empiricism" provided psychical researchers with two advantages: first, the ability to encompass marginalized phenomena, dismissed by mainstream science, into their scope of inquiry as potentially natural phenomena; and second, the ability to transform the lived experiences of their subjects (e.g., behavioral changes, habits) into generalizable "facts" that they hoped would eventually legitimize their research.[39]

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36 See also Bordogna: William James at the Boundaries.

37 James: Essays in Psychical Research.

38 Pierson: Extracts from the Letters of William James, 5.

39 Throughout their careers in psychical research, Sidgwick, Myers, and James remained convinced that by "fidelity to fact and a truly empirical method, psychical research along with other areas disallowed by materialistic presuppositions of science, would be restored as a proper subject of scientific and philosophical inquiry." What is particularly fascinating is that James's developed psychical research as a means to bridge the gap between science and religion. This passion and commitment to empirical observation of personal experiences is one of the most tangible elements that were carried throughout James's psychical research, psychology, and philosophy. See James: Essays in Psychical Research.

In 1882, the SPR emerged in response to the rigidity of contemporary scientific and religious communities. It was built by leading Cambridge University philosophers Henry Sidgwick and F. H. Myers, who believed that questions of immortality and the boundaries of the human mind demanded rigorous and objective investigation. For Sidgwick, in particular, psychical research fulfilled a moral obligation to salvage religious beliefs and pursue what he saw as the exception to scientific hegemony and scientific explanation: the human experience of free will, value, and higher purpose.[40] Like Wallace, Sidgwick believed God, or at least faith in one, to be the foundation of morality and ethics in Western society. In general, the bulk of SPR's work entailed gathering case studies, reports, and testimonies from thousands of witnesses about their encounters with spirit apparitions, haunted houses, and exceptional mental states. For instance, the Committee on Thought Transference – led by E. C. Pickering and C. S. Peirce – applied statistical analysis to the responses of psychic mediums to circulars and public notices in an attempt to measure the frequency of telepathy and other forms of extrasensory perception.[41]

The ASPR was established three years later, in 1885, largely due to the efforts of James and other influential members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.[42] The main work of the ASPR was to apply the

40 Daston: British Responses to Psycho-Physiology, 194. Henry Sidgwick, in his book The Methods of Ethics, writes, "[Determinism] has steadily grown both intensively and extensively, both in clearness and certainty of conviction, and in the universality of explication, as the human mind has developed and human experience has been systematized and enlarged. Step by step, in successive departments of fact, conflicting modes of thought have receded and faded, until at length they have vanished everywhere, except for the mysterious citadel of the will." Lorraine Daston argues that Sidgwick's "citadel of the will" (including human experiences of volition, value and ethics) comprised the "world of history" in opposition to the "world of science." Daston: British Responses to Psycho-Physiology, 194.

41 Taylor: Shadow Culture, 87.

42 The ASPR was established with the help of other prominent scientists, including astronomer and mathematician Simon Newcomb (who served as the first president), physician and physiologist Henry Bowditch (who served as vice-president), psychologist G. Stanley Hall, and James Mills Peirce. These men shortly quit the ASPR owing to disagreements over the methodology and findings of their experiments on thought-transference. More specifically, they perceived the ASPR to not be an upstanding scientific organization and were disappointed to share membership with people they perceived to be enthusiasts and promoters, rather than impartial researchers. In particular, Newcomb began his presidency by writing an article for *Science* magazine criticizing William Barrett's experiments on mind reading. He wrote that he had yet to read a "single piece of convincing evidence." Blum: Ghost Hunters, 88. It should also be noted that Newcomb did not participate in the research. While Science editors praised him for his "acute observation" of psychical researcher, as Deborah Blum notes, James characterized him instead as a "critic without substance." Blum: Ghost Hunters, 90.

most advanced techniques of modern science to the investigation of the claims of spiritualism. Unlike its British predecessor, the ASPR decided against being led by classical scholars. Its founding members determined to operate on purely scientific methods, using only trained researchers in their investigations. "Not that scientific men are necessarily better judges of all truth than others," James argued, but researchers tended to be more believable as experts.[43] The Committee on Hypnotism, led by James, was indicative of this shift of focus to an experimental paradigm. In a specially outfitted lab at Harvard University, James carried out extensive research on physiological reactions during hypnotic trances – in many instances, commandeering his own undergraduate students as his first subjects.[44] In the United States, the Piper case particularly captured the imagination of psychical researchers because it promised to definitively resolve the question of the postmortem survival of the human soul.[45]

The White Crow

"I remember playing the *esprit fort*," James wrote of his initial reactions to séances, "seeking to explain by simple considerations of the marvelous character of facts which they brought back."[46] As part of his work on the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena, James investigated the more notable mediums of Boston, detecting brazen fraud at séance after séance. Unlike these other mediums, however, Piper did not rely on dimly lit parlors or theatrical gimmicks to prove her talents.

Piper's biography bears striking resemblances to those of other female spirit mediums in the late nineteenth century. As Judith Walkowitz notes, "Spiritualists deemed women particularly apt for mediumship because they were weak in masculine attributes of will and intelligence, yet strong in the feminine qualities of passivity, chastity, and impressionability."[47] Piper's body can be seen as similarly defined by such imaginative psychological and physiological speculation.[48] The bodies of spirit mediums, or what Jeffrey Sconce calls "the negative female,"

43 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 87.
44 Taylor: Shadow Culture, 165.
45 Ibid.
46 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 80.
47 Walkowitz: Science and the Séance, 9.
48 Most scholars have traditionally dated spiritualism to the "Hydesville Rappings" of March 31, 1848, when the Fox sisters claimed to be able to communicate with the spirit of a murdered man found on their farm through rappings on their bedroom wall.

and the bodies of women more generally, presented for many Victorians an unfathomable entity, "a machine they could not understand."[49]

In the winter of 1885, James witnessed a dozen more séances with Piper, the young medium he saw following the death of his son. As part of his study, he also sent more than twenty-five anonymous subjects, or "sitters," mostly family members whom he had personally introduced to the medium. Typical of the trance-mediumship popular at the time, Piper's trances were facilitated by a "spirit-control," or a spirit who acted as a conduit between the medium and the spirit world. In particular, Piper was "controlled" by a spirit guide named Dr. Phinuit, purported to be a deceased French doctor.[50] A dozen of James's sitters received nothing but unknown names and trivial talk from the medium. But, unexpectedly, fifteen sitters claimed to be surprised by the messages they received – details and facts so intimate that Piper could not have possibly known them through gossip or random guessing. "The probability that she possessed no [clue] as to the sitter's identity, was, I believe," James admitted, "in each and all of these fifteen cases, sufficient."[51]

To the readers of his "Report of the Committee on Mediumistic Phenomena," published a year later, James acknowledged that these details do not otherwise prove anything since proof ultimately lies in personal conviction, or what one chooses to believe based on his or her own experiences. He would later call this choice the "will to believe." "I am," James wrote, "persuaded by the medium's honesty and the genuineness of her trance."[52] The source of Leonora's "supernormal" knowledge, however, continued to elude James.

True to James's style, the report offers "no definitely concluded piece of work."[53] As Krister Knapp notes, when James began his investigation of consciousness in 1878, he believed that the mind could not be divided into two seemingly unrelated states.[54] "It simply defied logic based on then accepted physiological and anatomical theories of the brain."[55] Instead of providing a conclusion, more questions arose from the seemingly irrelevant and trivial nature of Piper's trance utterances: Were they improvisations of the moment?

49 Sconce: Haunted Media, 44.

50 James later speculated that Piper's spirit-control took the form of a doctor because of her first encounters of trance-mediumship with "Dr." Cocke, a medium who claimed he could heal others with the help of spirits.

51 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 15.

52 Ibid., 16.

53 Ibid.

54 Knapp: William James, Spiritualism, and Unconsciousness, 2.

55 Ibid.

Were they in themselves right and coherent but addressed to the wrong sitter? Or were they vestiges of former sittings, now emerging as part of the automatism of the medium's brain? These questions suggested a transition in James's working assumption from one based on a single indivisible mind to one based on a mind that could be divided into multiple states of consciousness.

The skeptic rules out evidence in advance. The believer, in contrast, accepts far too much evidence to be true. Opting out of belief *and* disbelief, James – choosing to dwell in quasi-certainty – substituted a conclusion for a deferral. He wrote, "the committee of the society should first devote itself to the very exact and complete study of a few particular cases."[56] This deferral characterized James's psychical research and created the conditions of possibility for him to hold multiple, seemingly incommensurable theories of the mind and lines of inquiry open.

The Limits of Dr. Phinuit

"What science wants," James believed, "is a context to make the trance-phenomena continuous with other physiological and psychological facts."[57] Piper's trances threw into sharp relief the inadequacies of spirit-return and the subliminal mind as theories to account for the mental and biological processes of her trance states or the acquisition of her "supernormal" knowledge. The *prima facie* theory suggested the reality of spirit-return. To subscribe to this theory, though, one also had to believe in the immortality of the soul and the survival of consciousness after death.

Tensions between the experiential reality of spirit-return for Piper and the demand for establishing psycho-physiological facts are acutely reflected in the design and interpretations of James's experiments. Curious to ascertain whether there was continuity between a medium-trance and an ordinary hypnotic trance, James conducted a series of experiments on Piper to understand psychological and physiological modifications in these different states of consciousness. Initially, James had a difficult time hypnotizing Piper, forcing him to turn to her spirit-control, Phinuit, for assistance. By his fifth attempt, James reported that Piper had "become a pretty good hypnotic subject, as far as muscular phenomena and automatic imitations of speech and gestures go; but [he] could not affect her consciousness, or otherwise get her beyond this point."[58] Piper described

56 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 18.
57 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 16.
58 Ibid., 82.

entering her trance states as a feeling of numbness, a sensation she likened to "descending into a dense and chilly fog."[59]

James noted that her condition in semihypnosis was very different from her medium trance. In keeping with the pattern of James's other hypnotic subjects, Piper's hypnotic trances were followed by extreme muscular weakness. Unlike his other subjects, however, Phinuit purportedly mediated Piper's semihypnosis so that she could not recollect the instructions given to her during her hypnotic state.

Attempts to measure "thought-transference," or telepathy, in Piper's hypnotic trances were equally unsuccessful. She was tried twice with epistolary letters and was only successful in one instance. Piper did not fare any better in her waking state; the number of playing cards that she guessed successfully was not statistically significant enough to offer substantial evidence of thought-transference. As far as evidence goes, these findings suggested that Piper's medium-trance seemed to be an isolated feature of her mind, though James was unable to determine the psycho-physiological or supernatural source of Piper's spirit-control. Still, from these initial experiments James was able to discern three distinct states of consciousness: the normal waking state, the medium-trance, and the hypnotic trance. "This would of itself be an important result," James wrote, "if it could be established and generalized, but the record is obviously too imperfect for confident conclusions to be drawn from it in any direction."[60]

Two years would pass before James returned to the Piper case. In 1889, he visited four times with Piper and her family, spending a week at the James' country house in New Hampshire. This visit confirmed for James his belief that Piper was a "simple and genuine" person: "No one, when challenged, can give 'evidence' to others for such a belief as this. Yet we all live by them from day to day, and practically, I should be willing now to stake as much money on Mrs. Piper's honestly as on that of anyone I know, and am quite satisfied to leave my reputation for wisdom or folly, so far as human nature is concerned, to stand or fall by this declaration."[61] Four years after taking on the case, James was no closer to providing Piper or the ASPR with any answers: "As far as the explanation of her trance-phenomena, I have none to offer."[62] He hesitated to make rash generalizations from a few cases since he suspected that the names

59 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 100.
60 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 17.
61 Ibid., 83.
62 Ibid.

probably covered a very great number of neural conditions.[63] Yet he still struggled to make sense of Phinuit, Piper's purported spirit-control.

In James's sittings with Piper, he continued to encounter Phinuit's uncanny ability to recount intimate details of his family affairs, sometimes revealing things that he was not aware of at the moment. In light of Piper's trance utterances, James surmised that thought-transference did not merely entail the conscious or unconscious thoughts of the sitter, but often the thoughts of some person far away. Perhaps, James thought, her trances were accessing a power "in reserve," what he sometimes called the "sublime reservoir" and later referred to as "the cosmic reservoir."[64] Piper was especially gifted in recounting the intimate details of Alice Gibbens James's maternal family: "Some of them were dead, some in California, some in the State of Maine. She [characterized] them all, living as well as deceased, spoke of their relations to each other, of their likes and dislikes, of their as yet unpublished practical plans, and hardly ever made a mistake, though as usual, there was very little system or continuity in anything that came out. A *normal* person, unacquainted with the family, could not have said as much; one acquainted with it could hardly have avoided saying more.[65]

The accumulation of details, despite their seeming insignificance, had an irresistible effect on James, stoking the fire of his own "will to believe" in spirit-return and a purpose-driven universe. Piper's trances, however, were also full of gaps, discontinuities, and contradictions. For all of Phinuit's remarkable talent in "controlling" Piper, James was especially perplexed by Phinuit's ramblings on the most trivial things. "What real spirit, at least able to revisit his wife on this earth, but would find something better to say than that she had changed the place of his photograph?"[66] James confessed, "I was too disgusted with Phinuit's tiresome twaddle even to note it down."[67] Rather than a returned spirit, Phinuit increasingly appeared to James to be a figment of Piper's subconscious imagination – that is, a psychological fact or an exceptional mental state. James wrote expressing his doubts: "His French, so far as he has been able to display it has been limited to a few phrases of salutation, which may easily have had their rise in the medium's 'unconscious' memory; he has never been able to understand *my* French; and crumbs of information which he gives

63 Ibid.
64 Knapp: William James, Spiritualism, and Unconsciousness, 3.
65 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 97.
66 Ibid., 83.
67 Ibid., 85.

about his earthly career are . . . so vague, and unlikely sounding."[68] Further, all attempts to locate any records in France, such as census records or birth certificates, failed. For James, more fascinating than the possibility of spirit-return was the tenacity and minuteness of Phinuit's memory. Phinuit was able to recall the lives of sitters stretching across years with remarkable accuracy and detail. To unravel this mystery, James and the society would need someone to undertake a full-time investigation of the Piper case. In 1887, Richard Hodgson signed on to work as the principal investigator.

Prior to the Piper investigation, Richard Hodgson had successfully exposed two well-known mediums, Eusapia Palladino and Helena Blavatsky. The latter was the founder of the popular Theosophical Society. This earned Hodgson the nickname "the terror of fraudulent mediums" and the reputation of being the most ruthless and skeptical SPR researcher. Right away, Hodgson set to work to come up with a workable *modus operandi* to explain Piper's medium-trances, although he expected to prove her deception. To do this, he hired private detectives to follow the Pipers. After a month of surveillance, the detectives reported that they had discovered absolutely nothing.[69] Neither Piper nor her husband had held secret meetings, read past copies of newspapers, visited cemeteries, or hired their own private detectives – all common strategies used by mediums to collect information about potential sitters.[70] Fraud, as it turned out, increasingly seemed to be the unlikeliest of explanations for Phinuit's insights.

In 1892, Hodgson wrote his first report on the Piper case. He declared Phinuit to be a secondary subliminal personality. The ASPR investigators involved came to the consensus that the spirit-control was a creation of Piper's subconscious, a mental process that served to buffer herself from whatever mental battering took place in her trance states.[71] Although no conclusive evidence for the existence of spirits had been found, it was abundantly clear to James that Piper's subliminal self had remarkable powers of control over involuntary bodily processes and seemed to access heightened powers of perception, memory, attention, and cognition in ways that he could not explain.[72]

As a fictional character and mental buffer, Phinuit seemed to make a kind of strange sense.[73] But as a returned spirit, the facts made no sense at all. From their collected evidence, neither James nor Hodgson had been convinced of

68 Ibid., 84.
69 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 181.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., 182.
72 Taylor: Shadow Culture, 169.
73 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 182.

spirit-return. For real believers, however, Hodgson's rather cryptic close promised other results would be forthcoming: "Mrs. Piper has given some sittings very recently which materially strengthen the evidence for existence that goes beyond thought-transference from the sitters, and which certainly [on its face] appears to render some form of the 'spiritistic' hypothesis more probable."[74]

The "G. P." Control

It was the death and arrival of the George Pellew spirit-control that provided the concluding note of optimism to Hodgson's first report.[75] In the winter of 1892, Pellew, a young philosophy student and friend of Hodgson, unexpectedly died from a fall off his horse. A few months prior to his death, Pellew half-jokingly promised Hodgson that if Pellew died first, he would provide his friend with irrefutable evidence of spirit-return.[76]

When the George Pellew control – referred to as "G. P." by Hodgson – succeeded Phinuit as Piper's spirit-control and made its presence known in her sittings, he was not convinced that this control was the spirit of his deceased friend. But this opportunity would be Hodgson's best shot at definitively resolving whether Piper's spirit-controls were really subliminal personalities or indeed returned spirits. Unlike the dubious Phinuit, G. P. claimed to be someone known to Hodgson. This fact alone offered him a realm of possible tests to determine the source of Piper's "supernormal" knowledge.[77]

The test was simple. Hodgson would bring in over a hundred sitters to visit Piper and check their knowledge against this new trance personality. Some would be friends and family of Pellew, while others would be complete strangers. No one would be allowed to reveal their identities or their connections – if any – to the G. P. control. The anonymous sitters would be allowed to improvise their own tests, but were not allowed to give any explanation of them. The sittings were going astonishing well. Piper recognized photographs and old possessions and relayed private messages, which made sitters pale upon sight. Hodgson would spend another five years with the G. P. control before he would publish his findings in his second report.

74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.

After 130 sittings, Hodgson announced that he had earlier been mistaken in calling G. P. a trance personality.[78] The spirit-control present in Piper's sittings was indeed the returned spirit of his deceased friend George Pellew. All of the sitters were presented anonymously, yet G. P. effortlessly sorted through them. Not once did G. P. ever confuse a stranger for a friend, or vice versa. In light of these results, Hodgson found telepathy to be an inadequate explanation. It was unlikely that all of Pellew's friends were gifted telepathic agents capable of sharing their thoughts with Piper.[79] Moreover, it could not account for why G. P. was able to accurately describe friends not in attendance. To the shock of the SPR, Hodgson – longtime cynic and the most skeptical of psychical researchers – declared that these sittings provided the evidence needed to prove to the existence of spirits.

Hodgson's findings illuminate the quasi-certainty palpable within the Piper case. To formulate his conclusion of spirit-return, Hodgson relied upon *a priori* theories – rather than experimental findings – to "know" the defining features of telepathy.[80] He arrived at his conclusion, however, without a full understanding of the origin or mechanics of telepathy, though he indexed certain variables – spatial distance and personal dispositions – as potential factors in extrasensory perception. For the experiments to yield results, Hodgson had to strategically and prematurely reify telepathy as a "known" phenomenon with objective properties that could then be verified or refuted against his hypothesis of spirit-return. This allowed him to accomplish what James had refused to do all along – to provide an explanation for Piper's "supernormal" knowledge.

Not surprisingly, Hodgson's second report proved to be extremely controversial, igniting criticism within the SPR and the scientific community as a whole.[81] Proponents of the spirit-return theory argued that the contradictions

78 Ibid., 271.

79 Ibid.

80 What is particularly interesting about Hodgson's explanation of spirit-return is his reliance on preexisting provisional theories of telepathy. It is important to note here that at this time there was much uncertainty over telepathy, and it was (and continues to be) an object of investigation for psychical researchers. Moreover, I have been unable to trace the origin of these provisional theories of telepathy, so it is fascinating to me how Hodgson must necessarily stabilize an otherwise uncertain and unknown phenomena of telepathy in order to "know" spirit-return.

81 Many of Hodgson's opponents believed that Piper's abilities did not warrant the kind of patience that Hodgson and James granted to them. They believed that there were too many holes in her abilities. For instance, Andrew Lang, a former SPR president, believed Piper's Pellew control to be fraud. The Pellew control had forgotten his Greek and philosophy despite the fact that Pellew was a philosophy student at the time of his death.

and inconsistencies of trance phenomena were due to the spirit-control's lack of familiarity with its new surroundings and the medium's body, using the metaphor "like birds in the sea."[82] For critics, spirit-return seemed to be a poor cover story for the spirit-control's shortcomings and idiosyncrasies.

To account for Piper's "supernormal" knowledge, James typically vacillated between theories of spirit-return and the subliminal mind. These debates, however, presented James with a third alternative – the theory of a "cosmic reservoir" – to connect psycho-physiological processes with the "will to believe" in the afterlife and the seemingly real personal experiences of spirit communication. He speculated whether the energy generated in our lives burned an impression or memory – a cosmic record of sorts that lingers even after bodily death. Perhaps there was no life after death, just the occasional echo of the past. Pursuing this idea further, James wondered if we live the entirety of our lives buffered from this residual echo, but that these buffers might occasionally break down, perhaps in an exceptional mental state or in an exceptionally gifted person.[83] Imagining a world in which mental life and physical life ran parallel, James wrote, "Not only psychic research, but metaphysical philosophy and speculative biology are led in their own ways to look with favor on some such 'panpsychic' view of the universe as this. Assuming this common reservoir of consciousness to exist . . . what is its own structure? . . . What again are the relations between cosmic consciousness and matter? So that our ordinary human experience, on its material as well as on its mental side, would appear to be only an extract from the larger psycho-physical world?"[84]

Harkening back to his "science of religions," James's theory of a "cosmic reservoir" reflects a similar tension between his faith in scientific inquiry and a commitment to provisional "truths" based on unfolding personal experiences. His new theory reframed trance states as immanent relationships between an individual's subliminal consciousness and a larger "cosmic consciousness," which shapes human experience. Through reframing trance phenomena as psycho-physiological responses or altered states of consciousness, James transformed trance phenomena into potentially measurable and generalizable "facts" that could produce purposeful changes, including a person's sense of reality and orientation to the world. More significantly, it allowed James to challenge scientific materialist assumptions about the divisibility of the mind and the individuality of human personalities. Testifying to the importance of facts for validating

82 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 219.
83 Ibid., 223.
84 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 374–375.

psychical research, James wrote, "It is through following these facts, I am persuaded, that the greatest scientific conquests will be achieved."[85]

The Sense of Dramatic Possibility

On December 20, 1905, Richard Hodgson unexpectedly died of a massive heart attack before he could finish his third report. Like George Pellew, Hodgson joked with James that if he died and Piper was still holding sittings, he would control her better than any other spirit-control because he knew intimately the conditions and difficulties of psychical research.[86] Eight days after his death, the Hodgson control – referred to in James's notes as "R. H." – appeared to Piper.

As the R. H. control flickered in and out of Piper's sittings, it became obvious to James that this was another opportunity to "test the question of spirit-return," much like Hodgson's own efforts with the G. P. control.[87] James would set the standards for this test very high. He determined to be as ruthless an investigator as Hodgson was, setting aside emotions for cold hard facts. Encounters with the Hodgson control veered between a presence so real that James remembered having chills and, at the other extreme, tedious hours with what appeared to be Piper's peculiar masculine impersonation of Hodgson.[88] At his best, R. H. teased old friends and turned quiet and reserved with less-known acquaintances. The private jokes, intimate details, and embarrassing recollections all served to make Hodgson's sitters feel in some way that they were more or less conversing with the real man.[89]

For all of the extraordinary moments of connection, there were also profound moments of disconnection. R. H. could not accurately describe his childhood in Australia.[90] Along with the R. H. control came, James wrote, "so much repetition, hesitation, irrelevance, unintelligibility, so much obvious groping and fishing and plausible covering up of false tracks . . . the stream of veridicality that turns through the whole gets lost as if it were in a marsh of feebleness."[91] During these

85 Ibid., 375.
86 Ibid., 253.
87 Ibid.
88 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 286.
89 Ibid.
90 Worse still, when Hodgson died, he left behind a letter, the contents of which he said his spirit would reveal through Piper. She was unable to pass this test. James excused this failure, citing that it was difficult for spirits to speak through mediums.
91 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 336.

moments, James would plead with the R. H. control: "But, Richard Hodgson, listen for a moment. We are trying to get evidential material as to your identity and anything you can recollect in the way of facts is more important than anything else. . . . I wish that what you say could grow more continuous that would convince me. You are very much like your old self, but you are curiously fragmentary."[92] Two years and seventy-five sittings later, James published his "Report on Mrs. Piper's Hodgson Control".[93] There was no doubt in James's mind that Piper demonstrated supernormal knowledge during her medium-trances. The big question, however, remained unanswered. What was the source of this knowledge: Piper's subliminal consciousness or the returned spirit of Richard Hodgson?

To debunk "natural" explanations (i.e., information unwittingly furnished by the living Hodgson or other sitters), James relied upon his personal friendship and intimate knowledge of Hodgson. He described Hodgson as "gifted with great powers of reserve" and adverse to personal gossip and small talk, especially with Piper.[94] In his interactions with Piper, Hodgson had adopted a purely business tone, entering at the start of the trance and leaving immediately after the sitting was over. "It may well be that Mrs. Piper had heard one little incident or another to be discussed in the following report, from his living lips, but that any large mass of these incidents are to be traced to this origin, I find incredible."[95]

Yet it is James's and Piper's long-term relationships and familiarity with Hodgson that rendered the R. H. sittings more susceptible to information leakage and the impersonations of the medium. James was quick to point out, however, that Hodgson and other psychical researchers had previously hypothesized that spirits have a difficult time communicating through a medium's body – "like birds in the sea." James speculated that Piper's supernormal knowledge might be a product of her subconscious memories and imagination, unwittingly conjured in order to impersonate and enrich the details allegedly provided by the R. H. control. Seen in this light, spirit communication need not necessarily involve spirit-return.

In fact, James increasingly viewed spirit-return as an explanation lacking evidential force. Rather, what James saw was Piper's "will to impersonate" – that is, her power to draw upon "supernormal" sources of information. He imagined this "will" as potentially telepathically tapping into "the sitters' memories, possibly those of distant human beings, possibly some cosmic

92 Ibid.
93 James: Essays in Psychical Research.
94 Ibid., 257.
95 Ibid.

reservoir in which the memories of Earth are stored, whether in the same of 'spirits' or not."[96]

It seemed, however, that James was not willing to abandon spirit-return altogether. He held open the possibility for spirit-return by proposing that spirit communication might not simply be limited to a medium's "will to impersonate" but rather occurred through an interplay between the medium and the external "will to communicate" of returned spirits. In other words, he suggested that spirit communication might emerge from the interaction between two distinct "wills": Piper's "will to impersonate" and the R. H. control's "will to communicate." These "wills" are indicative of how James prioritized the concept of will in his pragmatism and found it increasingly salient in describing human behavior.[97] "But if asked whether the 'will to communicate' be Hodgson's or be some mere spirit counterfeit of Hodgson," James wrote, "I remain uncertain and await more facts, facts which may or may not point clearly to a conduction for 50 to 100 years."[98] This deferral allowed James to hold *in potentia* seemingly contradictory theories of spirit-return, subliminal personalities, and the cosmic reservoir.

This seemingly ideal opportunity to prove once and for all the existence of spirits was doomed from the outset. What James did not anticipate was that the R. H. control was an exceptionally bad case to test spirit-return owing to the unusual scope it gave to natural explanations. Taken by itself, James admitted that the case furnished no "knock-down" proof of Hodgson's spirit-return.[99] This lack of evidence, however, did not eliminate the confidence one felt from a "good sitting." Distinguishing between personal experiences and second-hand accounts, James wrote:

> One who takes part in a good sitting has usually a far livelier sense, both of the reality and of the importance of the communication, than one who merely reads the record. . . . When you find your questions answered and your allusions understood; when allusions are made that you understand and your own thoughts are met; either by anticipation, denial, or corroboration; when you have approved, applauded or exchanged banter or thankfully listened to advice that you believe in; it is difficult not to take away an impression of having encountered something sincere in the way of a social phenomenon. The whole talk gets warmed with your own warmth, and takes on the reality of your own part in it; its confusions and defects you charge to the imperfect conditions, while you credit

96 Ibid.
97 Knapp: William James, Spiritualism, and Unconsciousness, 4.
98 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 356.
99 Ibid., 281.

> the successes to the genuineness of spirit communication. These consequently loom more in our memory and give the key to our dramatic interpretation of the phenomenon.[100]

Strong convictions can fade. And what might seem real in the warmth of the present moment might diminish in one's recollections or upon a cold re-reading of transcripts. The decisive vote is cast by what James called "one's general sense of dramatic possibility," which ebbs and flows from one hypothesis to another, often "in a rather illogical manner."[101] This "sense," then, is contingent upon what one can imagine is possible in the universe. As for James, he readily admitted that he could perfectly well imagine the existence of spirits and other invisible agents and found his mind "vacillating about it curiously."[102]

In the face of quasi-certainty, James ultimately turned to the "will to believe" and personal "truth" to make sense of trance phenomena. If the "truth" is decidedly contingent upon verifying experiences that form "one's sense of dramatic possibility," then the larger question for James was not the origin or mechanics of spirit communication, but rather its human purpose. To this end, at the very heart of his psychical research – and, more broadly, his pragmatism – lies an account of "the way people think – the way they come up with ideas, form beliefs, and reach decisions."[103]

The following year, James died in the arms of his wife, Alice. Prior to his death, he wrote in his retrospective article "Confidences of a Psychical Researcher": "I heard [Sidgwick] say, the year before his death, that if anyone had told him at the outset that after 20 years he would be in the same identical state of doubt that he started with, he would have deemed the prophecy incredible. . . . My own experience has been similar to Sidgwick's."[104] As Blum notes, "after 25 years of working with outstandingly good psychical researchers, conducting experiments, studying the literature, sitting with mediums both fraudulent and gifted, James found himself stymied."[105] Throughout his psychical-research career, he encountered what he believed to be truly genuine supernatural phenomena, but he could not explain them. Leonora Piper continued to work as a medium for the ASPR for forty more years, dying in 1950 at the age of ninety-three. She would outlive most of her psychical researchers. She

100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 282.
102 Ibid.
103 Menand: Metaphysical Club, 351.
104 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 361.
105 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 310.

would not, however, outlive the debates over matters of life and death, faith and empiricism, science and religion.[106]

Conclusion

There are countless reasons why some of the most prominent scientists, writers, and philosophers of the late nineteenth century participated in psychical research. The prospect of life after death captured the imagination and fears of many hoping to definitively prove or deny the reality of spirit-return. James's involvement with psychical research, however, was incited by his moral and intellectual concerns over the growing materialist bias of the scientific community and, perhaps more importantly, over humankind stripped of faith.[107] What further set James apart from his fellow psychical researchers was his willingness to dwell in quasi-certainty – that is, his refusal to offer conclusive explanations for spirit communication and other psychical phenomena.

Quasi-certainty, as a mode of knowing through associations and deferrals, created certain affordances for James to access and "know" trance phenomena through wide-ranging and often idiosyncratic material effects. In particular, quasi-certainty allowed James to create provisional piecemeal associations between psychological and physiological responses, transforming immaterial beliefs

106 Ibid., 320. There were several moments in her twenty-five-year-long tenure as a research subject for James and Hodgson when Piper decided to quit the study in order to focus on being a mother and wife to her family (i.e., after the birth of her second child). During one of these moments, in 1901, Piper gave an interview with the *New York Herald*. In the article, she announced her separation from the ASPR and denied being a Spiritualist, stating "I must truthfully say that I do not believe that spirits of the dead have spoken through me when I have been in trance state." She also said that she believed telepathy might explain her mediumship and that her "spirit-controls" were an "unconscious expression of my subliminal self." Not surprisingly, these comments shocked Hodgson, who firmly believed in her abilities to communicate with the returned spirits. She later recanted her comments, claiming misquotation and saying that her statement had been made in a "transient mood." Clodd: *The Question*; Fodor: *Encyclopedia of Psychic Science*. On October 25, 1901, Piper stated in the *Boston Advertiser*, "I did not make any such statement as that published in the *New York Herald* to the effect that spirits of the departed do not control me . . . My opinion is to-day as it was eighteen years ago. Spirits of the departed may have controlled me and they may not. I confess that I do not know. I have not changed . . . I make no change in my relations." Luckhurst: *The Invention of Telepathy*, 231. It is interesting to note that Piper died without having known the cause of her medium-trances and seemed to vacillate between the two theories supplied by James.

107 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 41.

and personal experiences into potentially generalizable "facts" that might one day validate psychical research as a scientifically legitimate endeavor as well as lead to breakthrough discoveries about the depth and potential of the human mind. Through a mode of knowing contingent upon deferral and open-endedness as a driving force, James was able to hold in tension and *in potentia* seemingly incommensurable theories throughout the course of his investigation. This, then, shifted the weight to the individual's personal beliefs and unfolding verifying experiences to decide the "truth" about spirit communication. And the "truth," James characteristically concluded, one must decide for oneself. "I can only arrange the material."[108]

Although James and early psychical researchers were ultimately unable to identify the source of Piper's supernormal knowledge, they made significant contributions to understanding the subliminal mind and altered states of consciousness. "For the first time, investigators had the means to scientifically manipulate hidden mental processes and by so doing, to verify the reality of the subconscious."[109] It was also through these initial studies of psychic healers and spirit mediums that revealed a number of experimental techniques to induce trance and access unconscious states of mind. These techniques, as Eugene Taylor suggests, formed the foundations of modern psychotherapy.[110]

But perhaps the key insight of the Piper case for James was not the limits and horizons of our hidden mental life, but rather its human purpose. It was the insight that human beings are not merely products of materialist determinism or biological hardwiring as argued by the dominant scientists of the nineteenth century, such as Charles Darwin, T. H. Huxley, and Herbert Spencer. Rather, human beings are active agents in their own destiny because they choose to believe in free will, higher purpose, and a meaningful universe. Psychical research and pragmatism, then, were both entangled lines of inquiry for James to demonstrate the ways in which verifying experiences shape personal beliefs and how these beliefs are made real as organic habits and actions that modify future experiences.[111] Seen in this light, beliefs are not arbitrarily fixed, but must continually conform to our evolving desires, values, and moral understandings of right and wrong.

The quasi-certainty inherent in James's psychical research and pragmatism can be seen as indicative of larger tensions between religion and science within the scientific community and the general public. Promising to unite science

108 James: Essays in Psychical Research, 359.
109 Taylor: Shadow Culture, 170.
110 Ibid., 173.
111 Menand: Metaphysical Club, 355.

and religion, spiritualism provided many Americans with an accessible and tangible metaphysics – to understand the constitution of the human body and its relationship to the material and spiritual worlds – during the radical reconstruction of the nation's constitution and territorial boundaries following the Civil War.[112]

For the scientific and scholarly community of the late nineteenth century, Darwin's theory ignited competing intellectual and moral obligations to salvage the ethical code of Christianity or to rid modern society of "the enemy of science."[113] These concerns were particularly salient within mind-body debates over the nature of consciousness and the reality of free will, which often encapsulated larger questions about God, the afterlife, and the human soul. The Piper case, then, offers us a situated account of a mind-body debate through the efforts of James to bridge the demand for the empirical with the reality of the unseen – that is, to offer us a potential middle ground between empiricism and faith, materialism and spirituality, and biological determinism and the human experience of free will. The nineteenth century is remembered as an era of vast territorial expansion through scientific discoveries, new media, and technology. It is also remembered as an era of vast democratic expansion as political representation and voters' rights were granted to marginalized peoples for them to make active choices in the destiny of their nation and in their own lives. Perhaps more importantly, the Piper case offers us a historic glimpse into the anxieties and hopes of many Americans living in an era of radical social, political, and ideological change for the irreducibility of the human spirit to the human body.

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112 Sconce: Haunted Media, 25.

113 Blum: Ghost Hunters, 35.

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Ehler Voss

Educating the Mediums. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing's Work of Purification on Spiritualism

> We may be sure that absence of criticism, credulity, and the fanaticism of spiritists, have greatly hindered the education of mediums for scientifically useful objects. Fanatical eagerness to experience something a toutprix, to witness miracles, to receive signs from the "beyond," has rendered the crowd quite blind to the distinction between facts explicable according to the present conditions of psycho-pathology, and those which are not so explicable. The whole method of the spiritistic education of mediums, with their ballast of unnecessary conceptions, gives indeed an encouragement to fraud. When the believing congregation ends by seeing the work of a spirit hand in the falling of an umbrella, it is quite prepared to receive even the coarsest conjuring tricks of mediums as spirit greetings.[1]

The Wish for Purification

In 1914, Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (1862–1929), a physician living in Munich, published the first edition of his book "Materialisationsphänomene. Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung der mediumistischen Teleplastie" (Phenomena of Materialisation. A contribution to the investigation of mediumistic teleplastic). At its center are descriptions and photos of the experiments he conducted between 1909 and 1913, mostly in Paris and Munich, with the mediums Marthé Beraud, called Eva C., and Stanislawa Popielska, called Stanislawa P. The second edition of 1923 was expanded to include descriptions of experiments from the years 1914 to 1921 with additional, then-prominent mediums.[2] Common to all of these mediums was the ability to generate a wide spectrum of "materializations" or "phenomena" – also called ectoplasm or teleplasm – often in the form of faces, bodies, or individual body parts that seemed to issue from the body orifices of the mediums. To

1 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 20f.

2 Also in 1923, an English translation of the first edition appeared in London and New York.

Note: This article was first published in German as "Die Erziehung der Medien. Reinigungsarbeiten am Spiritismus bei Albert von Schrenck-Notzing." *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 1 (2013): 81–94. Translation by Mitch Cohen.

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this day, Albert von Schrenck-Notzing and his experiments produce different and sometimes very strong reactions – along with ridicule and clear antipathies and sympathies, often rather ambivalent affects.[3] In addition to the hypotheses to explain what was described, his investigation's wealth of records and photos and the claim to being scientific attracted attention.



Figure 1: The medium Stanislawa P.
Note: Graphic from Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 257. Captioned there as "Fig. 173. Author's flashlight photograph, 23 June, 1913".

With his book, Schrenck-Notzing set himself against spiritualism that had become popular in the middle of the 19th century by countering it with an alternative

3 Strong antipathies for example in Kemnitz: Moderne Mediumforschung; Moll: Psychologie und Charakterologie der Okkultisten; and most recently Kuff: Okkulte Ästhetik; sympathies for example in Konstantin Oesterreich, Eugen Bleuler, and Hans Driesch (cf. Sommer: Tackling Taboos). A famous ambivalent stance was that of Thomas Mann: Okkulte Erlebnisse.

explanation of the observed phenomena, according to which it was not ghosts who produced the phenomena, but the medium himself or herself. The "phenomena of materialisation" thereby stand temporally and substantively at the end of a major public debate about mediumism in the long 19th century.

Spiritualism as a Mediumistic Trial

The 19th-century protagonists of European spiritualism themselves repeatedly tied it to the claim to modernity. Part of this was an eschatological belief in progress and in the accessibility to scientific research of what were formerly considered metaphysical questions, the program of an emancipation of the genders, and a democratization of spiritual capabilities. Spiritualism was part of an unsurveyable and, from today's standpoint, confusing series of trials of the functions and potency of mediumism that began at the end of the 18th century with Mesmerism and gradually came to an end with, among other things, the invention of psychoanalysis and the institutionalization of the sciences at the beginning of the 20th century and that is carried forward today in a transformed and particularized form in psychotherapies, modern art, parapsychology, and modern esotericism, but without addressing the overarching public anymore as it did in the 19th century.[4]

In the 1780s, the physician Franz Anton Mesmer, who worked primarily in Vienna and Paris, developed the hypothesis of "animal magnetism" as the foundation of his healing practices. He postulated the existence of a universal "fluid", a force perfusing everything psychological and physical. In this theory, illnesses arise when the flow of this fluid is blocked in the patients' body. The task of the physician is to get the fluid flowing again by accumulating this power with the aid of magnets, a "baquet" modeled on the Leyden jar, or the person of the physician and then transferring it to the patients. Mesmer saw himself as an Enlightenment figure, and in the public media campaign, he was stylized as an opponent of the then supra-regionally renowned exorcist Johann Joseph Gaßner. Since Mesmer was able, with his methods, to produce the same phenomena in his patients as Gaßner was, for example inducing and eliminating symptoms of illness, but without thereby claiming the existence of demons, his practice was gratefully taken up to displace Gaßner and, with him, exorcism.

4 Cf. Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien.

Mesmer and, with him, the Enlightenment emerged from this constructed duel as the victor over superstition.[5]

Characteristic of the course of subsequent mediumistic trials in the long 19th century was the "orthopractical" nature of this duel. Mesmer did not doubt Gaßner's abilities. Decisive for Mesmer's victory was not his explanations of his practices, but the practices themselves. Despite wide differences in their orthodoxies, Mesmer's adherents could agree on him because he was able to replace their common opponent's practice with another practice that had the same effects. Mesmerism, in turn, was itself later exposed to such an orthopractical substitution trial. The English physician James Braid chose Karl von Reichbach's teaching, based on Mesmerism, which claimed the existence of an imponderable agens comparable to the "fluid", namely the "Odic force". Braid did not question the abilities of those who could put patients into various states using the Odic force. He tried to show that he could produce the same phenomena that Reichenbach's adherents did, but without resorting to the magnets they used. Thus, he describes an encounter with a mesmerizing physician friend of his as a kind of competition in which his friend showed him how he could influence the present patient with the aid of magnets, whereupon Braid achieved the same effects with his own method. Initially, he claimed to be holding a tool with special power in his hand, but at the end of his report triumphantly revealed that it was an ineffective trunk key. According to Braid, it is not an imponderable agens manipulable with magnets, like the Odic force, but the unspecific human "mind" that, through the expectant stance produced by the physician's words, causes the phenomena. For Braid, the proof is given with the substitution for his friend's practice.[6]

The term "medium" became popular with spiritualism but its shape was already prepared by Mesmerism. In the early modern age, the concept of "magia naturalis" conveyed the idea that people who did not have direct communication with God, as prophets, saints, and mystics do, could recognize something of the divine by studying nature. Researching nature would thereby became a reading in the "Bible of Nature" and nature a mediating medium between Man and God. An important shift in the conceiving of mediality by Mesmerism was in making it possible to interpret the phenomena not only religiously, but also secularly. Mesmer's contemporaries did not consider the fluid he posited to be conceptually especially original. But his practices promised a new kind of direct access to the powers of nature and to an explanation based entirely on natural law. Mesmer's practices

5 Cf. Ego: "Animalischer Magnetismus" oder "Aufklärung".

6 Cf. Schüttpelz and Voss: In jeder Beziehung ebenso wirksam.

received a particular modification in 1784 from his student, the Marquis de Puységur. Mesmer was clearly not interested in what his patients experienced during his treatments, in which they regularly fell into unusual physical states. In contrast, Puységur discovered special abilities in the patients he put into a "somnambulant sleep" using Mesmerist techniques, like speaking foreign languages or finding lost objects, and he thereafter focused his attention on precisely these abilities. The patients gave the magnetizer access to a knowledge hidden in the normal state and those treated become somnambulant mediums.[7]

In the same year, a French Royal Commission was established to publicly test the hypotheses proposed by Mesmer. The invited scientists came to a negative result and opened a subsequent series of trials and substitution trials of mediumism that were logged and made accessible to public examination. An often unmentioned aspect of the background of the mediumistic controversy is the opposition between materialism and idealism. Mesmerism offers a materialistic theory in which the agency is situated in a manipulable imponderable agens, while hypnotism and spiritualism counter these materialistic explanations with idealistic ones. Braid, for example, finds a vaguely defined human "mind" as the agent of action, and spiritualism, which insists on a "soul", however conceived, that exists beyond death and can intervene in the material everyday world. In spiritualism, the human and the technical medium is the site where dead souls can manifest themselves. The mediums become mediators between a realm of the living and a realm of the dead – a substitution, beginning with the invention of the telescope in the 17th century, of a distant, inhabited heaven by a beyond that, although categorically separate from this world, is nonetheless alive and accessible with the aid of mediumistic techniques and can be examined by close experiment.[8]

That makes spiritualism a hybrid that cannot be categorized as entirely religion or entirely science. Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, very familiar with the techniques of Mesmerism, spiritualism, and hypnosis, took up the task of finally stripping spiritualism and spiritistic séances of their "religious" aspects and making them a generally recognized science:

> For the observations of mediumistic phenomena hitherto made, do not, up to now, in spite of their continuity and their independent agreement, and in spite of the high reputation of the authors whose names vouch for the facts stated, fulfil the requirements of an exact scientific method. This may, however, be due to the character of the occurrences themselves.[9]

7 Cf. Schott: Hieroglyphensprache der Natur.
8 Zander: Höhere Erkenntnis.
9 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, V.

Spiritualism on Trial

Schrenck-Notzing was a member of the *Psychologische Gesellschaft*, which, founded in Munich in 1886 on the model of the *Society for Psychical Research* founded four years earlier in London, addressed the scientific investigation of so-called paranormal phenomena. This was also the period when a debate developed that supplemented the common discussion of deception and fraud perpetrated by mediums and that contrasted two opposing ways of explaining such phenomena under the terms animism and spiritualism. Connected with this debate are, in particular, the names Eduard von Hartmann and Alexander Aksákow. Hartmann was a philosopher from Germany and a member of the *Gesellschaft für Experimental-Psychologie* that had been founded in Berlin in 1888. In a book published in 1885, he tried to explain without recourse to ghosts the observations of levitation, knocking sounds, and "apports" that séance participants swore to. As an explicit answer to and rejection of Hartmann's animistic theory, the Russian State Councilor published a book in 1890 that recognizes the origin of the phenomena primarily within the participants at a séance and argues for assuming the existence of spiritistic ghosts.[10]

Schrenck-Notzing's substitution trial of spiritualism is likewise based on an animistic standpoint. He too rejects the hypothesis of ghosts and attributes the origin of the materializations to an imprecisely described extraordinary ability of the medium to produce them out of himself: a "dark and unexplored side of human Soul Life, and in particular to certain problematical psycho-physical effects".[11] For Schrenck-Notzing, therefore, purifying the spiritistic séance of its religious components is done by shifting the experimental setup. On the pattern of the natural sciences and their laboratory research, the tripartite spiritistic model of communication consisting of the observers, the mediums, and the invoked ghosts turns into a bipartite model consisting only of an observing subject and an observed object anymore.

Schrenck-Notzing's marriage in 1892 to the industrialist's daughter Gabriele Siegle provided him the financial scope allowing him to reduce his work as a physician and to set up a room in his Munich house that he designated the "laboratory of the author",[12] where he devoted himself more intensely to experimenting with various mediums.[13]

10 Cf. (among others) Wolffram: Hallucination or materialization?
11 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, Vi.
12 Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisationsphänomene, X.
13 Cf. Dierks: Thomas Manns Geisterbaron, 145–158.

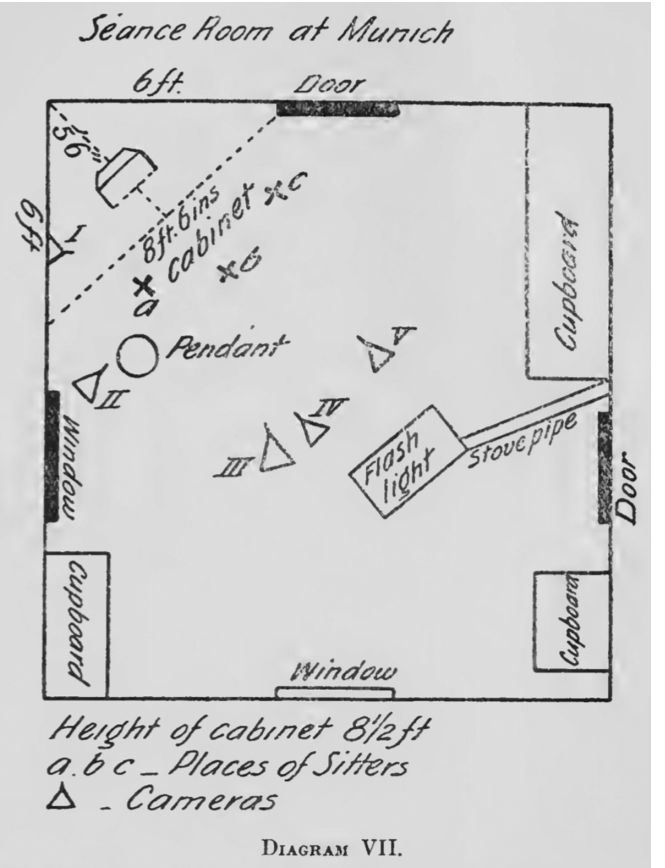


Figure 2: Floor plan of the séance room at Munich in the house of Albert von Schrenck-Notzing. Note: Graphic from Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 172.

Preparation of the objects to be observed and of the observing subjects was considered preconditions for objective observations in the new lab research of the late 19th century.[14] Just as this reflection about the conditions, abilities, and limitations of researchers was applied to anthropological fieldwork, in his investigation of mediumism (which Wilhelm Wundt had at the time excluded from psychology's research area), Schrenck-Notzing took his cue from the new research paradigm. With him, preparing the object to be observed consists initially in socializing the mediums: "the education of the mediums [. . .] so as to make

14 Cf. Schaffer: From physics to anthropology and back again.

them into useful subjects for research, is one of the most difficult problems which investigators, in this subject, have to solve".[15] This is especially difficult

> if the medium, in consequence of his or her low state of education, has only a slight understanding of the precautions necessary for a scientific investigation. Nevertheless, we should never forget that the success of the experiment is bound up with the mood, the confidence, and the undisturbed comfort of the medium.[16]

It is understandable that Schrenck-Notzing's preparations against fraud could easily be perceived as disturbing this comfort. To ensure that the mediums had not hidden in or on their persons what they later presented, they were sometimes gynecologically examined before and after the experiments, had to act without clothes on or in tightfitting full-body smocks, or had to eat blueberry compote before the session or take emetics afterward to exclude the possibility that they hid something in their stomachs.

Another aspect of Schrenck-Notzing's education of the mediums has to do with what he designated "spiritistic education", "spiritistic ritual", or "spiritistic tradition".

> So long as spiritism develops outside scientific laboratories, the traditional usages of the sittings must be put up with. It is only when science has seriously tackled the subject that one can attempt to reduce the phenomena to a system. Modern spiritism has the same relation to the future science of mediumistic processes as astrology had to astronomy, and alchemy to chemistry.[17]

In this way, in the course of a four-year period of experiments, the medium Eva C. succeeded in fulfilling, "to make the conditions during the four years of experiment gradually more and more rigid and exact".[18] If "the formation of chains, the singing and the addressing of the personifications appearing during the sittings"[19] were initially unavoidable, in time these accompaniments gradually dwindled. "We had gradually discarded the spiritistic tradition by a slow education of the medium."[20] The spiritistic traditions also included the "dark sessions", which Schrenck-Notzing replaced with experiments under red light.

Another preparation of the observed object lies in a one-sided cultivation of certain skills to improve related results. Thus, Schrenck-Notzing thought it seemed advisable,

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15 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 3.
16 Ibid., 23.
17 Ibid., 12.
18 Ibid., 21.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.

> [. . .] in the case of this medium, who is specially gifted for the production of teleplastic phenomena, [. . .] to develop this gift by suggestive education in every possible way, so as to form a firm empirical foundation for the study, by photographic means, of this teleplastic phenomenon so rarely found in mediums at present."[21]

Photography, in turn, served Schrenck-Notzing in properly preparing the researching subject. On this side, too, he recognized the potential sources of error in accordance with the paradigm of lab research. On the one hand is the possibility of perceptual illusions, which, however, he thinks he can exclude by using self-recording instruments:

> The objective registration was based upon photography [. . .]. We began with a single camera, but at the end of the fourth year we sometimes had nine cameras, including several stereoscopic cameras, in action at the same time.[22]

This led him to the assessment in another passage:

> Hallucination of the witnesses, who all made the same observations, is excluded, since the photographic records confirm the optical impressions.[23]

Schrenck-Notzing also brought into play another possible influence a researcher can have on the result of observation; it is based on the aforementioned special difficulty in preparing the object, which is able to unfold all its power and produce good results only with the proper mood. First, the light needed for a scientific investigation "neutralizes or impedes" its power.[24] Second, Schrenck-Notzing notes that the medium's necessary good mood can easily be spoiled by the presence and practices of those standing around him if the latter behave skeptically and thereby give the medium the feeling that they doubt his or her abilities. Disdainful treatment can make a medium "abashed, nervous, and incapable of any performance".[25] The aforementioned body examinations seldom contributed to strengthening the mediums' psychic condition, either.

> Mediumistic activity may be compared with artistic creation. A good artist, be he musician, poet or painter, requires the necessary emotional state in order to develop his creative artistic power. He also is dependent on details of surroundings, trifling disturbances, bodily well-being, etc. This is also the reason why sittings in circles having a spiritualistic

21 Ibid., 22.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 49.
24 Ibid., 11.
25 Ibid., 26.

> and religious colouring, in which the medium is almost venerated as a saint, are often attended by better success than the so-called scientific sittings.[26]

Schrenck-Notzing speaks of the observer's suggestive influence on the object of observation:

> According to our observations, it is clear that the general direction and subject matter of the thoughts of the persons taking part in the experiments have an influence {either in a favourable or unfavourable sense), upon the psychic condition of the medium, and sometimes also upon the character of the phenomena produced.[27]

This again casts new light on the origin that Schrenck-Notzing postulates for these phenomena. It is true that the hypothesis of ghosts is excluded, but clearly the cause need not therefore lie solely in the medium, if those surrounding him are in a position to help shape the result of the experiment through suggestion or telepathy and if the medium becomes, in part, the medium of his surroundings. Schrenck-Notzing regards this as a potential source of error that has to be countered by not inviting "professional debunkers", because "energetic thinking about exposing and prestidigitation could, as some researchers think, suggestively influence the medium in this direction and could animate him to demonstrate such sleight-of-hand tricks."[28]

Schrenck-Notzing on Trial

Schrenck-Notzing's attempts to prepare the research subject and the research object in accordance with the era's demands on laboratory research are only partially successful. The medium's preconditions for producing results are made difficult by the complete objectification of the object. The desired illumination stands against the darkness apparently needed to bring forth results. The weak red light and the dark curtains behind which the mediums retire and re-emerge, as well as the disappearance of the ectoplasm upon contact with bright light, hardly contribute to dispelling suspicion of fraud.

The objectification of the observing subject is not systematically carried out, either. The influence of those attending the experiment, designated as a potential source of error, stands against the practice, reminiscent of spiritistic salons, of convincing skeptics of what they see by regularly inviting respected

26 Ibid.
27 Ibid., 22.
28 Ibid., 30.

personalities. Schrenck-Notzing declares the problem solved with the partial transfer of observational competence to supposedly infallible technical apparatus, but apparently he does not consider that the authenticity of what is depicted is not thereby proven. Since many of the "ghost photographs" popular at the time were exposed as deceptions by showing that the photographic plates had been manipulated, the determination that plates were not manipulated has no significance in the case of his materialization phenomena. For the imputed manipulation by the mediums happened before photography and not after it. Photography thereby simply repeats the visual impression. The deception could be equally well seen "subjectively" as photographed "objectively".[29]

Schrenck-Notzing's preparations of the subject and object of the experiments thus could not ultimately defuse the accusation of fraud. This realization leads him to patterns of argumentation and defense that are customary in spiritualism, as well. While the opponents of spiritualism equate the exposure of deceptions with disproving the belief in ghosts, the adherents see a welcome process of constantly purifying authentic of inauthentic ghost contacts, which they see as helping to finally prove spiritualism scientifically.[30]

The lack of objectification of his experiments repeatedly leads Schrenck-Notzing to relativize the possibilities of applying laboratory conditions to his field of investigation, and he tries to justify this with the aforementioned special conditions of mediumism, namely the sensitivity of the mediums:

> [M]ediumship is not a purely mechanical function like that of physical apparatus, but depends upon the psychic constitution of the person in question. For this reason alone it is not right to demand objective results from the mediums in the sense of physics and chemistry, however desirable it may be to replace the record of the senses by registering apparatus. Mediumship has its own essential conditions, which must be respected and studied by the observer. [. . .]. Fanaticism for exactitude may lead to the drying up of the fountain from which we wish to draw our material.[31]

The hybridity and contradictoriness of Schrenk-Notzing's lab, which he himself in part recognized and which was never completely purified of spiritistic elements[32] and in which photographic evidence was created whose aesthetics recall religious pictorial traditions[33] – repeatedly mixes into the descriptions of his research a rhetoric that sees the ideal of a research situation realized only in

29 Cf. Walter: Die Materialisationsphänomene des Albert Freiherr von Schrenck-Notzing, 199.
30 Cf. Schüttpelz: Medientechniken der Trance, 282f.
31 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 11f., 24.
32 Cf. Wolffram: The Stepchildren of Science, 131–189.
33 Imorde: Bilder von Medien, 85.

the future: "It will, therefore, be a problem for future investigators to devise a special method for the examination of mediumistic processes."[34]

The Triumph of Impurity

Phenomena of Materialisation apparently left its readers in a certain state of perplexity. Thus, in an anonymous review of the first edition shortly after its publication:

> The credibility of the author is – as must be said first – beyond question. [. . .] But even taking these phenomena as real facts without every permitted doubt, one thing is astonishing: that they remain so meaningless. I mean: the scholar and the illiterate will be able to say no more and no less about what they have seen than that they have seen it. This intellectual, conceptual lack of productivity of the phenomena, this nothing but facticity, makes them greatly boring and indifferent. Slimy structures creep out of the medium's mouth, move, condense, change site, form limbs, form themselves into human faces – why is this all so dreary, so bland, that the only question that crosses one's lips is 'Why not?' I can imagine that those present felt a shock as if from something extraordinary . . . but that is all. Those who see it only in pictures and reports don't have this shock, not even it.[35]

At least in public perception, the investigation of materialization phenomena soon ceased after Schrenck-Notzing's sudden death in 1929. Thus, in 1976, Werner Bonin even writes in his lexicon of parapsychology that there were no more materialization mediums in Europe at that time.[36] This is pointed out by Lucius Werthmüller, who reports on an increase in such practices in Europe since the 1990s, but which he interprets spiritistically as the expression of an "intermediate level". Although he, too, reports on the disappointment of many participants in the face of their perception of the banality of the events, ectoplasm seems to continue to exert a fascination. Thus, Werthmüller himself gushes that he couldn't have dreamed that he would have the opportunity "to experience these utterly unbelievable phenomena so abundantly."[37] In the context of art and art exhibitions, Schrenk-Notzing's photographs still find lasting interest, and here they experience a primarily aesthetic reception.[38] The described materialization

34 Schrenck-Notzing: Phenomena of Materialisation, 21.
35 Quoted after Pytlik: Spiritismus und ästhetische Moderne, 394.
36 Cf. Bonin: Lexikon der Parapsychologie und ihrer Grenzgebiete, 326.
37 Werthmüller: Überlegungen zum Physikalischen Mediumismus, 38.
38 Cf. for example Loers: Okkultismus und Avantgarde, Fischer and Loers: Im Reich der Phantome, Chéroux: The Perfect Medium, Dichter, Golinski, Krajewski, and Zander: The Message, Fauchereau: L'Europe des esprits ou la fascination de l'occulte. Imitations of materialization

phenomena endure also in many films, series, and computer games – as ghost bodies or the secretions of raging ghosts, as intermediate product, item, crafting material, or obstacle.[39]

For Schrenck-Notzing, ectoplasm was supposed to be the proof of a work of purification – a cleansing of spiritualism of its "religious" elements by changing the practices of the mediums and by means of a material that was produced by the mediums themselves, and thus "immanently". This material was supposed to replace the material of the spiritists, from whose context the materialization phenomena originally came, and for whom it was the expression of an imponderable world that mediated between the living and the dead. In the reception of Schrenck-Notzing, this became a material that to this day remains fascinating, because it conjures up what is unpurified and not finally categorized in trafficking with ghosts. The unpurified trial thus seems to have triumphed over the education of the mediums.

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39 Cf. Wikipedia article: Ectoplasm (paranormal).

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‘S. W.’ and C. G. Jung: From Mediumship to Analytical Psychology

“In 1896 something happened to me that served as an impetus for my future life,” recalled C. G. Jung in 1925.[1] The event was his seances with his maternal cousin, Helene Preiswerk, which formed the basis of his 1902 medical dissertation, *The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena: A Psychiatric Study*.[2] The first historian to study the case was Henri Ellenberger, in 1961, in his study, “Psychiatry and its unknown history.” For Ellenberger, it featured as an example of a more widespread pattern through which

> a psychiatrist who has made one of his patients – most often a *female* patient and generally a *hysterical* one – a special object of psychological investigation. The psychiatrist develops unconsciously with this patient a long complex, and quite ambiguous relationship the result of which will be very fruitful for medical science.[3]

Ellenberger, (who revealed that the case was Jung’s maternal cousin), largely relied on Jung’s retrospective account in his 1925 seminar. In 1975, further information came to light in a book by the medium’s niece, Stephanie Zumstein-Preiswerk.[4] This was in turn used by Ellenberger in a further study in 1991, where he correctly noted that “the origin of Carl Gustav Jung’s theoretical teachings cannot be understood without reference to the experiments he made

1 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 3.

2 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena.

3 Ellenberger: Psychiatry and its unknown history, 239–40.

4 Stefanie Zumstein-Preiswerk: C.G. Jungs Medium. Unfortunately, the sources of the information in this work were not always given.

Note: Aspects of this research were presented at the Richardson Seminar in the History of Psychiatry at the DeWitt Wallace Institute for the History of Psychiatry, New York, in 2009, and the “Psychical Research and Psychology in the History of Science and Medicine,” at the UCL Centre for the History of Psychological Disciplines, London, 2013; for this occasions, my thanks to George Makari and Andreas Sommer, respectively. I would like to thank Ernst Falzeder for the transcription of Bleuler’s recommendations of Jung’s work, the discussions of the Zofingia society, and Jung’s unpublished manuscript on the seances. I would like to thank Barbara Zipser for the transcription of the seances notes. The present text is an expanded version of the paper ‘S.W.’ and C.G. Jung: mediumship, psychiatry and serial exemplarity published in *History of Psychiatry* 26:3 (2015): 288–302.

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in his student years with a young medium."[5] However, fresh examination in turn shows this to be much more complicated than has hitherto been realised.

Throughout his career, Jung repeatedly returned to this work, reformulating his analysis in the light of his developing theories. Critically, this process of reworking the material in the light of subsequent conceptions already plays a significant role in the 1902 study itself: so much so that it is hard to separate Jung's contemporaneous viewpoint in the late 1890s from his radically different later outlook a few years later as a young psychiatrist at the Burghölzli. The first task then, in attempting to understand why this case was so significant for Jung, is to reconstruct, as far as we are able, the chronological layerings of his approach to and understanding of the case.

In Search of the Spirits

In 1896, Jung's father, Paul Jung died. Shortly after, Jung had two dreams in which his father had come back to life. In Aniela Jaffé's biography, Jung recalled that his interest in life after death commenced with these dreams.[6] During the second semester of his medical studies, Jung came across a book on spiritualism, which awakened his interest in the subject:

> Names like Zoellner and Crookes impressed themselves on me, and I read virtually the whole of the literature available to me at the time . . . Kant's *Dreams of a Spirit Seer* came just at the right time, and soon I discovered Carl du Prel . . . I dug up Eschenmeyer, Passavant, Justinus Kerner and Görres, and read seven volumes of Swedenborg.[7]

The first contemporaneous notice of how Jung assimilated these authors is found in a lecture he delivered entitled "Some thoughts on psychology" on 15 May 1897, at a meeting of the Zofingia Society.[8] In this talk, Jung posited the existence of the soul as a vital principle which was independent of space and time, and hence immortal. Empirical proof for this could be found in the phenomena of spiritualism, such as telepathy, telekinesis and materialisations. He singled the spiritualistic work of the noted scientists, William Crookes, Zollner and Alfred Wallace for special praise, noting: "The phenomena we seek are the wondrous materializations observed by Crookes, Zöllner, Wilhelm Weber, Fechner, Wagner, Wallace

5 Ellenberger: C.G. Jung and the story of Helene Preiswerk, 291.
6 Jung and Jaffé: Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 117.
7 Ibid., 119–20.
8 Jung: Some thoughts on Psychology, § 23f.

and others."[9] The astrophysicist Zöllner conducted seances with the American materialisation medium Henry Slade between 1877 and 1878, and became convinced of the existence of a fourth dimension. On 3 and 11 July 1896, Jung took out three volumes of Zöllner's *Scientific Treatises* from Basle University Library.[10] In the 1860s, the naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace became a convert to spiritualism, and came to believe that spirits played a critical role in human evolution. On 16 January, Jung took out the German edition of Wallace's essays.[11] The chemist and member of the Royal Society William Crookes conducted seances with the American medium, Daniel Douglas Home, and became convinced of spiritualistic phenomena. In Home's presence, he claimed to witness an accordion being played without being touched and people levitating. To explain these occurrences, he posited the existence of a psychic force, which some people possessed as a native endowment. Most controversial was his seances with the medium Florence Cook, and his claim to have witnessed the materialisation of the being known as Katie King.[12]

Following Jung's presentation at the Zofingia discussion, a lively discussion took place, which unfortunately was not included in the published edition of Jung's lectures. It is reproduced here in full from the protocols of the Zofingia Society:

> The president thanks Jung for the dignified treatment of a subject, which places no small demand on the one dealing with it. He disapproves only of the all too ranting tone of the polemical points, even though he understands Jung's anger towards petty and lazy critics. He also would have liked to have seen something somewhat more detailed. As the main result of the work, he hopes that listeners will gain the insight that certain actual psychic effects should not be dismissed with denial. He then explained the difference between spiritism and animism, of which the latter had to simply be admitted, and with whose results psychologists are forced to reckon with. Hoegger defended modern theology against Jung's objections. It was precisely modern theology that reasserted the mystical in prophethood; it was especially Ritschl, whom Jung attacks, who pointed out to theologians, that they should build more on the effects that religion has exercised on its great representatives, than on religious speculations. The present duty of pastors is not to research the facts of animism and spiritism, but, while leaving that to the natural scientists, to work on people with currently generally recognised means as much as possible. Galluser declares himself as one of the much maligned cultural philistines and believes that the phenomena of human life and its end are natural. Jung finds it very unnatural, that every human life can suddenly once no longer overcome a mechanical or pathological resistance. Galluser explains this as a natural disturbance of nourishment.

9 Ibid., § 117.

10 Zöllner: Wissenschaftliche Abhandlungen, Basle university library records.

11 Wallace: Die wissenschaftliche Ansicht des Übernatürlichen.

12 Cf. Barrington: Crookes and the Spirit World.

Knapp finds that Jung has truly got stuck here. The president explains that Jung has been falsely understood, the problem is why the human machine runs, and not why it ceases. Knapp defends Dubois-Reymond, who had used the principles of natural science on all fields, even to the incorrect ones, and who therefore should not be condemned because of it. Jung explains that what he contests in Dubois-Reymond is that he carries over his natural scientific scepticism into philosophy. The moral damage, which Büchner caused, is however gradually much worse. Gallusser finds, that the staff should therefore not be broken over such men, who have expressed their scientific convictions, as is everyone's right. Jung finds that with people like Dubois-Reymond, philosophy lies outside their scientific field and consequently that they cannot lay claim to the right of scientific convictions. The president censures Dubois-Reymond, for the fact that he wanted to block the way to a field in which he was not competent, through his 'ignorabimus', and also asks everyone who doesn't agree with Jung to speak out freely. Oeri remarks that he would only have fought the spiritist theories in favour of animism, if Jung himself had offered him the opportunity through a detailed presentation. He vehemently censures the intolerant, scholastic manner of the spiritists against theoretical opponents and against people, for example, theologians, who do their duty fully in the intellectual sphere, but yet cannot also use their forces for this field. The president corrected a misunderstanding. Knapp does not see the purpose of spiritism. Oeri replied that animistic and spiritistic questions worthy of research, like any scientific problem, without regard to some practical consequences. He only regretted the fact that the people who courageously entered into these things, have let themselves be carried away to intolerance through partly very stupid opposition and mockery, and so rather than becoming a scientific school, have ossified into a sect. The president replies to Oeri that he judges incorrectly with the word 'sect,' since he did not know the very good literature in the spiritistic camp, which also contributes to discussion. Flury would like clarification of the scientific field and the division of labour, so that no one can get lost conceitedly in foreign regions. Hoegger replies to him, that with regard to what concerns them strongly, the theologians could not wait for the explanations of the natural sciences. Jung defined 'the whole sensory region' as the sphere of the natural sciences, thus also including the places where the supersensory had sensuous effects. Flury adds that natural science also primarily has the obligation to look for material-mechanistic explanations. Jung says that, with honourable exceptions, the prior practice of science has become false. Knapp thinks that the ways of spiritism are perhaps not the correct ones; for the time being is still very difficult to construct a theory on the present facts. Jung explains that the empirical material is sufficiently large; one must attempt to explain it animistically or spiritistically. Knapp calls for more attempts to go further and less repetition of the same experiments. Jung finds that there are already sufficient methods and attempts towards variation in this science. Galluser still thinks that such things lie in the area of faith. Vischer says that he is personally a witness to the fact that spiritism also has direct moral results (against Oeri's remark). Hoegger replied to Flury that he had misunderstood him, that while spiritism was currently not practicably usable, it could however be so to a high degree, through its proof of immortality. The president noted by conclusion, that the animistic facts had not been contested, and reminded everyone to study such things.[13]

13 Protocols of the Zofingia society, Staastarchiv, Basle.

This discussion demonstrates the active engagement with spiritualistic questions at the intersection of science and theology between Jung and his peers at the University of Basle.

The Inception of the Seances

Helene Preiswerk was born in 1881. There are varying accounts of the commencement of the seances. In 1925, Jung dated them to 1896, noting that she was fifteen and a half years old, and that her sisters noted that "she could obtain extraordinary answers to questions put to her when she was in a sleeping state."[14] In Jung's published account of 1902, he dates the seances to 1899 and 1900 – evidently postdating them to his medical studies, but keeping her age at fifteen and a half. Stephanie Zumstein-Preiswerk dates them to 1895, and claims that they were interrupted in 1896–7, while Helene Preiswerk was undergoing religious instruction, and then recommenced, from 1898 to September 1899.[15]

In his 1902 account, Jung noted that at the first seance, they began by using an upturned glass, on which fingers were laid, surrounded by letters on paper. Through this means, the medium's grandfather (Reverend Samuel Preiswerk) commenced communicating with them, with statements of a religious and edifying nature (concealing his relation to S. W, Jung did not indicate that this figure was also his maternal grandfather). These were then interrupted by the appearance of Jung's (paternal) grandfather, C. G. Jung the elder.[16]

Zumstein-Preiswerk gives the following account of the first seance:

> Grandfather visits us" she said. "'I must go, ask him where he sends me. He will take my place." She falls lifeless to the ground. Carl and Luggy[17] lifted her, frightened and placed her on the sofa. Carl composed himself first. "Where is Helly?" he asked. "Answer, you spirit, who have abducted her!" Suddenly a darkly coloured old man's voice sounded, which appeared to come from another world. But it spoke from Helly's mouth, despite the fact that she lay as if she was dead. "Do not fear, see, I am with you every day, I am your father Samuel, who dwells with God. Pray to him, the Lord, and ask him that my dear grandchild reaches her goal. She is now over the north pole, in the icy heights. That is the shortest way to America." "Why America?" asked Carl. "Helly will soon reach Sao Paulo. She is now flying over the shore of Panama. She will then stop the black one, the mestizo, from seizing Bertha." "Is her mission successful?" asked Carl after a long pause [. . .]

14 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 3.
15 Zumstein-Preiswerk: C.G. Jungs Medium, 53f.
16 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §45.
17 Helene Preiswerk's sister.

> "Give penance and pray for Berthi. Berthi has just given birth to a small Negro. Helly came too late.[18]

A week later they received a letter from her, in which she said she had been married for two years – she gave birth to a frizzy-haired boy a few days later. Jung was highly impressed with the communications, and together with his student friends, participated in the seances. The extant record suggests that, initially at least, Jung felt that he had found precisely the phenomena he had been seeking: his cousin could possibly turn out to be 'his' Florence Cook.

Some seance transcripts have survived. The following is an excerpt from a seance of 18 August 1897, which took place at Jung's home:

> *Attempt with the glass.*
> "What do you make of sin?"
> "It is the destruction of man which has already been since the beginning."
> "Is the sentence of Moses, 18, 11 directed against spiritualism?"[19]
> "No."
> "Does this sentence have meaning for us?"
> "It shouldn't concern you."
> "Is it time to begin the experiment with the table?"
> "Yes [. . .]"
> "Will you move an object in the room?"
> "Yes." [. . .]
> *Attempt at the movement of objects*

> Complete darkness. A stool which was under the table, was moved one metre and thrown. The medium was in a violent trance. Sounds from the sofa. Light movements of the sofa. There was a dog in the room. In the trance the medium said in dialect: "We have no use of animals." In high German: "You always speak of things, which in work . . . " After a while the medium spoke very slowly and in an altered voice in dialect: "My dear, we do not want you to photograph, because you will damage the medium with this." High German: "I also forbid making photographic records in these seances." At the request of the medium a light was put on. The medium slowly woke, as she had magnetised herself.
>
> On questioning with the help of the table, the meeting was interrupted between 9.50 and 10.10 hours.

> **Attempt with sooty paper**
> Sooty paper was placed in a box on the table. Violent trance of the medium. All eyes were closed. The table began to sway. K. J. and A. M. took the box away. [. . .] The medium fell

18 Zumstein-Preiswerk: C.G. Jungs Medium, 54.

19 Moses, 18, 11: "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in a the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead."

> to the floor and remained quiet for a long time. The medium spoke in dialect: "be well, I'll soon come again, goodbye." High German: "[. . .] She will breath and her pulse will beat, but she will not give you answers, nor look." Ten minutes complete silence. [. . .] Suddenly the medium said hastily in dialect; "'I am here again. The experiment is apparently not advisable – I have forgotten my body – water – my eyes run." They put the lights on and apply cold compresses to her eyes. She was deathly pale, her hands felt ice cold, and her pulse was slow and weak. After a while she said, "I am here again. Thank you for looking after my body in the meantime." (Dialect). The medium now raised her hands and began to magnetise herself. In an ornate way she depicted curved lines and circles over her brow, eyes, cheeks. Especially making spirals over the eyes [. . .] Quarter hour. When the medium had rested, she lay on the sofa. She complained about a headache, pain around her eyes and loss of the possibility of seeing. After half an hour and further magnetising, she could see again.[20]

In the seances, dead relatives appeared, and the medium became completely transformed into these figures, unfolding stories of her previous incarnations. Around this time, Jung read Justinus Kerner's "The Seeress of Prevost", which was to have a significant effect on the proceedings. In his 1902 account, Jung noted that the medium read Kerner's work after the fourth seance.[21] Zumstein-Preiswerk noted that Jung himself had given her Kerner's work as a gift on her fifteen birthday, in 1896.[22] However, Jung took Kerner's book out of the Basle University library only on 17 August 1987.[23] Following her reading of Kerner's work, she began to magnetize herself towards the end of each attack, with circles and figures of eight, to disperse her headaches.[24]

In the later seances, a significant spirit appeared, who went by the name of Ivenes. S. W. described her as a small but fully grown black-haired woman, of a markedly Jewish type, clothed in white garments, her head wrapped in a turban. Ivenes spoke the language of the spirits, and claimed that the spirits could see each other's thoughts (a notion that seems to stem from Swedenborg).[25] Ivenes was melancholic, serious, mature, and longed to get out of the world.

After reading Kerner, S. W. felt it was her duty to instruct the black spirits banished to certain realms and who dwelt beneath the earth's surface. Every fortnight on Wednesdays, she spent the night in the gardens of the beyond, and received instructions concerning the forces that govern the world, and the

20 Jung archive, Wissenschaftshistorische Sammlung, ETH, Zurich, Hs 1055:1a. The other participants were four other students, listed as R. Gonser stud. med., A. Müller stud. med., and E. Preiswerk stud. phil.

21 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §49.

22 Zumstein-Preiswerk: C.G. Jungs Medium, 68.

23 Basel university library checking records.

24 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §49.

25 Ibid., §59.

laws of reincarnation and the star dwellers, and in particular, gave a description of Mars and its inhabitants.[26]

Jung noted that the ghost-like look in her eyes lead some to compare her to the Seeress of Prevost. Jung noted says this suggestion was of consequence, as she then claimed to be the reincarnation of the Seeress.[27] Ivenes had to embody herself once every two hundred years, and claimed that only Swedenborg and Florence Cook shared this fate. She called them her brother and sister. A tale involving an elaborate series of reincarnations unfolded. In all her previous lives, she had been a medium. As a clergyman's wife, as which she had been seduced by Goethe, and bore him a child. In the 13th century, she had been a French noblewoman named de Valours, who had been burnt as a witch. As de Valours, she had been Jung's mother. When she was burnt as a witch, Jung went to a monastery in Rouen, and wrote a book on botany.

In his 1902 account, in a section entitled "mystic natural science," Jung noted that S. W. was subjected to "numerous suggestions concerning natural scientific questions" and that they often discussed scientific and spiritualistic questions at the end of the seances, and that they had spoken of attractive and repulsive forces in relation to Kant's "Natural History and Theory of the Heavens".[28] She then drew a detailed cosmological diagram, and explained, the functioning and interrelation of the various forces, which were split into several groups.[29] At the centre was the primary force, which was the cause of creation. This was surrounded by matter. The combination of the primary force and matter gave rise to other spiritual forces: the Magnesor group (the good or light powers); the Connesor group (the dark powers) and the Hypos group (magnetic powers residing in certain human beings). Each of these forces had their mediums, and like the Seeress of Prevost and Swedenborg, S. W. was a Magnesor medium.

Jung's 1902 account suggests that he didn't take any of this remotely seriously. However there exists an undated thirteen page fragment of a manuscript, including a sketch of her diagram (numbered p. 151 – p. 164) which suggests that this was not his original position. It appears as if this fragment was part of a larger contemporaneous write up and study of the seances. In this fragment, Jung reproduces the diagram and comments on it. He refers to his cousin throughout as 'die Seherin' (the seer). At one point in the manuscript, Jung noted: "To understand how the separation of the physical forces into two

26 Zumstein-Preiswerk notes that she had read Flammarion's work on Mars, 73.
27 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §63.
28 Ibid., §65.
29 Ibid., figure 2, 40.

groups is to be understood, see my work, 'On the nature and worth of speculative inquiry.' One will also find there in what way affinity must take an intermediary position."[30] The work that Jung referred to here was a presentation before the Zofingia society on 21 May 1898.[31] On the top of p. 153 of the manuscript, Jung wrote 'October 1898,' which suggests that he worked on it in the latter half of 1898.

In this talk, Jung attempted to classify the primary forces in nature, breaking these down into two groups: a priori principles inherent in matter on the one hand, and on the other, those that come into matter a posteriori. The first group consisted of weight, inertia, cohesion, adhesion, capilarity, elasticity, absorption and affinity. The second group consisted of light, heat, electricity, motion, magnetism. A distinction between the first and the second group was that only the latter obeyed the principle of the conservation of energy. He cited Kant's *Natural Theory of the Heavens,* and attempted to follow his lead in deriving everything from attraction and repulsion.[32]

In his unpublished manuscript, Jung commented on the Magnesor group:

> The forces of Magnesor are primarily the substrate of the effectiveness of good spirits. So far as it affects the visual sense, it appears as luminous white or blueish white or also in the form of different strong luminous colours. Magnesor is the substance of the spiritual body, and is also the principle of effectiveness in the spiritual world, just as our material body is the representation of effectiveness in the corporeal world. Magnesor appears to the eye of the seer as a luminous fluid (compare Andrew Jackson Davis). It is probably the next higher level of Reichenbach's Od or perhaps identical with the same. Inasmuch as the French spiritualists call the force (respectively the possibility) the effect of a spirit on resting matter Perispirit, the Perispirit has no place in the schema as a unifying force.[33]

'Perispirit' was a term from the French spiritualist Allen Kardec (the pseudonym of Hippolyte Rivail), for the fluidic body which connected the material to the immaterial. It enveloped the spirit. It was believed in that in seances, the perispirit of the medium connected with the perispirit of a disembodied spirit. 'Od' was Baron Karl von Reichenbach's term for a new force he posited, which emanated from substances, and certain people were particularly sensitive to.[34] The reference to Andrew Jackson Davis is further evidence of Jung's immersion in the spiritualistic literature at this time.

30 Jung archive, Wissenschaftshistorische Sammlung, ETH, Zurich, Hs 1055:469, 152–3.
31 Jung, (1898), §166f.
32 Ibid., §212f.
33 Op. cit., 153.
34 Cf. Braid: The Power of the Mind over the Body.

Concerning the life principle, Jung noted:

> In the zone between Magnesor and Cafar the seer indicated to me the place of the life force. The principium vitae corresponds therefore, despite our expectation, to no typical and unified level of force; rather it appears as that which we indicated by the will towards objectification, the preservation instinct of the organism, something labile, which sways between Cafar and Magnesor. On the one side, this swaying lies very close with the intensity of the will to life, but on the other side brings individuality into connection. It is very striking that the life principle has no other place in the system. (For example, there is no second, which would be expected, that good and evil would have a different will to life!) The unity of this position will however in the same way be testified through revelation and experience. The seer teaches that all men in a morally good condition are embodied, also in the condition of Magnesor. Experience fully confirms this theory: every immature child carries the testimony of their innocence in their eyes.[35]

This discussion indicates that he may have been envisaging a work on Helene Preiswerk akin to Kerner's "The Seeress of Prevost". Intriguingly, Jung noted in 1925 that he had observed her for two year and 'had given myself up to a study of detailed phenomena she presented, striving to get them into harmony with natural science.'[36]

In his 1902 account, he noted that the quality of the material fell off, and that there was an increasing staleness of content, coupled with an increasing attempt on the part of the medium to make an impression, which led him to withdraw from the seances.[37] Six months later, she was caught cheating, having concealed in her dress objects which she threw into the air during the darkened seances.[38] At the time of writing, he wrote that she no longer participated in seances, and worked in a business. According to the "reports of trustworthy persons," her character was much improved.[39]

Zumstein-Preiswerk gave a different account of the termination of the seances: on one occasion Jung brought his student friends with him. Their presence confused Helene Preiswerk, and her force left her. For Jung's sake, she tried to place herself in hypnosis with arm movements, which didn't work. She acted, which they realised. They all started laughing, which Jung couldn't stand.[40]

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35 Op cit., 154–5.

36 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 5–6.

37 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §43.

38 Ibid., §71.

39 In actuality, she became a successful dressmaker in Paris, where Jung visited her in 1902–3, when he was studying with Pierre Janet, and took her to the theatre (Cf. Zumstein-Preiswerk: C.G. Jungs Medium, 101f). In 1911, she died of tuberculosis.

40 Zumstein-Preiswerk: C. G. Jungs Medium, 92.

However the seances actually ended, it is likely that the study which Jung appears to have been preparing was laid to one side at this point in time. This then forms part of the backdrop for the moment in 1899, when Jung discovered his psychiatric vocation, on reading Kraft-Ebbing's *Textbook of Psychiatry*, and finding in psychiatry (as opposed to spiritualism) "the empirical field common to biological and spiritual facts, which I had everywhere sought and nowhere found."[41]

In 1900, Jung took up a position at the Burghölzli. In 1958, he recalled that he asked Bleuler to suggest a theme for his medical dissertation. Bleuler suggested that he experimentally investigated the disintegration of ideas in dementia praecox. Not knowing how to go about this, he chose "a theme which on the other hand presented fewer difficulties, and on the other offered an analogy to schizophrenia in that it concerned the systematic dissociation of personality in a young girl."[42] To Aniela Jaffe, Jung recalled that when he presented his own plan, Bleuler "remarkably accepted."[43] It is not clear how much of Jung's original manuscript was directly used, or reworked in his dissertation. Be this as it may, the dissertation is witness to his immersion in the literature of psychiatry and abnormal psychology since the time of the seances, bearing in particular the strong impress on Jung of his reading of Théodore Flournoy's "From India to the Planet Mars", which he had offered to translate.[44] While it appears that the study that Jung was initially engaged with in the late 1890s on the seances was modelled after Kerner's book, his medical dissertation was clearly modelled after Flournoy's. The work of the latter provided him with the possibility of a psychological approach to the phenomena, as opposed to the assent he had started with, which had been followed by dismissal.

41 Jung and Jaffé: Memories, Dreams, Reflections, 130. Bleuler shared Jung's interest in the exploration of psychical phenomena; in the 1920s and 1930s, they conducted seances with the mediums Rudi Schneider and Oscar Schlag, (Aniela Jaffé: From the Life and Work of Jung, 10).

42 Jung: On schizophrenia, §257. One presumes that the term Bleuler used in 1901 was 'dementia praecox.' On the work on dementia praecox at the Burghölzli at this time, cf.Brigitta Bernet: Schizophrenia.

43 Protocols of Aniela Jaffé's interviews with Jung for *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Library of Congress, Washington D. C, 75.

44 Théodore Flournoy: From India to the Planet Mars; Sonu Shamdasani From Geneva to Zurich. On Jung's offer to translate Flournoy's work, see Jung's tribute in Flournoy: From India to the Planet Mars, ix.

"A Psychiatric Study"

Jung's 1902 version casts the seances in the language of abnormal psychology. The phenomena Helene Preiswerk – now dubbed 'S. W.' – exhibited was compared with a star-studded cast of famous cases: Mary Reynolds, Felida X., Hélène Smith, Ansel Bourne, Albert X., Louis Vivé, Leonie Boulanger, and Sally Beauchamp – a who's who of dissociation. Jung presented his case within the context of the psychopathic inferiorities, and presented an unflattering portrait of her family background. Within this category, there was a class of people on whom there was a dearth of observation: "persons with habitual hallucinations, and also those who are inspired, exhibit these states: they draw the attention of the crowd to themselves, now as poets or artists, now as saviours, prophets, or founders of new sects."[45] As the literature on this subject was almost exclusively from English and French researchers, his study was intended to make up for this shortcoming in the German domain.

Jung noted that in the seances, S. W. had attacks of somnambulism, in which she represented her dead relatives in an impressive way. She went through the Charcotian stages of catalepsy, and that of the 'attitudes passionals'. He presented his own stance as sceptical, critical and uninvolved – like Flournoy's attitude in "From India to the Planet Mars" – noting that she resisted his critical explanation of her visions. In what he describes as her "semi-somnambulisms," she became her somnambulist "I" (using a concept he drew from Alfred Binet), and seemed a much older person. He noted that they couldn't establish direct thought-transference, indicating that they did telepathic experiments, and concluded that she lived a real "double life," using Azam's term.

The analysis that Jung now presented of the case drew in particular from Pierre Janet's psychological analysis and Flournoy and Myers' subliminal psychology. In his new account, the automatisms exhibited by S. W. transformed lethargy into hypnosis. Secondary ideas split off from the primary unconscious personality which led to the multiplication of spirits. The somnambulistic personalities had the medium's memory at their disposal. They knew the visions she had in the waking state, but only a superficial knowledge of her fantasies in her ecstasies. The spirits divided into two categories: serious-religious and cheerful-boisterous, and were just two subconscious personalities under various names. S. W. sought a middle way between extremes, and tried to repress them and reach a more ideal state. This led to the dream of "Ivenes," the name of her somnambulistic "I" who

45 Jung: The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena, §34.

controlled S. W.'s semi-somnambulistic states. Increasingly, the unrefined aspects of S. W.'s character faded into the background, where they continued to lead independent existences. Drawing in effect from Flournoy's notion of teleological automatisms, Jung argued that the double consciousness represented new character formations, attempts of the future personality to break through. Thus Ivenes represented the future mature personality of S. W. The process ended with a decline from somnambulism to "conscious lying."[46] Jung viewed her "mystic system" as an example of "heightened unconscious performance" that transcended her normal intelligence. He conjectured that its possible sources were Frederika Hauffe's drawing of the 'life-circles' in Kerner's book, and the fragments of conversations on scientific matters they held which she overheard.[47] He concluded by noting that he searched through the occult literature, and while he found parallels to her gnostic system, these would not have been accessible to her, effectively ruling out the possibility of further cryptomnesia.

After completing the work, Jung submitted it for examination. In his recommendation, Bleuler wrote: "[Jung's work] is a very competent and valuable one. Amongst other things it contains an independent very correct observation and discusses the facts with great acuteness and new perspectives backed up by an uncommon knowledge of the literature."[48]

In 1903, Jung presented the case at a meeting of the Verein Schweizerischer Irrenärzte in Rheinau under the title "On the psychology of the unconscious." He commenced by noting:

> The case of Rothe the flower medium has recently drawn the general attention to the phenomena of spontaneous somnambulism, by which it has shown that it is not only lay circles, but also many experts who are still completely in uncertainty concerning the psychological character of such phenomena. However corresponding cases are quite rare and still rarely reach the hands of a psychiatrist. The lecturer has been successful in observing such a case from beginning to end, that is, at close range for two years.[49]

46 Ibid., §136.

47 Ibid., §149.

48 Staatsarchiv, Zürich, 1902. A few years later, in his recommendation for Jung's habilitation, Bleuler again praised the work: "As for the other works, the first to mention is the dissertation, which carries out the psychological analysis of a case of the apparent influencing by spirits in an exemplary manner, a theme which few dare to approach. I can add that the hypothesis expressed in the dissertation, that it is a matter of a new character in the patient, has since then come true." Bleuler to the Medical Faculty of the University of Zürich, 19 January 1905, Staatsarchiv, Zürich. The latter comment suggests that Jung may have informed Bleuler of his impressions of her in Paris, and cited this in support of the teleological aspect of his analysis.

49 Jung, 1903. I thank Anatina Weiser for drawing my attention to this. On the Verein Schweizerischer Irrenärzte, Cf. Weiser: Zur frühen Psychoanalyse in Zürich. On the Rothe case,

The case of Anna Rothe was highly topical at this point of time. She claimed to be able to produce flowers from the fourth dimension. In 1902, she was arrested and charged for fraud. In the following year, she was imprisoned for eighteen months. In the discussion following Jung's talk, Auguste Forel commented:

> I am pleased at this work of Dr. Jung. It is high time that science accepted these questions, which belong to the most important in medicine. This whole field is still ignored by official science and the doctor's chamber, and the few who concern themselves with these matters become simply pushed against the wall. The psychiatrist should advocate that hypnotism and such like should be taught at the universities. The *chair* [Forel] hopes that this interesting work will bear good fruit.[50]

In the *Archives de Psychologie*, Flournoy wrote a laudatory review, noting:

> German science has hardly accorded attention up till now to spiritualism. Thus we salute this little volume, where a psychiatrist has not disdained to take as an object of study a case of mediumship of which he gives us a very interesting psychopathological analysis, as a happy sign of the times . . . . In scrutinizing closely the content of these subconscious products, with much finesse and perspicacity, the author has succeeded in revealing the psychological genesis in a manner both simple and complete . . . . It is to be wished that the excellent work of M. Jung will find numerous imitators, because it is a good example of the profit which normal and pathological psychology can derive from the conscientious study of cases of so-called spiritualistic mediumship.[51]

Thus the work was well received by the doyens of Swiss psychology and psychiatry: an ideal start to a psychiatric career.

S. W. Redivivus

In 1907, in "The Psychology of Dementia Praecox," Jung revisited the case, describing it now as one of hysteria. It was cited in tandem with Flournoy's Hélène Smith (also presented here as hysteric). After studying with Janet, and commencing his engagement with Freud's work, the interest in the psychopathic inferiorities made way for hysteria.[52] Jung noted that in his 1902 study he had based himself on Flournoy.[53] This pairing was coupled with a wider

cf. Treitel: A science for the Soul, 165–191. On the history of psychical research, cf. Sommer: Crossing the boundaries of mind and body; and Wolfram: The Stepchildren of Science.

50 Ibid., 22.

51 Flournoy: Review of C.G. Jung, 85.

52 Jung, (1907), §10.

53 Ibid, §58n.

hermeneutic move, in that Jung was in effect transferring and applying the psychogenic model which he had developed in his analysis of S. W. to dementia praecox. The dementia praecox patient was modelled after a medium, and delusional systems were interpreted in a similar manner as analogous to S. W.'s spiritualistic romances.

Five years later, in "Transformations and Symbols of the Libido", Jung now presented the case of S. W. as an exemplar of his new model of the emergence of the primordial images from the phylogenetic unconscious, which he would later term, the collective unconscious. He noted that it was in his work, "at a time when I had not yet understood the nature of psychoanalysis," that he discovered what unconscious fantasies are like, and how removed they are from what a girl of this age would outwardly show.[54] Jung now wrote that in the seances, she presented far-reaching fantasies of a mythic nature, seeing herself as the racial mother of countless generations. Jung went onto claim that if one left aside her poetic cast, there are elements that are probably in common with all girls her age, since the unconscious is infinitely more common than individual consciousness, since it is the condensation of what was historically the average. Now, his emphasis was no longer on her personal psychology, but the collective levels revealed in her fantasies.

From 1913 onwards, Jung embarked on an extended period of self-experimentation, in which he attempted to study the collective dimension of his own fantasies. The main method which he used: provoking fantasies in a waking state, and entering into dialogue with the figures who appeared, directly recalls his earlier experiments with Helene Preiswerk, with the difference that now, Jung was his own medium.[55] A critical development came in 1916, when he painted a work entitled the "Systema munditotius" [system of all the worlds].[56] This represented the symbolic cosmology which he elaborated in his contemporaneously written text, the "Septem Sermones ad Mortuos" (Seven Sermons to the Dead), cast in a neo-Gnostic style.[57] The painting has some affinities with S. W.'s depiction of the forces of the universe. In late summer and early autumn 1917, he drew a series of circles in pencil in his army notebook, which he later painted in the calligraphic volume of "Liber Novus".[58] He later called these circular depictions 'mandalas', borrowing a term from Tibetan Buddhism. He came to conceive the mandala to be a representation of the 'self', which he later

54 Jung, *CW* B, §95.
55 Jung: The Red Book.
56 Ibid, 364.
57 Ibid, 364f.
58 Ibid, 361f.

defined as the totality of the personality and the central archetype, whose symbols are indistinguishable from those of the Godhead.[59] He considered the realisation of the self to be the goal of the process of development, individuation, which he had been engaged in. For Jung, mandalas occurred throughout the world in various religious traditions. They also occurred spontaneously in dreams and in certain states of psychological conflict. In 1929, in his "Commentary on 'The Secret of the Golden Flower,'" he referred to her diagram as a mandala and noted that it "shows in its centre a spring of 'Primary Force,' or life energy without extension, whose emanations clash with a contrary spatial principle – in complete analogy with the basic idea of our Chinese text."[60] It thus formed a prime example of the "parallelism between Eastern philosophy and the unconscious mental processes in the West."[61] Similarly, on 20 October 1932, Jung wrote to Wolfgang Kranefeldt, "The drawing of my first female patient was very clearly a mandala, which I did not describe in entirety in my publication at the time because it seemed to me too absurd. I only saw much later what it actually meant; though it corresponded in its entire arrangement and fundamental thoughts to the central part of the River Map."[62] Thus it would have been the first with which he had been preoccupied.

In 1921, in "Psychological Types", he again cited the case of S. W. as a "detailed example" of the prospective tendency of the unconscious which Maeder had spoken about, "which playfully anticipates future developments."[63] In 1925, Jung presented his most extended reworking of the case, in the course of an account of his intellectual development. He commenced by stating that his whole interest in psychology began with this case.[64] He noted that in hypnosis, she would enter a trance, during which various personalities manifested themselves, and he found that he "could call by suggestion one personality or another. In short, found I could have a formative influence on them."[65] The

59 Jung: Concerning mandala symbolism, §627f.

60 Jung: Commentary on the Secret of the Golden Flower, §37.

61 Ibid., p. 56.

62 Cf. www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2010/the-james-s-copley-library-arts-sciences-including-the-mark-twain-collection-n08698/lot.357.html. In 1950 Jung glossed the 'River Map' as follows: "'The 'River Map' is one of the legendary foundations of the *I Ching* . . . According to the legend, a dragon dredged the magical signs of the 'River Map' from a river. On it the sages discovered the drawing, and in the drawing the laws of the world-order." (Jung: Concerning mandala symbolism, §542).

63 Jung: Psychological Types, §701n.

64 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 3.

65 Ibid.

language suggests that Jung was conducting hypnotic experimentation, à la Binet or Janet. He continued that "I began to study the literature of spiritualism but could find no satisfaction there."[66] As we have seen, the contemporaneous record suggests that initially, far from being distant, Jung was quite taken by spiritualistic literature. He then turned to turn to the works of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann for illumination.[67] He found his first explanation of what was taking place through his reading of Schopenhauer, namely that personifications were the result of the image-forming tendency of the Will, or what Jung would later term the libido. This led him to the conviction that the unconscious material had a tendency to "flow into definite moulds."[68] He parenthetically noted that "at this time I thought that after all there might be ghosts."[69] In essence, Jung was attributing his later conception of the purposive tendencies of the unconscious to his observation of S. W.

However, he now saw that he had overlooked "the most important feature of the situation," which was that she had fallen in love with him.[70] The implication here is that she had produced the material in an effort to please Jung, providing him with what he was looking for. In effect, this was taking up Flournoy's observations in his follow up study on Hélène Smith.[71]

Jung now proceeded to present a reading of her case in the light of his post 1917 theories of the individuation of the personality, developed after his own extensive self-experimentation. In effect, this formed his first public 'clinical' example of the process of individuation. He noted that her family had declined from its patrician status, and she now found in Jung all the sides of life which

66 Ibid., 4.

67 Jung later recalled to Aniela Jaffe that "the whole affair was a very strong impression for me, and gave me many problems. It also made me very determined to study Kant." Protocols of Aniela Jaffé's interviews with Jung, 69.

68 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 5.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid., 6. Regarding Jung's relation to her, in a letter to Freud on 20 June 1909, Sabina Spielrein wrote that S. W. "was deeply rooted in him, and she was my prototype. It is also significant that right at the beginning of my therapy Dr. Jung let me read his dissertation, in which he described this S. W. Later on he would sometimes turn reflective when I said something to him; such and such a woman had spoken in just such a way, etc. And it was always about this girl!" As Spielrein saw it, Jung's 'love' for her was a 'transference' from his relation to S. W. (Aldo Carotenuto: A Secret Symmetry, 105). Aside from the issue of affective transference, there is a sense that Sabina Spielrein, as Jung's test-case for his use of psychoanalysis, followed S. W. in taking on a paradigmatic role for him.

71 Théodore Flournoy: Nouvelle Observations sur un cas de somnambulisme avec glossosalia, 113.

she craved, and tried to the best of herself in the trance personage. Her cheating forced her back into reality, and she then went to Paris and became a dress maker. This transformation was itself "an example of the psychological law that in order to advance to a higher level of development, we have to commit a mistake which threatens to ruin us."[72] Her subsequent development now became seen as exemplifying some of the typical features of the individuation process. The milieu she lived in was too narrow for her gifts, so as a consequence, her unconscious compensated for this by presenting the opposite, in the form of very important personages. The tension between these two aspects became the basis of the mediatory or transcendent function. The figure of Ivenes was a symbol of this, as a resolution of the conflict of opposites.

In 1933, Jung commenced a series of lectures at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, which were to last for many years. In his first semester, he presented a history of psychology. After starting in a conventional history of ideas approach, he changed tack midway through, commenting:

> History, as you know, has always chronicled individual lives and psychologies, particularly of outstanding persons and 'great men'; and among these, the 'men of action' have predominantly attracted the interest of psychological historians. But there exist also other personalities besides such 'men of action' – 'psychic' people, people marked by their inner experience. They stand out much less, and yet we possess authentic historical sources about them, and find them in a place where we would have hardly thought to encounter them: in the lives of the saints, the *Acta sanctorum*, in the court records of witch trials, and later in the miraculous accounts of stigmatised individuals and of somnambulistic persons. By the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, a fairly copious literature had emerged on these strange personalities.[73]

Decades before Ellenberger, Jung himself was highlighting the role of patients in the history of dynamic psychiatry. He then proceeded to devote six lectures to an analysis of Kerner's "Seeress of Prevost", followed by three lectures on Flournoy's "From India to the Planet Mars". This attests to the significance these works had for him. As we have also seen, when considering these books, his own somnambulist, S. W., was never far from his mind.

On three further occasions, Jung returned to the case of S. W. In 1935, in his preface to the second edition of his book, "The Relations between the I and the Unconscious", he noted that the idea of the independence of the unconscious, which distinguished his views so radically from Freud, came to him in 1902, when he was studying the psychic history of a young somnambulist, referring

72 Jung: Introduction to Jungian Psychology, 6–7.
73 Jung: Modern Psychology, 37–38.

to his dissertation.[74] In 1939, in his paper "On rebirth," while discussing the enlargement of the personality, he noted that personality is seldom at the beginning what it will be later on. The three examples he cited were Nietzsche's encounter with Zarathustra, Paul at Damascus, and the Islamic legend of the meeting of Moses and Khidr, swiftly adding that there were more trivial cases to be found in case histories and courses of healing of neurotic patients.[75] Of these, he telling singled out the case of S. W., noting "I have discussed one such case of a widening of the personality in my inaugural dissertation."[76] Four years later, he wrote in conclusion to the fifth edition of his book, "On the Psychology of the Unconscious": "Just as the Breuer case . . . was decisive for Freud, so a decisive experience underlies my own views . . . For one who knows my scientific production it will not be uninteresting to compare this forty-year-old study with my later ideas."[77] S. W. was refigured here as Jung's 'Anna O.'

In the late fifties, Jung undertook a series of biographical conversations with his friend and colleague, the English psychiatrist E. A. Bennet, who noted the following remarks Jung made about S. W. in 1957:

> Ever since his experience with the mediumistic girl he had regarded the psyche as an objective phenomena with its own autonomous laws [. . .] Here he got his first glimpse of the fact that there was another world (the unconscious) which had a life of its own quite apart from the life of consciousness. The girl, in her trances, was living ahead of her actual age of fifteen-and-a-half, and from this he concluded (later) that the unconscious was timeless – all her life was there already.[78]

Some of Jung's retrospective statements serve to 'back date' his later conceptions, suggesting that he had already empirically observed and come to them then. They should be taken carefully, as they can also be read as pointing to the significance of Jung's early theoretical presuppositions on his later work: be it his mix of spiritualism, vitalism, idealist philosophy and Romantic animal magnetism in the late 1890s, or the synthesis of the subliminal psychology of Flournoy, Myers and James with the abnormal psychology of Binet and Janet, which framed his analysis in 1902. At the same time, it is clear that his experience in the seances, which led him to turn first to philosophy, and then to

74 Jung: Foreword to the second edition, The Relations between the I and the Unconscious, 123.

75 Jung: (1939), §216f.

76 Ibid., §219n.

77 Jung: On the Psychology of the Unconscious, §199.

78 Bennet: Meetings with Jung, 93.

psychiatry and psychology, opened up the possibility of a fruitful connection between 'clinical' observation and experimentation and philosophical and psychological speculation, an interface which he was to explore for the rest of his career. In subsequent decades, Jung continually returned to his seances with S. W., reworking the case as an exemplar of his evolving theories. It is as if to establish their worth, these theories had to be continually 'retested' on his original case, which continued to haunt him.

However, the psychological reworkings which Jung presented in his scholarly writings may not have been the end of the matter. At some stage, Jung became convinced of the post-mortem survival of bodily death, and hence of the possibility of communication from beyond the grave, as well as of reincarnation.[79] One wonders whether this may have led him to ponder anew the question of the veridicality of some of her communications from the 'dead,' and of their intertwined anterior lives.[80]

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79 Cf. Shamdasani: The boundless expanse.

80 In this regard, Jung's comments about her parapsychological abilities in a letter of 27 November 1934 to the parapsychologist J. B. Rhine in connection with the episode of 'exploding knife' which took place in his adolescence are striking less sceptical: "She could produce quite noticeable raps in pieces of furniture and in the walls. Some of those raps also happened during her absence at a distance of about 4km." Adler: C.G. Jung Letters, 182.

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Mediumistic Trials of the Short 20th Century

Ulrich Linse

The Braunau Trance Mediums and their Spiritualist Circle Between the Two World Wars. A Local Study

Braunau–without Hitler

1927: "[Freiherr Albert von] Schrenck-Notzing begged a good lady of the Bavarian aristocracy [Baroness Poschinger] to take me to Braunau by automobile and he gave me for companion an amiable professor of the Munich Polytechnic [Manfred Bühlmann, associated professor of the history of architecture and Dr . ing.], who is extremely interested in metapsychics. After a three-hours' drive through a country filled with spring flowers we reached the frontier. We crossed the Inn to enter the pretty little town which heretofore made its sole claim for fame through the persona of a German patriot who was executed by Napoleon I; and which hereafter will take its distinction in being the birthplace of the two mediums [Willi and Rudi] Schneider."[1]

1939: "Braunau-am-Inn [is] a charming frontier old-world village which is famous as the birthplace of three distinguished persons – Adolf Hitler, and Willi and Rudi Schneider, the Austrian physical mediums."[2]

1966: "The Innviertel [is a] peculiar landscape [. . .]. There is not only the foaming descent of the river Inn but also vast boggy wastelands and narrow villages in which hysteria, St. Vitus' dance and bedevilment reign. The 'Schneider boys' lived there, mediumistic workers' sons who could float through the darkened room, emanate astralplasm through mouth, nose and ears and make heavy pieces of furniture dance. They were studied by the famous

1 Sudre: Séance, 398.

2 Price: Fifty years, 92. Harry Price possessed the most comprehensive collection about the Schneider brothers and their mediumship. In 1926, he became founder and director of the London "National Laboratory of Psychical Research", competitor of the London "Society for Psychical Research (SPR)". In 1933, he offered his laboratory equipment, his library and collected materials to the University of London (Department of Psychical Research) but the project failed (Valentine: Institutionalisation, 141–143). Therefore, Price made the same offer to Eugène Osty and Charles Richet in Paris (1930) and to the University of Göttingen (1930), and finally to Hitler personally. In 1937, the Nazis decided to establish a "Department for Abnormal Psychology and Parapsychology" at the University of Bonn under Hans Bender (who was assistant at the Psychological Institute there) which was to conduct research and deal with questions of social hygiene in occult matters. Price visited the University of Bonn in 1937 as a guest of the Third Reich, but later withdrew his offer when the University of London renewed its interest (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 403–404). In 1948, the year of his death, he bequeathed all his material to the University of London; his archives were deposited there between 1976 and 1978 by his widow (HPArchive).

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> spirit-professor Schrenck-Notzing[3] before they were exposed of obvious fraud [. . .] Braunau is the place, too, which gave us the equally mediumistic 'Führer'." [orig. German][4]

Braunau was remembered before 1933 as the town where in 1806 the Nuremberg bookseller Johann Philipp Palm was executed on Napoleon's I orders because of a politically rebellious publication,[5] and in which the most prominent German trance mediums lived after the First World War. After the year 1933, it was internationally known as Adolf Hitler's birthplace and as being the area of activity of the mediums Wilhelm ("Willi"[6]) and Rudolf ("Rudi") Schneider. Looking back after the Second World War, the German writer Carl Zuckmayer considered the "Schneider boys" ("Schneider-Bub'n") Willi and Rudi and the political "medium" Adolf Hitler to be the most dubious personalities to have come out of Braunau, joined by pathological madness and fraudulence, deceiving blindfolded observers and unfortunately only exposed after Germans were completely hoaxed. The post-war pseudo-science of the occult roots of national socialism (the "fantastic realism" of Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier) even went a step further in giving arguments in favour of this "mediumistic" connection by maintaining that "Hitler and Willi Schneider were nourished by the same wet nurse".[7]

In reality, however, there was no connection or contact between Hitler and the Schneider brothers at all, and there was no special relation between Hitler and

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3 Albert von Schrenck-Notzing was also called the "Geister-Baron" [ghost baron]. His publications on the Schneider brothers: Schrenck-Notzing: Physikalische Phänomene, 102–109; Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisations-Phänomene, Appendix 548–602 (Schrenck's collaborator "Captain K." was Joseph Kogelnik from Braunau); Schrenck-Notzing: Experimente; Schrenck-Notzing: Neuere Untersuchungen; Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene.

4 Zuckmayer: Stück, 68. The English translation by Richard and Clara Winston, New York 1970, does not inform that it was abridged, but the pages 65–68 of the German original version are missing for instance. The above translation is by Ulrich Linse.

5 Philipp Palm, put straight before a firing squad at the fortified town of Braunau, then occupied by the French army, had published (not personally written) a Nationalist pamphlet against Napoleon: "Deutschland in seiner tiefsten Erniedrigung". Adolf Hitler, too, made reference to Palm in 1923: Hitler: Aufzeichnungen, 934.

6 Though some contemporary publications spelled Willi's name as "Willy", even in their titles, this paper uses the German spelling for reasons of both consistency and to respect Willi's and his family's preferred spelling, also in the citations given in the text.

7 Pauwels/Bergier: Aufbruch, 369 (French original in 1959: "Le Matin des Magiciens", English translation: "The Morning of the Magicians"). Gerda Walther wrote to Hans Bender 22/6/1971 about the nonsense of this assertion (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H). Pauwels/Bergier: Aufbruch, 369, also quoted Jean de Pange who is said to have written in 1940 that Schrenck-Notzing had his mediums taken from Braunau to Munich, "among them a cousin of Hitler". This was occult nonsense, too.

Braunau, too, with the one exception that it was his birth place. The latter had already been emphasised by Hitler himself[8] and corroborated by historical research.[9] To sum it up: there is no evidence that there was any biographical connection between Hitler and the Schneider brothers whatsoever. Therefore, the following study will, without mentioning Hitler anymore, concentrate on the two Braunau mediums whose reputation was predominantly positive at least among occultists and parapsychologists between the two wars. The Vienna university professor of physics Hans Thirring, impressed by Willi Schneider's "metaphysical phenomena", wrote in 1925: "it seems to me that Willi [Schneider] is one of the best mediums of our time".[10] In the same year, Eric J. Dingwall attested to Marie Holub in Vienna, that Willi, not Rudi, was the "king of mediums".[11] And in the 1930s, Rudi Schneider, following in his brother Willi's footsteps, became – after his beginnings at Braunau – the most famous and allegedly best paid[12] but also most thoroughly

8 Hitler: Aufzeichnungen, 601: Braunau was his place of birth, but he spent most of his childhood at Passau. Hitler was born at Braunau in 1889 and already in 1892 his parents moved from Braunau to Passau. Hitler later used his place of birth, which was not more than 250 metres away from the Bavarian border, and the fact that Braunau had belonged to the state of Bavaria one hundred years before, as an argument in favour of the "Anschluss" of the German parts of Austria to the German Reich.: Hitler Aufzeichnungen, 601.

9 Slapnicka: Hitler, 9: "Hitler neither loved nor hated his birth place Braunau. He didn't know it. His parents left Braunau when Adolf was three years old [. . .] It therefore was purely by chance that Hitler was born at Braunau." Similarly, Jetzinger: Hitlers Jugend, 85, wrote: "The boy Adolf came already away from Braunau when he was three years old, probably even earlier, so nothing can have connected him with this town."

10 Thirring: Physical research, 707. Thirring: Physical research, 706, confessed: "as a teacher of exact sciences I had never dreamt of believing in metapsychical phenomena until the beginning of 1924. My investigations with Willi Schneider taught me, however, that the hypothesis of genuine telekinetic phenomena is much better founded that the average scientist realises".

11 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 47 and 54, Annot. 17.

12 Rudi Schneider had taken part in 26 sittings of the "National Laboratory of Psychical Research" at London in 1929/1930 and he received, in addition to his hotel- and travelling expenses, £3 a week, more than he supposedly would have earned as a motor mechanic in Austria. In 1932, he took part in 27 sittings in London and received £10 a week plus hotel and travelling expenses. In addition, he demanded the presence of his fiancée Maria ("Mitzi") Mangl as this was necessary to strengthen his medial powers (!), so also her expenses needed to be paid. For the couple's 13-weeks stay, the Laboratory was forced to pay a total of £300 (Price: Account, 3). Already in advance of Rudi Schneider's London stay in 1933, his father demanded still more money from the Laboratory, arguing that Rudi also needed money to live on in summer when there were no sittings and to put something aside for winter. Price answered Rudi 1.9.1932: "Unless you are very careful, this commercialising of your mediumship will be the ruin of you. If I were you, I should settle down to work and build up a business – like Willi did." Finally, the Laboratory offered him for his coming in the autumn of 1933 £5 a week (Price: Vienna experiments, 17–19).

scrutinised and nevertheless, or rather therefore, most controversial European physical medium, and parapsychological circles and scientific research institutions in Vienna, Munich, Zurich, London, Paris and Prague scrambled to get him for sittings.[13]

The following study does not intend to rehash the controversy among parapsychological scientists lasting for decades about the genuineness or fraudulence of the phenomena (levitations, telekinetic motion and materialisations) produced by the trance mediums Willi and Rudi Schneider.[14] Neither do we again want to discuss the great innovatory potential of the parapsychological experiments with trance mediums by the psychiatrist Albert von Schrenck-Notzing at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries for cultural modernity in Munich.[15] Rather, this study will fully concentrate on the Braunau mediums themselves and their local supporters and look into their interpretations of the world around them and of their own manifestations. It is thus that we fully join Gerda Walther, philosopher and parapsychologist, who at the Fifth International Congress of Parapsychology at Oslo in August 1935 proposed a toast "to those to whom our scientific investigations owe their existence and without whom they were impossible and who nevertheless so often have to suffer from it and have come under severe attacks – the mediums"[16] – though some of the international scientific authorities present at the congress disapproved of this mediumistic turn. The main problem of such a mediumistic turn is the fact that almost all written sources dealing with mediums were – apart from sensationalist newspaper reports – "produced" by the scientists investigating them, not by the mediums themselves. They are those who act in shadow – in the double sense of the expression.

13 Rudi Schneider "became perhaps the most internationally discussed and most extensively, carefully, and scientifically studied physical medium of all time": Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 18.

14 This aspect of the scientific "mediumistic trial" is extensively documented by Gregory: Rudi Schneider. The aptly chosen provisional title of Gregory's book was "A ghost in the machine. The medium Rudi Schneider and his investigators": SPRA MS SPR/52, 11. We must draw attention, however, to the fact that Gregory, a member of the "London Society for Psychical Research", was no friend of its former rival institution, the "National Laboratory of Psychical Research" and its director Harry Price whom she accused of having tried to ruin Rudi Schneider as a fraudulent medium by a hoax photo (in which she may have been wrong): Gregory: Anatomy. As a counterweight to Gregory's pro-Schneider arguments, Carl von Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], is recommended – he was one of Albert von Schrenck-Notzings "most bitter opponents" (Walther: Ufer, 415).

15 See Linse: Trancemedien; Linse: Klassische Orte; see also Baßler/Châtellier: Mystik; and Treitel: Science.

16 Walther: Ufer, 473.

The Historical Background of the Braunau Trance Mediumship

Spiritualism gained a new quality after the atrocities and deficiencies of the Great War. An Austrian newspaper wrote in 1923:

> Already before the war, spiritualism and séances were not rarely spoken about in Austria, but they were often ridiculed, remembering sensational exposures of 'mediums' [. . .][17] Among families and friends table turning and table tapping had occasionally been parlour games practised among jokes and laughter – the knowledge of and interest in this 'strange kind of sport' did not go further, and science only passed the contents of Spiritualist literature coming now and then from Britain or the USA (of course!) with a superior and à priori rejecting shrug. Anti-Spiritualism manifested itself in the successful persiflage of the mediumistic fraud by sleight of hand, and according to general consensus, all this was nothing more but self-deception by which skilful swindlers found gullible victims. But already during the war and even more after its unlucky outcome, a tendency and yearning towards the supernatural which up to then had often been despised and derided made itself felt ever stronger in the face of brutal empirical reality [. . .] [orig. German][18]

The Braunau mediumism reveals this genesis of post-war spiritualism on a local level. It began in the winter of 1918/1919, which saw the end of the war and the beginning of the revolution. Spiritualism at Braunau was the result of the emotional stress caused by wartime deprivation and of the following loss of the war with its economic and political consequences. One of these consequences was the "Austrian Revolution" which led to the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire and the transition of the monarchy into the republic and to the formation of a German-Austrian state together with the demand of its entry ("Anschluss") into the German Empire. The last point directly affected the political and economic interests of Braunau, a border town on the bank of the river Inn opposite the German state of Bavaria; Braunau had been separated from Bavaria by the Peace of Teschen in 1779 and became part of Upper Austria, but its right of possession had remained controversial between Bavaria and Austria.[19] Furthermore, the political and economic uncertainty resulting from the

17 The historical example given here was the unmasking of the American trance medium Harry Bastian (and ridiculing Baron Lazar von Hellenbach, Austrian supporter of Spiritualism) by Crown Prince Rudolph and Archduke Johann Salvator (later name: Johann Orth) in 1884.

18 Anonymous: Bei den spiritistischen Medien.

19 The Treaty of Teschen (1779) between Austria and Prussia officially ended the War of Bavarian Succession (1777–1779); Austria received Bavarian lands east of the Inn river (a region called "Innviertel"). During the Napoleonic Wars, Austria was forced to temporarily cede the "Innviertel" to Bavaria again.

experience of war, military defeat and revolution also led to a spiritual crisis where mediumship could take root both in the Schneider family itself and among their local supporters.

So, the instability of life in the wake of the defeat of the Central Powers and the danger of the eruption of political chaos induced the building of a spiritualist circle at Braunau. In 1918/1919 not only the economic but also the political and military future of Braunau was at stake when the Bavarian Revolution destabilized the neighbouring Bavarian border region along the rivers Inn and Salzach which had already suffered radical social change and ensuing social tensions due to wartime industrialisation,[20] the revolutionary formation of workers' and soldiers' councils and the declaration of the Republic of Councils at Munich, where also a separation from Berlin – meaning independence from the newly proclaimed Weimar Republic – was on the agenda.[21] Deeply worried by these disturbances, a group of Austrian soldiers (according to the memory of Rudi Schneider: officers)[22] of the Braunau garrison is said to have tried to find out more about the impending future by help of a "talking table" ("redendes Tischlein"). Local people called this practise "table-turning" ("Tischerlrucken"):

> They used a stool ["Stockerl" in Austrian, Hocker in German] with three legs and a round seat, 20 cm in diameter, and had fixed a pencil to one of the legs. They installed the stool on a table covered with a white sheet of paper and positioned their fingers on the stool or their hands above it. After some time, the stool began to revolve and eventually wrote messages on the paper in big characters.[23]

The talking-table used by the soldiers was of course a planchette of the most primitive form: instead of using a perfectly manufactured oval or heart-shaped board with two wheels and a hole for the pencils or the more modern Ouija board with a pointer,[24] they simply took an ordinary small stool with three legs and attached a pencil to one of them, put their hands on it and waited until the spirits would answer their questions by writing out messages. This way of automatic writing was also not in need of a trained spiritualist medium[25] but could be

20 Linse: Gemeinde.

21 Seligmann: Aufstand.

22 Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 400.

23 Walther: Ufer, 453.

24 By help of these mechanical devices to communicate with the spirits, holding séances could become a regular family practise, see Hix: Ghosts.

25 Before the invention of the "mechanical" writing tool, chatting with the dead was more complicated: mediums were required "to call out the alphabet, letter by letter, to the rapping ghosts and thereby, spell out words and sentences from beyond in an excruciating slow manner" (Hix: Ghosts).

done by everybody who wanted to directly communicate with the spirits of the dead.

The soldiers had bought the large sheets of paper at Josef Stampfl's printing works plus book shop, which was located at the town square of Braunau, and when the female shop assistant asked them what they needed the paper for they explained the purpose of their acquisition to her and, after having fetched the small table itself, they told her the correct way of asking the spirits, who would announce their presence. The news of all this was channelled by the shop assistant to the Schneiders, whose flat was one storey above the shop. In the living room of this flat, the shop assistant, Elisabeth ("Elise") Schneider ("the small, worn mother of a large family, deprecatingly humble in her manner"),[26] plus the wife of "Father Schneider's" employer Leopold Höglinger and his sister assembled round the talking table, neglecting their household chores. This was the origin of the Schneider home circle.[27] The talking table, however, did not divulge any substantial information until Willi Schneider, the sixteen years old son, being an apprentice at Mr Schmied's dentist laboratory at Simbach – a town in Lower Bavaria just opposite Braunau on the other bank of the river Inn – after the end of his day's work held his hands above the table on his mother's request. Now they were getting written messages without any further help. This was the beginning of Willi's career as a medium.

The medial hyper-sensitivity of the Schneider boys may have been the effect of their being exposed to the war and its associated fears of disorder, of destitution and even of death. When they went home from the funeral of their eldest brother during the war – Willi, born in 1903, was about thirteen years old at that time – their brother Hans Schneider is said to have drawn Willi's attention to the appearance of their deceased brother above in the window of their flat. So, Willi looked up and saw him, too, but when he told this to his parents, they laughed at him.[28]

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26 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 5. Elisabeth Schneider, her maiden name was Krempl, was born at Braunau in 1869. Gerda Walther recalls sitting together with her for hours and drinking a cup of coffee ("Schalerl Kaffee") when the other members of the family went about their work: Walther: Ufer, 455.

27 Report in Joseph Schneider's protocol notebook of 1929, English translation in Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 3; for Rudi Schneider's report see Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 400.

28 Interview John Cohen with Willi Schneider in 1964, quoted from Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 16–17. Name (L. Schneider) and year of death (1917) are certainly wrong. In reality, the deceased seems to have been Joseph Schneider, compositor like his father, born in 1891, who died 10 September 1915, not quite 25 years old, of tuberculosis of the lungs, a typical disease of the poor. Source: Kirchenbücher Braunau am Inn, Sterbefälle, Duplikate 1915, Sign. 306/1915, Microfilm PfmF 73 (Projektnummer 41181 35): http://www.data.matricula.info/php/main/php (last accessed on September 24, 2019).

Not only Willi and Rudi possessed medial gifts but also, though to a lesser degree, their brothers Hans and Karl.[29] The Schneider family[30] included nine boys and

29 "One day Hans said to me that all of us – also he – could work as mediums if we wanted to, but that his trade had priority for him" (Letter by Gerda Walther to Fini Schneider 14/12/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H). Hans, a compositor like his father, later became an alcoholic: Letters by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 15/11/1971 and 10/7/1975: BSBM, Ana 317, Folders H and Q.

Karl Schneider, a photographer and later post office official, was a "talking medium" ("Sprechmedium"). Fini Schneider wrote to Gerda Walther 10/12/1971: "As I have just heard, Karl practised table turning ("Tischerlrucken") until lately [he had died shortly before in November 1971, one year after his brother Franz, a railway official]. Also [his brother] Franz might have had mediumistic capabilities (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H). Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 6, wrote in 1927: "I also heard that Karl [and his wife] Rosa were practising mediumship outside the family". About Karl see the fanciful book of Jaschke: Maria. Karl's spirit guide is said to have been a "Helga von Stein" (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 17).

30 Joseph Schneider told Vinton the following, not necessarily true story in 1926: "Father Schneider, so he told me, recorded all the early developments of Willi's mediumship day by day in great detail. Unfortunately, however, he loaned this protocol book to Dr. [Edmund] Holub of Vienna, who died shortly thereafter [16/2/1924] – and this vitally important document was never seen again" (Vinton: Schneider mediumship 7). Joseph Schneider's aim, it is true, was to scientifically document the parapsychological capabilities of his sons in order to support their careers as mediums, his own social reputation and the family income and so he made a logbook in January 1924, documenting the mediumistic phenomena in the Braunau sittings and attesting their genuineness by the signatures of the witnesses. Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 20, thinks that the idea had been inspired by the Vienna writer Erich von Czernin-Dirkenau who had made experiments with the Schneider brothers in his Vienna "Metapsychologisches Institut" and spread their fame through newspaper reports. As a reason for her assumption, Gregory draws attention to the fact that at the front of Father Schneider's first notebook with its handwritten entries two protocols of sittings on December 8th and 9th, 1923, in type-writing and with the stamp of the "Metapsychisches Institut" had been inserted. Facsimiles of some pages of the "Schneider Journals" in Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 61 (January 1924), 74 (June 1925) and 83–87 (July-August 1926).

Joseph Schneider's later report about the beginnings of the séances at Braunau in his record was not written earlier than 1929 (English translation: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 3–5, date 6). A still later oral report about the beginning of the mediumship of the Schneider brothers by Rudi Schneider told in Paris in 1930: Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 400–402. In addition, a much later tape recorder interview of Willi Schneider by John Cohen, Research Officer of the Manchester Society for Psychical Research, in Austria in 1964: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 16–17. According to Walther: Ufer, 459 (supported by letters by Gerda Walther to Rudi and Mitzi Schneider 24/8/1954 and 26/8/1954 BSBM, Ana 317, Folder O), Rudi Schneider had the intention of writing an autobiography with the help of Walther herself or of a journalist, but his wife's resistance (who obviously was afraid of future public controversies) and his early death in 1957, being only 49 years old, thwarted this plan.

three daughters, but only six of the boys survived. Rudi Schneider was the youngest of them, of tender health and undernourished:[31] "The [Schneider] family had suffered during the war years."[32] The harsh economic situation of Braunau at the beginning of the 1920s was obvious;[33] still before the middle of the 1920s, an English visitor to the Schneider family noticed visible improvements: In the autumn of 1925, he called Braunau and the town of Simbach on the other bank of the Inn "flourishing communities, and everyone [is] happy, and no sign of poverty visible. I noticed an immense difference in the appearance of Braunau and its 4.000 inhabitants since I last [in 1922] visited the place, which now looks much more prosperous."[34] But the bereavement of war had not been forgotten by the Braunau community at that time: In September 1924 the local war memorial was officially opened at the foot of the St. Stephan Catholic parish church. It commemorated 75 victims of war on four marble slabs: 57 soldiers killed, 6 soldiers missing and 12 male persons who had died as a consequence of war.[35] This limited number of 75 lost "sons of the community" did of course not include all the civilians who had died of wartime austerity. But as a result of the economic upswing (and of the "exposures" of Rudi's "levitations" as fraud) the attraction of the Schneider séances dwindled at Braunau in 1924. The majority became sceptical of the physical mediumship of the boys[36] and a Vienna newspaper commented: "The prophet has no honour in his own land."[37]

The active support of the home circle's activities by the family's head Joseph Schneider, born in 1871 in Bohemia and called "Father Schneider" by his admirers, had helped to develop its attractiveness after the Great War. Joseph Schneider belonged to the white-collar proletariat, as he was a skilled printer and worked as a machine compositor in Josef Stampfl's printing works at Braunau[38] where his

31 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 1.

32 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 210.

33 See Verein für Zeitgeschichte Braunau am Inn: Endlich vorbei! Information about the year 1920: "Because of the beginning of the inflation, economic decline of Braunau."

34 Price: Brilliant phenomena, 35.

35 Eitzlmayr: Kriegerdenkmal; Anonymous: Kriegerdenkmal.

36 See Anonymous: Bei den spiritistischen Medien.

37 Anonymous: Der Vater.

38 Josef Stampfl, born at Braunau in 1845, compositor, had founded the firm "Stampfl & Co.", the weekly "Neue Warte am Inn. Organ für Interessenvertretung des Bauern- und Gewerbestandes", and the "Braunauer Kalender" in 1880/1881 He was editor of the paper, manager of the printing works and of the bookshop. The owner of the printing works was the "Ober-österreichische Volks-Credit", a co-operative bank in Linz (see Kern: Volkskredit). Stampfl, a believer of political Catholicism, retired 1 March 1909: Anonymous: Josef Stampfl.

employer was Leopold Höglinger.[39] The printing works were located directly at the prominent town square in "a very old and rambling house".[40] The Schneider family had three rooms there on the first floor and lived in very moderate circumstances.[41] "All the rooms are crowded with furniture typical of a humble working-class family."[42] This small and old-fashioned flat was to become the epicentre of trance mediumship at Braunau.

Vinton called Joseph Schneider "a solid, klein-bürgerlich citizen".[43] Joseph Kogelnik, who did not like Joseph Schneider, griped about him: "Old Schneider, a nonentity for fifty years, now began to feel himself the most interesting man in Braunau, and he opened his house widely to the public."[44] "This man was a simple working man all his life and nobody took the least notice of him. Now, as a result of the mediumship of both his sons he has become vain and fancies he can play football with people. He [. . .] sees himself as the 'Caesar' entitled to dole out special favours by means of his sons."[45] Father Schneider was certainly flattered when he, a simple worker, was courted by rich members of the aristocracy and by learned scholars because of the medial abilities of his sons and could brag publicly about these international contacts.[46] His boasting was supported by his foreign visitors themselves who "fraternized" openly with the Braunau inhabitants and spent their money generously.[47] Joseph Kogelnik additionally accused Father Schneider of putting his sons for display at shows of spiritualist

39 Leopold Höglinger, compositor in the printing works of the "Katholischer Preßverein" at Linz, was appointed as Josef Stampfl's successor 1 May 1909 by the "Volks-Credit": Anonymous: Geschäftliches. The company's new name was: "Stampfl & Co. (Leopold Höglinger)".

40 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 4–5. The exact Braunau address of the Schneiders was Stadtplatz 36.

41 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 333; Kogelnik: Early days, 151, mentions "the very poor Schneider household"; the young medical doctor Theodor Seeger remembers the "miserable flat" of the Schneider family (Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 414).

42 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 5.

43 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 5.

44 Kogelnik: Early Days, 151.

45 Letter by Kogelnik to Everard Feilding 1924, English translation Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 69.

46 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 5, formulated it this way in 1927: Father Schneider "[is] inordinately proud of the Schneider mediumship. He delights in parading his foreign visitors along the main street or sitting with them over a stein of beer in the front window of the inn". Warren J. Vinton ("The psychology and economics of mediumship": Schneider mediumship, 43–44) and J. Malcolm Bird (Bird: Current status, 424, 426) saw in these social and economic advantages an explanation for the fraudulence of the Schneider brothers by help of accomplices insinuated by them ("confederacy hypothesis").

47 Price: Brilliant phenomena, 54, tells about his visit at the Schneiders in 1925 that after a few days he had been befriended with all people of Braunau: "After we had been in the place

organisations and at private home circles with the main purpose of earning money. By the nonsense of such stage shows ("Schaustellungsunfug") he would downgrade scientific experiments to a parlour game by failing to provide strict controls of the phenomena during these presentations and thus opening the door to fraud.[48] The main reason for these attacks on Father Schneider in the name of science was the simple fact, attested by Schrenck-Notzing, that Joseph Schneider had no good opinion of the parapsychological scientists because he stubbornly believed that séances involved the spirits communicating with the living ("Offenbarungsspiritist") and their commands had to be obeyed unconditionally because otherwise there would be no "phenomena".[49]

Joseph Schneider was the "dominant sitter", "stage manager" and "self-appointed major domo of the séance room" in the Braunau home circle.[50] From 1926 onwards, Rudolf Kalifius was leader of the circle.[51] Kalifius was born at Liebenthal in the vicinity of Troppau in 1887 as the son of the policeman Anton Kalifius, decided to pursue a military career, was a decorated officer in the First World War ("Tiroler Kaiserjäger-Regiment Nr. 1") and remained in active military service after the war at the Braunau garrison, and it seems that he led an astonishing double life during the 1920s. The local and regional newspapers regularly reported on his military duties at Braunau (such as the ceremonial swearing-in of recruits or his presence at military ceremonies commemorating battles of the First Word War), on his military successes (winner of many shooting competitions of the Braunau garrison), on his military promotions (he was eventually given the rank of major in 1927) and on his membership in the military organisation the "Kaiserschützenbund"; but strangely enough he was also

two or three days, we could hardly cross the road or enter a shop without someone saying 'good morning' or touching his hat. We photographed the school children (a proceeding so popular that we had 'deputations' asking for pictures from those 'unfortunates' who had been left out); we photographed the frontier officials, we photographed the 'oldest inhabitant'; we bought out the local tobacconist; we made purchases at most of the shops; we spent an evening in the local hostelry with the élite of the place, laughing and joking and consuming some of the very excellent Pilsner available – in fact, we freely fraternised with everyone in the town." According to J. Malcolm Bird, Warren J. Vinton, who stayed at Braunau almost three weeks, played there "the part of Lord Bountiful" (Bird: Current status, 365).

48 Anonymous (Kogelnik?): Entlarvung, 171 und 173. As to Kogelnik's supposed authorship see Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 68–72. Similar accusations of Kogelnik against Father Schneider in Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 173.

49 Schrenck-Notzing: Phänomene, 73.

50 Bird: Willi Schneider, 168.

51 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 78.

at the same time head of the Braunau spiritualist circle for many years and held numerous séances with the Schneiders during the 1920s.[52] In the spring of 1929, Carl Amereller accompanied Rudi Schneider to London to his sittings with Harry Price in the "National Laboratory of Psychical Research" where Amereller installed the electric equipment to monitor the medium and the participants; but in November 1929, the Braunau circle leader Kalifius took the initiative again against the possible future impresario Amereller and accompanied Rudi to London himself.[53] After Schrenck-Notzing had died unexpectedly in 1929, Kalifius was seen as one of his possible Munich successors but was turned down by Schrenck's widow as he lacked academic reputation.[54] Vinton described him as follows: "a huge, blustering army-officer, has in some way secured a dominant position in the [Braunau] circle; when he is there, Father Schneider leaves the direction of the sitting almost entirely in his hands. By sheer bulk and rough-shod authority, the Major can swing the séance along almost as he wills".[55]

In addition to him, a certain Franz Ramspacher is mentioned as having been a member and leader of the circle for several years .[56] He also was a compositor

52 According to Price: Experimentelles, 402, in 1929, Kalifius had already participated in 200 sittings with Rudi Schneider and had diligently documented these events. These records were destroyed at the latest after the death of Kalifius in 1946. In 1933, he had moved away from Braunau but not from the military service as we find him as battalion commander in the 1930s. His address in 1933 was Klagenfurt (Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 163) and then, as newspaper ads show, Parsch, a district of the city of Salzburg, where he wanted to buy a plot of land to build a house (it looks as if he wanted to settle down and get married). Gerda Walther found out that before the Second World War, he had moved to Vienna where he married shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. During the war he served as lieutenant colonel at the Wehrkreiskommando [Vienna], returned from the war but died soon afterwards (18/3/1946) in a Vienna hospital as a widower: Letter by Gerda Walther to Benedikt Kautsky 2/7/1958 and Kautsky's answer 12/8/1958: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder P; Letter by Gerda Walther to Mitzi Schneider 31.7.1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C. II-Anita Gregory.

53 Walther: Ufer, 455.

54 Walther: Ufer, 443. Originally, Schrenck-Notzing should have been succeeded by his "disciple" and collaborator Karl Gruber, medical doctor and professor of zoology at the Technische Hochschule München, who had experimented with the Schneider boys, too (Gruber: Parapsychologische Erkenntnisse, 204–215; Gruber: Willi Schneider; Gruber: Okkultismus, 78–96). But Gruber already died in 1927 from cancer, aged only 45 years (Schrenck-Notzing: Professor Gruber; Walther: Ufer, 433). Later, Karl Krall, a rich jeweller with an experimental laboratory for mediums of his own in his villa at Harlaching, Munich, was considered to be a promising successor but he died one month before Schrenck (Walther: Ufer, 439).

55 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 7.

56 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 21. Joseph Schneider's records had also been occasionally entrusted to him, writes Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 21.

like Father Joseph Schneider had been before,[57] even in the same printing works.[58] We do not know anything about the motives driving these two persons in their devotion to the spiritualist circle; neither Kalifius nor Ramspacher seem to have left any written statements dealing with their obviously profound spiritualist interest.

A detailed statistical study of the occasional and permanent local members of the Schneider's Braunau home circle in the 1920s has not yet been made.[59] There were both women and men among them, though the aristocrats or scholars who came from Munich, Vienna or London as occasional visitors or investigators were predominantly male. As few rare members of the educated elite (such as the Munich philosopher Gerda Walther or perhaps the Braunau judge Anton Raschhofer) visited the Schneider circle. Among them were some local Braunau officers, such as the discharged Joseph Kogelnik or the still in active service Rudolf Kalifius, both of whom were also natural science graduates of K. and K. cadet schools and military academies. They were certainly not motivated by visions of Isaiah's "peaceable kingdom", but attempted to counteract the trauma of Austria's loss in the war, the abolition of the imperial monarchical order, the forced partial demilitarisation of the country and the loss of their former privileged social status. No proletarians or sub-proletarians and no farmers were among the permanent

57 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 169.

58 In 1932, he was "responsible for the printing" of the "Neue Warte am Inn".

59 Detailed information might perhaps be possible by help of the entries in Father Schneider's two handwritten records with a total of 269 documented sittings (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 409). After Joseph Schneider's death these notebooks were inherited by Rudi Schneider and after his death by his wife Mitzi Schneider. Gerda Walther, obviously disappointed with Hans Bender ("[Schrenck-Notzing's] manuscripts and records gather dust at Bender's [Freiburg institute]. What a pity": Letter by Gerda Walther to Mitzi Schneider 31/8/1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Maria Schneider), urged Mitzi to hand them over to Anita Gregory. Mitzi gave the notebooks personally to her and to her husband Christopher Clive Langton Gregory in England in the autumn of 1964, together with the writing planchette, the curtains of Rudi's "darkcabinet" and Rudi's "certificates" from Eugène Osty und Harry Price. Anita Gregory said she wanted the material for her planned book about Rudi Schneider (Correspondence Mitzi Schneider-Gerda Walther: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Maria Schneider; Letters by Gerda Walther to Mitzi Schneider 31/7/1964 and to Anita Gregory 31/7/ 1964, 12/8/1964 and 15/8/1964; Letter by Clive Gregory to Maria Schneider 11/8/1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Anita Gregory). After Clive Gregory's accidental death in 1964, Anita Gregory became the sole owner of Mitzi's documents in 1964 (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 21). Rudi's certificates had been published before by Clive Gregory in the last edition of his magazine "Cosmos" (Institute for the Study of Mental Images, Church Crookham, Hampshire, 1/1961-4/1964) in October 1964. Later, Gerda Walther regretted what she had done and tried to convince Hans Bender that he should try to win Father Schneider's notebooks back for his Freiburg institute (Correspondence Hans Bender-Gerda Walther 1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H).

participants (the inner circle, so to speak) but mainly members of the respectable Catholic middle classes and of the white-collar proletariat (the compositors belonged to this "Arbeiteraristokratie" or "Stehkragenproletariat", as it was called in German). The formal education of the latter may have been lacking, but they attempted to further their knowledge by reading and they were ready to leave trodden paths and open themselves towards new ideas and experiences. Schrenck-Notzing attested "that the intellectual interests and knowledge of Father [Schneider] (especially with regard to the history of his home town [Braunau] and to occultism) went far beyond the usual petty bourgeois scope".[60] The fact that Friedrich Adler, the Austrian socialist leader (and physicist) polemicized against the Schneider brothers and their academic investigators ("pimps for the spiritual dens of vice") in the name of science and enlightenment and against the belief in obscure miracles and the propaganda of stultification in the Vienna "Arbeiter-Zeitung", may be taken as evidence that spiritualist séances were not without attractiveness for some members of the working classes.

And there were other educated individuals in the circle, especially women, who were trying to cope with their troubled times in a creative way. A typical example was Rosl Bauer, a drawing psychic medium from the nearby town of Simbach, wife of a Bavarian border official. According to Gerda Walter's information, Rosl was born in 1871, had been interested in parapsychological subjects, had come across a report about a Ouija board in a magazine in the first half of the 1920s and had consequently made one herself. With the help of this board, the spirit of "Fritzel", a friend of her family who had fallen in the war, communicated with her and instructed her how to continue from writing automatically (in "Fritzel's" characteristic small handwriting) to drawing "psychic paintings" ("Seelen-Bilder").[61] It is obvious that the Great War still haunted the memories of this sensitive woman. Another woman of this kind was Miss F. Reininger, painting medium from Braunau.[62]

We have broader knowledge only about a single regular visitor of the séances, about the Corvette Captain ret. Joseph Kogelnik.[63] As a consequence of

60 Schrenck: Materialisations-Phänomene, 549.

61 Walther: Ufer, 456. See also Gerda Walther's report quoted by Sperry: Exteriorisation, 480–481.

62 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 169.

63 Summary personal report on the levitations and materialisations of the Schneider brothers in the years 1918 to 1920: Kogelnik: Boy medium; Kogelnik: Animism. Kogelnik had been asked by Schrenck-Notzing to write a detailed report about Willi Schneider for a joint publication, but Schrenck's death in 1929 ended this project and the report was given back to Kogelnik. He published it separately in an English translation: Kogelnik: Early days; reprint in Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story; abridged version of the original German report: Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung.

Austria's loss of the First World War, the Austrian navy was abolished in the peace treaty of Saint Germain.[64] As a result, Kogelnik, who had sailed to Australia in 1898, who had been a member of the Austrian-Hungarian navy detachment against the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900 and 1901 as a navy cadet (as newspaper reports wrote), who had later been commander of a war ship before and during the First World War, was discharged without receiving a pension and transferred as "Amtsrat" to the tax office at Braunau.[65] Kogelnik, "K. and K. officer through and through",[66] was of course not at all pleased about this degrading transfer[67] and suffered from the "unaccustomed loneliness of this small country village".[68] The captain, "though having been brought up as a Catholic, had become a complete infidel, almost an atheist [. . .] under the influence of the materialism of the natural sciences being in vogue at the turn of the century." [orig. German][69] During his time at sea, he had visited spiritual séances on occasion but had been deterred by the credulity and the lack of scientific power of judgement on the side of the other participants.[70] At Braunau he was invited several times by acquaintances to visit the home circle of the Schneiders but hesitated, expecting to meet there superstition and the absence of the faculty of judgement. And when he finally gave in to his own boredom and to the urgent requests "of a Russian officer who had been an Austrian prisoner of war and had not returned to his home country, a Herr von B[ujukli],"[orig. German][71] as he later told, he entered the old house on the town square, the narrow staircase and the old-fashioned living room of the Schneiders with "a feeling of disgust": "all these were reminiscent of the middle ages; so, too, was [the] mental state of the residents, who it seemed really believed in ghost-stories and witches".[72] He was to experience there a profound religious conversion.

64 Regulations concerning the Austrian navy in the Treaty of St. Germain, Art. 136–143.
65 Kogelnik: Early days, 145. Kogelnik, retired as Corvette Captain, therefore he correctly said in German that he was "Kapitän a.D. Kogelnik" (a. D.= außer Dienst, meaning ret.). His British and American publishers sometimes misunderstood this and thought that the A or the D or both of them were abbreviations of his Christian names. In HPArchive he is called Fritz Kogelnik.
66 In the original: "very much the K. and K. officer": Information of Gerda Walther in Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 6.
67 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 6.
68 Kogelnik: Early days, 145.
69 Walther: Ufer, 447.
70 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 167.
71 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 334; complete name in Kogelnik: Early days, 146.
72 Kogelnik: Early days, 145.

The Braunau Home Circle and its Séances

The Braunau circle, headed in the beginning by Joseph Schneider and supported by the medial help of his son Willi, was in accordance with the well-known pattern of "mediumship of the family-circle type".[73] "At this time and in the eyes of these people," Kogelnik later remembered, "the séances were nothing other than a familiar channel of intercourse between them and the spiritual world".[74] Members of the Schneider family, close acquaintances of them[75] and a "spirit" participated in the séances. Thanks to the psychograph and Willi's help, Lola Montez, the deceased former mistress of the Bavarian King Ludwig I, announced her presence from the beyond during one of the first sittings.[76] Repenting her sins now, she pleaded that mass should be said for her. Father Joseph Schneider, a devoted Catholic, complied. As a sign of gratitude for his help Lola Montez, who wished to be called "Olga [Lintner]" in future to conceal her true identity, promised coming famousness to the Schneider family.[77] "At first one could hardly speak of regular séances, as there were no special arrangements. They were rather friendly and familiar gatherings, and 'Olga' was like a member of the family, a very welcome guest, who found herself always ready to amuse her friends."[78] The Schneider family is said to have held "Olga" in high respect: "They felt themselves highly honoured by the visits of the 'spirit' and in their eyes Willi was obviously the chosen favourite, since she manifested herself only when he was present."[79]

It comes as a surprise, of course, that none of the young men the Braunau families had lost too soon during the war and with whom they certainly wanted to connect desperately made their appearance at the sitting but the "historical

73 Bird: Willi Schneider, 162.

74 Kogelnik: Early days, 146.

75 Theodor Seeger, visitor of the Braunau home circle in April 1920, writes that "the Schneider parents did the greeting honours and one can gather from their confidential tone that the new arrivals were good acquaintances and friends of the house": Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 415.

76 Gerda Walther: Ufer, 453, wrote: "I don't know whether this personality of Bavarian history was particularly known in neighbouring Austria; many of those whom I asked, denied." We even know less whether anybody at Braunau knew that Lola Montez had turned to Spiritualism in America during the last years of her life. We cannot exclude the possibility that Willi or his father, who was very much interested in history, had read about her life in a newspaper article.

77 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 333–334; Walther: Ufer, 453.

78 Kogelnik: Early days, 149.

79 Kogelnik: Early days, 151.

figure" of a woman of doubtful character. This makes it obvious that at Braunau, the premature loss of their beloved ones and the duty of honouring the dead was experienced in the much wider cultural context of Catholicism, where the survivors were expected to take care of the deceased by praying for the "poor souls" suffering in purgatory. Guilt and repentance of the living was projected into the beyond. Feelings of mourning strangely mingled with amorous desires, at least in the subconscious longings of the pubescent boy mediums. In the eyes of the grown-ups, the "evil" sexually emancipated dancer Lola Montez certainly roused ambiguous emotions as did the emancipated woman workers in the war industry of the nearby Bavarian towns who joined the men in the inns,[80] a habit so far unheard of in this conservative region of the country. It seems that there was a mixture of memorialising and moralising in the Braunau family circle where both men and women mixed in a dimly-lit room for a new kind of religious entertainment. When intellectual critics wrote that the Braunau home circle produced "spiritualist parlour tricks" ("spiritistische Gesellschaftsspiele") at its best,[81] they rightly saw the entertaining amusement but totally missed the religious aspect which was inseparably interwoven with this kind of spiritualist activity.

In this initial stage Willi did not act as a trance medium, a fact later confirmed by Kogelnik[82] and corroborated by the description of his first visit at the Schneider family in May 1919:

> Willi was sitting on a small wooden stool which had been positioned on the sofa, in front of him was the table which was covered with a white table cloth reaching down almost to the floor. On the table lay a big board covered with a sheet of paper on which the psychograph was positioned. We were sitting in a half circle round one end of the table. The lamp hanging above the table was switched off, another lamp in the centre of the room was veiled with white paper so that twilight reigned in the room which was illuminated enough to make the figure of the medium and the other participants of the sitting clearly discernible. The medium sat in a very uncomfortable position; in order to feel himself more at ease he supported his head with his right hand whereas his left hand slightly rested on the psychograph.[83]

Then the psychograph began to rotate more and more quickly under Willi's influence who maintained that his hand was guided by "Olga".

> Now Father Schneider spoke up from the back of the room and asked: 'Olga, are you present?' The rotating movement suddenly came to a stop, the psychograph raised on two feet and heavily knocked with the third foot on the board; this was the answer which

80 See Linse: Gemeinde.
81 Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 414.
82 Kogelnik: Early days, 146.
83 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 334.

> meant 'Yes'. Then Father Schneider gave orders to 'Olga' as, for example, to lift the table cloth. Either 'Olga' obeyed or she announced her wishes in writing by means of the psychograph, that is: by the hand of the medium. Even when 'Olga' manipulated the table cloth, tied knots etc., Willi remained sitting calm and motionless on his stool all the time. [orig. German][84]

Soon the family circle in the Schneider living room must have attracted more acquaintances and other curious people, especially because the "phenomena" were not limited to "Olga's" writings anymore but became more numerous and more varied:

> People came from near and far, almost like going to the circus, in order to take part in the séances. At that time 20, even 30 people crowded in the narrow living room of the Schneiders. Even when Olga had said: let us call it a day! a few stalwarts wanted to have more and more. Willi, at this time still not in trance, therefore made all kinds of conjuring tricks for fun (mostly with his mother's apron) which were so primitive that everybody sitting close to him [. . .] and knew the genuine phenomena, had to realise it at once [. . .] [orig. German][85]

Soon the participants consulted the talking table every second day, soon every day from evening until midnight.[86]

The transformation of the social meetings in the Braunau living room into genuine spiritualist-mediumistic séances successively occurred in 1919, no doubt by way of external influence.[87] There was a phase during which Willi already sat in the "darkcabinet" in the Schneiders' living room with the writing planchette in his lap and remaining in a waking state during the whole sittings, not yet in trance.[88] This is corroborated by Theodor Seeger's description of his first visit of a Braunau séance on 7 May 1920.[89] Seeger reports that "Olga" answered questions by the participants regarding disease or financial speculations by tapping of the third leg of the stool (obviously recurring to the Yes-No pattern). Willi also

84 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 334–335.

85 Based on Kogelnik's oral report in Walther: Ufer, 448; see also Gerda Walther's preface to Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 164–166.

86 Kogelnik: Early days, 151; report in Joseph Schneider's record 1929, English translation by Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 4.

87 According to Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 338, the changes had been caused by Schrenck-Notzing's instructions; according to Rudi Schneider's memory (Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 401) the Italian Count Logothati visited the séances in the Schneider circle half a year after their beginning at his special request and suggested the red light and the "darkcabinet" be used there.

88 Kogelnik: Animism, 123,

89 Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 414–416. Seeger's report had been written some years later "from memory" (416).

produced fake "materialisations" which had been made popular before by the fraudulent psychic medium "Eva C." (Eva Carrière, born Marthe Béraud).[90] During Willi's séances, the white light was dimmed into red light, and the "medium", sitting on a chair, acted from behind a dark curtain screen fastened in one corner of the room, a so-called "cabinet".[91] The participants formed a semicircle in front of the "cabinet", built a "chain" by mutually joining their hands, talked extremely loudly or sang popular songs on "Olga's" order to support the mediumistic production. The participants were supposed to share harmonious feelings because any form of negative energy could influence the séance and prevent the production of spiritual phenomena. A limited number of identical participants was considered to be ideal.[92] In addition to the family circle in the Schneider's flat, there now were "controlled" séances in other Braunau houses,[93] among others in the houses of ex-captain Joseph Kogelnik[94] and of the district court judge Anton Raschhofer and his wife Therese Raschhofer.[95]

Willi's role changed dramatically when he became a trance medium, whose mouth the spirits of "Olga" and later of "Mina" used to communicate – the latter

90 As Seeger tells (Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 415) Willi Schneider knew and appreciated Eva C.'s achievements.

91 In the English-speaking world, they used the expression "manifestation cabinet", in Germany it was referred to as a "darkcabinet", an expression obviously coined in imitation of the "darkroom" used to develop photographic films. Theodor Seeger uses the expression "spirits corner" ("Geisterecke"): Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 415.

92 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 338–339.

93 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 174.

94 Address at Braunau: Bahnhofstraße 1.

95 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 70 (translation from Joseph Schneider's record of 13 March 1924, written Raschofer). It is unclear whether this was only a momentary interest of the Raschhofers. Anton Raschhofer would have been the most prominent and academically trained local member of the Braunau spiritualist circle. He was appointed judge of the Braunau district court in 1898 and then climbed the usual steps of the ladder up to the title of Hofrat [privy counsellor] when he retired in 1929 after having been the head of the Braunau district court for more than 30 years. He was highly esteemed by everybody, as the press wrote, because of "his honest German character". On the occasion of his retirement he was honoured with the Golden Badge of Honour of the Republic of Austria for his services to the Republic of Austria by the President of the Republic. He was a public figure at Braunau, representing the state both at the first mass of a recently ordained Catholic priest ("Primizfeier") in the parish church or at the opening of the Braunau protectory. He was an admirer of nature and the German Alps, a sprightly mountain hiker and a member of the "Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein, Sektion Braunau-Simbach" (Anonymous: Hofrat Raschhofer).

when his eleven-year-old brother Rudi, who first participated in the sittings of the Schneider home circle in the spring of 1920,[96] had wanted "Olga" all to himself and took her over.[97] According to Joseph Kogelnik,[98] the first trance sitting took place on 17 September 1920. This was also the date a certain Mr K. joined the Schneider séance for the first time. This person, said to be medially gifted, fell into a trance right at the beginning of the sitting. Willi, at this time already sitting in the "cabinet", watched this occurrence which was new to him with great interest and suddenly fell into a trance himself, his face showing a completely different expression. This was, as Kogelnik put it, a "turning-point" because from then on, Willi acted as a trance medium.[99] "Olga" now communicated through his mouth and no longer through the writing planchette.

Soon Willi was not alone in this.

> "With the times, the character of the séances changed insofar as not only the medium but also other participants of the circle fell into a trance. In his waking state, Willi could not exert any influence on other persons present, but when he was in a trance he slowly turned on his chair to one or the other person of the circle, lightly blew on them and quickly these persons gave way and were in a trance themselves. In a similar way he woke them up again before he finally woke up himself. So sometimes two or three

96 Report of Rudi Schneiders in: Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 401–402.

97 See Kogelnik's report to Schrenck 27/4/1920 in Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 197. According to Schrenck-Notzing: Phänomene, 147, "Olga" spoke through Rudi for the first time already on 17 January 1919. Anita Gregory suggested the following explanation for Rudi taking over "Olga" from his brother Willi: "it could well be that manly, reliable, athletic, mechanically-minded Rudi, the ninth boy when his parents ardently desired a curly-headed little girl, produced or took over and adapted from his brother Willi, a female sub-personality who was imperious, capricious and vain, and quite markedly feminine" (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 1 and 413).

98 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 338; Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 198–200.

99 Gerda Walther emphasised that Willi or Rudi were never hypnotised by Schrenck-Notzing, who was one of the first to introduce hypnosis for therapeutic purposes at Munich, but they fell into a trance automatically about five minutes after the participants of the circle had formed the "chain" and the spirit guide "Olga" had announced her presence with the form of greeting "Gott zum Gruß" (Walther: Ufer, 118). According to Schrenck-Notzing, traditional expectation in the Schneider family was that the beginning of the autohypnotic state needed to be visible for the participants; this manifested itself with Willi and Rudi by a "flash-like convulsive flinching" of the medium. This jerk could also be heard and was so strong that the controlling person was afraid that the medium might fall down from the chair he was sitting on. This reaction resembled the clicking of one's heels on the command "Halt!" ("Stillgestanden") in the former Austrian imperial army (Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 5; Walther: Ufer, 118). Schrenck therefore called this a "suggestive artefact" (Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 5). The medium's waking-up, too, came with a flash-like jerk after "Olga" had said goodbye again with "Gott zum Gruß" (Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 5).

> persons were in a trance, sitting slumped on their chairs with their eyes closed. Their role was only passive and they served to enhance the phenomena." [orig. German][100]

These "assistant media" were mostly recruited from the Schneider family itself (especially Willi's brothers Rudi and Karl together with his "medially gifted sister-in-law Lina Schneider",[101] the wife of Hans Schneider), but also male and female guests (such as Cilly Ramspacher)[102] could play this role.

The phenomena got more intense in this new phase and "phantoms" began to make an appearance. For instance, during one of the first séances held in Kogelnik's flat on 21 March 1921, when the gramophone played the first notes of a record of tango music,)

> a female figure, clad in an extremely fine white veil", stood in the middle of the circle, "danced the tango perfectly and in complete silence and disappeared as quickly as she had come after the last notes had died away [orig. German].

After a pause of some minutes, Kogelnik put on an adagio by Beethoven,

> and again, the phantom stood in our midst and charmingly danced to the rhythms of the music. At the end she graciously bowed towards us and disappeared. [orig. German][103]

It seems that the seductive dancer Lola Montez had taken hold on the imaginations of some of the sitters.

The Braunau circle continued to exist until the beginning of the 1930s, even after Albert von Schrenck-Notzing and later his international competitors and successors had begun scrutinising the Schneider brothers in the name of science. However, it seems that the strong local public interest in the trance séances at the Schneider's flat had to a large degree weakened together with the decreasing political and economic post war crisis. Harry Price added immediately after his above quoted passage on the improving economic situation in 1924 – overestimating both the influence of the Catholic church and the role of

100 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 340. Kogelnik: Boy medium, 251–252, emphasises that Willi had never needed an assistant medium to support him, and Rudi only in the beginning of his mediumship because of his weak physical constitution.

101 Walther: Ufer, 456. "Major Kalifius also held some séances with her alone. He was of the opinion that she also could be trained to become a good medium but, being a housewife, she didn't want to take time for this" [orig. German] (Letter by Gerda Walther to Fini Schneider 14/12/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H).

102 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 70. She was the wife of the above-mentioned Braunau circle member and leader Franz Ramspacher. In "Neue Warte am Inn" 26 or 29/6/1918, 6, C[illy] Ramspacher, Braunau, Pfarrhofgasse 4, advertised "universal putty" (retail and wholesale).

103 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 340.

scientific "physical research"; the Braunau inhabitants in fact had never been interested in spiritualism research:

> Though naturally the fame of the Schneider boys has spread far and wide, very few of the Braunau inhabitants seem to have sittings with the boys. The reason is, I think, because their religion does not exactly encourage the individual to dabble in the occult. During the five days we were there, we met all sorts of people and asked all sorts of questions, and physical research does not appear to interest the great majority of Willi's neighbours. But he gets many noted continental professors and scientific men who are interested, and it would be interesting to discover what the Braunauers think all these people come for. But the fact remains that physical research does not interest the people generally.[104]

Catholic Spiritualism

Foreign visitors such as Harry Price were surprised at the mixture of Catholic belief and spiritualist practice in the Schneider family, a fact somewhat incomprehensible to him: "The Schneider family are, of course, Catholics, which is rather curious when one comes to think of it, but I do not think they suffer on that account."[105] Price expressed the contradiction as he saw it by saying that the Schneider family did not confess a spiritualist creed but firmly believed that "Olga", who had first communicated with them by help of the planchette and later through the mouths of Willi and Rudi, was nobody else than the spirit of the deceased sinner Lola Montez.[106] J. Malcolm Bird, Research Officer of the American Society for Psychical Research, commented on the same subject after having read Kogelnik's reminiscences as follows:

> The Schneiders as we know have the prima facie aspect of spiritism very strongly present. K[ogelnik]'s text indicates that they regard 'Olga' as a visitor from without; it would be interesting and to some degree important to know what, if anything, precisely they believe about her nature and source.[107]

Strangely enough, neither scholar delved deeper into that question, though it is striking, as we wrote before, that the communication of Lola Montez by help of the planchette and later of the human medium was deeply connected with the

104 Price: Brilliant phenomena, 36.
105 Price: Brilliant phenomena, 35.
106 Price: Experimentelles, 404.
107 Bird: Willi Schneider, 163.

Roman-Catholic belief that the "poor souls" in purgatory would try to contact the living and implore them for redeeming prayers or for offering the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice for the dead. It was, of course, a Christian variation of ancestor worship completely unfamiliar to the British investigators.

The "syncretistic" mixture of Roman-Catholicism and spiritualism at Braunau was not at all singular. The basis of the compatibility of the two "religions" was their common belief that souls continue to exist after death and that it was possible for the living to communicate with them. Gerda Walther reported several of such cases in southern Bavaria from the beginning of the 1920s:[108] A Mrs Parapod held a spiritualist circle for "poor souls" which manifested themselves so that their relatives could ask about their experience in the beyond and about their present wishes. Walther also visited a Mrs Hartel, a simple cleaning woman and a devout Catholic living in her very small and modest house in the Munich suburb of Ramersdorf, who prayed intensely for the "poor souls". After sprinkling the relatives present with holy water and having said prayers, she communicated with the dead in half trance at her family altar, the God's corner ("Herrgottswinkel", in this case with a crucifix in the corner of the wall and a blue-mantled statue of the Madonna below) in her kitchen-cum-living-room and told the relatives about the current feeling of their deceased and encouraged them to pray for the "poor souls". But when the parish priests heard about these reprehensible practises they saw to it that those women stopped them. The Catholic Church did not want to lose the monopoly over spiritual welfare work and therefore the Sanctum Officium had forbidden spiritualism for Roman Catholic believers on 24 April 1917.[109] At Braunau, no such church intervention is known to have taken place.

There is no indication that Joseph Schneider, his wife and sons or the other Braunau members of the séance circle had ever felt any conflict between their spiritualist practise and their Catholic belief.[110] They all remained devoted Roman Catholics. They never turned into social outsiders. Joseph Schneider – a lifelong member of the "Oberösterreichischer Landesverband der Feuerwehren" ("Regional Association of the Fire Brigades of Upper Austria") – was esteemed at

108 Walther: Ufer, 285–288.

109 As to the reaction of the Catholic and Protestant Churches to spiritualism, one of the new religions of the 19th century, see Wolffram: Stepchildren, 213–219.

110 This must be stressed contrary to different suggestions by Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 4, or the wording of Walther: Ufer, 448. Persons concerned could exculpate themselves by arguing that the Sanctum Officium of the Catholic Church had only forbidden spiritualism on 30 March 1898, but not scientific parapsychological investigations, see Gerda Walther: Catholic Church.

Braunau as an honourable citizen,[111] and highly regarded by his employer for whom he worked all his life, and when he died in 1933, he had been well prepared by receiving the Last Sacraments before.[112] For those people, spiritualism was not an alternative form of religion but it rather strengthened their traditional Catholic beliefs. The grip of Catholicism may have weakened in the younger generation of the Schneiders in the 1920s: "The family Schneider, at least its younger members, were more or less indifferent [towards religion] but still participated in the traditional religious customs" [orig. German], such as the consecration of smoked meat ("G'selchtes") on Easter Morning, Gerda Walther wrote.[113] Rudi Schneider, a handsome lad and heart throb (even the beautiful married Austrian cinema actress Carmen Ziffer von Teschenbruck was among his admirers),[114] charming and obliging, probably not very intelligent but possessing good common sense,[115] is said to have had a passion not so much for occultism but for football, motor cycle races, aeroplanes and mechanical-technical issues.[116] "You have the fun of it ["die Gaudi"] and I must sleep [in trance]",[117] was his interpretation of the sittings. He never tried to proselytise for spiritualism or propagate a spiritualist interpretation of the phenomena produced by him or "Olga" respectively. Anita Gregory emphasised: Rudi

> was an almost exclusively 'scientific' medium: virtually all his sittings were given in an attempt to provide evidence for physical paranormality, rather than to impart religious teachings or provide proof of personal human survival.[118]

But this was when Rudi, praised for his obliging manners, went about business among more or less unbelieving scientists. The "private" Rudi is practically unknown to us. When he unexpectedly died from a stroke in 1957, Anita Gregory informs us that

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111 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 106. A temporary loss of popularity seems to have happened in the beginning of the 1920s, during the phase when the Schneider home circle was open to everybody, by an article in the local paper writing that Willi had been caught doing fraudulent tricks: "Old Schneider was crushed; he now recognised, himself, the reason why he could not ride to popularity in this way. So the doors of his house were again closed": Kogelnik: Early days, 151.

112 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 375.

113 Walther: Ufer, 449.

114 Walther: Ufer, 454.

115 Walther: Ufer, 453–454.

116 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 22 and 72; Walther: Ufer, 454.

117 Walther: Ufer, 454.

118 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, XVI.

> [his wife] Mitzi went on sitting by herself, evening after evening, in front of a little table that had often been used for séances [a planchette!] and begged 'Olga' to come and give some sign of 'her' or Rudi's continued existence. But the table never moved.[119]

A Spiritualist Conversion

Corvette Captain ret. Joseph Kogelnik and his wife Maximiliane entered the Schneiders' living-room for the first time on 29 May 1919, to take part in a séance there. For him it became a day of "inner revolution" – a psychic parallel to the external political November Revolution which had just been exterminated in nearby Bavaria in bloodshed: "This day I must now recognise, after the lapse of years, as a very remarkable one, as the very turning point of my life. For of what account are the material ups and downs of life, the mere external fluctuations, when compared with the internal revolutions that turn upside down the mind of man?"[120]

As the reader will remember, that still was the phase when the Schneider séances made use of the writing planchette, manipulated by Willi, in order to communicate Olga's words to the sitters. The "phenomena" themselves which Kogelnik experienced at his first attendance were rather modest: a table cloth was pulled upwards; Kogelnik's shoelaces were loosened, his shoe pulled off and flung among the sitters; his handkerchief was grasped and thrown back with a knot tied in it; all the while Olga's hand was covered by a table cloth. Kogelnik, who had come to the miserable sitting room reluctantly and strongly reserved, must nevertheless have been baffled by his experience there and he left in a state of strong mental disturbance: "Possible fraudulence or any natural explanation for the phenomena could not be found by any of the participants of the sitting." [orig. German][121] After the first overwhelming feelings, soon inner doubts followed – this phase was named "the inconsistency of conviction" by a specialist, and also the consequences of this state of uncertainty were the usual ones: the attendance of more and more mediumistic sittings. After the first séance, Kogelnik later remembered, hundreds of them followed with different media.[122]

119 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 405.
120 Kogelnik: Early days, 145.
121 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 335.
122 Kogelnik: Early days, 148.

During the following Braunau séance, the sceptical Kogelnik tested "Olga's hand". First, he in vain tried to grab it violently under the table cloth, later at least to have a look at it:

> The mysterious hand did not always remain invisible. Olga had already demanded several times that a musical instrument be placed under the table. Her wish was fulfilled and a zither[123] placed backwards below the table until it was completely hidden behind the table cloth. Immediately afterwards we heard that the strings were plucked and then a stronger twanging started. At later experiments, we made things more difficult for Olga by not completely pushing the zither behind the table cloth in order to force her to reach out with her hand if she wanted to touch the strings. First slowly and hesitatingly, and repeatedly retreating, a slender white arm with finger-like tendrils appeared which then reached for the strings and began to pluck them. This apparition was substantially different from a human arm [. . .]. [orig. German][124]

Later Kogelnik told Gerda Walther that these experiences had convinced him that something supernatural really existed.[125] Of course, Willi occasionally worked with tricks, but "the genuine phenomena were inimitable, complete phantoms, even a person who had just passed away appeared [. . .]" [orig. German][126]

Details of the latter event which happened at a later phase of the Braunau spiritualist circle when Willi already acted behind a cabinet curtain as a trance medium, were told by Kogelnik himself as follows: At Braunau there lived the couple A. which regularly attended the Schneider sittings[127] until the husband died at the end of the year 1920.[128] His widow did not return to the Schneiders' living room before 23 May 1921. During this séance, Willi, his brother Rudi and Mrs A. fell into trance.

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123 The use of music in order to get connected to the "other side" is an intriguing subject. The zither used by the Schneiders was a popular folk music instrument played in households in Bavaria and Austria since the beginning of the 19th century. In the better-to-do households of Joseph Kogelnik or Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, a gramophone was used instead during séances. Willi Schneider is said to have had a "musical talent" (Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisations-Phänomene 550).

124 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 336, with a drawing of this event by his wife Maxi (copied, too, in Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 167).

125 On the basis of an oral report of Kogelnik told by Walther: Ufer, 448.

126 On the basis of an oral report of Kogelnik told by Walther: Ufer, 448.

127 It seems to be the same Mr A., in whose Braunau flat Theodor Seeger participated in a séance on 15 April 1920, which was an utterly negative experience: Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 416.

128 According to the Braunau parish register/death register, only one Mr A. died at the end of 1920: Karl Alteneder, master painter, born 20/1/1874, died 22/12/1920 of a heart defect, married in 1897 to Maria, née Stampfl. He was the owner of the house in Schleifmühlstraße 4 at Braunau.

> Suddenly, a faintly glowing spherical mass could be seen which emanated out of the black curtain and floated towards the red-veiled lamp which hung from the room's ceiling, slowly transformed itself into a head and then took on human features. All people present now quite clearly recognised the features of the late Mr A. The whole circle was simply paralysed and looked at the apparition in fascination. The mouth of the medium now uttered the following words: 'I would not have come if not my wife's thoughts had summoned me.' And now the pale lips of the phantom opened and a very quiet whisper was heard, among which the word 'singing' could clearly be understood, and then the whole circle sang the favourite song of the deceased. Now a hand became visible below the head of the phantom and gave the rhythm of the song. Then first the hand disappeared, the head became less and less clearly visible, became a pale spot of light which then faded completely. [orig. German][129]

Kogelnik, who had finished reading Albert von Schrenck-Notzing's "Materialisationsphänomene" (Munich 1914) during the winter of 1918/1919, realised the connection between what he had read in the book and what he had experienced at Braunau and therefore informed Schrenck-Notzing by letter about his experiences with Willi Schneider in June 1919.[130] So it was Kogelnik who discovered the Schneider brothers for science. Contrary to Schrenck-Notzing, Kogelnik did not unilaterally support Schrenck-Notzing's psychological ("animistic") interpretation of "occult" events.

This attitude explains why at the first visit of Gerda Walther, Schrenck-Notzing's "scientific secretary", at Braunau in 1927, he was far from delighted at seeing her, as he was afraid "that he again will be questioned by a representative of scientific parapsychology". [orig. German][131] Later she became friends with the Kogelniks, especially with his wife Maxi.[132] Walther also became a member of the Braunau circle herself:

> I went to Braunau and took part in numerous sittings there, together with other and very different personalities, in order to be able to pass judgement on this. I discussed these things also with [. . .] Captain Kogelnik and Major R. Kalifius [. . .] So I was a frequent and well-received guest at the Braunau sittings, even after Schrenck-Notzing's death.[133]

Under the influence of the Braunau Spiritualism, Walther dissociated herself from Schrenck's purely psychological explanations of the "trance personality".[134]

129 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung, 341.

130 Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 166 und 173.

131 Walther: Ufer, 448.

132 Walther: Ufer: 449.

133 Walther: Ufer, 446–447.

134 After Schrenck's death and the consequent dissolution of the "Parapsychologische Gesellschaft" he had founded, Walther joined the "Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Psychologie", which had been founded by Carl du Prel, was later inspired by General Josef

Like the Munich psychologist Ferdinand Probst, she wanted to leave the question open "whether Olga was only a dissociated part in the unconscious ["Abspaltung im Unterbewußtsein"] or more".[135]

Kogelnik in his own explanation made use of Franz Anton Mesmer's pre-scientific theory of the magnetic "fluid" (or "animal magnetism"), an invisible "fluidum" or vitalising natural force which penetrates the universe and also all living beings. Reflecting on Willi's above described manifestations of a human head and of a female dancer, he wrote the article "Animism or spiritualism?" in which he explained mediumistic manifestations as manifestations of the "fluid" emanating from the medium. He proposed the following conclusions: "The fluid shows the properties of conscious life and behaves like an independent individuality", therefore "conscious, intelligent life can exist without being bound to cells" of a body. Using the fluid extracted from the medium and also from the other people present, an "intelligent power" had formed hands, heads and veils. This fact compels us to recognise "the superiority of this intelligent power over the fluid-matter which obviously is handled at will by it". "Such a priority naturally involves the absolute independence of this intelligent power from fluid-matter streaming out of the Medium". "Conscious intelligent life" therefore neither depended on cell mechanisms nor on fluid-matter. "Thus we are led to accept the real existence of life forms beyond matter, which are endowed with the properties of consciousness and intelligence, as we are ourselves."[136] This was, of course, a kind of proof of the existence of God with the help of Mesmer's fluid and its physical effects, whereas the "animistic" theory which explained mediumistic materialisations through psychology (that is as emanations of the medium's individual psyche) was dismissed by Kogelnik as a less important side track. In summary: Joseph Kogelnik was a religious seeker, not a scientific (para)psychologist. Gerda Walther was both (a fact unknown to Kogelnik at that time); but Kogelnik was more sceptical towards the phenomena of the Schneider brothers than the credulous Walther[137] and accused them

Peter, and "where those persons assembled who were interested in Spiritualism [and – contrary to the name of the society – not in scientific (para)psychology]": Walther: Ufer, 460. For more information about General Peter, see Walther: Ufer, 422–425, where she wrote that he had taken part in 50 sittings with Willi Schneider and in 15 with Rudi Schneider.

135 Walther: Ufer, 452. It was Probst who had drawn Walther's attention to Prince: Dissociation: Walther: Ufer, 427.

136 Kogelnik: Animism, 126.

137 "Whenever it was necessary, I always supported Rudi's genuineness with words and in writing because of all my personal experiences [with him]": Walther: Ufer, 458.

of occasional fraudulent tricks,[138] but he also attested the genuineness of many of their "phenomena".[139]

A Protestant Spiritualist-Parapsychological Theology

At Braunau, Gerda Walther also got to know the Protestant theologian and professor at Vienna university (from 1915 to 1939) Richard Adolf Hoffmann. He visited the Braunau home circle as a guest and "was of the opinion that the Schneider phenomena were very important in order to overcome the 'demythologising' theology". [orig. German][140] At Vienna, Hoffmann belonged to the circle of academics interested in spiritualism and parapsychology.[141] He also came to personally know the phenomena both of Willi Schneider (in 1923)[142] and later of

138 See Kogelniks letter to E. Feilding in Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 69, or a photo taken by him at Braunau with Willi in trance and the alleged apparition consisting of a piece of cloth pinned to the curtain of the "darkcabinet": Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 241. But Kogelnik, on the other hand, distanced himself from the conclusions drawn by the Vienna physicists Stefan Meyer and Karl Przibram as being "irresponsible" because they had only shown the possibility of imitating levitations in a natural way but had not exposed Rudi in flagranti (Anonymous (Kogelnik?): Entlarvung – criticism of Kogelnik's accusation by Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 455, Annot.). Przibram and Meyer had accused Rudi Schneider of having used natural tricks for his levitations which had been shown by Erich Czernin-Dirkenau in his Vienna "Metapsychologisches Institut" (Karl Przibram/Stefan Meyer: "Informationen betreffend Rudi Schneider", Vienna 11.2.1924, in: Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 63–66) and had set off "the Vienna press campaign against the Schneider family" (Gruber: Willi Schneider, 228; as examples, see Anonymous: Entlarvung; Anonymous: "Levitationen").

139 There also existed an undated postcard in – as Anita Gregory cautiously said – Kogelnik's handwriting and lent to her by Gerda Walther – which affirmed genuine phenomena in connection with Rudi (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 72 and 127, Annot. 12). Regarding this postcard, Gerda Walther had written to Gregory: "Kogelnik [. . .] I believe you can risk to say that card about D[ingwall] and Olga was from him [. . .]": Letter by Gerda Walther to Anita Gregory 12 or 15/3/1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Anita Gregory.

140 Walther: Ufer, 450. In this context, Walther's allusion to Rudolf Bultmann's programme of demythologising the New Testament is historically incorrect as Bultmann's programmatical essay "Neues Testament und Mythologie" was published not before 1941.

141 See Heindl: Österreichische Gesellschaft.

142 Willi Schneider worked as dental technician in Vienna from 1923 to 1925. According to Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider], 449, the main reason why Willi left Munich in the spring of 1923 was not, as pretended by Schrenck-Notzing, the splendid job prospects offered to him in Vienna but – as Klinckowstroem had heard from Karl Gruber – that the Munich police had

Rudi Schneider (in 1924) there in Vienna.[143] In "Das Geheimnis der Auferstehung Jesu"[144] ("The mystery of the resurrection of Jesus"), a book published by him with the spiritualist-occultist publishing house of Oswald Mutze at Leipzig[145] in 1921, Hoffmann interpreted the apparition of the resurrected Jesus and other stories of the New Testament (such as the miraculous liberation of St. Peter and St. Paul from prison, the scene of the transfiguration of Jesus on Mount Tabor, the day of Pentecost, or St. Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus)[146] in a Spiritualist-parapsychological way by a theory of "the formation of new matter" („Neustoffbildung"). He wrote that the main motivation for his publication was the Great War:

> The enormous scope of wartime events of the past years with their astronomical number of casualties, among them so many promising lives, have heightened the interest of wide sections [of the population] in this problem of the beyond ["Jenseitsproblem"]. [orig. German][147]

Hoffman cited in his book occultist and parapsychological literature on materialisations (which he called "formation of new matter": "Neustoffbildungen"); his theories were based among others on Schrenck-Notzing's books "Materialisationsphänomene" (Munich 1914), "Der Kampf um die Materialisations-Phänomene: eine Verteidigungsschrift" (Munich 1914) and "Physikalische Phänomene des Mediumismus" (Munich 1920), and on Fritz Grunewald's "Physikalisch-mediumistische Untersuchungen" (Pfullingen

become interested in him because he was suspected of smuggling gold. In Vienna, Willi was looked after by the chief physician ("Primarius") of the Vienna state mental hospital "Landesirrenanstalt am Steinhof", Edmund Holub. After Holub's death – said to have been caused by Rudi Schneider's "exposure" by Karl Przibram and Stefan Meyer – Willi lived in the city house of Holub's widow Marie Holub. During this time, he also travelled to Britain two times in order to conduct experiments with Eric J. Dingwall: Schrenck-Notzing: Neuere Untersuchungen; Thirring: Vienna; note of Willi and Fini Schneider for Gerda Walther 1970: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder G.

143 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 13 und 46. "Rudi is here in Braunau and old Schneider frequently takes him to Vienna where he keeps being invited by diverse private persons": Letter by Joseph Kogelnik to Everard Feilding, research officer of the London Society for Psychical Research, 1924 (English translation: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 69). Thirring: Psychical research, 694–695 and 706, reports about a sitting in Hoffmann's house with Rudi Schneider in October 1924 and about Hoffmann's presence at a Vienna sitting with Willi Schneider in July 1925.

144 Hoffmann: Geheimnis.

145 Linse: Buch.

146 In his later publications and lectures, Hoffmann repeatedly supported the "parapsychic" interpretation of St. Paul, too; see Taupe: Hoffmann, 52–54.

147 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 13.

1920). He thought that one might draw the following conclusions from the literature he examined:

> We saw that, under certain circumstances, the human body possesses the capability of emanating more or less visible and more or less corporeal fluidal creations [. . .] What is most miraculous and most astonishing in the examples quoted are those cases in which the fluidal creation ["Fluidalbildung"] gains such a high degree of materiality and vitality that a third disinterested party may get the impression of being confronted with a living being. [orig. German][148]

The reader's first impression is that Hoffmann's fluidal creations copy the spiritualist theory of spirits: "In quite a number of cases, a relatively independent individual personality seems to appear in addition to that of the medium. Frequently, those beings claim to be messengers of the world of the deceased [. . .] or are addressed by the people present as their late relatives or acquaintances because of their similarity in appearance and the way they move."[149] But in reality, he writes, they are no genuine apparitions of ghost or spirits but "materialisations", that is "fluids emanating for the reason of certain creative powers in the unconscious mind of the medium [in trance]" [orig. German]. On the other hand, by alluding to the "psychophysical energy" visible in the disciples/mediums of Jesus, he did not align himself, as one might think at first, with the pure psychological ("animistic") explanation supported by Schrenck-Notzing, for example, but interpreted the apparitions in a kind of Spiritualist Revelation as messengers from a supernatural world.

In this way he tried to explain the New Testament's stories on the disciples' meeting with the resurrected Jesus:

> The materialisations consist, as we saw, of fine-matter creations which more or less distinctly copy separate parts of the human body such as the face, arms, hands, feet, but also complete figures which in the most favourable and well-developed examples evoke the impression of living, moving, even talking human beings. I have not the slightest doubt anymore that the [biblical] apparitions of the resurrected Christ were materialisations. [orig. German][150]

It was true that in the apparitions testified by the Bible the usual circumstances of a spiritualist séance, such as dimming of the light or mediums falling in trance, which produced the apparitions "among pains" (here he referred to the

148 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 123.
149 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 124.
150 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 145.

repeatedly reported "birth labour" of the mediums),[151] were missing. But in the case of the Bible the disciples themselves must be understood as mediums, and the manifest apparitions "had drawn their materiality from the bodies of the disciples present". [orig. German][152] And these disciples experienced the respective "materialisations" in full consciousness, "though it might be possible that one or the other of them had fallen in a light trance". [orig. German][153] St. Peter and St. Paul, he wrote, were to be considered as the most gifted materialisation mediums among Jesus' disciples.

The apparitions, however, were no pure emanations of the unconscious psychical powers of the disciples but – and here Hoffmann falls back on the spiritualist "religion of revelation" ("Offenbarungsspiritismus") – manifestations from the "world of the deceased", in the case of Jesus "revelations of the Risen Christ":

> In the materialisations experienced [by his disciples], the departed Christ revealed himself by making visible his spiritual body in which he lived after his death by help of using certain substances from the bodies of his disciples, especially from the body of St. Peter, by which he intensified and condensed the extremely subtle materiality of this [spiritual] body. [orig. German][154]

Hoffmann's theological teaching of the "disciple-mediums" and of the consequent "living Christ" might have been of some contemporaneous importance when doing pastoral work. When he stated: "The apparitions had their origin in no inferior source than in a dead person himself who nevertheless was still alive", he preached consolation and hope to his fellow men: "We must not anymore agree with the dreary ["trostlos"] world view of those who wrongly believe that there is no further life for man when we carry him to his grave." [orig. German][155]

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151 The German writer Thomas Mann, participating in some of Schrenck-Notzing's experimental sittings in Munich, wrote that Willi Schneider's trances had a "sexual element" and that his behaviour undoubtedly resembled "the act of delivering a child"; in addition, erections and ejaculations of sperm accompanied the "psycho-physical labour and production of the young man": Schrenck-Notzing: Experimente, 255; Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisations-Phänomene, 561–562. These male sexual aspects of trance mediumship were of course omitted in Hoffmann's biblical exegesis!

152 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 145–146.

153 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 151.

154 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 161–162.

155 Hoffmann: Geheimnis, 167.

Conversion to Christian Faith Via Spiritualism

The Protestant Richard Adolf Hoffmann was theologically (and probably also emotionally) strengthened both by parapsychology and spiritualism. The experience of spiritualism at Braunau also brought about conversions to Christian faith in some hitherto unbelieving contemporaries. In the spring of 1919, for instance, Joseph Kogelnik's materialistic-scientific world view was shaken and was broadened from "the material world" to the "supernatural".[156] In 1927 he reported that he had written to Warren Jay Vinton in reaction to Vinton's exposure of the Braunau mediums that he could only agree without reservation to a single sentence in Vinton's publication: "The phenomena which I saw[157] were so startling that, if authentic, they would have demanded a great extension if not a total revision, of current biological and physical science."[158] And Kogelnik added:

> Like few others, Mr Vinton had realised at first glance the eminent importance of the phenomena for our science as a whole; so important, that the entire construct of the materialistic world view must collapse when confronted with them.[159] Now he was personally given the choice of either accepting the genuineness of the phenomena and drop the materialistic world view which he could no longer support as a rational being, or of denying or at least doubting the phenomena.

But Vinton's "absolute belief in this world ["Diesseitsglaube"] which had been shaken at Braunau temporarily", had strengthened again "in the bustle of the cosmopolitan city [London]" and so he had repeated in his publication "the credo of the man of this world ["Diesseitsmensch"]" which is: "Only the material world is real, what goes beyond it can be nothing but an illusion!" [orig. German][160]

But Joseph Kogelnik did not stop at this anti-materialistic turn to the supernatural ("Übersinnliches"). Gerda Walther reports that he and his wife Maximiliane

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156 He might have experienced moments of belief before. When he reported about his voyage to Australia in 1898 before the Braunau "Katholischer Gesellenverein" in 1927, he dramatized an experience during the Christmas Days of 1898: "Roaring storm at night! In such moments of greatest danger everyone comes closer to his Lord. The Sea does not rear up freethinkers, the Sea teaches to pray": Anonymous: Monatsversammlung.

157 Vinton took part in some séances with Willi and Rudi Schneider at Braunau in July-August 1926, together with Eric J. Dingwall and Helen Dingwall, see Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 75–87.

158 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 4.

159 Today, an "anomalistic psychology" (Eberhard Bauer) would try to understand these phenomena in the framework of a "generalised quantum theory" ("weak quantum theory").

160 Kogelnik: Das Ende.

("Maxi"), stimulated by the spiritualist experiences at the Schneiders' séances, read the Bible with new understanding. "Now also the transcendental ["Übernatürliche"] became apparent to them. They realised that it was superior to the supernatural ["Übersinnliches"], the parapsychological, and that was the only reason [add: and not debunking of the Schneider mediumship as being fraudulent] why they turned away from it in order to occupy themselves more and more with the much higher subject of religion." [orig. German][161] She then moved on to write about the Kogelnik couple:

> This was the beginning of their new theoretical, and later on, practical interest in Catholicism and spiritual matters, which reduced their interest in physical phenomena, especially as they both have very poor health and found the sittings rather exhausting.[162]

Kogelnik was also fascinated by the stigmatised Catholic Therese Neumann from Konnersreuth and he was the first to draw the attention of American parapsychologists to her.[163] And he spiritually supported Gerda Walther[164] on her way from parapsychology to Christianity. She had grown up an atheistic and Marxist and had not been baptised. During the First World War, she had been a student of the patriarchal Edmund Husserl in Freiburg who had refused to confer qualification as a university lecturer on her as he had refused to do for Edith Stein.[165] Riding on a train in November 1918, she had a mystical experience,[166] had then been with the trance phenomena of the Schneider brothers confronted as Schrenck-Notzing 's secretary and confirmed their genuineness. After Schrenck-Notzing's death in 1929 she remained in contact with the members of the Schneider family. However, she turned more and more away from Schrenck-Notzing's parapsychological interpretation of physical mediumship. Richard Hoffmann and Joseph Kogelnik, she wrote, encouraged her in her religious soul-searching, "quite contrary to the

161 Walther: Ufer, 449.

162 Walther: Preface to Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 166.

163 Kogelnik: Korrespondenz. Harry Price had also gathered material on her in his large parapsychological collection (see HPArchive).

164 Gerda Walther took part in 21 sittings of Schrenck-Notzing with Rudi Schneider. Furthermore, she was present at two or three times the amount: Walther: Ufer, 458. The basis of her reports in Walther: Ufer, at least partly were earlier notes, see her extensive comments as translator to Price: Experimentelles, 404–405, and Gerda Walther's preface to Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 164–166.

165 Walther: Ufer, 216. See Hausmann: Jugend. It cannot be excluded that Edith Stein's conversion to Catholicism in 1922, about which Walther was informed in 1923 (Walther: Ufer, 332), in some way prefigured Walther's own decision to convert.

166 Walther: Ufer, 221–228.

milieu of Schrenck-Notzing."[167] In this way she moved "from Marxism and atheism to the Christian faith", as she wrote in the subtitle of her autobiography.[168] Her spiritual re-orientation finally led her from the anthroposophical "Christengmeinschaft" [Christian community] to the Roman-Catholic faith. She was baptized in Nazi Munich in 1944.[169] But not all friends of the Schneider spiritualist circle were ready to go as far as that. This is the reason why Gerda Walther accused Rudolf Kalifius, head of the Schneider circle at Braunau and baptised as a Roman-Catholic, that he had "not advanced to the true [Christian] religiosity". [orig. German][170]

Whereas the "materialistic"-psychological interpretation of the Schneiders' "phenomena" was rejected by Christians such as Kogelnik and Walther, they did not draw a clear line between spiritualist apparitions and their emphatic profession of Christian faith. What they professed was a Christian creed awakened and strengthened by spiritualist experience. Gerda Walther reported that Father Schneider was almost offended when Captain Kogelnik did not come to the Spiritualist séances in the Schneiders' flat anymore and argued that Kogelnik "has become very bigoted,[171] and that the Church did not think highly about those things".[172] But when Walther asked Kogelnik about it, he gave a different explanation: The present quality of spiritualist phenomena at the Schneiders' circle "was but a pale reflection of former achievements and had therefore lost its attraction for him and his wife". [orig. German][173] According to Kogelnik's report by letter of March 1924, he had stopped attending Willi's séances for a year because his mediumistic abilities had considerably weakened; as an exception,

167 Walther: Ufer, 451. In 1963, Gerda Walther was invited by the interconfessional "The Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies" and read there a paper "Parapsychology and Religion": Letter by Gerda Walther to Joseph Kogelnik 21/2/1964 BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Anita Gregory.

168 Walther: Ufer. The illustration on the dust cover of the book shows St. Christopher carrying the Christ Child on his shoulder. It is a photograph of Hans Leinberger's St. Christopher, the Christ-bearer (1525) in the "Liebfrauendom" in Munich, which was a great Christian inspiration to Gerda Walther (Walther: Ufer, 490).

169 Walther: Ufer, 627–643.

170 Walther: Ufer, 449.

171 There was also fundamental criticism of Father Schneider by Joseph Kogelnik, see Anonymous (Kogelnik?): Entlarvung, 171 and 173, and Kogelnik's correspondence with the London Society for Psychical Research 1924: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 68–69.

172 Walther: Ufer, 448. Wolffram: Stepchildren, 213–219 emphasised in the chapter "The response of the churches" this rejection of spiritualism by the Catholic and Protestant Churches.

173 Walther: Ufer, 448.

he headed a sitting with Rudi at Braunau on March 1924 but doubted the genuineness of it.[174] And when J. Malcolm Bird attended a sitting of Rudi's at Braunau on 11 October 1929,[175] Kogelnik was there to welcome Bird but left five minutes before the séance started with the explanation "that the mediumship [of Rudi] had deteriorated so from the high point at which he had known it several years ago, and that the phenomena were now so unsatisfactory, that he was no longer interested and refrained from attending so far as this was possible."[176] He and his wife were firmly integrated in the Catholic organisations at Braunau; she in the "Katholische Frauenorganisation", he in the "Katholischer Volksverein", the "Katholischer Gesellenverein", and the "Christlich-deutscher Turnverein".

Kogelnik remained open-minded as regards mediumistic matters: "The Kogelniks were very much interested in physical phenomena".[177] In 1927 he reported without any word of criticism or disapproval about his three years' observation of the wife of the stationmaster of Mattighofen near Braunau who saw the spiritual bodies of the living and the dead and where he had been a witness to many interesting debates with the scientists and theologians visiting her, whereby her spirit guide had assisted her in participating in these debates on equal footing.[178] After the Second World War he told

174 Letter of Joseph Kogelnik to Everard Feilding 1924: English translation Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 69.

175 Details of this sitting in Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 98–110.

176 Bird: Current status, 608. With this argument Bird explained the fraudulent acts noticed by Vinton and him (Bird: Current status, 424, 426).

177 Letter by Gerda Walther to Anita Gregory 12/15 March 1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Anita Gregory. A famous example at that time, also mentioned in the Austrian press ("A modern witch": Anonymous: Hexe; Anonymous: Spukphänome), was the case of the spook-medium or poltergeist Johanna Plesnik („Miss Hannie"), who was in the Kogelniks' employment as a housemaid for three weeks in the spring of 1922. She was a 15 years old peasant girl from Graz and an orphan. In the wake of Schrenck-Notzing's lecture on her (Schrenck-Notzing: Spukphänomene) the Austrian press wrote about her and so information also reached James Hewat McKenzie, who founded the "British College of Psychic Science" in 1920, and author of "Spirit Intercourse. Its theory and practice", New York 1917. He and his wife Barbara visited "Hannie" at Braunau in 1922 and then took her with them to London for further research: Kogelnik: Report; Kogelnik: Zur Entlarvung; Walther: Ufer, 447; Correspondence between Joseph Kogelnik and Gerda Walther 1957: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-J. Kogelnik.

178 Kogelnik: A case. According to this report, the wife of a certain Mr Hatheyer, a teacher at Mattighofen, had similar apparitions of ghosts. Rosa Hatheyer (née Jungwirth), a teacher's daughter from Lochen, in 1890 had married Max Hatheyer, headmaster of the elementary school at Lengau, who was transferred to Friedburg in 1906 and to Mattighofen in 1912. She died, only 39 years old on 3 January 1916 in Mattighofen "after a long and painful illness which she endured patiently" (as the press wrote).

Gerda Walther that a spirit manifesting itself through a Vienna medium had recently given him not more than one year to live. But he wisely commented "that almost all these mediumistic messages of spirits were of course unreliable, albeit stupefying" [orig. German] – and he did in fact had many more years before him.[179]

The then close connection between Christian belief and parapsychological – or spiritualist respectively – phenomena in the Schneider circle can also be demonstrated in their positive view of Therese Neumann (in Austria and Bavaria, the farmgirl was simply called "Resl"), the Catholic stigmatic from the village of Konnersreuth in Bavaria (1898–1962). Gerda Walther reports about a conversation she had with the surgeon Wilhelm Scheuba, from 1929 to 1959 chief physician ("Primarius") at the general public hospital at Braunau:[180] He had been very much impressed by the Schneider phenomena and had considered them to be absolutely genuine. He had also visited Konnersreuth and had afterwards supported without reservation the genuineness of Therese's blood miracle. He had personally examined Therese's eyes there and was of the opinion that weeping bloody tears could not be explained scientifically.[181] The natural and relaxed way in which "Resl's" miracles were perceived in this Catholic milieu is exemplified by a report about "Maxi" Kogelnik's appearance at a meeting of the "Katholische Frauenorganisation Braunau" at the end of October 1926: "In the informal part of the evening Mrs Captain Kogelnik read with much humour and applause amusing stories from the book about Resl ["Reslbuch"]."[182] "Holy women" played even after the Great War, as they had done before, an important role in this Catholic milieu. This is also proven by the deep veneration of Gemma Galgani of Lucca, the Italian saint, mystic, ecstatic visionary and stigmatic (1878–1903), by Maximiliane Kogelnik and Gerda Walther. Walther even took Gemma as her new main

179 Letter by Joseph Kogelnik to Gerda Walther 3/2/1949 (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C. II-J. Kogelnik), and Letter by Gerda Walther to Anita Gregory 12/15 March 1964, in which she wrote that the widowed Kogelnik may meanwhile have died in a home for old gentlemen at Bad Ischl as he no longer answered her letters (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Anita Gregory). Kogelnik's wife Maximiliane had already died at Braunau in 1942.

180 I am very grateful to Prof. Dr. Christian Scheuba (Vienna) for his information about his grandfather Wilhelm Scheuba (1896–1962) (Walther: Ufer, 450, wrongly spelled "Schäuba").

181 Walther: Ufer, 450.

182 Anoymous Katholische Frauenorganisation. Maximiliane Kogelnik probably read from a book by Johannes Mayrhofer: Konnersreuth, Regensburg 1926.

Christian name when she was baptised.[183] She, who had written a book about mysticism herself,[184] was especially impressed by the "manifold [parapsychological] phenomena" in the life of this saint.[185] Quite obviously, this veneration was a way to uphold absolute moral values in the face of the rapid deterioration and loss of values during the Great War and the post-war years.[186]

Spiritualist Limitations of Parapsychological Science

The experiments of the Munich psychiatrist Albert von Schrenck-Notzing with the Schneider brothers mainly represented a phase in the scientific study of parapsychology in which séances, telekinesis and materialisations were observed in a controlled manner by means of mechanical equipment and then documented.[187] Schrenck's experiments with Willi began in 1919, those with Rudi in 1924. After Schrenck had heard about the mediumistic events in the spiritualist circle at Braunau from Joseph Kogelnik in June 1919, he had a close look at things happening there from October 1919 onward: "I went there from time to time in order to give instructions and offer advice as to the training of the medium as an experimental subject and I participated in numerous séances." [orig. German][188] He then commissioned Kogelnik with training Willi Schneider as a reliable scientific medium and rented a small [parapsychological] laboratory for them at Simbach, situated opposite Braunau on the Bavarian bank of the river Inn, where Willi had

183 Walther: Ufer, 449 and 636.

184 Gerda Walther: Phänomenologie.

185 Walther: Ufer, 449. Walther's attention had been drawn to Gemma Galgani by the Catholic Austrian writer Enrica von Handel-Mazzetti who had visited the Kogelniks [and also the Schneiders?] at Braunau.

186 This probably was the reason why Maxi Kogelnik und Gerda Walther were especially taken with the book "Tugendschule Gemma Galganis, Dienerin Gottes und stigmatisierte Jungfrau von Lucca", published by the "Wallfahrtsverlag Kloster Andechs" in 1920 and written by Ludwig Beda, monk in the monastery of Andechs, Bavaria: Walther: Ufer, 449.

187 In the following phase, parapsychology concentrated on measuring bodily reactions, which were invisible to the eyes, by the help of measuring instruments (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, XVII).

188 Schrenck-Notzing: Experimente, XIII.

started to serve his apprenticeship with a dentist in 1919.[189] Already there the main aim was to cure Willi from the original spiritualist indoctrination he had received at Braunau. As soon as Willi's apprenticeship ended in 1921, Schrenck invited him to come to Munich until February 1923, found him a job there in a dental technician's laboratory and used him as a medium. When Willi's mediumistic abilities began to waver in 1923, Schrenck only occasionally asked for Willi's help[190] and instead used his younger brother Rudi, who still was required to attend school at Braunau, and asked him to come to Munich every weekend for experimentation.[191] The boys needed to be accompanied by their father until the age of maturity.[192] Later Schrenck provided Rudi with a vocational training position as a mechanic at the garage of Daimler-Benz in Munich.[193] Schrenck held 104 sittings with Willi[194] and another 88 with Rudi.[195] The Schneider brothers were, until Schrenck's unforeseen death in 1929, mediums at least partially dependent on him financially.[196] And Father Schneider profited from the monetary income of

189 Walther: Ufer, 447. According to Rudi Schneider's report in Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 402, and Kogelnik: Willi Schneider story, 177, Schrenck had rented a room at Simbach am Inn as a provisional laboratory and had it furnished by Gerda Walther. See also Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisations-Phänomene, 548.

190 Willi only occasionally came over from Ebersberg, "especially when foreign guests [of Schrenck] wanted to see his phenomena, which became more feeble but were still precise, or when Rudi suffered a negative period: Gerda Walther in her introduction to Schrenck-Notzing: Grundfragen, 24.

191 Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 402.

192 Walther: Vater Schneider. This obituary on "the death of a man whose selfless interest in parapsychology [. . .] will never be forgotten" totally suppressed the social and financial advantages so ardently sought for and received by Father Schneider.

193 Schrenck-Notzing: Phänomene, 137; Walther: Ufer, 454.

194 Gerda Walther's preface to Schrenck: Grundfragen, 23.

195 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, V.

196 When Schrenck-Notzing died in 1929, Willi Schneider, who had become totally uninteresting for him because of the absence of "phenomena", had passed his examination as a dentist and worked as a dentist at Ebersberg near Munich with Mr Bösl. Rudi Schneider, however, had not yet come to a decision regarding his working life. He first lived at the expense of Schrenck as a lodger with Rudolf Schmidt, an official of the "Bayerischen Versicherungsbank" and authorised bank representative of the Schrenck-Notzings. Because he did not feel at ease there, he moved to the residence of engineer Karl Amereller as a lodger and temporarily worked in Amereller's firm in Munich, which installed the electrical control instruments devised by Karl Krall in Schrenck's laboratory. After Schrenck's death, Amereller obviously tried to become Rudi's new impresario (Price: Rudi Schneider, 3–4; Walther: Ufer, 442). In 1953/1954 Willi Schneider tried to extort 20,000 Marks from Schrenck's heirs to build up his own dental practice, arguing that he had served the Baron as a medium completely "selflessly". Outraged, Gerda Walther wrote to Joseph Kogelnik: "It is unthinkable that Willi received neither a fixed

his underage children, accompanying the minors (and probably receiving extra money for this service) and sometimes acting as their impresario.[197] Schrenck, for his part used the Schneider brothers as private mediums to further his scientific reputation among European and North American parapsychologists.

Schrenck's only aim was to produce physical mediumistic phenomena such as materialisations or telekinesis by scientifically controlled experiments and document them in the presence of witnesses. In order to dispel any suspicion of fraudulence insinuated by his scientific opponents, he continuously improved the technical equipment used for these experiments. In tiring monotony, as Gerda Walther criticised, he tried to produce the same phenomena again and again during the years, such as is done by a physicist or chemist in their laboratory. "The repetitive course of the demonstrations during the sittings which was the same through months and years might certainly have become tedious to others. Not so to Schrenck-Notzing: he wanted to demonstrate these things to always new and renowned scientists under steadily improved conditions of control and thus to convince them by evidence [. . .]" [orig. German][198] Walther wrote that – after having been present at a greater number of sittings – "she had found this kind of phenomena in their repetitive similarity rather boring in the long run". [orig. German][199] "Even 'Olga' once remarked during a 'talking

sum of money from Baron Schrenck for the sittings (as also Rudi did) nor financial remuneration for each of them. According to my knowledge, he had also been lodged with Mrs Zenta Prestele [in Munich] at the expense of Schrenck. I don't know if still other earnings went to him or his father [from Schrenck] [. . .] As far as I can remember both the Baroness [Gabriele] von Schrenck and her authorised bank representative [Rudolf Schmidt] said that Willi had also received sums of money from the Baroness after Schrenck's death when he worked as a dentist at Ebersberg" (Letter by Gerda Walther to Joseph Kogelnik 17/8/1954: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder O [orig. German]). It seemed also highly dishonourable to Walther that all the time between 1945 and 1953, the Schrenck-Notzings had never heard from Willi again, contrary to Rudi (Letter by Gerda Walther to Anna Schneider 17/8/1954: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder O); Rudi also distanced himself from Willi's attempt to blackmail the Schrenck-Notzings (Letter by Rudi Schneider to Gerda Walther 20/8/1954: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder O).

197 In 1933, however, when Father Schneider suffered a stroke at Rudi's wedding day and received the Last Sacraments, and his wife asked Schrenck's wife Baroness Gabriele von Schrenck-Notzing for some money to buy medicine for her sick husband and promised that Rudi (according to the British press the best-paid medium of the world), would pay back the debt, the baroness flatly refused. Father Schneider did not recover from the illness and died in the same year: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 375.

198 Walther: Ufer, 408.

199 Walther: Ufer, 421.

séance' ["Sprechsitzung"] in the familiar circle that she was sick and tired of 'Schrenck's circus', that she really was fed up with it". [orig. German][200] Schrenck, however, awaited the phenomena with astonishing excitement and also impatience and without any empathy in the "trance personality". [orig. German][201]

What is even more astonishing is the fact that over the years, Schrenck was not able to successfully eliminate in his experimental sittings the spiritualist Braunau elements such as forming the circle by holding hands (forming the "chain"), the use of musical boxes and musical instruments for telekinetic purposes, of dimmed red light, of the "darkcabinet", of exaggerated loud talking or singing demanded from the participants by "Olga". Most important: Schrenck could not get rid of the mediums' spiritual guide "Olga" herself. He was afraid that by destroying this part of the mediums' personality (as he saw it), he would "risk destroying the very complex that constitutes the mediumship"[202] and so lose his valuable mediums. Despite heavy conflicts with the Schneider brothers, he did not dare to eliminate the spiritual guide who greatly disturbed his scientific experiments. Therefore "Olga" and not Schrenck was in the centre of the sittings, it was she who decided about the date and the procedures of the scientific experiments, such as the seating plan (which of course was important for the control of the medium, especially because she dictated that sitters were to alter their position during sittings or even leave the room), the physical phenomena to be requested and the special order of experiments. In this way she made a laughing stock of Schrenck in the presence of his scientific colleagues and the other visitors interested in parapsychology. Moreover, "Olga" had to be humoured and her whims obeyed because she could always threaten to delay or utterly deny the phenomena. So, the true sovereign of his sittings was not Schrenck but "Olga"[203] – to him an uncontrollable "secondary personality" of the medium,[204] to the Schneiders, including the mediums, an extremely lively but sensitive spirit.

Schrenck in vain fought to win back control over his scientific experiments. In his waking state Rudi could talk his way out of responsibility by arguing that he could not be made responsible for things happening during his trance; and during trance "Olga" in turn denied any connection with Rudi and even addressed Father Schneider as "Mr Schneider".[205] Schrenck tried to break the

200 Walther: Ufer, 421.
201 Walther: Ufer, 427–428.
202 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 130; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 117.
203 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 140.
204 See Prince: Dissociation.
205 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 131.

resistance of Rudi and "Olga" by post-hypnotic commands to produce quick and good phenomena, but Rudi answered in trance by "Olga's" furiously rejecting Schrenck's attempt at manipulation.[206] Also Schrenck's strategy to bring about the formation of a new and more docile trance personality failed.[207] By refusing to perform, "Olga" "was paying Schrenck-Notzing back for attempting to dictate to her."[208] Schrenck was finally forced to admit that "Olga" made him look stupid in front of his academic colleagues and that this conflict – Gerda Walther called it "a dispute over respective areas of competence" ("Kompetenz-Streit")[209] – made him fall ill. During this "crisis" in the summer of 1928,[210] "Olga" even risked an attempt to break away from Schrenck in this struggle for power.[211] It seems that only Schrenck's premature death (some say as a result of this unresolved conflict) prevented the final showdown planned by "Olga".[212] Only after Schrenck's death, in the 1930s, did "Olga" occasionally make concessions to Rudi's scientific investigators (and as such: employers).[213]

Schrenck's scientific assistant Gerda Walther was of the opinion that the so-called "spiritual" or "mental" or "psychic" phenomena such as telepathy, clairvoyance or psychometry were scientifically much more interesting than "physical mediumship". She was surprised because Schrenck had not at all been interested in telepathy (not even in her own telepathic abilities).[214] Schrenck furthermore only accepted a psychological interpretation of parapsychological events: "Parapsychological phenomena [are] in connection with the body of the medium essentially a problem of the unconscious life of the psyche, that is of a psychogenetic nature." [orig. German][215] This "animistic" explanation had also been the main reason of Schrenck's former fundamental break-up with Carl du Prel and his more "metaphysical" interpretations of Spiritualism, aiming at proving the existence of an independent soul separated from the body.[216] Gerda Walther was in line with the contemporaneous scientific trend by focusing in her parapsychological programme on psychical and not on

206 Walther: Ufer, 451.
207 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 118 and 125.
208 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 125.
209 Walther: Ufer, 429.
210 Walther: Ufer, 451; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 116.
211 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 118 writes about "Olga's" "intention of giving a brilliant farewell performance".
212 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 119.
213 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 190–191.
214 Walther: Ufer, 421.
215 Schrenck-Notzing: Neuere Untersuchungen, 171.
216 See Kaiser: Karl du Prel.

physical phenomena.[217] By returning to telepathy she also attempted a religious reverse turn of parapsychology itself.[218] She stressed both the similarity and the difference of parapsychological experience to mystical spiritual-religious epiphany.[219] Her own mystical awakening in November 1918 strongly influenced the further way in which she interpreted and approached mediumistic and religious phenomena, up to her final decision to convert to Roman-Catholicism.

"The Psychology of Mediumship"

The "phenomena" of mediumship resulted in the communicative connection between medium and sitters and, so was the consensus at the time, were dependent on the "mutual feeling of goodwill between medium and sitters if they are to be really genuine".[220] In corroboration of this "psychology of mediumship",[221] Hans Thirring wrote about his experiences with Willi Schneider in Vienna:

> What this medium wants more than anything else is an atmosphere of cheerfulness among the sitters. In all our sittings, the strongest telekinetic phenomena occurred amidst a roar of laughter when the sitters were joking or when some rhythmical chorus was sung [. . .] Metapsychical phenomena cannot be produced by the mere will of the medium. Some psychic emotion seems to be necessary [. . .] In the case of our medium the necessary emotions seem to be furnished by rhythmical music; by the touch of a woman[222]; or by the buoyant spirit of a cheerful circle.[223]

Sceptics, however, were of the opinion that this was only the medium's strategy to skilfully distract the persons present from his fraudulent tricks.

What can be said about the "nature" of the medium himself? Willi or Rudi Schneider were more than a single individual. Each of them was a twin person; one person during the waking state and a different person ("trance personality") during sittings.[224] The change of personality during trance manifested itself in a

217 See Wolffram: Stepchildren, 176.

218 See Walther: Telepathy.

219 Walther: Phänomenologie. See McAlister: Gerda Walther.

220 Thirring: Psychical research, 704. Schrenck, too, repeated this again and again.

221 The phrase was coined by Harry Price in his concluding remarks to Thirring: Psychical research, 707.

222 The concrete female person Willi preferred to control him during his sittings in Vienna was Marie Holub, which, of course, fired the accusations of fraudulent "confederacy".

223 Thirring: Psychical research, 704–705.

224 See Prince: Dissociation. When talking about "trance personalities" also the synonymous expression "spirit control" was used in England without necessarily implying a spiritualist

change of "character", but also of voice and breathing. "Olga" spoke through the medium's mouth "by a rapid whisper"[225] in combination with a "wheezing breathing and an increase of respiratory frequency" ("stark beschleunigte, keuchende Atmung") ("hyperpnoea").[226] The medium said he "remembered nothing of what happened while he was in trance" and "did not feel the slightest sense of identification with Olga".[227] But the double nature of these allegedly separate persons was nevertheless united in a single living person: "Willolga" or "Rudolga" respectively.[228] The two Schneider mediums and their spiritualist milieu, however, understood the "trance personality" not as a "secondary personality" in the psychiatric sense but as an independent spirit who produced the "phenomena" by condensing ("Verdichtung") the "force"[229] drawn out of the medium's body and, in addition in order to intensify it, out of the bodies of the sitters.[230] "Rudi, Olga said, only provided the 'force' with which she then 'worked'. She did her best, of course, but she was not always successful in 'condensing' it [no doubt: the force] sufficiently."[231] In this way, the independent "trance

explanation of its nature (contrary to the German use of "Kontrollgeist"): Bird: Willi Schneider, 175. Gregory: Rudi Schneider, neutrally talked about a "secondary person(ality)".

225 Walther: Ufer, 418. Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 12, characterised it as a "husky whisper", Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 119, as a "hoarse, rapid whisper".

226 Walther: Ufer, 418. Schrenck-Notzing: Neuere Untersuchungen, 181, characterised it as a "short, spasmodic breathing"; Bird: Current status, 413, as a "steam-engine breathing". Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, saw a causal connection between Rudi Schneider's hyperpnoea, his neuromuscular tremors (Karl Gruber: Willi Schneider, 219–210, called it a "Schütteltremor") and his manifestations of the paranormal "force": Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 196–202. Vinton maliciously wrote that Willi's performance with Eric J. Dingwall in London in March/April 1926 had produced only very meagre results, but: "The medium's spasmodic, rapid breathing and other weird activities in his so-called 'trance' were more spectacular" (Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 3). There also existed two gramophone records "with Rudi's trance-Olga breathing" recorded by Schrenck-Notzing: Letter by Gerda Walther to Mitzi Schneider 2/11/1964 and Postcard by Mitzi Schneider to Gerda Walther 5/11/1964: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Maria Schneider. According to Gerda Walther, the Gregories possessed these two gramophone records and had promised copied tapes to her: Postcards by Gerda Walther to Mitzi Schneider 27/11/1964 and 24/5/1965: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder C.II-Maria Schneider. The two records are in the HPArchive (HPI/2/6), but broken.

227 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 115.

228 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 16.

229 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 187, used the translation "force" for Rudi's German expression "Kraft", a kind of paranormal energy.

230 Walther: Ufer, 419.

231 Walther: Ufer, 451. "It was never explained [by 'Olga'] how this 'condensation of force' ["Verdichtung einer Kraft"] could be understood" (Walther: Ufer, 419). It is also not clear whether the concept of "force" itself or only of "the force going into the [invisible] rays" was

personality" alone was fully responsible for the success of the scientific sittings[232] and could alone be blamed for all the trouble caused during sittings[233] or for fraudulent tricks an honest person like Rudi would never have been capable of.[234] This interpretation, Gerda Walther wrote, should indeed be supported by investigators because it prevented the mediums from adopting the airs and graces of stars and gave them emotional security when the mediums in trance, without consciousness and willpower of their own, were left in the hands of the goodwill and criticism of people often unknown to them.[235] Whereas "Olga" was only "a facet" of the living individual medium to Schrenck-Notzing,[236] the persons affected interpreted events in a spiritualist manner, "it being understood that the medium's own 'spirit' has left his body and been replaced by this other [of 'Olga']".[237] They did not shout this interpretation from the rooftops because Schrenck had early impressed upon Father Schneider to tell foreign scientific investigators as little as possible about the rootedness of his sons' mediumship in the Braunau spiritualist home circle.[238] The Braunau spiritualists only superficially copied central "technical" terms from the scientists, such as "teleplasm" or "ectoplasm"[239] and "materialisations": "The whole [Schneider] family uses Schrenck-Notzing's terminology with great virtuosity".[240] In reality, these were two completely separate worlds: the local "religious" believers in spirits forming the "chain" in the Braunau circle to listen to the trance medium channelling the demands of the living dead, and the (para)psychologist "foreign" investigators, in themselves deeply divided into debunkers of fraudulent mediums and supporters of a still inexplicable psychophysical "force". The (para)psychologists

taken by Rudi-Olga from the Ostys in Paris. As Rudi pretended not to know what "Olga" did and said during trance, it was only she who used this concept of "force", not Rudi. Walther summarised the investigations of the Ostys and the invisible rays used by them in: Schrenck-Notzing: Grundfragen, 229–231.

232 Walther: Ufer, 419 and 451; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 115.

233 Rudi Schneider, distancing himself from "Olga", spoke of "des habitutes bien génantes": Osty/Osty: Pouvoirs, 401.

234 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 126.

235 Walther: Ufer, 451f.

236 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 114.

237 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 11.

238 Walther: Ufer, 452. This might have been the reason why during Vinton's presence at Braunau, Father Schneider scolded his wife for believing in spirits ("[he] always argued with some heat against Mother Schneider's belief in "spirits'") and left himself open whether the "phenomena" were caused by a "'spirit' of another world" or by "the medium's subconscious self": Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 16.

239 Vinton: Schneider mediumship, 15f.

240 Klinckowstroem: Willi Schn[eider] 415.

spoke in the loud rival chorus of their scientific publications and debates, the Braunau spiritualists spoke with one voice only, the whispering but commanding voice of "Olga".

Much has been said about female mediums of the 19th century who materialised male spirit guides, which gave these women a chance to speak and sometimes act as men did in a patriarchal society and thus cross gender boundaries at least during séances.[241] But what about blurring gender roles the other way around as Willi and Rudi did by embodying the female spirits of "Olga" or "Mina" (sometimes, it is true, Willi also gave voice to an "Otto" and Rudi to an "Anton")? In the séances with the Schneider brothers, male scientists met female spirits which were embodied in the unconscious condition ("in trance") by pubescent boys. The sexual ambivalence of these sittings was heightened by the fact that the mediumistic abilities were understood as a kind of creative act of procreation or child birth (including labour pains).[242] There were of course also latent homoerotic aspects in the close bodily contact between mediums connotated as being female (and their spirit guides really were!) and their mostly male "controllers". Investigators such as Schrenck tried to keep the Schneider boys away from sexual intercourse as this would weaken their mediumistic abilities. He and other investigators thought that there was a connection between physical phenomena and sexuality by observing that sperm was occasionally ejaculated by Willi and Rudi during successful séances.[243] But Schrenck never reflected on this complicated and disturbing emotional side of his supposedly rational scientific experiments in a darkened room. This is the reason why Eva C. had already been able to eroticise her male investigators including Schrenck-Notzing by her tricky "materialisations".

One might guess that after the atrocities of war these female spirit guides put on a soft motherly note. Such an assumption is not supported by any evidence, however. Regarding intelligence and knowledge, "Olga" was not different from Willi or Rudi, but in her character and temperament she really was a different thing entirely. Especially Rudi was friendly, cooperative, docile, reliable and ready to agree to scientific control conditions. The Munich neurologist and psychiatrist Ferdinand Probst who had taken part in 36 experimental sittings with Rudi Schneider, in 34 of them as his main controller,[244] even said that Rudi "was

241 Braude: Radical spirits; Edelman: Voyantes; Owen: Darkened room; Tromp: Altered states.
242 Schrenck-Notzing: Experimente, 255; Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisations-Phänomene, 561–562; Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 141, 156.
243 Schrenck-Notzing: Experimente, 255; Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisationsphänomene, 560–561; Schrenck-Notzing: Phänomene, 141 and 156; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 123–125.
244 Walther: Ufer, 427.

[psychically] endangered because of his all too great good-naturedness".[245] "Olga" was quite the opposite, imperious, moody, assertive, demanding and unpredictable.[246] Her capricious role can best be understood as an unconscious way of reacting against the social pattern of this kind of scientific experiments with mediums. Rich aristocrats and famous university scholars from the big cities of Munich, Vienna, Prague, Paris or London could "afford" these boys who were descended from humble workers' origin and had grown up in the small and poor town of Braunau. It was "Olga's" role to bridge these enormous social differences at least during séances or even turn social relations upside down. In fact, not the scientists, as we already said before, determined the modalities of the experimental sittings, but "Olga". She took her revenge on the investigators by putting a waste paper basket over the head of a famous scientist or a bowl of cold water, or by whacking him in the head or by pulling his beard.[247] When at a Braunau sitting in 1927, Manfred Bühlmann, associate professor for the history of architecture at the Technische Hochschule München, asked "Olga" whether he was allowed to kiss her [materialised] hand, he got a gentle biff on the nose as an answer.[248] Ridiculing the academics present certainly gave her a lot of fun and satisfaction. "Olga" imperiously demanded that the participants incessantly and loudly and absurdly chattered and sang without any pause because otherwise she would not be able to perform. To further assert her command, she could ask persons to sing individually.[249] She especially wanted to impose her typical lower class musical taste on the participants. Whereas Schrenck wanted to play records of earnest classical music during the sittings, "Olga" wanted to listen to military marches, brass bands and "beermusic"[250] (such as the "Bayerische Defiliermarsch") or to popular songs (such as "Kommt ein Vogerl geflogen" or "In Lauterbach hab' ich mein Strumpf verloren").[251] In addition "Olga" quite obviously hated the stilted earnestness of the scientists and answered with "the

245 Walther: Ufer, 428.

246 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 422.

247 Walther: Ufer, 419; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 94.

248 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 44. In the records of a sitting with Rudi Schneider in the "Metapsychologisches Institute" at Vienna 8/12/1932, presided over by Erich Czernin-Dirkenau and Otto Meixner, one can read: "One of the present [participants] receives a strong blow on the chest and is finally hurled violently at the feet of one of the participants. When asked what that blow was supposed to mean, 'Olga' through the medium's mouth replies: 'To remember me by'" (English translation by Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 26).

249 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 157–158.

250 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 134.

251 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 140 („Biermusik"); Walther: Ufer, 420; Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 114 and 157–158.

extremely childish, if not to say silly" ("läppisch") suggestion of the incessant chattering of the participants[252] or of using toys for producing manifestations.[253] Eric John Dingwall, research officer of the Society for Psychical Research, in a letter called the general "howling" of the sitters on "Olga's" bidding "burlesque entertainment".[254] If this kind of exhilarating accompaniment was refused to her by Schrenck she became furious and let him and the other participants wait for hours in the dark before the phenomena started. It was a kind of class struggle in the experimental laboratory.

How did their closest relatives experience the medium? Willi's wife Josefine ("Fini"), a nurse, answered that Willi's comical attitude, already mentioned by Schrenck,[255] had only been superficial. Willi, she wrote, was not as cheerful and harmless as people thought he was; in reality he was "uncommunicative, mistrustful, and [only] in his outward appearance was he a happy man. He never told me any details about his time with Schrenck [. . .] He told [me] almost nothing." So, he had remained a "mystery" even to her.[256] After the Second World War, Willi came back from Germany to Austria and worked as a dental technician at Braunau but could not open his own laboratory as he still held the German nationality (from 1935 until 1957). He did not want to return to Germany, however, because of his mother's illness, later out of "private reasons".[257] His attempt to set up his own dental laboratory in 1954 by help of extorting money from the heirs of Schrenck-Notzing[258] and by pretending that he was able to demonstrate "phenomena" again and therefore wanted to be invited to London and Paris for money,[259] completely failed.

252 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 134.

253 Schrenck-Notzing: Die Phänomene, 105.

254 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 153.

255 Schrenck-Notzing: Materialisationsphänomene, 551.

256 Letter by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 15/11/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H. Fini's only souvenir from the young Willi (a time when she had not known him) was a painted portrait of him "in the prime of his life", as Gerda Walther wrote in English to Hans Bender (Postcard by Gerda Walther to Hans Bender 17/8/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder L). Arranged by Gerda Walther, Fini donated the portrait to Bender's Freiburg "Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene" in 1972 (Letter by Gerda Walther to Hans Bender 19/9/1971; Letters by Hans Bender to Gerda Walther 22/9/1971 and 9/12/1971; Letter by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 28/3/1972 BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H).

257 This at least is the information given by Willi and Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther in a note in 1970: BSAM, Ana 317, Folder G.

258 See annotation 196.

259 In the middle of July 1953, Willi Schneider informed Gerda Walther in a letter that he still could trigger phenomena and wanted to be available to science: Letter by Gerda Walther to Joseph Kogelnik 17/8/1954; Letter of Willi Schneider to Gerda Walther 19/2/1954; Letter by

As a consequence, he became an employee in the "Vereinigte Metallwerke Ranshofen-Berndorf" in 1955 but was sent into early retirement in 1965.[260] One year later he suffered a stroke and was confined to bed from then on and required nursing care.[261] Because of his bad temper, he was hardly bearable for his wife. He did not want any obituary printed in the newspaper when he died because of "the evil tongue of people".[262] He became a happy man only on his deathbed: "He passed away in peace. He must have experienced great joy in his last seconds on earth, as I had never before seen such inner joy in the expression of a dying man." [orig. German][263]

Apart from the questionable psychological nature of the mediums, physical peculiarities were assumed. In vain Gerda Walther tried to convince Willi's widow and the parapsychologist Hans Bender to have an autopsy made of Willi after his death in 1971, because – as she wrote – this offered the unique chance of investigating the physical mediumistic energy centre of the Schneider brothers in the liver: "It was assumed that the mediumistic energy emanated from and withdraw into their right hip (when there was a sudden light switched on, both Willi and Rudi felt strong pain at this spot and the skin was reddened then)". [orig. German][264] But finally, Willi Schneider without any medical intervention was laid to the eternal rest in the Braunau cemetery to the sound of the firemen intonating "Ich hat' einen Kameraden".[265]

Alternative Forms of Popular Piety Between the Two World Wars

A superficial look at the Schneiders' mediumship might bring one to assume a clear difference between "scientific" parapsychological experiments in Munich

Gerda Walther to Willi Schneider 20/2/1954: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder O. Perhaps Willi had been encouraged by the 1952/1953 publication of Kogelnik: Willi Schneider Entdeckung.

260 Note by Willi and Fini Schneider 1970 for Gerda Walther: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder G.

261 Letter by Gerda Walther to Hans Bender 28/7/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

262 Letter by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 15/8/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

263 Postcard by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 4/8/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

264 Letter by Gerda Walther to Fini Schneider 12/12/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H. Karl Gruber wrote (Gruber: Okkultismus, 81): "After exhausting sittings, the awakening medium [Willi Schneider] often complained about pain at his right side." Gruber "was without doubt that a fluid substance emanated from the medium's body", but did not know from which part of the body it came from.

265 Letter by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 15/8/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

and in other European capitals and the spiritualist (pseudo)religious practises at a local level at Braunau. Does this also imply a strict separation between a scientific and a religious interpretation of the Braunau mediumism? By looking closer, this clear difference is somewhat blurred. The spiritualist spirit guides limited the scientific sovereignty of the scientific experiments, as we saw, and the persons leading the circle ("Zirkelleiter") at Braunau (Father Joseph Schneider and Rudolf Kalifius respectively) reacted against scientific doubt and questioning by introducing themselves the scientific methods of documentation by records and written statements of witnesses. And whether one looks at the rational side of scientific experiments or at the religious side of spiritualist séances, they both met in a popular environment in which simple curiosity, social communication, thrilling entertainment and hidden sexual pleasures played a decisive role.

One might say, of course, that from a historical point of view, the Braunau spiritualism was a regression to an already out-dated American new religion of the 19th century.[266] However, it was also true that this religion had been reactivated as a consequence of the First World War with its many millions of casualties including the victims of the pandemic Spanish influenza – and this not only in the defeated nations such as Germany or Austria, but also in the victorious countries.[267] The real power of spiritualism in the 1920s and 1930s became manifest when investigators such as Albert von Schrenck-Notzing and his foreign competitors were not able to eliminate the spiritualist elements including the spirit guides in their own scientific parapsychological experiments – and were taunted for this by their spiritualist trained mediums. The scientific experiments of Schrenck-Notzing saw a triumph of spiritualism over (para)psychological science!

A clear distinction between secularly arguing parapsychologists, who understood the spiritual guides as dissociated elements of the unconscious mind of a person, and spiritualist religiosity escaping into the belief of the eternal soul did not always exist in reality. A good example for this is Gerda Walther. She earned her money as Schrenck's "scientific secretary" and doing so she also came into contact with the Schneider family. She who had not been baptised and had been educated an atheist by her socialist father, fell under the religious spell of the spiritualist Schneider milieu. As regards the Schneiders themselves, spiritualism not only confirmed and strengthened their traditional Catholic belief in eternal life but in addition they received fame (as the spirit of "Lola Montez" had promised them as return for the pious act of prayer for her "poor soul") and the material gratification of earning their money as international

266 See Linse: Säkularisierung.
267 See Brandon: Spiritualists, 220–222.

trance mediums. Rudi Schneider married Maria ("Mitzi") Mangl in 1933 (including the Catholic church wedding ceremony) and moved to Weyer in Upper Austria as a professional motor mechanic, chauffeur, and driving instructor with his own driving-school which his widow later continued to operate.[268] Until 1937 he still held sittings at Weyer, in Vienna, Prague and London with Austrian and foreign investigators. Later, having become cautious after Austria's "Anschluss" to the Third Reich in 1938, he only held private sittings at home without any outsiders ever admitted, with his landlord Schickl, a timber trader. Up until Schickl's death in about 1947 or 1948,[269] they held many nightly séances "in which 'Olga' wanted to explain a technical invention [to them] but they did not completely understand ["man kam nicht ganz zurecht damit"]."[270] Before Rudi's widow committed suicide in 1970 due to her suffering from incurable cancer, she burned the records of these sittings so that her Schneider relatives with whom there had already been inheritance disputes after Rudi's sudden death in 1957, would not be able to make money through this material.[271] So "Olga's" last financial coup with the help of a technical-mechanical invention unfortunately failed to materialise. The spiritual and the material were very close together in this world of parapsychologists and spiritualists.

We could not glean a clearly delimited spiritualist trance religion in our local Braunau study. The phenomenon can much rather be seen as a gradual transition from spiritualism to Catholicism in a milieu strongly believing in miracles and perhaps even longing for them. People who were looking for material assurance of religious beliefs in a materialistic age could find it in various miraculous manifestations, from the blood tears and other "stigmata" of Christian saints to the "teleplastic fluid" of spiritualist mediums. Spiritualism furthermore offered a possibility for a Protestant theologian such as Rudolf Adolf Hoffmann to proclaim a Christian doctrine which was based both on mediumistic experience and on modern parapsychological science and also gave consolation in the face of millions of war victims.

The starting point of the Schneider home circle at Braunau with the self-manifestation of the "poor soul" of "Lola Montez" and the ensuing spiritualist communication with this dead person draws attention to the latent fear of a

268 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 1.

269 Dates according to Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 392. Anita Gregory wrote that Schickl's wife continued the sittings after her husband's death until she suffered a stroke and died in 1951, after which the Schickl relatives threw the Schneiders out of the house: Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 392.

270 Letter by Gerda Walther to Fini Schneider 19/9/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

271 Letter by Fini Schneider to Gerda Walther 17/9/1971: BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H.

breakdown of the social connection between generations by the violent death of so many young people during the First World War. In smaller communities such as Braunau, where everybody knew everybody else, it became an important social duty to keep the memory of the dead alive in the hearts of the surviving population. This is why in so many towns and villages war memorials were publicly inaugurated after the war which individually listed the names of each of the deceased. And this is why other forms of communication with the dead such as the ones practised in spiritualist séances were of psychological and social importance for these communities. Praying for the "poor souls in purgatory" had been the traditional and formerly institutionalised Catholic practise of loving communication between generations.[272] Moreover, once it had also been a social solidarity pact between the different classes of the living themselves.[273] When the spiritualists gained popularity after the Great War, this was a sign that the old Catholic tradition of praying to and for the "poor souls" was about to lose its persuasive power.[274] In Catholic Bavaria and Austria it seems to have been partially replaced by the more "modern" practise of connecting the generations by help of living mediums. This was a wider social "circle" in which the living and the dead "formed the chain". Schrenck-Notzing, obsessed with proving physical mediumship, was completely blind to this psychosocial aspect of the Schneider mediumship originating at Braunau.

Our case study of Corvette Captain ret. Joseph Kogelnik shows how the breakdown of his military and political world together with his former financial security and social status also destroyed his philosophical sense of security and triggered the search for new inner and outer stability. This "inner revolution" led him from his shattered materialistic world view to spiritualism and then to Catholicism. Gerda Walther, who became friends with him, was encouraged by a moment of mystical epiphany in the month of the November Revolution of 1919, to go a similar way from atheism and Marxism to spiritualist parapsychology, then from anthroposophical oriented Christianity to Roman Catholicism.

In the 19th century, the belief in spirits, in seeing and summoning ghosts, and the existence of stigmatic and ecstatic virgins were Catholic answers to the great time of upheaval after the French and the Industrial Revolutions.

272 Le Goff: Fegefeuer, 22f.

273 See also Koren: Spende.

274 The last among the living to feel responsible for the "poor souls" were Therese von Konnersreuth in Bavaria, who called the "poor souls" craving for redemption by help of the living: "begging cats" ("Bettelkatzn"): Steiner: Visionen, 140, and in Austria Maria Simma, called the "poor-souls-woman" ("Arme-Seela-Wible": Schurig: Maria Simma).

This spiritual reaction was especially embodied in women living in rural areas.[275] This symptom of change might well be interpreted as a rural parallel to contemporary feminist emancipation of the educated classes in the big cities. In the second half of the 19th century, female Spiritualist mediums of the underclasses added to this tendency of women's liberation.[276] Our observations regarding the mediums of the Schneider family or the Kogelnik couple at Braunau show that this "feminist" tendency continued in the first half of the 20th century, stimulated by the turbulences of the First World War and the post-war years. It is obvious, however, that in addition to "holy virgins" such as Therese von Konnersreuth or Gemma Galgani, we now have male trance-mediums with their female spirit guides. The spirit of "Lola Montez" alias "Olga" does not only illustrate the temporal and causal connection between rebellious women during this time span; "Olga" furthermore offers the prototype of a capricious woman not inclined to obey her male "masters" – neither Schrenck-Notzing nor Rudi himself.[277] In reality, things were even more complicated, of course: Schrenck-Notzing's life style both as an independent scientific investigator and as a bon vivant depended on the money of his wife, the rich heiress of the industrialist Gustav Siegle from Stuttgart; Schrenck himself seems to have preferred the financially dependent Schwabing bohemian Franziska Countess von Reventlow as paid mistress who avenged herself for Schrenck's purchased sex by referring to him as "Schnotzing"[278] in her diaries. The charming and obliging Rudi Schneider had first refused to marry a woman who was the only child of a wealthy Vienna businessman because he did not want to depend on her money but wanted to provide for his wife himself[279] – and the character of his later chosen wife Mitzi Mangl, who had no money of

275 Von Olenhusen: Erscheinungen; Priesching: Maria von Mörl; Weiss: Seherin von Altötting.
276 Braude: Radical spirits; Edelman: Voyantes; Owen: Darkened room; Tromp: Altered status.
277 Walther tells the story of a conversation between Rudi and "Olga" when she was moving glass as they sat to drink coffee: Rudi boasted that now he was his own master and "Olga" could have no power over him as she did during his trance. As an answer, Rudi fell into trance and "Olga" now spoke out of his mouth and explained that he "had got too cheeky with her – and she wanted to demonstrate to him who really maintained control! [. . .] We asked 'her' to set him free again. He came back to his mind, looked at the cake in his hand in astonishment, shook his head he said that 'Olga' had again played a trick on him. We gave him the good advice not to provoke 'Olga' again" (Walther: Ufer, 452).
278 An expression coined by her with several pejorative allusions to "Schmonz": in Yiddish twaddle; to "Schmotz", in Swabian dialect grease or mud; to Schmock: a stupid unpopular person.
279 Walther: Ufer, 454.

her own, was surprisingly similar to that of his spirit guide "Olga".[280] Willi and Rudi had no children (which caused the inheritance disputes among the Schneider brothers).[281] So, a story of the Braunau mediums inevitably leads into the labyrinth of love and sex in the roaring twenties and the different gender patterns accompanying them.

In the years after the First World War, new forms of religion emerged in Germany as an answer to the spiritual crisis: The so-called "inflation saints" ("Inflationsheilige"), radicalising the life-reform movement of the 19th century,[282] caused agitation among the population of the urbanised and industrialised German regions by their anarchic life style and its political implications.[283] In the more conservative, rural and lower middle class milieus, table turning ("Tischerlrucken") and spiritualist communication with the souls of the deceased was seen as a practicable means of bringing light in the darkness of a troubled age.[284] "The miraculous or the enchanted" ("Das Wunderbare oder die Verzauberten") was the way a contemporary writer summarised the many varieties of answers to the dominant need for the soul's health if not salvation in the years between the two world wars. In his collection of "miracles" he listed, among others, spirit materialisations, anthroposophy, the blood miracles at Konnersreuth and numerous "prophets in the German crisis". Hitler, with his mediumistic power, he wrote, was only one of them.[285] So he also constructed a religious-political connection between Hitler and the other representatives of "miracles", just as Carl Zuckmayer specifically did between Braunau mediumism and National Socialism in the text quoted in the preface. What can be said from a historian's point of view to this interpretation? As a general hypothesis it is certainly wrong as the connection between Braunau trance mediumism and Nazism seems to be limited to two persons only: One of them was the Protestant Vienna theo-

280 Gerda Walther wrote to Hans Bender 11/1971 that Willi's wife Fini Schneider, "contrary to the pretentious, conceited Mitzi was a nice, simple, motherly woman" (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H).

281 Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 126, nevertheless thought that the marriage of Rudi and Mitzi had been "satisfactory and harmonious": "I met Mitzi in 1964, about seven years after Rudi's death, and if ever a woman mourned for her husband it was Mitzi Schneider." Fini Schneider wrote to Gerda Walther 14/12/1971, 4 1/2 months after her husband Willi's death: "Slowly I am getting over it. In spite of everything that was [this allusion might refer to Willi's chronic illness and the consequent emotional stress for both of them], I miss Willi very much" (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder H).

282 See Wedemeyer-Kolwe: Aufbruch.

283 Linse: Propheten; Kort/Hollein: Künstler; Linse: Ludwig Christian Haeusser.

284 See Sawicki: Leben.

285 Olden: Das Wunderbare, 18–19.

logian Richard Adolf Hoffman.[286] The other person was Willi Schneider himself (German citizen from 1935 to 1957)[287] but not his brother Rudi.[288] It is true that the Schneider brothers did not embody resistance against the Nazis during the Third Reich as Therese von Konnersreuth did as a folk saint.[289] But by their mediumistic "miracles" they at least strengthened Catholic identity in persons like Joseph Kogelnik. But one should not forget that the political consequences of Austrian Catholicism could go hand in hand with strong anti-Semitism in the wake of Karl Lueger, founder of the "Christlichsoziale Partei" in 1893 and mayor of Vienna from 1897 until his death in 1910. Kogelnik was a member of this conservative Austrian party[290] and so it is not surprising that his "Christian socialism" had a strong vein not only of anti-Marxism[291] but also of Arian anti-

286 Richard Adolf Hoffmann, called "Ghost-Hoffmann", later was a National Socialist, anti-Semitist, an opponent of the "Bekennende Kirche" and a supporter of the "Deutsches Christentum": Taupe: Hoffmann.

287 Already Gerda Walther, no supporter of National Socialism herself, suspected that Willi Schneider had been a member of the NSDAP: see her personal annotation to a note of Willi and Fini Schneider for Gerda Walther 1970 (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder G): "NSDAP?" Gerda Walther also informed Hans Bender in a letter 28/7/1971 that Willi had been a combatant (medical sergeant) on the Nazi side during the whole war, had then been an English prisoner of war in Germany and added: "Probably NSDAP?!" (BSBM, Ana 317, Folder L). According to BAB, Wilhelm Schneider was a member of the NSDAP since 1 April 1930 (party number 227.300), a member of the SA, block-leader of the NSDAP local group at Ebersberg, a member of the "Deutsche Arbeitsfront", the "Reichsluftschutzbund", the "NS-Reichsbund für Leibesübungen" and the "Kolonialbund".

288 Rudi Schneider kept away from the Nazis and got through the reign of the Third Reich uncompromised (no entry found in BAB). Whereas his brother Willi lived in Bavaria under Nazi rule since 1933, Rudi married Mitzi Mangl in 1933 and moved to Weyer in Austria, so that the Nazis' pressure became relevant for him only after Austria's "Anschluss" in 1938. According to Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 405, he was imprisoned by the Gestapo but set free again without any explanation. It is obvious that this was intended to be a warning to him because from 1938 onwards he did not hold any public sittings anymore on his wife's wish.

289 See, for instance, the intensive contact of Fritz Gerlich, murdered in the Dachau concentration camp by the Nazis, to Therese Neumann: Morsey: Fritz Gerlich. Fritz Gerlich's beatification is in a state of preparation.

290 We infer this from his talks at several "Christian-socialist evening consultation hours" ("Christlichsoziale Sprechabende") at Braunau as documented by the weekly "Neue Warte am Inn".

291 In 1927, he gave a talk before the Braunau "Katholischer Gesellenverein" about the differences between Christian socialism and Marxist socialism: "The talk was so clear and convincing that everybody [present] shuddered away from the crimes of Marxist socialism": Anonymous: Monatsversammlung.

Semitism.[292] Kogelnik, however, seems to have been immune against Nazism.[293] Gerda Walther's resistance against National Socialism and its use of "black magic" as a warfare weapon was strengthened by her conversion to Roman Catholicism,[294] which had partly been motivated by her experience of the phenomena produced by the Schneider brothers.

Willi and Rudi Schneider represented in the years between the wars a kind of "untamed mediumship" and they refused to be tamed by parapsychological science or by totally losing themselves in the traditional Catholic concern about the "poor souls in purgatory" or by being associated with a political creed. Their trance phenomena were a historical phenomenon beyond science, confession or political ideology. Even to their closest relatives they remained a "mystery". Nevertheless, their psychohistoric rootedness in the materially depraved and psychically disconcerting conditions of the time is obvious. So, our local study does not reveal the existence of a pure form of alternative (that is: anti-Catholic) spiritualist religion at Braunau but shows that popular piety found new facets to express itself in a traditionalist milieu between the wars and so could also spread its effects to more intellectually inclined persons who were disappointed with "materialism", "rationalism" or "patriarchalism".

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292 In an article in the Spiritualist "Neues Licht" in 1925, Kogelnik violently attacked Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis with anti-Semitic arguments in the name of Christianity, "Arianism" and political conservativism: Anonymous: Spiritualismus.

293 No entry found in BAB.

294 Ernst Schulte-Strathaus, literary scholar and antiquarian, was a member of the Schrenck-Notzing circle in Munich and took part in sittings with Rudi Schneider in Munich and at Braunau. From 1934 to 1941 he belonged to the staff of Rudolf Hess, after whose flight to Britain in 1941 he got into the focus of the Nazi "Sonderaktion Hess" and was imprisoned in a concentration camp until 1943 (Schulte Strathaus; Walther: Ufer, 473–474 and 582). As the Nazis found letters by Gerda Walther in his belongings, she was also arrested by the Gestapo (Walther: Ufer, 583–598). She had worked before as a censor in the Gestapo "Auslandsbriefprüfstelle" in Munich because of her command of foreign languages (Walther: Ufer, 568–569). After her release from custody, she returned to the "Auslandsbriefprüfstelle", but nine months later was asked to work in the Berlin Supreme Command of the Navy in the "Group SP" (SP stood for Sidereal Pendulum) where one experimented with sidereal pendulums to locate Allied sea vessels (Walther: Ufer, 599–602; Gerda Walther: Hitler's black magicians; Anton/Schellinger/Schetsche: Szientismus). On her own wish, she then returned to Munich to her former job as a censor by which she could support Christian opponents of the regime (Walther: Ufer, 603–626, 644–650, 664). Together with a friend she secretly duplicated bishop Clemens August Graf von Galen's sermons in defiance of the Nazis (delivered in July/August 1941) on her typewriter, cautiously hiding the traces, and passed them on ("It was good that the old revolutionary tradition [of Socialism] still lived on in me!" Walther: Ufer, 573–574). She was dismissed without notice on 28 February 1945 for "defence reasons" ("abwehrmäßige Gründe") by the Gestapo: Walther: Ufer, 682.

Archives

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München: Deposit of Gerda Walther, in: Nachlässe, signature: Ana 317. Quoted as BSTM, Ana 317. Walther's written testimony in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek has not yet been organised for its greater part. I thank Dr. Nino Nodia (Nachlassreferat der Abteilung Handschriften und Alten Drucke Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München) for the permission to study the Walther papers. They only include material dating after the Second World War because Walther's older collection was destroyed by bombing several times and by Gestapo confiscation during the "Special Action Heß" ("Sonderaktion Heß") in June 1941 (Walther: Ufer, 588).

Bundesarchiv Berlin: information about Wilhelm ("Willi") Schneider was taken from: NSDAP-File Cards; Folder in "Parteikorrespondenz"; Folder Sign. R 9361 III/569364 with file cards and party statistical inquiry ("Parteistatistische Erhebungsbogen") 1939 (information by Heinz Fehlhauer 4/5/2017). Quoted by us as BAB.

Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene e.V., Freiburg im Breisgau (IGGP-Archiv): Nachlass Albert von Schrenck-Notzing (signature: Nachlässe 10/1). The material collected by Albert von Schrenck-Notzing badly suffered during the Second World War and from neglect; what was left was collected in the IGGP-Archive. There is no detailed list available of the material deposited there; the home page of the institute comments its list of deposits with the remark: "Deposit not yet organised" ("Nachlass noch nicht erschlossen"). The IGGP-Archive holds a deposit of Gerda Walther, too (signature: Nachlässe 10/6). There is no detailed list available of the kind of material deposited there: "Deposit not yet organised" ("Nachlass noch nicht erschlossen"). One can expect that the two gramophone records with Rudi Schneider in trance are in the IGGP-Archive's collected sound-carriers (signature: 4/1 "Schallplatten") but no online list is available.

Oberösterreichisches Landesarchiv: Matricula. Online portal of church/parish registers. Braunau am Inn: http://data.matricula-online.eu/de/oesterreich/oberoesterreich/braunau-am-inn/ (last access on September 24, 2019). We especially used the death registers of Braunau.

Österreichische Nationalbibliothek: ANNO (Austrian Newspapers Online): „Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften online": http//anno.onb.ac.at/ (last access on September 24, 2019).

Society for Psychical Research Archive, Repository: Cambridge University Library, Department of Manuscripts and University Library. Quoted by us as SPRA. Collection description of Manuscripts/MS SPR/1-94: https://janus.lib.cam.ac.uk/ In the SPRA is deposited part of the material used by Anita Gregory for her two publications on Rudi Schneider: MS SPR/52; MS SPR/53; MS SPR/67; MS SPR/75. Of

special interest are: “Notebooks: Sittings with Rudi Schneider” MS SPR/75 (as this deposit has not yet been catalogised one can only hope that these indeed are the two valuable notebooks of Father Schneider handed by Mitzi Schneider to Anita Gregory and her husband Clive Gregory in 1964). 2 letters by Joseph Kogelnik (here wrongly: Hogelnitz) from Braunau to Everard Feilding 1924 (see Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 68–69 and 127, note 11): MS SPR/52,1. Correspondence of Joseph Kogelnik-Eric John Dingwall 1923–1925: MS SPR/53,2. It is not clear whether the correspondence and papers of Gerda Walther in MS SPR/52,1,2,4,10 also include her correspondence with the Gregories. The testimonials of Harry Price and Eugène Osty, handed over by Mitzi Schneider to the Gregories in 1964 seem to be identical with MS SPR/52, 11 (18 and 19): “Harry Price, Lord Charles Hope to Rudi Schneider (1930) (mounted on card)” and “E[ugène] Osty, declaration of certainty that Rudi Schneider can produce paranormal phenomena, 1931”. The transcription of the “interview tape recorded by Mr. John Cohen [with Willi Schneider in 1964], translated by Anita Gregory” (Gregory: Rudi Schneider, 18) is not listed in SPRA; maybe it can be found somewhere in the University of Manchester Special Collections.

Stadtarchiv and Studienbibliothek Braunau: Häuserchronik Braunau (Chronicle of the houses of Braunau): information about Joseph Kalifius. No documents about Willi and Rudi Schneider were collected in the Stadtarchiv (information by Manfred Rachbauer, Stadtamt Braunau, 18/7/2017 and 11/8/2017).

University of London, Senate House Library, Eric John Dingwall Papers. MS912, Collection description (304 pages): http://archives.libraries.london.ac.uk/resources/MS912.pdf (last access September 24, 2019). Quoted by us as EDArchive. The collection includes material used by Anita Gegory for her two publications on Rudi Schneider and a discussion of her conflict with Harry Price about his “exposing” of Rudi Schneider. Most important: Correspondence with Willi, Rudi and Joseph Schneider: MS912/1/130; Correspondence with Carl von Klinckowstroem: MS912/1/16 and MS912/1/105; Correspondence with Gerda Walther: MS912/4/269; Discussion with May Walker about Rudi and Willi Schneider and their relationship with Captain and Mrs Kogelnik and Albert von Schrenck-Notzing: MS912/1/14; Correspondence with Clive Gregory and Anita Kohsen Gregory: MS912/269.

University of London, Senate House Library, Harry Price Archive. Collection description (771 pages): http://archives.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/resources/HP.pdf (last access September 24, 2019). Quoted by us as HPArchive. Another part of the material used by Gregory: Rudi Schneider, is deposited in this archive. Most important: London hotel bills for Mitzi Mangl and Rudi Schneider: HPB/5B/3; Rudi Schneider Sittings: HPC/3C/1-2; Correspondence Price-Joseph Schneider: HPC/4A/106 and HPC/4B/225-227; Correspondence Price-Rudi Schneider: HPC/4A/107-108 (107

includes a letter by Price from 1930 "certifying that Rudi Schneider's phenomena are genuine") and HPC/4B/228-229; Correspondence Price-Albert and Gabriele von Schrenck-Notzing: HPC/4A/84 and HPC/4B/183 and 184; Correspondence Price-Gerda Walther: HPC/4A/126 and HPC/4B/259-263; Correspondence Price-Rudolph Kalifius: HPC/4A/148 and HPC/4B/130; Letter by Rudolph Kalifius to Gerda Walther: HPC/4C/17; Correspondence Price-Joseph Kogelnik: HPC/4B/136-137; Letter by Joseph Kogelnik to Eric Dingwall: HPC/4C/19; Correspondence Price-Carl von Klinckowstroem: HPC/4A/66 and HPC/4B/134; Letter by Carl von Klinckowstroem to Gerda Walther: HPC/4C/28; Correspondence Price-Edmund and Marie Holub: HPC/4A/146 and HPC/4B/109; Correspondence Price-Hans Thirring: HPC/4A/122 and HPC/4B/252; Correspondence Price-Karl Przibram: HPC/4A/154 and HPC/4B/207; Correspondence Price-Karl Amereller: HPC/4A/135 and HPC/4B/281; Correspondence Price-Hans Bender: HPC/4A/4 and HPC/4B/13. Photo material (photos, glass lantern slides, negatives etc.) of the Schneider brothers and their circle, of Braunau, of the Schneider investigations: HPA/5/1; HPC/2/7; HPG/1/6/1-2; HPG/1/13/1; HPG/2/683-751; HPG/3/155-313, 522–542, 676–679, 697–717, 723–741. Two gramophone records "Rudi Schneider going to trance 1932": "records are broken, unfit for production": HPI/2/6.

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Erhard Schüttpelz and Ehler Voss

Passing the Examination. The Mediumistic Trial and its Double in the Writings of Jeanne Favret-Saada

Knowledge

Between 1969 and 1972, the French anthropologist and psychoanalyst Jeanne Favret-Saada conducted research on witchcraft in the French bocage. For research on witchcraft, three important results remain tied to her name. First, that what is called witchcraft has not only a complex of motifs that are basically the same all over the world with many local variants,[1] but also, *on site*, witchcraft is a mode of speech, a rumor or hearsay in which the accusations need not correspond with a consistent sequence of narrative motifs, but are above all brought into and kept in suspense. It is this suspense that prevents damage and allows its artful turning into harmlessness. The therapeutic processes of dewitching that Favret-Saada describes form the framework of a procedure that may prevent the transformation of accusations and counter-accusations into physical violence – at least as long as no authorities intervene and develop a desire to find for themselves the truth of the events. As long as therapy itself maintains its authority, physical violence is ruled out and an epistemological state of suspension remains the telos. This is a universal potential for dealing with/in witchcraft and, at the same time, the particular historical or regional variant of witchcraft accusations that Favret-Saada investigated und made comprehensible. This variant works with consciously contradictory principles.

People who believe that witchcraft is merely a figment of imagination are disturbed in such a way that they consider the possibility that there is a corresponding reality; people who already acknowledge that witchcraft is a reality are confronted with the possibility of delusion or a medical problem. The way witchcraft accusations are spoken of remains consciously unresolved. Whatever people assume to be therapeutically sensible is repeatedly reversed.

1 Cf. Mayer: Witches.

Note: This chapter was first published in German as „Die Wörter, der Zauber, das Leben. Jeanne Favret-Saada zwischen Hexereiforschung und Psychoanalyse." *Curare. Journal of Medical Anthropology* 40:4 (2017): 264–281. Translation by Mitch Cohen.

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The acknowledgment of confusion as the core of witchcraft is the greatest achievement of the first of Favret-Saada's three books on her fieldwork – a methodological achievement whose application can only be transferred from individual case to individual case.

Second, for medical anthropology, this insight into the mode of accusation remains tied to the exposition of the healing effects of witchcraft treatments for the patients, which were hardly noted in earlier research on witchcraft. In her case descriptions, Favret-Saada focuses on the healing aspect of witchcraft in the figure of Madame Flora and her card reading technique. Madame Flora works as a dewitcher and has the ability to deal with people who are severely damaged, impotent, depressive, or traumatized and unable to manage their lives without outside help. With the aid of verbal ceremonies, these patients are spurred to act against their own resignation and are thereby brought into a position in which initiatives for action are made possible again. Favret-Saada describes the healing effects of aggressiveness.

In settled agricultural situations like the French bocage, the accusation of witchcraft is usually territorialized, and it is aimed at the mutual dependence of farm owners on the well-being and wholeness, the health and fertility of family and livestock, harvest and equipment. A series of misfortunes endangers the farm and its residents equally and evokes the comparison: the damage came from elsewhere and in a series. When one person has more, the other has less. Who took it from him? Free-floating, but in part fixed ideas of persecution make a duel situation possible that initially seems imaginary to the observer, because it is staged in the complete absence of hostile persons. But the condition of absence is precisely the prerequisite for the duel's being more than imaginary. Favret-Saada writes that breaking off relations with neighbors or acquaintances, combined with the presence of an unfamiliar person on the farm, leads the neighbor or acquaintance to develop his own suspicions and, in some cases, to begin arming himself as well. An imaginary and improvised ceremonial duel becomes a real duel of avoided gazes and encounters, and vice versa.

Favret-Saada describes situations in which people are summoned to deal with misfortunes that have already occurred, without being able to prevent the now exercised interventions from triggering cascades of measures that remain opaque to each other. And in no way must there be "objectively understandable" reasons for the misfortune; often there are paradoxical and asymmetrical situations in which people who are doing comparatively well accuse people who are living in misery – for example, the impoverished neighbors of a rich farmer who has had a series of misfortunes: suspicion falls on the poor farmers simply because they embody the danger of misfortune that they have experienced in their own lives.

Favret-Saada rejects the functionalist categorization of such circumstances as a form of social disciplining and the psychological explanation of categorizing the relationship as "envy". The sociological and psychological categories indirectly seek poetic justice and do not accept that there is a realm that remains inaccessible to official morality. Favret-Saada's depiction proves the normality of the "amorality" of cases of a behavior that seeks one's own advantage and well-being and nothing else. In minute analyses, she shows how the destructiveness of misfortune can be stopped or at least shifted. There are several such solutions that consist of a process of slowing down or rendering unsure. Among these are, first, the already mentioned spatial isolation that consists of identifying a person as aggressor and imposing a demand that s/he be avoided. If this person surmises the other's attribution and s/he answers in the same idiom, s/he will be unable to do anything but respect the avoidance, and from then on, seen from the outside, the escalation has the structure of a moratorium that can last for years.

Second, the treatment seldom continues without rendering the patient uncertain whether witchcraft has really been performed or whether there is a medical problem. These processes, as mentioned before, are applied in zigzag: someone who does not believe in a certain other person's witchcraft is driven to believe in it and is isolated from that person in such a way that s/he must deal with his or her own persecution syndrome and its ritual treatment. But who believes too strongly in witchcraft is distracted by physical diagnoses and is thrown back upon his or her ability to doubt. Both approaches can be acted out against each other and, with skillful treatment, move toward a peculiar state of suspension: the hostility being imaginary and as not being imaginary, the self protected from hostile powers and exposed to them, and the treatment as an open series. And it appears to be this artificial state of suspension that nourishes the potential of healing a deadlocked situation or at least makes it seem possible, because the healer takes the wishes and ideas of the patients and their relatives seriously and opens a situation toward decisions that can still respond to each new crisis, improvement, or relapse, without abandoning the claims of anamnesis, diagnosis, and therapy.

But the bitter secret of an ethnography of witchcraft and magic is that it faces irreparability. And Favret-Saada does not close her eyes to the cases in which no healing is possible. The attempt to manage what is irreparable, to heal it, can contribute to and even accelerate its irreparability. The symbolic victory of a single healing will never offset the many hopeless attempts to heal. And yet each treatment must set to work with the same unshakeable optimism – and rightly so. And this is the author's third great insight. If no healing is possible, then perhaps a delay, an extension of endurance, or a surge of resistance is

still possible. The feeling of an embittered defensive battle can help all sides not to resign and can replace the hope for healing. If ten years without healing have passed, ten years of steadfastness can be won in this way.

Magic Books

What did Favret-Saada's psychoanalytic training contribute to her knowledge of witchcraft? In all her publications, Favret-Saada made strictly sure to keep psychoanalytic terminology and ethnographic description separate.[2] She does not make this separation particularly explicit, but it can be justified from both sides. The limitation of psychoanalysis is that it is only marginally competent in cases of paranoia and psychotic violence. Sigmund Freud's few texts on the theme are famous and much-discussed, but they are based on studies of literature and not on his own treatment of patients. Freud barely touched on the world of bewitchments and dewitchments, specifically in his analysis of a "demonological neurosis" in the 17th century.[3] As in the case of Schreber, his diagnosis remains controversial[4]; the extension of psychoanalytic technique from the "neurotic" to the "psychotic" realm has often been postulated since Freud, but to this day it has not lost its exceptional nature and, at least at the time when Favret-Saada was trained, was still in the phase of pioneering research.[5] If one applies the vocabulary of psychoanalysis to the field of witchcraft, then it is usually done from a twofold distance: from the distance of neurosis experts' lack of competence for the "psychotic" realm, and from the distance between the terminology of psychopathology and ritually shaped practices. Only under the precondition of this twofold distance can we say that what we associate with "psychotic" symptoms and diagnoses is repeatedly worked through elsewhere in rituals: ideas of persecution and severe psychosomatic suffering connected with ideas of persecution that can escalate to the experience of "soul murder".

And yet, it can hardly be denied that Favret-Saada's presentation could not have been possible without psychoanalysis: what she describes is another form

2 Cf. Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 250–266.

3 Freud: Eine Teufelsneurose im siebzehnten Jahrhundert.

4 Freud: Psychoanalytische Bemerkungen über einen autobiographisch beschriebenen Fall von Paranoia (Dementia paranoides).

5 Balter: Talking Back to Madness; Hoffmann: Psychoanalytische Psychosentherapie als transkulturelle Auseinandersetzung.

of "talking cure", of the healing power of the spoken word. The emphasis on the verbal character of the procedures she describes goes so far that she hesitates to speak of a "ritual". As in psychoanalysis, too, what is important is the spontaneity of improvisation and of talks, and not a predetermined or planned course of treatment. Madame Flora, her most important protagonist, hence appears simultaneously as the opposite and the double of a psychoanalyst: the opposite, because she maintains constant control of the activities involved; and as double, because, in the course of several sessions, she elicits an anamnesis, a diagnosis, and the therapy from the patient himself or herself.

In Favret-Saada's three books, this constellation takes several forms. In "Les mots, la mort, les sorts" (translated as "Deadly Words"), Madame Flora appears as an improvising healer with artful verbal methods treating a hopeless case (the Babin family); in "Corps pour corps", in her significance for the initiation and treatment of the anthropologist, she appears as the most important protagonist and informant of her fieldwork; and in "Désorceler", as an expert card-reading fortune teller, whose skilled technique the author reveals. If the crucial insight of the first book lies in the specific mode of witchcraft accusations, how can we characterize the different modes of all three books?

We have to confess a reading experience that initially touches only the surface, but then leads into unimagined depths. Opening the three aforementioned books by Favret-Saada, there are at least two passages that appear like a magic book hidden within the book. The French word for magic book goes back to the medieval "grammaire"; the "grimoire" got its name through the basic schooling of literate clerics with access to the holy books, the "litterati", from which the layman repeatedly expected magic knowledge and assistance. With Favret-Saada, too, the passages of "grammar" stand closest to the magic of a "grimoire". Her first book – "Deadly Words", from 1977 – ends with a large number of diagrams inscribed with the positions of the patient, the malefactor, and the healer. These diagrams are a typical structuralist endeavor with grammatical and topological exercises, but at the same time, they offer an elementary iconography of misfortune and its magical treatment. There are depictions of the position of the witch, of why she is dangerous, and of how one should respond to him or her. According to the author, the diagrams contain, above all, the promise of a future theory, but what emerges was primarily some kind of abstract folklore: the reduction to the "plot" of witchcraft accusations, without the mode of suspension described in the meticulous discourse analyses that make up the bulk of the book. A "plot", because the topological diagrams form a series of steps of transformations that, to become comprehensible, ask for an operative form of reading: a proxy for changing persons and territories and a

miniaturization of the magical duel in atoms and molecules with positive and negative charges.

These diagrams no longer deal with witchcraft accusations, but with witchcraft, beyond the mode of suspension that has been a precondition of the book so far. Viewing these pictures, one cannot deny the seriousness of the situation, one can only study it or try it out. It's a little as if the main part of "Deadly Words" were about the life-giving and healing power of the treatment, while the appendix deals with the deadly content of the belief with the fixed idea, the main part is written in a virtuoso eloquence, the end instead consists of bold and simple images of a deadly threat and its successful defeat. A savage picture story, a cartoon strip. From the perspective of the main part of the book, it is not only superfluous, but also counterproductive: the suspicion of witchcraft should not be this simple, after all.

Something is wrong here, or it is right solely because these apotropaic images are just as necessary as the long listing of the Babins' hopeless life story. The diagrams promise another book, a theoretical book on dewitching that would answer the question of the relationship between witchcraft and madness.[6] They promise a theory of healing and a theory that would heal the scientific failure of the others. But this theory was never published. Instead, four years later, "Corps pour corps" was launched, initially an extensive excerpt from the fieldwork diary assembled not by Favret-Saada, but by Josée Contreras. It remains unclear whether the text presaged as a second book was written or not. In any case, it was not published, even if part of the announced book must have existed in 1977.

The diary, too, ends with a rupture and an appendix. The fieldwork finishes with a crisis that the ethnographer eludes through weeks of absence. More precisely, she eludes Madame Flora, whose practice she is no longer a match for. In this moment, a third person, also a healer, advises her to avoid Madame Flora entirely in the future. As is not hard to guess, following this advice would have led to a retrospective re-identification of the whole constellation of the fieldwork, and indeed of the entire process of initiation. All the positions would have been reassigned. The author of the diary doesn't follow this advice though, but, step by step, she finishes her fieldwork and "data gathering", without breaking with Madame Flora. In other words, she follows her own insight that the mode of suspension remains the best protection from duels and damages and thereby rescues her knowledge from the devastations of identification. Thus, the actually deadly martial title of the second book – "Corps pour corps", body for body, the short formulation of a duel to the death – can be read differently and life-affirmingly: my life for a body of texts, and the corpus of texts as protection for my bodily life.

6 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 33.

This resolution lets the diary end like a cliffhanger and like a classic autobiography. For each autobiography since Augustine and Rousseau is also about how the autobiography itself found its beginning and how the authorship and the mission of the autobiography arose. In this case, the origin lay in those weeks of absence in which the author studied the scientific literature on witchcraft research and then wrote an essay that is printed in the appendix to "Corps pour corps". This time the sequence is reversed: the diary culminates in a deadly threat, while the appendix formulates the elixir of life. It does not offer the promised theory of dewitching, but, on the contrary, an old article with preliminary considerations of the relationship between psychoanalysis and witchcraft research. But this article meant Favret-Saada's breakthrough to the only valid standpoint of research in these tricky realm, at least in author's view. This standpoint consists in accepting one's own knowledge and learning as part of the object of research.

Jules Michelet proves to be the historical predecessor of Favret-Saada's position, and reading his scandalous text "La Sorcière" from 1862, she found her path to authorship and her epistemological position. Today, Michelet's position has been suppressed again so that he would deserve a new rehabilitation, specifically in the current minefield of discussing the relation between Enlightenment and relativism. For Michelet rightly reminded all Enlightenment thinkers, socialists, classical liberals, and scientists of his time that witchcraft and Enlightenment had not been opposites, and that, from a scientific and historical-philosophical standpoint, it is cheap and even downright false to reduce their relationship to the plot that the Enlightenment abolished witchcraft accusations. Michelet reminds us of the past of the Enlightenment itself, which has been suppressed in embarrassment: everything we would like to call Enlightenment was once witchcraft. For all of our scientific ambitions, political views, skepticism, unbelief, atheism, curiosity, and will to freedom – all of this was termed witchcraft, apostasy, and the will to enter a pact with evil. Everything that became the Enlightenment was once witchcraft. Michelet merely draws the conclusions from this necessary anamnesis of European history, and they are fantastic consequences that everyone should read for himself or herself. In the history of witchcraft research, it is clearly recognizable that, in the course of the 1970s, Michelet's standpoint was shared by an astonishing number of intellectuals: from the women's movement with its self-identification as witches[7] and the spread of Wicca esotericism among academics[8] through Carlo Ginzburg's historical partisanship for the idiosyncrasy of those the

7 Federici: Caliban and the Witch; Hauschild: Die alten und die neuen Hexen; Hauschild, Staschen, and Troschke: Hexen; Hutchinson: Antiquity and Social Reform; Hutton: The Triumph of the Moon.

8 Bowker: All knowledge is local; Luhrmann: Persuasions of the Witch's Craft.

Inquisition charged as witches,[9] to Hans-Peter Duerr's epistemological partisanship for the reality of witches' flying (the 1970s also saw numerous new editions and pirated editions of Michelet's book).[10]

Favret-Saada, too, found in Michelet's standpoint the only scientific stance that meant no denunciation or accusation and no functionalization or glossing over of the phenomena she observed. That's why "Corps pour corps" has two endings: the fieldwork is broken off, but the relationship to the healer is held in suspension; she adopts Michelet's standpoint, which consisted in his being the only writer who recognized and acknowledged his scientific knowledge of witchcraft as being part of the research object, not as the translation of an exotic form of knowledge, as Evans-Pritchard[11] did, and not as the Other of science or the Enlightenment, as is omnipresent in academic writings. Witchcraft is the apostasy of academic reason and the origin of the Enlightenment itself, the will to know. Witchcraft research must therefore flout academic reason in the name of the Enlightenment; after all, throughout the epoch of the persecution of witches, it was university personnel who acted on the side of the Inquisition and who legitimized their activity as being scientific; and when the persecution of witches came to an end, it was again university personnel who patrolled the Enlightenment's Other and denied its legitimacy.

As a consequence, Favret-Saada affirms the practice of dewitching as part of the Enlightenment and one of its possibilities, including its danger of leading to a duel that both sides will perceive as witchcraft. We will examine the consequences of this affirmation more closely below, which are the scandalous core of Favret-Saada's standpoint. And we will show that she was right.

Contradictions

In comparison with the dramatic epistemological reversals and literary constructions of her first two books, the third appears more as a coda. Almost 40 years after the end of her fieldwork, it was published in the form of a collection of essays in 2009. The title "Désorceler" promises the key to dewitching, i.e., what the promised sequel was supposed to accomplish. The title of the English translation is even more drastic: "The Anti-Witch", which sounds a little as if one had condensed a colonial "anti-witchcraft movement" into a single person.

9 Ginzburg: Die Benandanti.

10 Duerr: Über die Grenzen einer seriösen Völkerkunde.

11 Evans-Pritchard: Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic Among the Azande.

But under these two titles, extremely heterogeneous studies are assembled, with interpretations that partly contradict each other. A main part of the book focuses on the playing cards that the dewitcher Madame Flora works with, and Favret-Saada describes in detail the technique with which the cards are turned and her clients are skillfully and, with imperceptible shifts, brought to accept a specific interpretation.

The book – at least the French original with its beautiful colored illustrations – can, like the first, be opened as a magic book that offers help in the performative implementation of both dewitchings and spells. Here, too, a "grammar" is promised, namely the analysis of the speech acts with whose aid Madame Flora is able to instill aggressiveness and agency to act in the quietly suffering peasants. And here a weird transition from grammar to "grimoire" emerges: take a look at your misfortune, take a look at your malefactor! One could cut the cards out of the book and replay the game with the aid of the given explanations. Favret-Saada's analysis oriented toward the theory of the speech acts involved is doubtless helpful, but it is not the promised revelation. The effect is more like a surprising sequel to the diagramms of her first book: witchcraft is depicted, so that the game of dewitching may begin. Can one portray magic without making these portrayals ready to take the leap to the promise of magical efficacy?

But perhaps the point is precisely this being "ready to take the leap". For Favret-Saada's books were composed in full consciousness of their literary character. In a certain sense, her books are even applied literary theory. Their central insight into the state of suspension in witchcraft accusations stems not only from her fieldwork and its notes, but in equal measure from reading of literary theory – of Tzvetan Todorov's classic study of fantastic literature.[12] A detailed review by Favret-Saada from 1972 reveals what she learned from Todorov and what she criticizes in him.[13] Since the 18th century and especially in the 19th century, fantastic literature turned the conflict between paranoia and reference that Favret-Saada emphasized into a form of literary art. What makes this literature fascinating is a state in which two incompatible interpretations appear, and both encounter the same world with the same impact: one interpretation in which "supernatural" beings influence the protagonists and another in which matters have a natural cause and the appearance of supernaturalism arises through the protagonists' imagination. The art of fantastic literature consists in not resolving the simultaneity of these two possibilities and not leading

12 Todorov: Introduction à la littérature fantastique.

13 Favret: Todorov T., Introduction à la littérature fantastique.

to disillusionment, but retaining an inexplicable remnant. The literary fascination arises because the state of suspension is achieved and is refined as stringently as possible: as a form of horror and temptation. That this art form arose in the 18th century and flourished in the 19th century is no coincidence, because the long 19th century as a whole experimented with shifting forms that could be interpreted both secularly and religiously: spiritualism and mediumism in the series of its trials, but also the natural or supernatural knowledge and application of imponderables (ether, electromagnetism, gravitation). The rise of fantastic literature seems to fit well in this series, especially since, from the beginning, it took up the material of these experimental practices and turned it towards sensation and horror and toward enticement and the philosophy of life.

The connection between Todorov and Favret-Saada raises an important and unanswered question: let us assume that this shifting form of discourse – that is, the suspicion of witchcraft placed in suspension – has existed in Europe's lower classes for centuries, and is even as old as the world – that is, the suspicion of witchcraft placed in suspension. What accounts for the emergence of fantastic literature? Mesmerism arose at about the same time and permitted the skeptical upper classes a new and scientifically attested license of rapture, after a long phase of renouncing ecstatic states. If the magical disenchantment of the bewitching was an oral technique with many preconditions, as Favret-Saada presents it, then what does it mean that this procedure has entered both high-brow and trash literature as a literary technique? In this light, fantastic literature is part of the long 19th century's mediumistic trial, perhaps even that part whose institutionalization could best be realized.[14] And in its depiction of magical procedures, doesn't anthropology also repeatedly participate in its own kind of fantastic literature? Isn't anthropological theorizing in the field of magic, for example Lévy-Bruhl's theory,[15] also a counterpart of the fantastic genre?

If that should be true, then fantastic literature made it possible to represent a knowledge in the educated classes that was present all along in rural magic and mastery of witchcraft, knowledge in suspension as a modern form of ambivalent enchantment, but also of healing power – even if in fantastic literature it often tips over into an emphasized incurability of the intermediate state with catastrophic consequences. In fantastic literature, magical therapy became a literary form, transformed from spell-casting to aesthetic invocation, with unbroken popularity ever since.

14 Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien; Schüttpelz and Voss: In jeder Beziehung ebenso wirksam.

15 Lévy-Bruhl: La mentalité primitive.

At the same time, it remains true that Favret-Saada was first able to thoroughly structure her corpus of documents with the aid of Todorov's theory of fantastic literature and probably only in this way gained the personal security to name the unresolvable tensions and incompatibilities that other researchers had observed, but didn't want to depict as confusion because of the absurdity of constant confusion. No other description of witchcraft accusations is characterized by an analogous pleasure in incompatibilities. Favret-Saada's, however and to emphasize it, are precisely for that reason not fantastic literature, and not in Todorov's sense either. Whereas Favret-Saada insists that the spell-caster seeks "to avoid any meeting between the two spheres of madness and witchcraft",[16] fantastic literature since Romanticism repeatedly aims openly at this collision. Because Todorov presented the rules of discourse as rules, just as Favret-Saada would later present the rules of Madame Flora's cartomancy, she can vary these rules and take recourse to fantastic literature for comparison, but also emphasize the contrast with the city-dwellers who are relieved of existential hardship. Her conscious decision for this literary form also helped her protect herself with a number of shifting disclaimers. With the help of the repertoire of literary theory, we can distinguish the author Favret-Saada from her personifications as "narrator": vis-à-vis the tabloid press, whose attention she had attracted, she insists that she is not a witch; vis-à-vis the anthropologist, that she was "caught"; and vis-à-vis the attentive readers, she definitely suggests that she was regarded as a witch, or at least as a dewitcher, capable of healing and counter-magic; of course under the premise that she believed none of this and, at the same time, that one must believe in this discourse in order to be able to research it, but also to feel the weight of the world. She thereby demonstrates that she occupies all given positions; this kaleidoscope of positions seeming too difficult for one person to fill; but an author with a kaleidoscope of narrators can readily do so.

The Trial

So it's no surprise that on closer examination, each of Favret-Saada's books contains a central incompatibility that remains unresolved. We have already noted this in the second book: what would have been if Madame Flora had not been the healer, but the perpetrator of the anthropologist? What if she is the perpetrator, under different illumination? This incompatibility seems to be an

16 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 33.

instance of the great contradictoriness that runs through the first book like a classic antinomy: on the one hand, Favret-Saada determines that it is impossible to take the position of the witch oneself and to identify as a witch. On the other hand, she repeatedly delves into the possibility and circles it as a possible result of a future anamnesis that the victims of magical attacks may have themselves been magical aggressors at an earlier time. This contradiction is not elucidated anywhere; Favret-Saada probably foresaw its exegesis in a theoretical sequel.[17]

This difficulty obviously lies at the center of the understanding of witchcraft accusations. Normally it seems in every speech act that the accusation is axiomatically assumed: only the other person, only every other person could be a witch. The accusation remains irreflexive; otherwise, the language game would collapse. On the other hand, precisely the description of the speech act insists that this game leads to a situation that can appear to be the other side of irreflexiveness. Where does the irreflexiveness tip over into symmetry and a possible acknowledgement of being identified as the witch by others? Nowhere, says the description. At the same time, the therapeutic anamnesis labors on this point: was there in the prior history of the treatment a phase in which the patients themselves behaved as magic aggressors? And what about the diagrams in the appendix? Is the diagram of the witch really the kind that excludes a self-identification? One can doubt it, because the moment when the description is reduced to a sequence of rules in a game is also the moment when the positions appear entirely relational viz. exchangeable. The theory of dewitching lets the irreflexivity of accusations tip over into a possible reversibility. But this tipping point is not a part of the theory. "Deadly words" reads like a text under whose surface a kind of magma seethes, at least when one follows these suspicions of inconsistency.

The third book no longer treads this danger zone. The main part of "Désorceler" is characterized by the claim that is possible to take out the playing cards and reveal the rules according to which the game of dewitching functions – an enterprise, however, that ultimately proves to be impossible. With the classic Enlightenment gesture of unmasking sleight of hand tricks, Favret-Saada generalizes a game that, in the historical part of the book, she depicts as a unique historical, unrepeatable phenomenon. The comparisons between psychoanalysis and magical therapy seem strangely incoherent. Her analysis disintegrates into a bundle of perspectives that are coherent, but that in the end can

17 Cf. Salmon: De la critique de l'objectivité à la cartographie des positions impossibles.

no longer be put together in a coherent whole that additional ethnographic interpretations could supplement.[18] The unresolved antinomies of the first two books – was the patient himself once a witch? Where do the healer's mutual accusations lead? – remain unresolved.

This historical sequence, it could be objected, is nothing unusual in anthropology. It may even be the rule. The anthropologist Ioan M. Lewis[19] describes the person who has returned from the field as the mouthpiece of his community with strangers who, like every disciple of a cult of possession, must be exorcized from his affiliation with strangers by writing his ethnographic text. In principle, this task has no end, and, depending on the anthropologist's personal development and the severity of the case, it becomes ever more effortfully or ever more routinely a series of reinterpretations or a detailed exposition of material. Even if one believes one has worked through everything and thereby finally ended the possession, the real or imaginary return to the field forces one to periodically renew the spell, because exorcism and conjuring cannot be separated. As Lewis himself proved, during the rituals of the Inquisition, a spirit the inquisitors identified as the Devil often appeared and put the accused in a trance; and every priestly exorcism knows analogous intensifications – the exorcism contains an invocation by name, while in classic cults of possession, a cyclical invocation of the spirit is supposed to keep it captivated in the interim. This equation holds also for coping with a fieldwork experience and other journeys, so that, in the course of their lives and the completion of their accounts, anthropologists have to note that, although everything seems to have been said, there is always something left that demands a sequel, in other genres and increasing fragmentation.[20]

But this may not be the only explanation of the "seething" state of the first book. Favret-Saada also conducted research on what is called witchcraft outside of the French bocage, in the context of her psychoanalytic training – a context that compelled her to apply her analysis of witchcraft practically. That is our conjecture. Or was it the reverse, and the knowledge obtained in the bocage developed from the recognition of her own psychoanalytic milieu, her own group? Both possibilities have their own evidence, as emerges when one reads the 1977 publications in one go.

In the annals of Jacques Lacan's *École freudienne de Paris*, right after Jacques Derrida's challenge to a philosophical duel, Favret-Saada's public resignation

18 Cf. Dobler: Fatal Words.

19 Lewis: The Anthropologist's Muse.

20 Favret-Saada: Death at your heels; Favret-Saada: A Reply.

letter is narrated as a key moment that led to the surprising end of the Lacan school.[21] A comparison of the two texts shows that Derrida's attack hardly had the potential to burst apart the Lacan school; its primary aim was to claim a privileged translation between Heidegger and Freud (and Joyce) on his own.[22] The history of reception played out entirely in the sense of this imaginary gigantomachy: tens of thousands of pages offering high honors to Lacan and Derrida, continuations of continuations of subtle initial readings – secondary literature on Favret-Saada's letter to Lacan? None. There may be texts that were never commented on (for 40 years) because they are so incisively formulated that no one feels the need to comment on them. But viewed historically, that is not true, either, because a whole closed-door meeting of the innermost circle of the Lacan school reacted to Favret-Saada's letter, and this discussion shook the Lacan school and, after a brief pause for reflection on the part of its supporting pillars, brought it tumbling down.

Lacan snagged his disciples with a simple declaration of monopoly: he claimed a monopoly on the legible, literal, non-interpretive meaning of Freud's writings. It was all about Freud's word, an *École freudienne*. Freud's texts were interpreted in well-prepared oral improvisations and emphasized the dominance of the signifier over the signified, and it combined Martin Heidegger's history of being with the cybernetic and structuralist ideas of Roman Jakobson, whom Lacan had gotten to know through Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lacan's formation of psychoanalytic theory was in many respects "retro-futuristic": the return to Freud's texts via technically loaded linguistic and communication-theoretical models and their abstractions. In the 1970s, Lacan also began supplementing Freud's topologies with his own topological diagrams.

A few parallels with Favret-Saada are obvious: the focusing on the signifier of the discourse, the suspension of references; and the fascination with diagrams. Additionally, in "Deadly Words", Favret-Saada always heads for the question of a "primal scene" of witchcraft, in which the irreflexiveness of witchcraft gives way to a reversibility of the scenic attribution. Talks with the people in the field also repeatedly touch on this tipping point as a possible position, including as a possible position for the ethnographer.

> Although Louise Regnier considers me to be on the side of civilization and good, she cannot help being somewhat afraid of my possible 'force'. Towards the end of our conversation, she asked me, after silently looking at me for a long while: 'You write books; but don't they [the witches] learn their tricks in books?' I got out of it somehow, answering

21 Roudinesco: Jacques Lacan & Co.

22 Derrida: Die Postkarte.

> that witches' books are 'kept in the family': they have no author and are inherited from dead relatives.[23]

We have seen that Favret-Saada's diagrams, too, mark this tipping point effortlessly: the impossible position of the accused is as easily depicted as all the others. In addition, not only can others identify one with this position, but, using the diagrams, one can also identify oneself with this position. What actually happens in the moment when one plays through the witch's position for oneself? Favret-Saada's theoretical fragments report:

> According to the bewitched, a witch's force is of an unkown magnitude, but in any case it is immeasurably superior to their own: as soon as a witch appears, he presses on the boundaries of their 'enclosure' with an intensity which those boundaries were never meant to withstand; so a breach is opened, through which the bewitched's force will begin to leak away. [. . .]
>
> In local discourse the witch is a fundamentally 'jealous' being; in my own terms, I would say he is jealous because his domain is never big enough for him to use up the whole of his power. Since all social space is registered, or appropriated, the witch is then obliged to invest domains marked with the names of other individuals, and to mark plots with his own name, i.e. to draw them into his own domain.
>
> What is 'magic' in the witch is thus this basic overflow, this surplus of force relative to his name (or territory): a witch is a being who never has enough vital space in which to invest his force. [. . .]
>
> It would therefore be more correct to say that this necessarily unbounded surplus force operates through the body/the name/the domain of the witch. (This is also true of the unwitcher, who always complains of this force which works on him and alienates him; anyone who might possibly become an initiate he invites to rid him of this force once and for all by taking it all on himself.)
>
> One can infer from this that the witch represents a *lack of vital space* due to his surplus of force.[24]

Favret-Saada's theory of the witch is reminiscent of the founding document of the structuralist theory of magic and its translation between semiotics, magic, and psychoanalysis, i.e., of the model of Claude Lévi-Strauss.[25] The witch and the dewitcher possess a surplus of signifiers and encounter the patient's lack of signification; through an abreaction, both can come together and trigger a possible healing process that began in the symbolic and imaginary, according to Lévi-Strauss. This situation becomes incurable and damaging as soon as the witch, with his or her surplus of vital power, creates a lack in the other and as

23 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 87, footnote 30.
24 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 203.
25 Lévi-Strauss: Le sorcier et sa magie.

soon as the territory is distributed in such a way that every gain produces a loss elsewhere, according to Favret-Saada. And there are people who are forced to create a "breach" of loss in others, because the surplus power goes through them – are they all witches? At least, they are in danger of endangering others. Only as dewitchers can they in turn shift to healing, first because they bring a surplus of signifiers to the situation, more than the situation provides (and Favret-Saada uses Todorov to demonstrate precisely that the dewitcher always articulates one incompatibility too many, i.e., at least one surplus signifier in every situation), and second by setting their surplus power against the enemy and striking back or pushing back

This is a coherent structuralist theory, by improving the master. To what degree does this theory also apply to the master himself? Lévi-Strauss' surplus of signifiers was available to everyone; he himself no longer had to found a school, because his reception had long since left behind the question of personally forming a school – so much so, that Favret-Saada no longer mentions his starting text on the theory of magic, and no longer has to mention it. Lacan, in contrast, insisted on an initiation hierarchy with trials and certifications that he personally supervised; in this, he followed Freud's monopolization of psychoanalysis, which led to the successive exclusion of most of his best disciples and friends, his master students and all rebels, and to the conception of "Totem and Taboo".[26]

Psychoanalysis, too, is based on a central irreflexivity: an initiation through self-analysis was possible only once, namely in Freud's founding act; all further initiation processes occur under the supervision of a training analysis. This aspect, too, was repeatedly the occasion for a break with the master or with the analysis; Carl Gustav Jung, for example, managed to move out from under Freud's shadow and to end the catastrophic years after his break with Freud by carrying out his own self-analysis and adopting old techniques of imagination.[27]

When does the dogma of the training analysis become a deadly danger? What led to the suicides of the "passe"? Favret-Saada's indictment is basically an accusation of witchcraft, but in the sense of her definition of the witch (and the dewitcher): with the "passe", Lacan created a situation in which he could occupy "still another territory". This situation produces a corresponding ineradicable "lack" in those at his mercy, because only Lacan could end it, but to do so he would first have to speak with them. But in his absence, during the

26 Roazen: Freud and his followers.
27 Jung: Das rote Buch.

examination, an asymmetry arises that becomes absolute: the lack escalates, self-esteem dwindles immeasurably – in other words, the examinee is "bewitched" by the master's claim to the candidate's entire territory and can't escape this spell until he is given the redeeming word that he has passed. And if s/he flunks, the redeeming word never comes; the surplus of hostile power floods everything; the lack of signifiers to redeem the inarticulation of the (non-) signified is experienced as worse than painful, because the rejection is irreversible and within one's own group appears as social death.

The words in which Favret-Saada depicts this state of affairs are quite different from those we would choose, but the analysis remains the same:

> J. would certainly still be alive if she had not submitted to the initiation. But I would never say the initiation (the "passe") had killed her: for her, that would be a bad joke. I believe, rather, that she died of the portions of what could not be analyzed in her, which, under her analyst's sponsorship and with the approval of her colleagues, flowed into the abyss of her initiation, which seems to me to be the last place where a phantasm can be analyzed. But she certainly knew that, and that's why her death belongs to her, herself.
>
> But the whole *school* – including me, who, until the day when I asked the secretary to strike me from the list, did not object to my office – is and remains responsible that *the initiation institutes a site of what cannot be analyzed under the guise of the most extreme analytic experience*.[28]

Instead of an analytic experience: humiliation in a ritual that turns out to be a farce, because the only thing one is told at the end is: welcome to the club! Those who fail, fail shortly before the farce, according to Favret-Saada. The situation of bewitchment repeated itself in the Lacan school through the dictatorship of the examination, in which every candidate had the wish to address the master as having become a peer for once, but under the condition that Lacan would have the last word. To be analyzed by him and to be allowed to speak the first valid word of one's own self-analysis. This wish was apparently an impossible wish that catapulted one back from the supposedly highest level of psychoanalytic self-analysis and analysis of others into the deepest regression and into the "Jemeinigkeit" of your possible death wish. In Lacan's initiation hierarchy, there is no "highest level" of knowledge, but only the farce and its deadly threat through the impossible "your wish is my command". For the "passe" is constructed as an infernal machine in the sense of the indomitable power of the witch, and the wish for the title "AE" (of the analyst of the school, the École) leads into the abyss of what cannot be analyzed:

28 Favret-Saada: Entschuldigung, ich wollte doch nur . . ., 170 (translated for this chapter by Mitch Cohen).

> In regard to the *initiates*, I have often asked myself what they want in this hell. Each of them declared that the title AE was completely unimportant. But when I told J., for example, that it was all about *him*, she nevertheless wished to go through the initiation, she said, to force the jury to hear her. – To the degree that I can say anything at all, it seems to me that the initiates – at least the authentic ones among them – unavoidably fall for the magic of the most extreme analytic experience: the opportunity to finally be heard by Lacan-of-the-school. But like all analysands who seek the truth, they know quite well that there is something that they will not speak of under any circumstances. A forthright analysis, at least, takes them on the path to expressing this something, whereas the initiation leaves it completely untouched; for there is no analyst there (even though the matter plays out among analysts) and therefore also no analysis.[29]

The Duel

Favret-Saada's open letter had a divided echo: its publication in "Les Temps Modernes" rapidly made it known to the broad public and contributed to discrediting the Lacan school. Soon after its appearance, it was also published in German, in the intellectual magazine "Kursbuch" in a special issue focused on "sects" (Number 55, 1979), which, considering the "school" of Lacan and the described psychological pressure, one can regard as appropriate or not. No official commentary followed from the Lacan school (as far as we know), but the letter soon became the unmentioned foundation of the critical discussion of the central initiation ritual of the Lacan school – a discussion whose minutes led within a year to the self-dissolution of Lacanian psychoanalysis, or better: led to the abolition of the "passe" itself and thus to the end of Lacan's monopoly of power. The intervention of the insider was successful, but her name was obliterated from all the files (except for a short text passage at the beginning of the closed-door meeting), and it can well be that her name not only did not come up in the meeting's discussions, but was also taboo during the coffee breaks – just as one doesn't mention a noose in the house of the hanged man, to quote a German idiom.[30]

The discussion of the "passe" was also the zenith of the defense of Lacan's power and its abolition. One can even go further and postulate that Favret-Saada's accusing letter and the subsequent necessity of a reflective discussion of school formation not only destroyed, but also rescued the Lacan school: with

29 Favret-Saada: Entschuldigung, ich wollte doch nur . . ., 174 (translated for this chapter by Mitch Cohen).

30 The minutes can be found in the "Lettres de L'École Freudienne de Paris. N° 23. Expérience de la passe" of April 1978. Accessible at: http://ecole-lacanienne.net/bibliolacan/lettres-de-lefp/ [last accessed on September 24, 2019].

new tolerance and without the deadly monopoly of a master. The accusation of witchcraft against the master removed him from the center of the exercise of personal power and, to all appearances, unfolded a wholesome force that remains effective today. With its help, during the master's lifetime, the members of the Lacan school managed what psychoanalysis never succeeded in with Freud: liberation from the figure of apostasy and its deadly Inquisition experience, along with the shrinking of the master to the format of a member of his own school.

What became of St. Jeanne, the "persona non grata" at this moment? We don't know. In academic circles and intellectual scenes, the situation of the duel takes the form of debates that never have the aim of taking the form of the duel as a topic and making it an object of reflection. People in the French bocage do just that, and it is the substance of their form of therapy, but intellectuals normally don't do anything like that. In this respect, Favret-Saada's text is an absolute exception, one in a million, especially if we compare it with Derrida's argument with Lacan. In intellectual circles, the secrets of the duel are only articulated behind the scenes; dominant on stage is the shadowboxing of insinuations, feints, and hidden maneuvers whose whole field of ramifications not even the initiated can recognize and may never be able to follow. The magic apparatus of intellectuals has the form of Jacques Derrida's "Postcard" and turns the course of a duel into a self-referential and progressively unrecognizable tracking. So it is fitting in every way that the one text triggered a wealth of commentaries and the other stands solitary in an empty landscape, although Favret-Saada's text spoke about the social rules of the game from the vantage point of an insider and initiate and it decisively changed the history of psychoanalysis in France.

Until Roudinescu's history of psychoanalysis in France, which presents the historical sequence as unmistakably as we have, there were no references to the Lacan school's dealings with Favret-Saada; and Favret-Saada wrote no follow-up text, either. Here we eschew all speculations, simply because at the moment they would just be shadowboxing, too, and we cleave to the body of the text and to the affinities between the therapy form found in the field and the ritual dewitching of Paris.

"Deadly Words" contains, on the one hand, the patient ethnography of several not-so-everyday situations of witchcraft accusations, with diligent elaborations and documentations, and on the other hand, a series of attacks on the established disciplines of traditional witchcraft research. On the one hand, the rehabilitation of rural people; on the other, the rebellion against the lack of understanding by city people, academicians, and the relevant guilds – anthropology, folklore studies, psychology, journalism, Church – all of which have failed

in the case of research on witchcraft, when it comes to articulating what rural people really do and say. Exclusion from the professional discourse of anthropology and folklore studies is consciously accepted as part of the bargain, but it remains part of the discourse analysis of the field. As we have outlined above, this is a consequence of Michelet's position: in the name of the Enlightenment, academic reason must be unmasked in its inability and naiveté, and in other cases like Lacan's, also in its malignity, whether resulting from inability or from naiveté.

For us, born later, Favret-Saada's metaphysical rebellion is a key to understanding a time in which discourse analysis was thought capable of undermining or reforming entire institutions. She took her method of treatment from the field: if someone doesn't want to believe the reference, s/he must be taught; if s/he believes it, s/he should doubt it. It seemed to Favret-Saada that no academic discipline was able to grasp what "witchcraft" really means for the people who experience it, because all these disciplines regarded it as a form of gullibility and self-deception. But the much more conspicuous gullibility lay – and still lies today – on the side of the academicians who were always already finished with their construction of belief in witches before they even posed a single question to those affected by it. Categorizing the others as "gullible" proves to be the simplest means of asserting one's own abstract version of reality, without even once having to check it against the resistance of the documents or of the people. Nothing seduces to gullibility as much as imputing it to others. Against this widespread academic laziness, a reference to reference is what they need.

But Favret-Saada also takes the opposite route, namely the exorcism of reference where it is believed and leads to the "bewitching" of the individual. In the meantime, Favret-Saada's life's work divides into two work emphases whose treatment seems diametrically opposed. On the one hand and first, her studies of witchcraft, which always underscore the referentiality of injurious magic: the anthropologist's inescapable "being caught", the desperation and illnesses of the victims, the existence of the persecutor, and the intractability of the duel, which creates its own reference, because only death can end it. On the other hand, her writings and interventions concerning blasphemy, which with several monographs and many individual commentaries, became the focus of the second half of her life's work.[31] On the surface, the latter seem much more simply constructed, since they are about exorcising any reference from blasphemy and about protecting it from legal prosecution. Favret-Saada's

31 Including Rushdie et compagnie; Comment produire une crise mondiale avec douze petits dessins; Les sensibilités religeuses blessées.

position here is unambiguous: "blasphemy" doesn't exist; it is part of an accusation and a structure of persecution that finds an end only with the insight that the sole reference of blasphemy is the accusation itself with its consequences and with its perpetrators.

This double position seems compelling, on the one hand, and more than construed, on the other. If we try to understand her, we find ourselves in several uncertainties. For the Enlightenment, the persecution of witches turned out to be the real witchcraft; and from the standpoint of the Enlightenment, the legal persecution of blasphemy is a continuation of the Inquisition, a secular persecution and punishment of apostasy. However, if the academic disciplines treat the rural populace's accusations of witchcraft as the apostasy from reason, they themselves continue the categorizations of the Inquisition and treat accusations of witchcraft as a form of witch hunt, rather than as an attempt to heal the persecution. But this healing, doesn't it turn into denunciation, too? And can the legal protection from blasphemous acts not also become a protection against acts of possible persecution? Does Favret-Saada's double position stand up to a trial of consistency?

Only if we return to Michelet's position: everything we call the "Enlightenment" was once "witchcraft" and "blasphemy". If we take the Enlightenment seriously, rather than confusing it with its later phase of success, then we will have to defend the act of blasphemy (or experience in our societies the failure of the Enlightenment as soon as we once again accept a multitude of blasphemy accusations and ultimately allow ourselves to be surrounded by the accusation of sacrilege); and we will have to take the possibilities of the accusation of witchcraft seriously, because otherwise we can no longer protest once our institutions overstep the threshold between deadly reference and life-preserving imagination and between deadly reference and life-preserving imagination. Then we have to acknowledge the unspeakable: that injurious magic is possible in our institutions, as well, and can be provoked by the wrong rules of the game.

Here are the words with which Jeanne Favret-Saada addressed Jacques Lacan directly, thereby passing over to the duel, and with which she utilized and simultaneously destroyed forever the phantasm of the "passe" – for once to be allowed to address the master in the course a training analysis:

> But in 1973 at the conference in Montpellier, when the members of the jury were asked about their activities, they displayed perplexity or sought excuses. You yourself, Lacan, indulged in a long speech that restricted itself to the statement that, about the initiation, one could, well . . . actually not say anything at all, because you yourself still had to wait and see (for what and for how long), but that the initiation was definitely a stroke of

> lightning (is that what struck J.L. dead?), or like a thunderclap, because as Heraclitus already said, etc. What is most astonishing is that this stammering seemed brilliant to many.[32]

These sentences are a conscious travesty and derision of the master, who believed in the fusion of Freud and Heidegger, and at the same time, it is a mythological finger exercise. Heraclitus' sentence "Zeus governs the world through lightning" stood over the entrance to Heidegger's cottage, in Greek, which Lacan had visited. In the guise of lightning, Zeus had killed one of his lovers, Semele, in the act, in his true form. Yes, the authority of Lacan-Heraclitus-Zeus-Heidegger was death and lightning in sexual intercourse (the electrical discharge in every orgasm) with the wish to be allowed to experience the master "in true form", that is: as lightning, as a joke, as an institution, and as "jouissance". Lacan's brilliant stammering was the incarnation of his authority, the stroke of genius of this travesty made it collapse. Who killed J.L.? The "passe"? The master's monopoly? "You yourself, Lacan . . ."? Favret-Saada's address comes at a surprising moment, after pages full of sober elucidations, and it knows no excuses, no stammering, no waiting. What significance did the "passe" even have, except that precisely this event became possible? "You scumbag!" could not have been more drastic.

To Each his own Secret

Suicide has been a starting point and a founding figure for anthropology and sociology and, through her break with the Lacan school, is found in Favret-Saada as a counterpart to her anthropology. In the case of anthropology, however, suicide is called "voodoo death" and cannot be distinguished from murder.[33] It always remains possible that people under suspicion of witchcraft or in hopeless examinations and self-examinations proceed to suicide if social pressure is so great that they see themselves confronted with the alternatives of either themselves accusing their accuser of witchcraft and accepting a duel, of shifting it to a third party, a mediator, or of succumbing to this pressure. This is the basic situation that all sociological and anthropological thematizations of suicide circle around and that characterizes Jeanne Favret-Saada's oeuvre. The call for help: No one to turn to. Maybe there are things one can learn better in the provincial countryside, and maybe one learns them only out of desperation.

32 Favret-Saada: Entschuldigung, ich wollte doch nur . . ., 173 (translated for this chapter by Mitch Cohen).

33 Cannon: "Voodoo" Death.

The story we have told is true, but it is not the whole truth, not even half of it. So it is probably also false, measured against what will emerge from the archives one day. The corpus of text has gaps, and through the gaps in the publications whistles the wind of canonization. We don't know what additional material exists. The first book promised a theoretical sequel, but this never appeared. Its description encompasses only five percent of the material Favret-Saada gathered, according to her estimate. The second book, the diary, is extremely censored and trimmed fit the story told above and its drama. According to the author, the diary was five times as long. And the psychoanalytical notes from the author's training analysis, if they still exist, are unknown to us anyway. In a discussion in 1978, Jeanne Favret-Saada related the following anecdote about the practical comparison between dewitching and psychoanalysis:

> When I had become a psychoanalyst, my dewitcher, a healer I had taken into my confidence, held a tarot card session with me to ask about this event. Madame Flora wanted to know how a psychoanalytic healing works. She had seen a film on television in which Freud fixated his patients with a penetrating gaze to divine their secret thoughts. "You won't do that with me, will you?" she asked me anxiously. "No, I only do that if someone asks me to; otherwise it doesn't work." "But how does it work?" the healer asked. "With words," I said and explained the arrangement of the session, which she had to understand as a ritual, of course. But that didn't play much of a role, as I explained that the session consisted simply of the patient talking and me occasionally saying something in response. "Howsoever, but you surely do something at the same time?" insisted the healer. I was still considering how I could give an honest answer that would formulate the principle of the psychoanalytic method of healing as simply and unmistakably as possible, when she finished the talk with the following words and an expression that showed that she had seen through the reason for my silence: "In the end, to each his own secret!"[34]

This anecdote is revealing in many ways. In the context of her story, it serves to problematize the concept of "ritual", both for psychoanalysis and for Madame Flora's method as Favret-Saada described it, and also for the comparison between the two. If a practitioner improvises and heals with words and, in the course of the improvisation, it remains unclear what comes next and then after that, then isn't the concept of the "ritual" misleading? But this anecdote is especially revealing because it contains a misunderstanding that Favret-Saada does not comment on any further, but passes on to the gathered academics: the psychoanalyst thinks about how she can best make the professional secret comprehensible; the healer looks at her contemplation and interprets it as meaning that the psychoanalyst doesn't want to reveal the secret. Intellectuals probably

34 Favret-Saada: Le langage de la sorcellerie, 37 (translated for this volume by Mitch Cohen).

always understand their professional secrets like this: that they are, in principle, not secrets, but very difficult to present adequately – so that they do remain secrets in the end. Other people will see through them: to each his or her own secret!

In return, intellectuals and academics assume that the others have secrets they don't want to reveal and that one can get to the bottom of. But it can also be that these people have the same difficulties as intellectuals and academics, namely to find the right words to make themselves understandable to us. How can I best make this comprehensible, so that my partner in dialogue understands it, too? And what trade secret is too difficult to be put forward without misunderstandings? And it may well be that these difficulties are the most important things that happen between investigators and those they investigate.

So, in conclusion, all we can do is disclose our method and put the results in brackets. The point cannot be to believe or not to believe our story or to consider it a dewitching. Our aim is the symmetrical reading of a corpus of texts that is not openly referring to its complements. We do not produce a symmetrical text, but only a symmetrical reading of what we can literally read from the publications from the year 1977. Where the reference was avoided, we have created a reference: there was a struggle for life and death, and death had already happened and made the future of the ritual a question of survival. The examination had been passed, and the examination was abolished through the acknowledgement that imagination can kill. Voodoo death? If yes, then in Paris. Where the reference was believed, it could be declared imagination: folklore studies, anthropology, psychiatry had to do with invented witches whose ability to articulate their own deeds was never perceived and recognized by these powers. The gullibility was on the side of those who were convinced, to the point of dogmatism, of the gullibility of the others. And the necessary scientific articulation work was thereby already prestructured, because the event happened in language: it was voiced and discussed. But, despite all ability to be skeptical, this articulation retained something unanalyzable, also in the psychoanalytic sense: there was no id that could become ego; it could only become an absent you and a dangerous he: "The dirtbag!" and "You dirtbag!" Deadly reference and death-wishing reference could be more wholesome than mere imagination, but only if the proper isolation was maintained.

Between the two contexts of psychoanalysis and witchcraft research, a different suspension and reversal is created from what these two disciplines envisage. The result was no ethno-psychoanalysis and no possible equating of dewitching with psychoanalysis. As a psychoanalyst and anthropologist, Jeanne Favret-Saada rejects this equation, and we haven't performed it, either.

Neither is the procedure of the dewitcher a "ritual", nor is the anthropologist's "being caught" a "method" by which she distances herself from her interlocutors' imaginative power (as Rosenfeld[35] seems to assert). Precisely because no such equations or non-equations are carried out or suggested, the results can be universalized.

Deadly reference can be combatted with wholesome imagination, and deadly imagination with wholesomely aggressive reference. This reference can go so far that, in certain situations, one is forced to drop one's cover for a moment, to accept the danger that the suspended state of attribution will disappear entirely and the panic or instinctual reaction of an undeniable duel will arise.[36] Irreparable damage can be the result. The irreparable, itself, cannot be healed, but only delayed and brought to a halt through constant invocations that act "as if" a healing were possible and that demonstrate what happens "if a healing becomes possible". And in our text: if a symmetrical anthropology between psychoanalysis and witchcraft research, between researchers and the researched, between rural exorcism practices and academic initiation rites becomes possible.

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35 Rosenfeld: Hexerei als Sprachspiel.

36 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words 123.

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Andrew Ventimiglia

The Angel in the Machine. Divining Legal Authorship in Channelled and Computer-Generated Works

> It chanced, one evening, that Lewis and Ferdinand, two college friends, were in a company where the Talking Turk was the subject of the conversation. People were discussing whether the strangest feature of the matter was the mysterious and unexplained human influence which seemed to endow the figure with life, or the wonderful insight into the individuality of the questioner, or the remarkable talent of the answers . . . "All figures of this sort," said Lewis, "which can scarcely be said to counterfeit humanity so much as to travesty it mere images of living death or inanimate life are most distasteful to me.
>
> E.T.A. Hoffmann, "Automata" (1814)[1]

This article juxtaposes two debates that each sought, and largely failed, to decisively determine the legal status of non-human authorship. The first debate emerged amongst legal scholars and Copyright agents as they struggled to categorize computer-generated works within the matrix of authorial practices recognized by American copyright law. The second debate focused on authorship in channelled works, particularly in one exemplary case – *Urantia v. Maaherra* – during which the courts variously and unpredictably assigned legal ownership of the channelled text *The Urantia Book* to the myriad celestial and human actors collectively participating in the book's complex production. By contrasting these two debates, I demonstrate that legal definitions of authorship fail to clearly distinguish between the productive capacities of animated humans and non-human agents (be they computer or divine) as they are simultaneously and collectively involved in the complex work of creative production.

Creativity and Copyright: The Agency of Men and Machines

Sigmund Freud famously used E.T.A. Hoffman's story 'The Sandman' to develop his theory of the uncanny; however, Hoffmann's 'Automata' might present an even more unsettling non-human figure in the Talking Turk.[2] The eponymous

1 Hoffmann: Automata, 80–81.

2 Freud: The 'Uncanny.'

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Turk is a touring automaton to which all are invited to ask questions and listen to his unique and surprisingly insightful responses. Unlike Olympia – the mechanical object of misplaced affection in 'The Sandman' – the Talking Turk disturbs visitors not by his physical resemblance to a human but rather by the perception of a human-like animating force within its fabricated exterior. This automaton is clearly artificial in appearance; yet, human breath comes from his lips when he responds, and his answers demonstrate an otherworldly wisdom, a capacity to penetrate the psyche of the question-asker and perhaps even surmise his or her future. In fact, the mystery and power of the Talking Turk grows in proportion to the visibility of the mechanism apparent in his design, as the exhibitor makes a show of winding up the figure and will, "if desired, open a sort of lid, so that inside the figure you could see a complicated mechanism consisting of a number of wheels."[3]

The Talking Turk exemplifies a paradox in thinking about technology, automation, and computing that continues two hundred years after the story's publication: the more technology achieves success mimicking human thought, behaviour, and action, the more it is perceived as non-human and otherworldly, simultaneously cosmically threatening and imbued with divine presence.[4] This tension exists as much in Masahiro Mori's twentieth century concept of the 'uncanny valley' as in Freud's predecessor Ernst Jentsch's nineteenth century analysis of machines throwing into doubt "whether an apparently living being really is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate."[5] The experience of encountering non-human entities 'performing' human acts, be it automata responding to questions (a mechanical precursor to the famed Turing test) or computers generating new creative works, not only blurs the distinction between man and machine; it challenges the nature of autonomy and agency itself. By severing the presumed link between the human agent and signs of agency (now produced by automata), the emergence of artificial intelligence upends common-sense understandings of 'humanness.' In doing so, it stands as a subject of fascination for not only philosophy and fiction but also law, wherein the links between

3 Hoffmann: Automata, 79.

4 Hoffmann's story is based on Wolfgang von Kempelen's chess-playing Turk, which toured Europe through the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Ellison: Automata for the People, 136–142; Riskin: The Defecating Duck, 620–622; Schaffer, Enlightened Automata, 154–157.

5 Ravetto-Biagioli, The Digital Uncanny, 1. Simon Schaffer formulates a parallel idea writing, "Automata figure in the sciences of the Enlightenment as machines in the form of humans and as humans who perform like machines." Enlightened Automata, 126.

humanness and legal categories – for instance, liability, responsibility, authorship – can no longer be considered self-evident.[6]

In both historical and contemporary examples, the productive or creative capacity of non-human actors – from automata to artificial intelligence – does not grant them the status of legal personhood, much less 'ensouled' personalities, but instead creates the perception that they are tools or puppets controlled by an unseen master.[7] The inability or unwillingness of the public to recognize automata, computers, or artificial intelligence as capable of singularly originating creative works leads them instead to imagine them as *media or mediums*, channelling either unknown and mysterious external forces or, more prosaically, other human actors (programmers or users, for instance).[8] Yet, rather than resolving the uncanniness of the encounter, this approach instead has generated two interrelated difficulties. First, it questions human agency as a prerequisite to creative action. If the perception of autonomy, creativity, and agency in machines is no guarantee of an animating 'humanness,' then how are we to know that humans themselves are autonomous, creative, or agentive in their own activities? In this regard, the public reception of automata historically interpenetrates with the contemporaneous trajectory of mesmerism, in which skilled mesmerists turned their victims "into real automata under the power of imagination," their bodies, marionettes piloted by a hidden power.[9] Second, it disturbs the legal categories that assume only humans achieve the status of rights-bearing entities. Must the law produce new categories to deal with these agentive technologies or can one find traditional human legal actors operating beneath or beyond various machines, no matter how autonomous they become?

Despite the marginal status of computer-generated works in the creative industries, legal theorists have been particularly concerned with how the legal system might allocate ownership rights in these works.[10] The reason for this preoccupation stems less from any specific disputes resulting from these creations than from the manner in which computer-generated works, like their eighteenth and nineteenth century mechanical predecessors, challenge

6 Solum: Legal Personhood.

7 For a compelling reading of puppetry, the supernatural, and other uncanny phenomena across literature and entertainment, see Nelson: Secret Life.

8 The most thorough analysis of the intersection of media and mediums and, by extension, the historical intersection of spiritualism and technology is Sconce: Haunted Media.

9 Schaffer: Enlightened Automata, 157–8.

10 As one sceptical legal scholar writes, "The scholarship pondering the possibility of computer-authored works is surprisingly extensive, even though no one has ever exhibited even one work that could plausibly claim to have a computer for an 'author' in the sense that the Copyright Act uses the term." Grimmelmann: Computer-Authored Work, 403.

long-standing cultural assumptions about the intrinsically human nature of creativity, originality, and individual authorship: central ideas underpinning the entire apparatus of modern intellectual property law. Unlike the model of creative production most familiar to contemporary copyright law – one involving a singular human author producing a work subject to that author's proprietary control – computer-generated works are produced through a longer chain of complexly interrelated human and non-human actors including the programmer, software, computer, and end-user.[11] Thus, this model of production – one that may become more common with the growth of increasingly sophisticated artificial intelligence programming – demands a new model for understanding and legally managing creative production, one more akin to theories of mediumship than dominant models of original, authorial production.

This connection between computer-generated works and media is not solely metaphorical, as may have been the case with the example of automata and mesmerism. Rather, legal scholarship and even case law has recognized tangible links between debates about intellectual property in channelled texts, automatic writing, and other forms of mediumship on one hand and the complexities of non-human authorship of computer-generated works on the other. Emblematic of these emerging links is the copyright dispute *Urantia v. Maaherra*. This 1997 case involved the validity of copyright in the spiritual text *The Urantia Book* and featured a number of inquiries into the legal and metaphysical dimensions of the book's production. The dispute explored the book's unconventional creation as it was authored by celestial beings and 'received' by an anonymous sleeping person over the course of thirty years before being compiled and published by a group known as the Contact Commission. In its exploration of the book's mediumistic production, the court sought not to undermine the book's copyright protections but rather to locate the production of legal ownership as it emerged from the complex and ongoing relations between angelic authors and human participants. In tracking this production, the court then cited an article about the legitimacy of copyright in computer-generated works, stating, "It is far from clear that the federal courts ultimately will conclude that our copyright law requires human authorship . . . The

11 Of course, as explored in more detail below, the 'conventional' model of authorship paraphrased here has been thoroughly disproven from a range of scholarly perspectives. For a cursory analysis of the shortcomings of the common sense 'Western cultural model of creativity' and its alignment with intellectual property law see, Sawyer: The Western Cultural Model.

Constitution's reference to 'authors' does not . . . mandate that authors be flesh and blood."[12]

Urantia v. Maaherra, a case centring on a profoundly religious model of creativity – the divine, sacred, or angelic authorship of works delivered through the medium of a human subject – was thus influenced by scholarship on computer-generated works and, in turn, contributed an account of production suitable for the emergent domain of creative computing. To understand this particular conflation of computer authorship and spiritualist mediumship, I turn to the longer history of legal thought on the nature of authorship in computer-generated works before returning to the details of the case. In doing so I argue that, rather than simply measuring the production of computer-generated works against the bar of human authorship, legal debates about computer-generated works – like cases about mediumship – repeatedly recognize the *artificiality* of concepts of authorship, originality, and creativity in the law. In these debates, copyright law does not provide diagnostics for locating the presence or absence of authorship in a work (which thereby allows for the recognition and allocation of ownership rights) but instead serves to mask the fundamentally indeterminate origins of creative production.

To reiterate, the anxiety present in legal commentary on computer-generated works does not stem from the fact that computers are attaining a level of creativity and originality previously only considered the domain of humans. Instead, in investigating the nature of creative production by computers and other generative technologies, this literature exposes the fiction of autonomous, independent human authorship. The resulting picture is a conception of creativity emerging from an assemblage of inseparable human and non-human components and involving a complex mix of programmatic material and random variation to produce 'original' works. In other words, this literature finds that computer-generated works – like all works – have no author. To be more precise, intellectual property does not need to determine the author in order to allocate ownership in the work. Rather, the causal order is reversed. The existence of an original, creative work (according to the low thresholds set by copyright law) necessitates the discovery of the author as a legal fiction in order to allocate ownership properly. One can only say that they appear as they are 'fixed in a medium of expression,' a process of materialization achieved by humans and non-humans alike.[13]

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12 Miller: Copyright Protection, 1065.

13 U.S. copyright law reads, "Copyright protection subsists . . . in original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, from which they can be perceived, reproduced, or otherwise communicated, either directly or with the aid of a machine or device." *17 U.S. Code §102*.

This conclusion reaffirms commentary emerging from critical legal theory documenting the socio-legal construction of authorship, its origins and effects.[14] It differs in that this technological dilemma – by producing works without obvious human authors – produces a reckoning within law itself of the fragility of the author concept, its lack of substantive definition, its expendability. This emerging legal discourse extends beyond the historically commonplace notion that courts have established an incredibly low threshold for authorship.[15] Instead, it produces an *a posteriori* model of authorship: the work emerges first as a legal-material object and the author is later determined, or rather impressed upon the work, through legal analytics. In the process, these analyses reconfigure authorship *as* mediumship. By this, I mean that legal authorship does not necessarily reduce the creative process through which a work materializes to personal expression by an individual. Instead, it identifies the actors (individual, collective, corporate) that facilitated the work's emergence, tagging those to whom the appearance of the work owes some kind of causal debt even in the absence of indicators of original style, voice, personality. Authors then are channels without whom the work could not manifest but whose own individuality need not have imprinted anywhere in the resulting product. This model then is, in the words of Alan Durham, authorship as "less a conscious and creative act than a mechanical confluence of forces."[16]

The Emergence of Non-Human Authorship

While automata stand as important precursors to artificial intelligence as well as the non-human production of creative works – one may think here for Henri Louis Jacquet-Droz's android writer, artist, and musician – none of these early

14 Central to this literature would be two seminal essays by Foucault and Barthes on authorship – "What is an Author" and "Death of the Author" – as well as a wide range of articles and books emerging from history, literature, and critical legal studies in the last few decades including, Coombe: Cultural Life; Rose: Authors and Owners; Woodmansee: The Author, Art and the Market; Bracha: Ideology of Authorship; Jaszi: Toward a Theory.

15 David Nimmer writes, "Almost any ingenuity in selection, combination or expression, no matter how crude, humble or obvious will be sufficient to render the work a writing." This conclusion is largely based on the landmark ruling in *Bleistein v. Donaldson Lithographing Co*. 188 U.S. 239 (1908). Nimmer on Copyright, §8.31.

16 Durham: Random Muse, 572.

projects explicitly challenged authorship as conceived by artists and philosophers, much less the law.[17] The earliest recognition of computer authorship – and its attendant legal complexities – in the United States appeared in the 1965 Report of the Register of Copyrights in a section titled "Problems Arising from Computer Technology." That year witnessed the first deposits of computer programs registered for copyright protection (in the form of print outs, punched cards, and magnetic tape), which prompted the Copyright Office to recognize potential problems that may arise for "computer programs, computer authorship, and automation in the Copyright Office."[18] Noting that it had already received applications for registration of a musical composition created by computer, a computer-generated abstract drawing, and compilations that were "at least partly the 'work' of computers," the Office wrote:

> The crucial question appears to be whether the 'work' is basically one of human authorship, with the computer merely being an assisting instrument, or whether the traditional elements of authorship in the work (literary, artistic, or musical expression or elements of selection, arrangement, etc.) were actually conceived and executed not by man but by machine.[19]

While not definitive, the Report left open the possibility that copyrightable works may be 'conceived and executed' without the involvement of humans.

The next legal comment on the matter came from the National Commission on New Technological Uses of Copyright Works, whose report to the U.S. government in 1978 interrogated how changing technologies – particularly computers and photocopiers – would affect copyright law and whether or not legal reform or revision would be necessary.[20] The Commission's conclusions were similarly non-determinative. Acknowledging that "'artificial intelligence' has not yet come to pass," the report claimed, "On the basis of its investigations and society's experience with the computer, the Commission believes that there is no reasonable basis for considering that a computer in any way contributes authorship to a work produced through its use." Instead, it recognized a fundamental continuity

17 Although some of these projects did bring into question the potentially mechanical nature of creative and philosophical production. As Simon Schaffer points out, not only labourers were reconceived through emerging conceptions of automation and mechanisation: So too the professional class of "writers looked like automata" working for their publisher in factory style. Enlightened Automata, 131.

18 Sixty-Eighth Annual Report, 4.

19 Ibid., 5.

20 Final Report.

between the computer and earlier technologies "like a camera or a typewriter": inert instruments that are only capable of functioning "when activated either directly or indirectly by a human."[21]

This conclusion, based on a reductive interpretation of the computer as tool, was periodically revisited, for instance, during hearings debating the passage of the Semiconductor Chip Protection Act of 1984 and again when the Office of Technology Assessment wrote a report on "Intellectual Property Rights in an Age of Electronics and Information."[22] These later reports recognized that computer programs were more than "inert tools of creation," and could function at least as 'co-author' of many works thus complicating the discovery and attribution of authorship. In response to some of these inquiries, the U.S. Copyright Office revised the section on authorship in their 1984 Compendium of Copyright Office Practices. They clarified, "The term 'authorship' implies that, for a work to be copyrightable, it must owe its origin to a human being."[23] Subsequently, the most recent edition of the Compendium released in 2014 – prompted in part by a controversy over a 'monkey selfie' copyrighted by the wildlife photographer who provided the cameras – clarified, "To qualify as a work of 'authorship' a work must be created by a human being." Explicitly linking the (in)eligibility of computer-generated works to other forms of non-human authorship, the Compendium claimed,

> The Office cannot register a work purportedly created by divine or supernatural beings, although the Office may register a work where the application or the deposit copy(ies) state that the work was inspired by a divine spirit . . . Similarly, the Office will not register works produced by a machine or mere mechanical process that operates randomly or automatically without any creative input or intervention from a human author.[24]

These assertions attempted to sidestep the difficulty of applying prior legal categories to computer-generated works. What had been taken for granted – the centrality of individual human activity in the production of creative, original

21 Ibid., 44. The comparison to the typewriter is apposite but not necessarily for the reasons imagined by the Commission. As Lisa Gitelman points out, the typewriter also disrupted the coherence of authorship by changing the relationship between authorial agency and material inscription. Not coincidentally, the term 'automatic writing' was applied to both spiritualism and typing as examples of writing done by partially conscious, distracted subjects. Scripts, 185.

22 Miller: Copyright Protection, 1044–1049.

23 However, no reference is made explicitly to computer programs in particular. It continues, "Materials produced solely by nature, by plants, or by animals are not copyrightable." 1984 Compendium, 200–202.

24 2014 Compendium, 300–22; Burstyn: Creative Sparks.

works – now was to be legally required to ensure the smooth operation of copyright.[25] At the same time, copyright law recognized a wide range of works produced through unconventional arrangements of people and that did not conform to the model of one author/one work. Compilations and collective works, works of joint authorship, and works for hire involved increasingly complex chains of actors, which in turn necessitated more nuanced understandings of legal authorship.[26] For instance, as detailed by the Compendium, compilations produced distinct forms of authorship including "selection authorship," "coordination authorship," and "arrangement authorship."[27] The role of the human author was then a necessary condition for the production of copyright but also fluid in its relation to the ensuing creation. Rather than a producer of the creative work *ex nihilo* the author simply needed to be present somewhere along the chain of production, a conduit without which the work might not materialize but whose actual agentive force in producing the work may vary considerably.

Meanwhile, the increasing likelihood of a copyrightable or patentable work produced by computer prompted copious scholarly commentary beginning as early as 1969. In the *Journal of the Patent Office Society*, the earliest analysis of computer-generated works by patent attorney Karl F. Milde Jr. concluded that there were no obvious barriers to a computer producing copyrightable material since it should be able to meet the minimum standards of originality, creativity, and fixation.[28] The important question then was simply how to apply or refine legal categories in order to adequately allocate ownership. The cascade of scholarship to follow has often reiterated this same point. For instance, in 1989, Evan Farr tested a range of legal categories – joint works, derivative works, compilations, works-for-hire – in order to conclude that the programmer would most likely be entitled to copyright in the resultant works.[29] Other have claimed that the program user – the one who causes the fixation of the resultant work – is

25 The Compendium of course only refers to the regulations surrounding registration of a work. One could still institute a civil action against infringement even if registration had been refused and the Compendium, as an internal agency manual, would only be deferred to if the interpretations have the power to persuade. Burstyn: Creative Sparks, 282.

26 For a history of the most radical of these new authorial configurations – the work for hire – see Fiske: Working Knowledge.

27 "Selection authorship" involves choosing the material to be included in the compilation; "coordination authorship" involves "classifying, categorizing, ordering, or grouping the material or data," and "arrangement authorship" involves organizing the order, position, or placement of material within the compilation as a whole. 2014 Compendium, 300-18-19.

28 Milde: Can a Computer Be an 'Author,' 390–395.

29 Farr: Copyrightability of Computer-Created Works.

best positioned to obtain copyright.[30] Rarer is the commentary that concludes that computer-generated works, absent a clear human author, should fall into the public domain.[31]

While commentary on computer-generated works continues to proliferate, the most provocative commentary remains the earliest. In 1981, Timothy Butler suggested that the complex production of computer-generated works warranted an equally complex solution: the legal creation of a 'fictional human author' and then the appointment of a fact-finder to assign the appropriate fractions of copyright to the various contributors to the work.[32] Even earlier, Karl Milde used his analysis of the creative capacities of computers to reflect on the broader philosophical issues raised by these technological changes. He claimed that consideration of the intelligence of computers led him to deal with "the nature of thought itself," and even the religious dimensions of human capacity.[33] In doing so, Milde wrote that many scientists "believe that 'thought' can best be defined as the selection of the pertinent from the random." Such a definition would "leave the vast majority of the machines in operation today as capable of writing or discovering."[34]

In order to accommodate and recognize the creative power of increasingly powerful computational thinking, Milde redefined thought – like creative copyrightable expression – as not necessarily something generated uniquely from within but rather as an *ex post facto* process of selection. At the time, this reflection had real legal precedent. The case *Alfred Bell & Co. v. Catalda Fine Arts* (1951) involved a similar re-definition in order to argue for the legitimacy of a company's copyright in a mezzotint engraving of a painting in the public domain. The Second Circuit, reflecting on the nature of originality, came up with a radical definition of authorship to justify its ruling. "A copyist's bad eyesight or defective musculature, or a shock caused by a clap of thunder, may yield sufficiently distinguishable variations [that would qualify for copyright]. Having hit upon such a variation unintentionally, the 'author' may adopt it as his and copyright it."[35]

Compared to historical rationales for copyright – for instance, those that emerged in relation to the 'romantic author' or 'romantic genius' of the eighteenth and nineteenth century – this legal conclusion is self-evidently radical.

30 Ralston: Copyright in Computer-Composed Music.
31 Clifford: Intellectual Property.
32 Butler: Can a Computer be an Author.
33 Milde: Can a Computer Be an 'Author,' 382.
34 Ibid., 404.
35 *Alfred Bell & Co.*

The copyrightable variations under consideration in this example have no trace of personal expression in it, caused as they are by unknown external natural forces or unconscious bodily processes.[36] The 'author' simply recognizes and chooses them after their appearance. Alan Durham argues that this mode of creativity is not antithetical to other rulings aimed at preserving the concept of 'creativity' as essential to copyright but merely the broadest interpretation of fundamental legal principles. "The artist who suffers from 'defective musculature,' or who is startled by a 'clap of thunder' still produces something that would not exist if the artist did not exist. In terms of physical causation, if not intellectual planning, the artist could view the inadvertent product of his efforts as 'created' rather than 'discovered.'"[37]

By thinking of *Catalda* as sufficient legal precedent to establish copyright in computer-generated works – absent the bulwark of requiring 'human authorship' as later asserted by the Copyright Office – scholars like Milde (and those to follow) widened the scope of the legal notion of creativity to let in other modes of creative production, the most conspicuous being psychographic writing and other like forms of mediumship.[38] Legal scholar Annemarie Bridy analysed this unexpected confluence:

> The person who actually produces psychographic writing claims to act only as an amanuensis for a disembodied spirit or consciousness.[39] In disputes over ownership of the rights in psychographic works, the questions that arise are essentially the same as those that arise in cases involving works created by generative software programs: To what or whom do these works owe their origin? Does copyright subsist in them? If so, to whom does it belong? To the extent that more than one party played a role in bringing these works to the public, do the parties share authorship? If so, what if one of those parties is not a legal person?[40]

36 Mario Biagioli writes that 'personal expression' in copyright can be thought of as the direct ancestor of the notion of romantic genius evoked to justify ownership in literary property in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. 'Personal expression' is also central to Fichte's famous proof of the illegality of reprinting. Fichte: Proof; Biagioli: Genius against Copyright.

37 Durham: The Random Muse, 588.

38 Legal scholarship on copyright in computer-generated works not cited elsewhere in this article includes, Glasser: Copyrights in Computer-Generated Works; Grimmelmann: Copyright for Literate Robots; Lee: Digital Originality; Samuelson: Allocating Ownership; Vigderson: Hamlet II; Wu: From Video Games to Artificial Intelligence.

39 Bridy cites Allan Kardec who describes psychography as "the transmission of the thought of the spirit by means of writing by the hand of a medium." Bridy: Coding Creativity, 18.

40 Ibid.

The history of legal disputes involving automatic writing or channelled works, while not extensive, consistently demonstrates the degree to which courts work to justify copyright even for unconventional modes of creative production. The English case of *Cummins v. Bond* (1926) provides one of the earliest examples. In this case, the plaintiff Geraldine Cummins wrote a book by covering her eyes and writing at the rate of 2,000 words an hour. Blewett Lee, a contemporary reviewer of the case, wrote: "During that time she was only partially conscious, and what was written she only partially remembered afterwards . . . The plaintiff in her evidence testified that so far as she was aware she played no conscious part in the writing, and there were occasions when she was satisfied there was some external force."[41] While the court was amused that all involved agreed the "true originator was one who was no longer an inhabitant of this world," the significance of the case lay as much in its metaphysical dimensions as in its recognition that legal authorship inhered in the plaintiff who produced – in combination with the spirit – the work without clear conscious effort. Reflecting on this matter, Lee wrote that Cummins as "the medium might even hold the title to a copyright by the name of 'Cleophas' [the channelled spirit]. Even an idol may be a legal person, and own property at least in India, and appear in court by next friend."[42]

Later cases produced similar rulings. *Oliver v. Saint Germain* (1941) determined that the status of the plaintiff-author as 'amanuensis' of a book dictated to him by Phylos, the Thibetan, a Spirit did not necessarily diminish his rights in the text.[43] The opinion did suggest that Oliver's assertion of copyright and his status as conduit for the spiritual author may be at odds and could

41 Lee: Copyright of Automatic Writing, 22–23. The defendant was expected to edit the manuscript but instead published excerpts from the work without the plaintiff's permission. In his defence, he challenged the validity of the copyright, "arguing that the work was 'wholly communicated in substance and form by a psychic agent' and, therefore, 'not an original literary work in which copyright could subsist.'" Bridy: Coding Creativity, 19.

42 Lee: Copyright of Automatic Writing, 25. Lee's extension of the argument to the potential legal rights of an 'inanimate object' like an idol may come across as somewhat absurd; however, one can trace a longer history of the legal rights of animals and things that makes the idea seem a bit less far-fetched. See, for example, Humphrey: Bugs and Beasts; Johnson: Statute of Anne-imals; Srivastava: Mean, Dangerous, and Uncontrollable Beasts.

43 The plaintiff lost the case but not through invalidation of his copyright but rather simply because the defendant's book was sufficiently different that no proof of illegal copying could be made. Both books were about "earthly creatures receiving from the spiritual world messages for recordation and use by the living," but no plagiarism or copying of words was found other than "slight similarity of experiences in that parties became agencies for communicating between the spiritual and material worlds."

endanger his rights in the work.[44] However, the court never questioned that the work was original within the meaning of the law – i.e. that it owed its origin to the author and was not copied from other works – even if the nature of this authorship remained opaque.[45] The Court, while granting copyright, depicted this relationship between the production of originality and Oliver as author as decidedly attenuated. For instance, the court did not claim that Oliver – the medium – attained authorship because in the act of channelling or transcribing the spirit's message he added his own expressive style or arranged the spirit's message in such a way as to warrant the title. Nor did it assert that Oliver, by fixing the message in a medium of expression, was entitled to claim authorship.[46] Finally, the court did not presume to trace the "communication with and conveyances of legal rights by the spiritual world as the basis for its judgment."[47] Nonetheless, the existence of an original, creative work necessitated the location of its author, thus the complexities of its production posed little obstacle to the imposition of authorship onto Oliver, the medium.

Rather than dispensing with the 'author' entirely and thereby nullifying the works' copyright, these cases instead contorted the definition of authorship, often in contradistinction to the claims of the copyright owners themselves. In *Cummins v. Bond*, the court found it sufficient to claim that the plaintiff earned her authorship by having "actively cooperated in translating the spirit's words into a comprehensible language."[48] Similarly, a later case involving the channelled text *A Course in Miracles* determined that the channel had made editorial choices sufficient to satisfy copyright's creativity standard.[49] Nowhere was this process of shoehorning authorship to novel spiritual creative conditions more apparent than in the case of *Urantia v. Maaherra*, the case that most clearly mirrors the debates around computer-generated works both in the manner of its production as well as its litigation history.

44 The court writes, "Equity and good morals will not permit one who asserts something as a fact which he insists his readers believe as the real foundation for its appeal to those who may buy and read his work, to change that position for profit in a law suit."

45 Nimmer on Copyright, §10.1.

46 The possibility of authorship inhering in 'fixation' was decidedly rejected in a later case, *Andrien v. Southern Ocean County Chamber of Commerce* (1991) wherein the court recognized that writers entitled to copyright protection could be far removed from the 'mechanical tasks' of putting the copyrightable expression into material form to be distributed to the public.

47 *Oliver*.

48 Bridy: Coding Creativity, 19.

49 Ibid., 20.

'Materialized in Written Form': The Case of *Urantia v. Maaherra*

The Urantia Book – as described in the Ninth Circuit ruling in *Urantia v. Maaherra* – is a book believed to have been "authored by celestial beings and transcribed, compiled, and collected by mere mortals."[50] Owned and distributed by the Urantia Foundation, a trust organized specifically to "perpetually preserve inviolate the text of *The Urantia Book*" and disseminate its teachings, the book became the subject of a lawsuit when the defendant Kristen Maaherra distributed an infringing copy on computer disk. The resulting case involved a complex investigation of the details of the work's authorship and registration in order to determine the validity of its copyright.

The history of the book's 'channelled' origins is as complex as the litigation it was to spawn.[51] The man often held most responsible for the book's production – Doctor William S. Sadler – claimed that, "there was no known psychic phenomenon attached to the origin of the Urantia Papers [the series of papers that would later become the chapters of *The Urantia Book*]." One could only say that the final text was "materialized in written form."[52] Nonetheless, from secondary documents produced after the book's first publication in 1955 one can piece together a consensus view of the book's spiritual production.

The content of the book was created by a commission of supernatural beings with the resulting papers delivered to Earth via angels – known in Urantian terminology as 'midwayers' – through a human Conduit in order to guide humans

50 *Urantia Foundation.*

51 The Urantia Foundation chooses not to use the terminology of 'channelling,' 'mediums,' or 'spiritualism' in referring to the supernatural production of *The Urantia Book*. The reason for this assertion is partly a matter of 'boundary work' – distinguishing Urantians from other New Age and spiritualist practices circulating at the time of its publication. In this regard, the Foundation follows the instruction contained within *The Urantia Book* itself in which is written, "The mid-wayers [angels] at present on Urantia [Earth], all of whom are of honourable standing, are not connected with the phenomena of so-called 'mediumship'; and they do not, ordinarily, permit humans to witness their sometimes necessary physical activities or other contacts with the material world, as they are perceived by human senses." However, it also allows them to foreground the complexity of the book's 'materialization,' which resists reduction to a singular model of production. Urantia Book, 865.

52 Sprunger: Regarding the Origin.

in their spiritual evolution.[53] Because of the large gap in the language of divinity and English, the midwayers had to interpret and translate the original angelic ideas – "enlarged concepts and advanced truth" designed to expand cosmic consciousness – into the "circumscribed language of the realm."[54] However, they did this not in isolation but rather in conjunction with the Conduit, specifically the part of the Conduit called the Thought Adjuster that is the indwelling piece of the divine existing in every individual. Rather than simply speaking to humans, the midwayers "attain varying degrees of contact with the Thought Adjusters of certain favourably constituted mortals through the skilful penetration of the minds of the latters' indwelling. (And it was by just such a fortuitous combination of cosmic adjustments that these revelations were materialized in the English language)."[55] The resulting language and style of *The Urantia Book* was also shaped according to the particular evolutionary status of the public to which the revelation was to be delivered. Teachings "not too far removed from the thought and reactions of the age" were to be presented in order to encourage the slow development of readers' spiritual consciousness, to push them incrementally forward in "the circuitous gropings of humanity in quest for truth."[56]

Thus, the resulting ideas contained in the text were fundamentally hybrid: original divine works – already, as described in *The Urantia Book,* a 'composite presentation by many beings' – translated and transported by angels through a human Conduit and into a particular linguistic and ideational milieu.[57] However, this remains only a fraction of the story of the text's 'materialization.' The success of this translation hinged in part on the disinterest – the precise lack of agency – of the human Conduit. "The Adjuster of the human being

53 'Midwayers,' or midway creatures, exist halfway between the realm of mortals and the angelic realms. While they may not be precisely the same as 'angels' as generally understood in Christian traditions, *The Urantia Book* claims that "many of the more literal phenomena ascribed to angels have been performed by the secondary midway creatures." The Urantia Book, 855, 865.

54 The Urantia Book, 1.

55 Ibid., 1258. In fact, many claim that the chain of transmission involved multiple steps from the original language of Uversa to English (from Uversa to Salvington to Satania to English) because the exalted language of Uversa and English are simply too far apart so that "99% of the original concept was lost in translation." Sadler: How the Urantia Papers. See also, Riddleberger and Jewel: The Origin. The citations in *The Urantia Book* referring to its own production are usefully collected in the document "Page References Regarding the Nature, Origin, and Organization of The Urantia Book," released by the Urantia Brotherhood.

56 The Urantia Book, 1007

57 Ibid., 1008.

through whom this communication is being made enjoys such a wide scope of activity chiefly because of this human's almost complete indifference to any outward manifestations of the Adjuster's inner presence; it is indeed fortunate that he remains consciously quite unconcerned about the entire procedure."[58] The process of textual composition occurred while the Conduit was asleep. Further, the Conduit was not even physically involved in the book's physical production. As William S. Sadler Jr. – the son of the 'founder' of the Urantian movement – described it, as the Conduit lay sleeping, nearby a pencil would move over paper "with no visible means of motion." As another Urantian explained later, the handwriting of the resulting paper "was not the writing of the human individual whose superconscious mind was used in some way in the materialization of the papers." After the papers were read by the Contact Commission – the organizing body who began to collect the papers and who would later form the nucleus for the copyright holder the Urantia Foundation – and typed up, the original papers would disappear.[59]

This byzantine creative process thus depicts the only actor that according to precedent has legitimate legal claim to the text – the Conduit – as neither author of the book in its 'original' language, nor translator, nor amanuensis, considering he was not responsible for even fixing the work in material form. Nor was anyone in the Urantian movement inclined to deem the Conduit author of the book, even for the sake of copyright. Rather, the Urantia Foundation – the legal successor to the Contact Commission – claimed copyright in the text based on their role as stewards of and distributors for the revelation. The Foundation's control of the text and its use of its legal rights to shape the practices of the movement then prompted competing groups to attempt to wrest away the Foundation's copyright by encouraging the production of infringing copies of *The Urantia Book*, which might in turn prompt lawsuits challenging the validity of those rights.

This Commission had indeed played a part in the production of *The Urantia Book*, though not one that conformed to traditional legal definitions of authorship. The Commission was formed by Dr. William Sadler who had discovered the Conduit and then assembled a group of close friends and associates to present questions, the answers to which constituted the bulk of the Urantia Papers. This group later received permission from the angelic authors to publish the book and procure its copyright. In order to do so, the Commission formed the Urantia Foundation designed specifically to publish and preserve the resulting

58 Ibid., 1208–9.
59 Sprunger: Historicity.

sacred text.[60] While the Foundation clearly played a role in 'originating' and publishing *The Urantia Book*, its active status in shaping the text was another matter. Some Urantians – many of whom were behind the subsequent legal actions – adamantly stated, "There was no human authorship or creative input, and there was no human editorial decisions involved with the materialization of the Urantia Papers . . . No human being knows or ever knew, the exact method by which the Urantia Papers were materialized. We can only be categorically certain that there was no human authorship, no human editorial involvement, nor any human activity in creating, selecting, and/or arranging the Urantia Papers."[61]

The mysterious, apocryphal, and complex details of *The Urantia Book*'s origin would have remained a backstory to the Urantia movement – in which the text's supernatural production was often downplayed in order to attend to the 'spiritual truth' evident in its content – if not for the series of lawsuits designed to challenge the Urantia Foundation as the book's author and proprietor. These cases evidence the myriad ways in which the Foundation – like in other instances of non-human authorship – mobilized pre-existing legal categories to fit the alternative logics and mechanisms of production grounding its ownership in the text. At the same time, they show lawyers, judges, and juries collectively crafting a narrative of authorship after the fact that would guarantee the ownership already presumed to exist.

Similar to earlier cases involving channelled texts, the judgment in *Urantia v. Maaherra* – citing an article analysing the conclusions of the CONTU report – first confirmed that *The Urantia Book* was copyrightable despite agreement by both parties on its non-human origin. The court wrote, "The copyrightability issue is not a metaphysical one requiring the courts to determine whether or not the Book had celestial origins."[62] Nonetheless, the details of the book's spiritual production permeated the ruling as they were translated into legal details determinative of the Foundation's copyright. For instance, *The Urantia Book* was deemed copyrightable because the court agreed that the Contact Commission was sufficiently involved in the book and thus reached the low threshold of creativity established in prior case law.

> In this case, the Contact Commission may have received some guidance from celestial beings when the Commission posed the questions, but the members of the Contact Commission chose and formulated the specific questions asked. These questions materially

60 Ibid.
61 Sprunger: Regarding the Origin; The Question of Origin.
62 *Urantia Foundation.*

> contributed to the structure of the Papers, to the arrangement of the revelations in each Paper, and to the organization and order in which the Papers followed one another.[63]

Subsequent details of the book's production became relevant in the analysis of the transfer of copyright from the Commission to the Urantia Foundation. The court found that the Foundation's possession of the printing plates substituted for the absence of any legal documents of transfer or assignation. While not discussed, the convenient absence of the original handwritten pages of the Papers served useful in limiting the materials to which copyright might inhere.

The complex chain of authorship for *The Urantia Book* also resulted in a number of complications relating to its registration and renewal, but none that challenged the fundamental legitimacy of the Foundation's rights. The registration and renewal documents – particularly the 'author' and 'copyright claimant' fields – required a funnelling of the book's authorship into predetermined categories.[64] This artificial process resulted in the Foundation stating on its renewal certificate that it was the "proprietor of copyright in a 'work made for hire.'"[65] While the Foundation may have found this category an apt designation for the relationship between the Foundation and the revelators that tasked them with publication, the court nonetheless challenged the book's status as a work for hire. "The Foundation was never the employer of any of the spiritual beings, of Dr. Sadler, of the Contact Commission, or of any other entity that played a role in the creation of the Papers."[66] The court similarly challenged the book's status as a 'composite work' but still ultimately sided with the Foundation based on the strength of the Trust's claim to ownership in the original copyright.

The result of these debates, which ultimately confirmed the validity of the Foundation's copyright, produced one long-standing precedent: "Inadvertent mistakes on registration certificates do not invalidate a copyright."[67] Of course, the incorrect attribution of authorship in the registration certificate was not

63 Ibid.

64 *The Urantia Book* was originally published in 1955. Under the *1909 Copyright Act*, copyright duration was twenty-eight years with a possibility for renewal of another twenty-eight years. By the time the Urantia Foundation thus filed for renewal in 1983, the *1976 Copyright Act* was operative, which allowed for a renewal for forty-seven years.

65 Interestingly, one of the few scholars to have explicitly explored the links between the Urantia cases and computer-generated works – Annemarie Bridy – similarly concluded that 'work-for-hire' doctrine was the most apt category to apply to works of non-human authorship. Coding Creativity, 26.

66 *Urantia Foundation.*

67 This dimension of the case accounts for the majority of its roughly fifty future citations.

inadvertent, nor was it a mistake, even if it was deemed legally inaccurate. The wording used by the Foundation on its registration was reflective of the uneven match between the particular form of materialization that produced *The Urantia Book* and the various legal categories available for making sense of non-traditional authorship – i.e. forms of authorship that do not conform to the Romantic model of one human author/one work. However, importantly, this mismatch *did not* invalidate the Foundation's copyright. Instead, it pushed the courts – much as they had in *Catalda* – to claim that the existence of a work, of necessity, produces an author whose own legal entitlements cannot be lessened by the messy details of its production or registration.

Meanwhile, the Foundation developed its own defence of its copyright, which it delivered to followers. Its argument was two-fold: that the construct of 'legal authorship' was itself an artificial way of determining proper ownership, and that the Foundation played a central role (even if not an 'authorial' role) in the book's production and so was worth of its copyright. To the first argument, the Foundation wrote, "It becomes ever more obvious that the 'human subject' was but a small part of this vast project, even if a critical part. In this context, it would be absurd for him, or anyone else directly involved, to lay claim to the status of 'author.'" To the second, the Foundation deployed the slogan "No questions – no Papers," as part of its rationale for ownership.[68]

If *Urantia v. Maaherra* downplayed the details of *The Urantia Book*'s production in order to assert the given-ness of copyright, a subsequent case – *Michael Foundation v. Urantia Foundation* (2003) – proved that these details could indeed matter and that their strategic arrangement produces the figure of the author even in its absence. The case of *Michael Foundation* involved another organization made up of disaffected former adherents of the Urantia movement that published a long excerpt from *The Urantia Book* and then proactively filed an action against the Foundation to invalidate its copyright.[69] This case went to jury trial, which resulted in a verdict in favour of Michael Foundation thereby placing *The Urantia Book* in the public domain.

The rationale for this ruling centred on the Conduit's role in the book's production. The Urantia Foundation argued either that the book was a "composite of discrete, individual works by the Conduit rather than a unified work" or that it was a "commissioned work because Urantia Foundation's predecessor in interest [the Contact Commission] specially commissioned the Conduit to write

68 Urantia Foundation: Copyright Registration; Sadler, History. See also, Lewis: Peculiar Sleep.

69 *Michael Foundation.*

The Urantia Book."[70] Either of these legal determinations would allow the Foundation to renew the work's copyright, whereas a ruling that the book was a "unified work by a single author," i.e. the Conduit, would mean that the copyright would have reverted to him or his heirs and the Foundation would not have been entitled to its renewal. The jury ultimately chose the latter description. In doing so, it imposed a conventional model of one author/one work onto the production history of *The Urantia Book,* thereby analogizing the Conduit to a traditional author and attributing all agency and intent to him alone.

The jury's ruling – and the Tenth Circuit's explanation of the rationale behind this ruling – evidence the imposition of classic authorial agency and intent onto the narrative of *The Urantia Book's* production. For instance, the court argued that 'intent' was the controlling factor in determining how to classify the book (be it a unified work, composite work, joint work, etc.).[71] Similarly, the jury decided – and the court concurred – that the book had not been 'commissioned' in the legal sense (which resembles the 'work for hire' doctrine at play in *Urantia v. Maaherra*). "The Conduit began writing the Urantia Papers on his own initiative, and 'announced to the contact group the plan to initiate the *Urantia Papers*' after having delivered papers of celestial origin to Dr. Sadler for twenty years. The Conduit himself requested the questions from the Contact Commission."[72] This claim was defended as legitimate in the circuit court's opinion even if the court then immediately qualified this claim by including a footnote claiming "the Conduit announced these plans on behalf of, or 'as' Machiventa Melchizedek, one of the celestial personalities constituting the 'Revelatory Commission,' to whom Urantia Foundation ultimately attributes the revelations it believes *The Urantia Book* to embody."

70 Ibid. While it may appear disingenuous for a spiritual organization like the Urantia Foundation to try on different legal arguments, the Foundation understood it to be neither legally unusual nor problematic from a religious perspective, considering it grounded its defence of ownership in an entirely different supra-legal rationale involving stewardship and care for the revelation rather than, for instance, economic incentive. Urantia Foundation: Copyright Registration.

71 To be precise, the court said that the question of whether 'authorial intent' was the controlling factor in determining a work's classification was not settled, so it could not rule decisively that the jury's instructions to that effect were necessarily wrong.

72 *Michael Foundation.*

Conclusion: Similarities and Differences Between Channelling and Computer-Generated Work

The varied rulings surrounding *The Urantia Book* appeared, as Woodrow Barfield writes, to call "for a human author to find a copyrightable work even if the author did not conceive of the original work."[73] Meanwhile, the actual application of copyright law (locating originality, creativity, and fixation) to the circumstances of the book's production involved deploying different dimensions of the law to secure rights alternately to the Conduit (attributed authorship in *Michael Foundation*) or the Contact Commission (in *Maaherra*). In this process of legal reasoning, the resonance between this case and contemporaneous thinking about computer-generated works becomes apparent. Even as originality, creativity, and fixation were divvied up differently between divine authors, Conduit, and Commission, all the actors were tied together – mediated – by the Conduit whose presence secured the conditions for the book's materialization. Similarly, in computer-generated works, programmers, the computer program, and its end-users all contributed in various, and uneven ways to the production of the resultant work; however, all are mediated – united over time and space – through the computer program itself.

Scholarly anxiety about the authorship of computer-generated works stems from a fear of the same instability evident in *The Urantia Book*'s confused case history. Works produced by artificial intelligence seem to demand – indeed their literary, musical, or graphical coherence necessitates – the similar production of an author in whom originality, creativity, and fixation can all be located. The reality of the situation is slightly different. Originality, creativity, and fixation can all be found in a computer-generated work, but they are disarticulated, dispersed amongst different actors: namely, the programmer, the program, the data inputs (for example, a database of music to teach the computer composition or perhaps random numbers to generate unanticipated results), and the user. The programmer may be responsible for the creative component as author of the algorithm that, in part, shapes the resultant work, while the user might be responsible for the fixation when he or she runs the program.[74]

73 Barfield: Intellectual Property Rights, 667–668.

74 Bruce Boyden's article "Emergent Works" nicely graphs these different possibilities on a chart with 'Fixed Input' (input from the programmer) on one axis and 'Progressive Input' (input from the downstream user) on the other. The works that most challenge copyright are those that demonstrate low fixed or progressive input, which Boyden calls 'emergent works.' Boyden: Emergent Works.

While computer-generated works thus challenge the unity of originality, creativity, and fixation in a single actor, their presence in the resultant work – and thus the legal prerequisites to legitimate copyright – do not. Just as was the case for the Conduit and *The Urantia Book*, the computer program is the medium through which originality, creativity, and fixation come together.[75]

For this reason, computer-generated works – like the automatons of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, may generate anxiety, may produce in consumers the sense of ghostly presence, the absent human author capable of generating a work of such originality and intellectual coherence. Copyright law, by attempting to locate and legally secure the human author in this chain of production, assuages that potential anxiety by rendering legally cognizable, even mundane, that which might otherwise challenge our narrow conceptions of creative production. The effort to secure copyright only to human authors – thereby excluding at the same time divine or otherworldly authors and computer programs – stems from this same effort to legally bind unusual, unruly forms of production or to exclude them entirely from the domain of the law.

The practice of copyright law – particularly in its fact-finding role locating legal quanta of creativity, originality, and fixation – masks the instability of the text/author relationship, its legal coherence covering authorial incoherence. No matter what the details of a text's production, the range of contributors to the work, the relations of power in a work-for-hire or commissioned work, copyright guarantees that the author – incoherent in reality – is rendered coherent as a legal entity. Without the stability of law, the reader's encounter with the text is haunted by the potential destabilization and disintegration of the fiction of the unified author, and the potential re-emergence of the uncanny always hover over the communication at a distance that the medium affords. In this sense, the *Urantia* cases and the issues regarding computer-generated works are not exceptional to the production of the author in the legal realm but rather exemplary. They demonstrate the degree to which the law forces coherence on circumstances, no matter how incoherent or unusual. Similarly, they suggest that the author – be it a spiritual medium or a computer program – is best

75 One may notice a slight asymmetry here in that the works lacking in human authorship excluded by the U.S. Copyright Office Compendium are not those produced by mediums and computer programs but rather divinities and computer programs. However, I would argue that this asymmetry disappears in reality because the arrangement of legal actors in any resulting cases would be similar: i.e. various contributors, advocates, and actors, each of whom perceive a proprietary stake in a particular work and act accordingly to shift non-human authorship back onto different configurations of humans.

conceived not as the origin for the resulting text but rather as a medium, a 'thing in the middle.'[76]

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76 Peters: Marvellous Clouds, 6.

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Anna Lux

The Return of the Controversy. Testing Psychics in the 1970s and its Consequences for German Parapsychology

It was about 1900 when the appearance of physical mediums performing materializations and table levitations culminated in the United States and in Europe for the first time. The performances by celebrities such as Henry Slade or Eusapia Palladino were accompanied by intense discussions about the authenticity of the supposed paranormal abilities and the likelihood of fraud. During these discussions, proponents and skeptics faced each other in entrenched positions. Psychical researchers and parapsychologists tried to evoke the phenomena in controlled experimental designs and intended to establish parapsychology as a legitimate discipline within the field of science.[1] Magicians, in contrast, publicly imitated the supposed paranormal phenomena in order to debunk them as illusions.[2]

By the 1930s the controversy had lost much of its fervour. The most important reason for this decline was a methodological turn in parapsychological research that led to a preference for quantitative and statistical methods. Yet, in the 1960s the "psychic stars" returned. Once again physical mediums gained attention in public as well as within the parapsychological community. The most popular medium in this period was Uri Geller (*1946), who held the world in suspense by claiming to bend spoons by mental power alone. With the return of the psychic stars the heated controversy about the nature of their performances returned as well.

This paper is about the role of German parapsychology within these processes. At this time German parapsychology was mainly represented by Hans Bender (1907–1991), who, after the Second World War, achieved a remarkable institutional success. Despite the controversial nature of paranormal phenomena Bender was a recognized scholar within the scientific field[3] and also enjoyed wide-ranging popularity.[4] In addition, he was considered *the* expert on everything paranormal not only by the mass media but also in political and legal contexts.

1 On Germany see Wolfram: Stepchildren.

2 See Lamont.

3 See Bauer/von Lucadou: Parapsychologie in Freiburg; Lux: Passing.

4 See Lux: On all Channels.

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In all these fields credibility was a very important resource. In the scientific field, according to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, credibility is a precondition to accumulating symbolic capital, which again is a precondition for success.[5] Bender was a very charismatic person and for a long time enjoyed a high degree of credibility, which was one of the reasons for the academic success of parapsychology in Germany.

Towards the end of the 1970s Bender's position changed. He lost influence and reputation in scientific contexts and his standing as an expert weakened. This development was based on a complex combination of internal and external factors: a progressive differentiation within the field of German parapsychology after Bender's retirement; an increasingly critical attitude towards the popularity he had gained through intense cooperation with the mass media; the return of a transformed spirituality (New Age) that was accompanied by a strong skeptical movement[6]; and a deep social, political, and economic transformation taking place in the Federal Republic of Germany after the "boom years". The return of the psychic stars and with them the return of heated controversy about fraud in parapsychology was closely connected to all of these factors, which also had a crucial influence on the transformation that parapsychology in Germany underwent towards the end of the 1970s.

The Return of the "Psychic Stars"

The return of physical mediums started in the 1960s and peaked with the performances by Uri Geller. The young Israeli caused immense international fascination by psychokinesis. Interestingly, the supposed paranormal phenomena he produced were quite trivial: he bent cutlery and repaired watches apparently by sheer mental power. The simplicity of these phenomena was part of the public fascination and success of Geller. Unlike other mediums Geller provoked a kind of epidemic reaction: the supposed paranormal phenomena, which he performed on television, seemed to happen in the audience too. In Japan, the UK, and Germany thousands of television viewers reported that similar phenomena had occurred in their homes without anybody's interference. Spoons and forks

5 See Bourdieu: Homo academicus.

6 In 1976 the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (CSICOP) was founded. About ten years later, in 1987, the German skeptical organisation "Gesellschaft zur wissenschaftlichen Untersuchung von Parawissenschaften" (GWUP) was founded. See Hansen: The Trickster.

were bent and watches started to tick again. Furthermore, some people, most of them children and teenagers, came forward and pretended to be able to produce the same phenomena as Geller had done.[7]

Why was metal bending successful in the 1970s? Compared to other mediumistic phenomena like levitations or materialisations, spoon bending was a remarkably unsophisticated phenomenon. It was closely linked to material objects of everyday life. In contrast to levitations (which could also be observed by spiritually gifted persons) or to materialisations of ethereal ectoplasm, spoon bending was neither connected to ghosts nor the afterworld.

The hype around Geller and spoon bending was accompanied by a growing interest in occult, paranormal and esoteric issues since the end of the 1960s.[8] In conjunction with these social processes, that were referred to as the "occult wave",[9] Geller seemed to be the "beginning of a new era" and the "signal for a radical change in the philosophy of life".[10] Geller was an accomplished performer who knew how to produce his supposedly paranormal abilities to great effect. He combined the spectacular character of mediumism with the mass hysteria of fandom – as it was witnessed, for instance, in connection with the Beatles or the movie *The Exorcist* (1974). Geller provided both, entertainment and contemplation.[11]

After the Second World War and in the 1950s it was especially *mental* mediums that became popular. Clairvoyants, fortune-tellers and astrologers were frequented in response to a widespread need to gain knowledge about lost relatives or about an uncertain future. Public interest in abilities such as psychokinesis only began in the 1960s with reports about the American Ted Serios (1918–2006) and his psychic photos or the Russian medium Nina Kulagina (1926–1990), who could levitate coins and matchboxes covered by a glass – both apparently by mental powers. In Germany the so-called "electronic voice phenomenon" became popular after the Swedish artist Friedrich Jürgenson (1903–1987) published his book *Sprechfunk mit Verstorbenen (Electronic Communication with the Dead)* in 1967. The subtitle of the book claimed that electronic voice phenomena could be a "form of practical, techno-physical communication with the afterworld, appropriate to an age of nuclear power".

The technological and physical aspects of paranormal phenomena seemed extremely interesting to a larger audience. Both the electronic voice phenomenon

7 See Bender et al.: Der Geller Effekt, I, II, III.

8 See Hess: Science; Stenger: Soziale Konstruktion.

9 Bender: Parapsychologie, 7.

10 Andreas: Uri Geller, 218.

11 From a skeptical perspective, see Randi: The Truth.

and metal bending were a provocation for modern science, especially for the findings and theories of physics.[12] At the same time these phenomena were linked to more general cultural and social processes and the transition from an optimistic to a critical assessment of scientific progress. The generation that had landed on the moon knew that it was possible to transcend hitherto accepted natural laws and to open up new frontiers. But it was also the generation "after the boom" (Doering-Manteuffel/Raphael), i.e. a generation living in an era of profound structural, social, and cultural change. Nearly every social field was in transition and many people were in search of new references and guidance. Against this background, spoon bending perfectly fitted the time – it was an everyday, worldly phenomenon that was nonetheless scandalous because it questioned physical laws and common worldviews. In the 1970s spoon bending appeared as an overdue "attack on common sense".[13] It seemed to be one of the last gasps of a utopian *Zeitgeist*, which, due to deep structural economic changes, political radicalisation and social divisions as well as a rising new esotericism and occultism, only towards the end of the 1970s was beginning to lose plausibility.

The Return of the Controversy

Controversies about mediumism and about the authenticity of phenomena like spoon bending have been an integral part of the history of parapsychology up to the present day.[14] To put it simply: On the one side of these conflicts stood those scientists (especially parapsychologists) who took the existence of paranormal phenomena and authentic mediums for granted. On the other side were those who suspected that the mediums were fraudsters and that their paranormal abilities were nothing but tricks. The skeptical group consisted mainly of magicians, but there were also scientists and actors from the health and legal sectors. Finally, the mediums themselves took part in the controversy. Some of them intervened in the debates by professing their authenticity, others uncovered themselves as magicians in a spectacular manner. The controversy took place in public and the audiences were fascinated not only by the mediums and their phenomena, but also by the doubts raised and by the controversy as such with its "eternal interplay of debunking and contradiction".[15]

12 See Bauer/von Lucadou: Methoden.
13 Moser: Spuk, 13.
14 See Bauer: Kritik.
15 Natale: Geisterglaube, 334.

An important issue within the controversy was the question of trickery. How should one react if a medium was caught cheating or if a medium confessed to engaging in trickery, as Eusapia Palladino had done? Critics on the one hand regarded such exposures as a general proof for fraud and the nonexistence of the phenomena. The mediums and some of the parapsychologists considered instances of apparent fraud as an effect of the critics and their skeptical attitude obstructing the mediums activity, but from the perspective of the skeptics it was obvious that their "sharp eyes" had prevented the self-appointed mediums from performing their tricks.[16]

On the other hand proponents of the psi-hypothesis, like the German parapsychologist Hans Bender, answered the question concerning fraud and cheating differently: Firstly they pointed out that there had been scientific experiments in which trickery could definitely be excluded and that these studies had shown the authenticity of paranormal phenomena. Secondly, they emphasized that they themselves actively helped exposing fraudulent mediums. Thirdly, they argued that the fact that a medium had cheated did not automatically prove that this medium did not possess paranormal abilities.

In the end the discussion between skeptics and proponents about the authenticity and fraudulence of mediums resulted in a stalemate. Each supposed fact was interpreted in one way or the other; every interpretation was accused of being biased by the other party in the conflict.

In the course of the "Rhine revolution"[17] the original controversy from the 1930s onwards had lost in vehemence. Biologist Joseph Banks Rhine (1895–1980) had conducted extensive research on the paranormal by using quantitative and statistical methods and contributed decisively to the professionalization of parapsychology. In 1934 Rhine and his colleagues had founded the "Parapsychology Laboratory" at Duke University (NC) and started conducting research on extrasensory perception (ESP) and psychokinesis (PK) over a period of 30 years. They eventually claimed to have found proof for the paranormal abilities of human beings. Though the strength of these abilities differed between individuals, they insisted on a statistical basis for their assumption. The scientification (*Verwissenschaftlichung*) of the research and strategies of "boundary-work" (Thomas F. Gieryn) by Rhine to exclude controversial fields such as spiritualism and poltergeist phenomena from parapsychology led to a certain acceptance of the discipline within both the scientific community and the public. Of course,

16 See Müller: Para.

17 Beloff: Parapsychology, 125.

discussions about the existence of psi and the methods of parapsychology never ceased, but by this time they had lost a good part of their vehemence.[18]

This development turned out to be to the advantage of parapsychology in general. In 1953 a professorship for parapsychology was established in Utrecht (Netherlands). In 1957 the Parapsychological Association as a professional association was founded and in 1969 it was incorporated into the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the most important scientific association in the United States.[19]

For German parapsychology Hans Bender was the crucial person in these years. He was charismatic and strongly dedicated to establishing parapsychology as a recognized and institutionalised scientific discipline. His endeavours eventually bore fruit. After having founded the private "Institute for the Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health" (called IGPP) in Freiburg in 1950 he became professor for the frontier areas of psychology at the University of Freiburg in 1954. Bender was very successful in applying for research funding and he was considered the leading authority on the paranormal, both by the general public as well as in political and juridical contexts, where he was frequently consulted as an expert.[20]

Bender knew that parapsychology had crucially benefited from the scientific paradigm of Rhine but considered Rhine's statistical methods as insufficient. According to Bender they had "straitjacketed" the occult phenomena.[21] For a real understanding of the complex characteristics of paranormal phenomena it was necessary, in his opinion, to study these phenomena in the context of everyday life. For this reason Bender (in contrast to Rhine) also investigated psychic mediums. He conducted research on the clairvoyants Arthur Orlop (1912–1984) and Gerard Croiset (1909–1980) as well as on Jürgenson and the electronic voice phenomenon. Besides these projects Bender was especially fascinated by so-called spontaneous phenomena, notably poltergeists. Against this backdrop it cannot surprise that he was highly impressed when Uri Geller started bending spoons at the beginning of the 1970s.

Thanks to the return of psychic stars parapsychology became even more popular than before and in the 1970s Bender reached the peak of his popularity. Psychokinesis was no longer an unknown term but had become part of everyday discourse – a discourse influenced by Geller's popularity and an increasing

18 See Mauskopf and McVaugh: Elusive Science.

19 On the institutionalization of parapsychology in 20th century, see the contributions in Lux and Paletschek: Okkultismus.

20 See Lux: Passing.

21 Bender: Parapsychologie, 33.

interest in paranormal phenomena and practices (the "occult wave"). Bender saw these developments as an opportunity: Now, that parapsychology and its issues drew so much social, media and scientific attention, had the time come to prove psi not only statistically but as a phenomenon of everyday life?

Bender was fascinated by Geller's phenomena and especially impressed by the mass reaction Geller provoked. After Geller had appeared on the popular television show "3x9", metal bending also seemed to occur in many private households. Thousands of phone calls were made and letters sent to the IGPP in order to report similar phenomena. Bender wanted to examine this mass reaction by means of a survey. He applied to the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG), the most important German research foundation, asking for a quick decision and emphasizing that his research on the "psychic epidemic" provoked by Geller would have far-reaching consequences for the mental health of the German public. And indeed, Bender's research project on the so-called "Geller-effect" got funded.[22]

In conducting his survey Bender was not only interested in getting mass data on psi. He also hoped to find a *real* medium, a "Mini-Geller".[23] Bender and his colleague drove all across Germany in order to interview personally the most promising candidates who had claimed to bend metal. It proved to be an exhausting and disappointing trip, as Elmar Gruber (*1955) – at the time a young student and later a collaborator at the IGPP – remembered. Some of the metal benders, Gruber noted in his book on Hans Bender, did in fact seem to have paranormal abilities, if only rather weak ones. Others, it turned out, were cheating. The overall result was shattering, as Gruber remarked. The more people they examined, the more they doubted whether the "Geller-effect" had ever existed. The only person never to lose heart was Bender himself, as Gruber wrote.[24]

Bender indeed found some promising metal benders. One of them was Silvio M., a 34-year-old man from Switzerland (*1941). The contact between Bender and Silvio was made by Rolf Mayr, a Swiss magician well versed in debunking fraudulent mediums but at the same time open to parapsychology and its issues. During a first meeting with Bender Silvio bent several spoons, holding them between two fingers of one hand while stroking them with the fingers

22 See the application for research on a "psychic epidemic", handed in to the DFG on Marchs 28th, 1974. The application was approved, and the results were published in *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*. See Bender et all.: Geller-Effekt, I, II, III.

23 In Italian parapsychology, young mediums performing Geller-like phenomena were called "Gellerini" or "Mini-Gellers" .

24 See Gruber: Suche, 270.

of the other. After some examinations with controlled material Bender convinced himself that Silvio was a qualified medium worth to be examined.[25]

Since some of the experiments didn't work out when professionals (scientists or cameramen) were present in the same room, Bender decided to change the experimental setting. He installed a video camera in Silvio's apartment and provided him with controlled material (cutlery and metal rods) in sealed glass flasks. Silvio was asked, whenever a suitable moment arose, to open the glass flask in front of the camera and bend the metal objects by mental power. He was not permitted to stop the recording during the performance. The video recordings were analysed frame by frame in the IGPP and the bent (or even broken) cutlery was examined by institutions specializing in materials testing. Bender was highly impressed by the results[26] and continued his research by cooperating with Hans-Dieter Betz (*1940), a physicist at the University of Munich. In a series of experiments at the physics laboratory in Munich Silvio apparently was able to influence an electric resistance by mental powers alone.[27] The results of the experiments seemed to prove his psi-abilities. Bender published these results in a paper in 1976. He concluded that, after two years of research, there could be no doubt about the authenticity of the phenomena that Silvio had produced.[28] Accordingly Bender presented Silvio in public as a man with real mental powers.[29]

Despite Bender's euphoria the case study on Silvio did not lead to a breakthrough for parapsychology as it was not considered to be a general proof for psi.[30] Even parapsychologists differed in their assessment and some of Bender's younger colleagues responded with caution to his euphoric interpretation. For example Eberhard Bauer (*1944) and Klaus Kornwachs (*1947), who had written the introduction to the *Silvio protocols* published in the IGPP journal in 1978, remarked:

> Of course we know that this research and its presentation might be criticised. Especially experts in trickery might find passages in the protocols they would interpret as corroborating the fraud-hypothesis. We think these protocols should not be used to develop a conclusive criterion for authenticity or fraud. [. . .] The present research material should be used primarily as a basis for discussing further efforts to distinguish manipulation

25 See Bender: Täuschungen, Bender/Vaundrey: Psychokinetische Experimente.

26 See Gruber: Suche, 272–274.

27 See Betz: Experimentelle Untersuchung.

28 See Bender and Vandrey: Psychokinetische Experimente, 235.

29 See the newspaper clippings at the IGPP archive, E/23: PK: Silvio (1975–1987).

30 Even though the results of the experiments with Silvio were deemed important evidence on an individual level. See Bauer: Suche, 405–406.

> from fact and to develop new hypotheses that can be verified by scientific experiments step by step.[31]

The differences in the evaluation of the *Silvio protocols* call attention to an important development within German parapsychology during these years: the increasing differentiation of the field after Bender's retirement in 1974. Bender's successor at the University of Freiburg was Johannes Mischo (1930–2001), one of Bender's former scientific assistants. As a professor, Mischo tried to represent parapsychology as focusing on basic research and academic teaching. He had a strong interest in academic respectability and kept his distance to controversial issues. In contrast to this, Bender, who now, after his retirement, felt free of academic restrictions, represented parapsychology in a way that involved both highly controversial issues (such as poltergeists and psychokinesis) and an extensive popularisation.[32]

A second reason why the Silvio-experiments, despite Bender's enthusiasm, did not receive wider attention in the scientific community was the fact that in summer 1979 Silvio was found cheating. A detailed report concerning the incident was published in *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie* as late as 1981.[33] What was the reason for the two-year time lag between the incident and its publication? The delay was partly due to different perspectives on fraud and its effects on rating psychic mediums and their abilities as described above. Bernhard Wälti (1926–2007),[34] who had continued experiments with Silvio after Bender and Betz, was in favour of an early publication of the revelation. Bender, however, hesitated.[35] He was convinced that Silvio was an authentic medium and therefore needed protection. Bender feared a report on manipulation would turn Silvio into an object of aggressive debate about fraud in mediumism and that Silvio would be regarded as just another imposter. In Bender's view reporting the manipulation would risk the disruption or even cessation of the psychokinetic phenomena, he, Bender, wanted to encourage and protect.

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31 Preface by the editors concerning the "Silvio-Protokolle", published by B. Wälti: Silvio-Protokolle, 2.

32 I like to thank Eberhard Bauer (IGPP) for providing information on the processes in Freiburg after Bender's retirement. See also Bauer: Suche.

33 See Dokumentation.

34 Wälti was a Swiss mechanic and technical assistant at the Institute of Physics at the University of Bern.

35 See the correspondence between Bender und Wälti in IGPP archive: E/23: Silvio Meyer (Psychokinese), 1978–1980.

Silvio's case reveals a methodological problem in Bender's approach. Because he was convinced of Silvio's authenticity he withheld information about his manipulations. This act of withholding crucial information was highly questionable. Furthermore, it confirmed the accusations of skeptics who claimed that parapsychologists selected their data as they pleased. Thus, the eventual publication of Silvio's manipulations was not Bender's move but forced upon him by young colleagues who demanded unremitting transparency in the debate.[36]

The return of the controversy over psychic stars and Bender's dealing with it had consequences not only for the debate within the parapsychologists' community. It also had consequences for the recognition of parapsychology in the field of science as can be demonstrated by the "Rahn case". Claus Rahn was another "Mini-Geller" investigated by Bender. Born in 1947 and living in Bremerhaven, Rahn was praised by the tabloid *Bild* as being "better than Uri Geller".[37] Rahn contacted Bender through Gert Geisler, editor in chief of the popular esoteric magazine *Esotera*. Since the Swiss magician Mayr, whom Bender consulted, could not detect any trickery in Rahn's performances and, after first tests, both Bender and Betz were impressed by Rahn's psi-abilities, Betz invited Rahn to the physics laboratory in Munich. However, the cooperation soon ran into difficulties. According to Rahn the investigations were exhausting and he was suffering from Betz' mistrust.[38] As a result Rahn broke off the tests and left Munich (not without taking the research protocols with him in order to sell them to the press).[39] Betz, for his part, was exasperated by Rahn's behaviour.

> It is time to be stricter with him, otherwise he will not comply. I need him for some more experiments in order to rule out any fraud. Only then can I talk about him in public. But that, understandably, is what he [Rahn] wants.[40]

Bender tried to negotiate between Rahn and Betz, for he wanted to present Rahn to the international community of parapsychologists as a medium worthy of further investigation.[41]

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36 See Gruber: Suche, 274.

37 This article in *Bild* was quoted in Geisler/Fritsch: Claus Rahn, 681.

38 Letter from Claus Rahn to Hans Bender (26/06/1976), in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977.

39 See the article in the magazine "Spiegel" (without author): Dreh dich, dreh dich.

40 Letter from Hans-Dieter Betz to Hans Bender (06/12/1976), in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977.

41 See letter from Hans Bender to Claus Rahn (25/06/1976), in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977.

The question of fraud had played a more important role with Rahn than with Silvio right from the beginning.[42] Nevertheless Bender remained convinced that Rahn was an authentic "Mini-Geller" and therefore supported Rahn despite the trouble he caused and the accusations raised against him.

The situation escalated in January 1977 when Rahn was publicly exposed on television.[43] In a television show both Rahn and a popular magician, Werner Geissler-Werry (1925–2000), were shown bending metal – Geissler-Werry explicitly by a magic trick and Rahn allegedly by mental power. Rahn was introduced as a medium participating in a research project at the University of Munich, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and investigated by scientists such as Bender and Betz. When Rahn was asked by the journalist if his supposed psi-abilities were certified by science, he answered: "Yes, without any doubt."[44] At the end of the television show the scene in which Rahn bent a fork was shown again. This time the scene included a pointing arrow that drew attention to extremely thin threads glued to the fork and leading into Rahn's right shirtsleeve. The scene proved Rahn was manipulating and led to the closing comment of the television show: scientific experiments were not able to measure psi-phenomena, even if they pretended to do so.[45]

The television show, by presenting the debate and the arguments of the scientists and by eventually debunking the medium, actually intensified the controversy. It scandalized not only the fraud itself but also the fact that Rahn was part of a scientific experiment funded by the DFG and that he, Rahn, obviously was able to play along with experienced scientists. The television show turned out to be a disaster for Bender and Betz, especially as the tabloid *Bild* continued to spread the scandal with headlines such as "The 'Uri Geller' from Bremerhaven cheated thousands, even scientists".[46]

Even after this incident Bender tried to continue working with Rahn hoping to at least rehabilitate his own work. He also asked Betz to continue the experiments with Rahn. Bender wrote: "Fraud does not automatically mean that the

42 See Kornwachs: . . . also doch Betrug.

43 The TV show *Kraft durch Psi* (Power by Psi) was a documentary produced by Herbert Hübenthal. It was broadcasted on Sunday, 2 January 1977 at 19:15 pm on WDR 3.

44 Script of the TV show, in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977, 4.

45 See the script of the TV show, in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977, 8.

46 *Bild* article (05/01/1977), in: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977. Betz wrote a letter to the programme director of the television station emphasizing that some of the information presented in the documentary was incorrect (e.g. the research project not only included studies on Rahn but on psychokineses in general, and the budget was not 100.000 but 70.000 Deutsche Mark). In: IGPP archive: E/23, Nr. 851: PK: Claus Rahn, 1975–1977.

medium is not authentic. 100 years of empirical work have shown that." The difficulties with Rahn were due to "bad luck", Bender continued, and in a few years Betz would be proven right and regarded as a pioneer.[47] However Betz, unlike Bender, was not at all inclined to continue research on Rahn. For him the cooperation was over.[48]

The Loss of Credibility and its Consequences

Shortly after this incident it became clear that the television show had a far more profound impact than Bender had thought. One reason for that was Bender's own strategy of popularization. In the 1950s and 1960s Bender had maintained a balance between a scientific and a popular discourse on parapsychology. In the 1970s, however, his popularity as "spook professor" finally reached its peak and thereby became more and more problematic. With television shows like the one with Rahn the already blurred boundaries between parapsychology and entertainment continued to fade. As a consequence, Bender was increasingly criticised and suffered a loss in credibility.[49]

Credibility can be defined as the degree of recognition that someone receives from other people. Usually, credibility is based on competence and trustworthiness, although it is sometimes based on a specific charisma. According to Bourdieu, the scientific field is a social arena of struggle in which credibility plays a crucial role, because it helps to appropriate scientific capital, reputation (symbolic capital), or official functions (institutionalized capital). In the "circle of credibility" (Latour/Woolgar) scientific results gain their value by scientific

47 Letter from Hans Bender to Hans-Dieter Betz (21/01/1977), in: IGPP archives: E/21, Nr. 39: Allg. Korrespondenz, Inland A-M, 1977.

48 On the contrary, Betz was interested in going on with the studies on Silvio. He wished to "produce a perfect experiment." Letter from Hans-Dieter Betz to Hans Bender (31/01/1977), in: IGPP archives: E/21, Nr. 39: Allg. Korrespondenz, Inland A-M, 1977.

49 Bender was *the* authority in the field of occultism and parapsychology in the public since the 1950s. He cooperated with tabloids and popular magazines, gave lectures on the radio and cooperated with television stations on issues such as astrology or clairvoyance. In doing so he intended both to inform and educate the public about occult and paranormal phenomena. He summed up this work as a „positive critique of superstition". In the 1970s Bender's cooperation with the mass media became more and more problematic and criticized. But Bender went on with his strategy of popularization. For instance, he gave interviews to the esoteric journal *Esotera* (e.g. in 1975, H. 2.). He was involved in the criticized infotainment-broadcastings *Psi. Berichte über Unerklärliches* (1974 and 1975) and in the television show on "Mini-Geller" Claus Rahn. See Lux: On all Channels.

and extra-scientific recognition, both of which are substantially produced by credibility. Credibility is of particular importance within controversial disciplines and scientific fields with fuzzy boundaries such as parapsychology. The case of Hans Bender not only shows what happens when credibility increases and the "circle of credibility" is at work, it also allows us to see what can happen when credibility in the field of science declines.

The "Rahn case" did greater damage to Bender's credibility than other cases of debunking. The case was not only a public scandal, for – due to the participation of physicists and the DFG – it had also definite consequences for the field of science, first of all regarding finance. Until the television show the DFG had financed several research projects of the IGPP.[50] This considerably helped to legitimize parapsychology as a science and to increase Bender's credibility. After the debunking of Rahn the DFG deemed further funding "inappropriate".[51]

Obviously the funding organisation itself had also come under pressure after having been mentioned in the TV-show as a sponsor of psychokinetic experiments, and the person responsible for physics in the DFG was quoted in the *Der Spiegel* with the words: "It's time to get to the bottom of things."[52] As a consequence, applications by Betz and by the IGPP for funding of psychokinetic research were rejected.[53]

At the same time the controversy about mediumism in public had entered a new and more critical phase. This phase was characterized by pugnacity and aggressiveness and was more and more focussed on Bender's integrity.[54] Until then, Bender had been widely accepted as the representative of parapsychology and considered an expert in the mediumistic controversy. In 1974 the news magazine *Der Spiegel*, which was generally critical of occult and paranormal issues, still characterized the research of parapsychology as "debatable",[55] and in the same year science journalist Thomas von Randow, in the national weekly

50 See IGPP archive: E/20: Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft 1954–1966.

51 Letter from Hans-Dieter Betz to Hans Bender (31/01/1977), in: IGPP archive: E/21/39: Allg. Korrespondenz, Inland A-M, 1977.

52 See the article in the magazine "Der Spiegel" (no author given): Dreh dich, dreh dich.

53 Even Benders applications for reimbursement of travelling expenses were rejected, even as similar applications until then had always been easily approved. See correspondence at the IGPP archive: E/20: Förderung durch die DFG 1966–1981; E/20: Förderung durch die DFG 1974–1981.

54 See Bauer/Hövelmann/von Lucadou: Jahrhundergkongreß.

55 See the article in the magazine "Der Spiegel" (no author given): Parapsychologie, ich weiß nicht wie.

newspaper *Die Zeit*, called parapsychology "a science we urgently need at the moment".[56]

Only a few years later, in 1978, did a critical attitude become predominant in both journals. At this point, the articles took a particularly skeptical point of view concerning the discipline of parapsychology and the conduct of Hans Bender: Parapsychologists like him, according to *Zeit*-journalist von Randow,

> do not restrict themselves to discussing their research inside the scientific community, but they are eager to make the uninformed public believe that the unexplainable floating between heaven and earth really exists.[57]

In this struggle for credibility and the discussions about who should be the expert on the paranormal in science, law, and the public arena, three skeptics played a crucial role: Herbert Schäfer (1926–2019), head of the criminal investigation department in Bremen; Wolf Wimmer (1935–2004), judge at the court in Mannheim; and Otto Prokop (1921–2009), professor and forensic expert at the Charité hospital in East Berlin. These skeptics, who worked in the field of criminology and law, had for years opposed parapsychology and especially Hans Bender.[58] They wanted to delegitimize him as a person and parapsychology as a discipline for being pseudoscientific. Their aim was to exclude parapsychologists from universities and courts and to deny Bender's status as an expert on the occult and paranormal in public. According to them parapsychology and especially Bender were in fact spreading occultism and the belief in witches. In their view, the work of parapsychologists was not based on objectivity but on superstition.[59] Parapsychologists threatened to "infiltrate" universities practicing modern superstition in the form of science.[60] In sum, for these skeptics it was not only the occultists that were fraudulent and often criminal *Okkulttäter* ('occult offenders'),[61] but also the parapsychologists who investigated them.[62]

These arguments were not new and an integral part of the controversy about parapsychology. At several times during the 1950s and 1960s Bender had won public and legal disputes against such critics. His successes were partly due to his reputation, but also to his references to the ideological dimension of the debate on parapsychology. Bender denounced Prokop, who was professor

56 Randow: Schwierigkeiten.
57 Randow: Zwei Zungen.
58 See Schneider: Soldaten.
59 See Quote ibid, 298.
60 See Prokop: Parapsychologoie.
61 See Schäfer: Okkulttäter.
62 See Schäfer: Poltergeister.

in East-Berlin,[63] and his colleagues as "remote-controlled"[64] by the Eastern political system. For "Leninists" like Prokop, Bender wrote in 1959, the existence of parapsychology was "not only a violation of science, but also a violation of the doctrine of atheism."[65] For actors like these, Bender claimed, the mere assumption of the existence of paranormal phenomena was already "heresy". They perceived the occult and parapsychology as 'opium of the people', a tool for exploitation by capitalists.[66]

In the mid-1970s the situation began to change. I have already mentioned some of the reasons for this change. Looking at the actual controversy between Bender and these three influential skeptics, we have to add further reasons. Firstly, the general political situation had changed with Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, a "change by convergence" between the East and the West. After this point, the ideological argumentation that Bender had used in the late 1950s was losing plausibility. Secondly, Otto Prokop, the East German forensic expert, had won renown not only in the GDR, but also in the Federal Republic of Germany. His books on 'occult medicine', homeopathy, acupuncture, and parapsychology, based on a scientistic worldview and excluding any form of occultism, were published in both the GDR and the FRG. The more Prokop's reputation grew, the more he dominated the discourse on the paranormal in the GDR, and the more influential he became with regard to the skeptical discourse in the FRG.[67] Thirdly, we have to keep in mind the social status of Schäfer, Wimmer, and Prokop. As experts in the field of criminology and law they argued not from a scientific perspective but from a legal point of view. Due to their influence the focus of the debate increasingly shifted from questions on mediumism and the scientific distinction between true and untrue (*wahr/unwahr*) to questions of the legitimization of parapsychology and the distinction between what is legally right and legally wrong (*Recht/Unrecht*). As a result of this complex process Bender, towards the end of the 1970s, had lost credibility and respectability while his opponents had gained public visibility, plausibility, and influence. This shift can be shown in four incidents that happened in 1977 and 1978.

63 He had moved from Austria to the German Democratic Republic in 1956.
64 Bender (1959/60), 5.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 On Prokop see recently Anton: Das Paranormale.

The Doctoral Degree

The first incident concerned a complaint in February 1977 regarding the question whether Bender's second doctoral degree had been legally obtained. Bender had received his first doctoral degree in the field of psychology in 1933. But he did not completely finish the formal procedure for his second doctoral degree in medicine in 1941. Nevertheless both degrees were used in several publications (e.g. in the official lecture catalogue of the University of Freiburg), apparently without Bender's objection.[68] After the complaints were made, Bender repeated and completed the procedure at the University of Heidelberg and received a PhD in medicine in 1980. However, the affair was widely spread in popular magazines.[69] For example, a journalist in *Der Spiegel* described Bender sarcastically as "hocus-pocus-professor", comparing his "decorative academic degree" to the alleged psychokinetic phenomena defined by Bender himself as "the disappearing and reappearing of objects".[70] The quotation shows how much Bender's credibility already had suffered. Maybe more than the affair itself, it was the use of ridicule like this that contributed to the decline of Bender's credibility.[71]

The Case of Heiner S.

Another affair revolved around the so-called confession of Heiner Scholz, published by Herbert Schäfer in spring 1978.[72] In 1965 Bender had investigated the so-called "Poltergeist in the china shop" in Bremen, where 14-year-old Heiner Scholz was said to move objects by the sheer force of his mind. Schäfer, who at the time was working as a detective in Bremen, investigated the case some years later and came to the conclusion that Scholz had deceived Bender. Eventually Scholz admitted to cheating. His confession, launched by Schäfer, was spread widely in media. While Bender wrote a detailed reply in *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*,[73] publicly the picture of

68 See the report on this issue by Hans Bender from 10/04/1977, in: University Archive Freiburg: B2 61/449.

69 *Stern* article: "Doktor aus dem Jenseits" (24 February 1977); *Spiegel* article: Dr. psi, (28/02/1977).

70 Dr. psi, (28/02/1977), 169.

71 See Schetsche: Anomalien; Mayer: Phantome.

72 See *Stern* article (25/07/1978), *Zeit* article: Der übersinnliche Lehrling Heiner, 12/05/1978.

73 See Bender/Mischo: Geständnis.

Bender as a gullible researcher predominated. Since the case of Heiner Scholz was one of Bender's 'textbook cases', Scholz' confession called into question Bender's general competence. The incident shows how Bender further lost influence: Schäfer's statements were frequently quoted, while Bender hardly was given any possibility to speak in public. The decline of Bender's credibility is illustrated by two statements of *Zeit*-journalist Thomas von Randow: In 1974 he had described Bender as "subtle and smart",[74] but only four years later, in 1978, because of Bender's "psy-antics" (*"Psi-Mätzchen"*) in the Heiner Scholz affair, he no longer considered him trustworthy.[75]

The Nazi Past

The third attack on Bender's integrity referred to his work during the Third Reich. Especially *Der Spiegel* raised suspicions regarding Bender's connections to the Nazi regime. As a matter of fact, Bender had become a member of the NSDAP in 1937. From 1941 until 1944 he was professor at the *Reichsuniversität* in Strasbourg (France), which had been founded by the National-Socialists. The research on Bender's Nazi past has shown that Bender made several concessions to the political regime in order to establish parapsychology as an academic discipline. Bender also benefited from the support of important scientific and political figures.[76] In any case, when *Der Spiegel* mentioned Bender's Nazi past in 1977, it was not so much in order to evaluate Bender's role during the Third Reich, but rather to combine the complaint regarding the illegitimacy of his PhD with a picture of him as an unscrupulous person who had sold his soul to the Nazis. At a time of highly emotional discussions about the Nazi past of German elites the mere mention of Bender's collaboration with the Nazi regime assured great public attention.[77]

74 Randow: Schwierigkeiten.

75 Randow: Zwei Zungen.

76 See Hausmann: Hans Bender.

77 The debate on the connection between occultism and fascism is one of the most important elements of the discourse on occultism in the 20th century. See Kurlander and Black: Revisiting.

The Judgement of the *Bundesgerichtshof*

Finally, the most important incident happened in 1978, when Bender lost his status as an expert in legal cases by a verdict of the *Bundesgerichtshof* (BGH) ('Federal Supreme Court'). Since the 1950s Bender had worked as an official expert in trials and had written scientific statements on clairvoyants and astrologers.[78] In 1978, a verdict by the BGH brought this cooperation to an end.[79] It stated that:

> the results of parapsychology do not belong to scientifically confirmed knowledge [. . .]. Even if one stops short of considering parapsychology as an anti-science, the mental powers, which it claims, cannot be accepted as scientifically proven in criminal proceedings. Rather these powers belong to belief, superstition, illusion or delusion. Therefore these powers cannot be accepted as a source of reality by the judge.[80]

The verdict added that even the scientific publications of Bender could not change the court's evaluation of parapsychology as being unqualified for use in trials.[81] On the contrary, the verdict explicitly referred to the publications of Prokop and Wimmer. Again we can see the decline of Bender's credibility, while his opponents gained influence. Even Bender's role as a scientist and professor emeritus of Freiburg University could not prevent his dismissal as an expert in juridical contexts.

Bender criticized the verdict of the BGH as biased in the *Zeitschrift für Parapsychologie und Grenzgebiete der Psychologie*.[82] But all his efforts proved in vain. The time when he was considered an expert for paranormal and occult issues in legal and juridical contexts had passed. For years his opponents had tried to exclude him from any such proceedings and now they had finally succeeded.[83]

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78 See Schellinger: Kriminaltelepathie.

79 The quoted verdict was passed as a result of the so-called "murder trial without a corpse" that took place in Heilbronn in 1977. During this trial, the lawyer of the defendant had consulted a clairvoyant woman to get information about the missing corpse. Hans Bender was consulted to give an expert opinion on the abilities of the clairvoyant. After the court in Heilbronn had rejected the motion by the defendant, the case was taken to the Federal Supreme Court *(Bundesgerichtshof)*. Its verdict concerned the particular case, but also the 'case of parapsychology' in general.

80 BGH-judgement 2/02/1978 (file number: 1 StR 624/77).

81 See Ibid.

82 See Bender, Kornwachs, and von Lucadou: Bundesgerichtshof.

83 See Schneider: Soldaten, 291–292.

In sum, we can consider the late 1970s as a phase of decline for parapsychology in Germany, after a phase of rising acceptance in the 1950s and 1960s. Bender lost much of his reputation and credibility in the scientific and legal field. The controversy about mediumism (public scandals, increasing plausibility and visibility of the skeptics, shift of discourse) played a crucial role in this process. A phase of crisis followed.[84] The question "Quo vadis parapsychology?" was intensely discussed in the community.[85] At the end of the 1980s the financial situation of the IGPP became very critical and the institute's future uncertain. Moreover, parapsychology lost its support at Freiburg University, which after Mischo's retirement in 1998 eventually led to its disincorporation.[86]

But the phase of decline has a second side: Due to Bender's popularity and his position in the controversy over psychic stars, new sources opened up. In the 1970s, when funding by the DFG ended, Bender came to know the coheiress of Volkswagen Financial Services, Asta Holler (1904–1989). Holler was interested in paranormal and spiritualistic practices and fascinated by Uri Geller. She met Geller in 1972 and supported him. In 1975 Asta Holler contacted Bender after she had seen him on a television show. In the following years she donated some thousand Deutsche Mark to the IGPP and promised to incorporate the institute in a foundation. Only after her death in 1989 did the actors realise how much money was involved. As one of several beneficiaries of the Christian und Asta-Holler-Stiftung (named after Asta Holler and her husband, who had already died in 1969) the IGPP could greatly expand. In the years to follow it became one of the biggest institutes in the world investigating paranormal phenomena.

Conclusion

Within only a few years Bender's status had changed. In 1974, at the peak of his popularity, he was considered an expert on the paranormal in public, science and law. He was an acknowledged professor at Freiburg University and his field of research was academically institutionalised. In contrast, at the end of the 1970s Bender had significantly lost in credibility (especially within the scientific field) and had to relinquish his status as an expert in the field of law.

84 See Bauer/Hövelmann/von Lucadou: Jahrhundertkongress.

85 See Müller: Para, 180.

86 The chair of psychology and the frontier areas of psychology was transformed into a chair of pedagogical psychology.

Bender's decline in the late 1970s was crucially forced by the return of the psychokinetic mediums and his role within the controversy. The process was accelerated by different factors: Bender's failure to mark a boundary with regard to the public and new religious movements during the "occult wave", several fraud affairs, and the increasingly successful interventions by his legal and criminological opponents. As a result the controversy in the late 1970s shifted from the question of authenticity or fraud in mediumism to questioning the legitimacy of parapsychology itself. During this complex process, aggravated by several scandals, Bender increasingly lost credibility in the field of science and with it access to resources.

These results confirm the theory that the "circle of credibility" can plausibly help explain not only the rise of scientific disciplines but also their decline. At the same time we can state that credibility is not only a resource in the field of science, it can also gain influence in other social fields and mobilise resources for scientific research. In sum, the return of the psychic stars during the 1970s had far-reaching consequences for the development of German parapsychology and its status in science, jurisdiction and public opinion.

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Uwe Schellinger

Clairvoyance for the Security of the Republic. Gerard Croiset and the Search for Hanns Martin Schleyer (1977)

On 5 September 1977, Hanns Martin Schleyer, President of Germany's Employers Association, was kidnapped in Cologne by the "Kommando Siegfried Hausner" in an extremely brutal measure by the Red Army Faction (RAF) terrorist group. During the kidnapping, the RAF shot Schleyer's driver and three accompanying officers dead. With the kidnapping, the terrorists wanted to extort the release of eleven members of the first generation of the RAF imprisoned in Stammheim Prison.[1] What followed was the month and a half of the "German Autumn" that had Germany holding its breath. The sad climax came when the RAF hijacked the Lufthansa "Landshut" plane on 13 October 1977, the plane and its hostages were liberated at the airport in Mogadishu, Somalia on 18 October 1977, and the "night of death in Stammheim" followed. On the evening of 19 October 1977, the corpse of Hanns Martin Schleyer was found in the trunk of an Audi 100 in Mulhouse, Alsace, where the RAF terrorists had sent the police with a letter claiming responsibility.

The events of the "German Autumn" of 1977 and the immediately preceding and following history shaped the Federal Republic of Germany for a long time – actually, until this day. We can regard the "leaden years" as some of the best-researched years in recent German history. The research literature written in the meantime is extremely extensive[2] and grew again in the 40th anniversary year, 2017.[3] Immediately after the violent end of the spectacular hijacking and the

1 See Bauer: Hanns-Martin Schleyer; Hachmeister: Schleyer; Hürter: Von deutscher "Härte" und italienischer "fermezza"; Pflieger: Aktion "Spindy".

2 See, among other publications, Hürter & Rusconi: Die bleiernen Jahre; Kirsch & Vowinckel: RAF als Geschichte und Gegenwart; Kraushaar: Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus; Peters: Tödlicher Irrtum; Pflieger: Rote Armee Fraktion – RAF; Weinhauer: Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik; Weinhauer, Requate & Haupt: Terrorismus in der Bundesrepublik.

3 See, among other publications, Kraushaar: Die blinden Flecken; Peters: 1977; Terhoeven: Rote Armee Fraktion.

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murder of Hanns Martin Schleyer, which had become a certainty, public discussion began about the previous weeks' investigative methods and fiascos and about the series of events in general. In this context, one of the things that became known was that the special operations staff appointed by the German government to find Schleyer had decided in the second week of the dragnet to consult with the renowned Dutch clairvoyant, "sensitive", and healer Gerard Croiset, in hopes that he could help to find usable clues as to where Schleyer was hidden. Although those involved were supposed to keep this measure secret, the press learned of it very quickly, while the dragnet was still in process. Before two weeks had passed since the events, Germany's yellow press published various bits of information in the form of half-truths. On 3 November 1977, the magazine *BUNTE* published a first such report, written by the then-renowned journalist and filmmaker Will Tremper titled *Ein Hellseher sah Schleyers Versteck* (a clairvoyant saw where Schleyer was hidden). The text was illustrated with a large-format photograph of Gerard Croiset. The tenor of Will Tremper's "sensational disclosure" was unmistakable: Croiset, the clairvoyant who was consulted, had "in trance" twice put the police on "the right track" to discover, first, in a high-rise parking garage in Cologne's Meschenich district, a Mercedes car in which Schleyer had been transported for a time and, then, a conspiratorial apartment in a high-rise in Cologne, where on 5 October 1977 the officers had found a blood-stained shirt belonging to Schleyer, among other things, and which may have been the first place the RAF hid him.[4]

A Mercedes 230 was indeed found on 30 September 1977 in the underground garage in the high-rise complex at Am Kölnberg 2 in Cologne's Meschenich district; and after a period of observation, the police opened it on 4 October 1977. In it, they found traces of Schleyer's kidnapping and one of his cufflinks. On 5 October 1977, the police indeed also found an apartment in Cologne's university center (Luxemburger Straße 124) that the RAF rented and used to prepare the kidnapping: but no shirt of Hans Martin Schleyer's was found, nor was he hidden there.[5]

Much of yellow journalist Will Tremper's report in the tabloid *BUNTE* thus did not correspond with the facts.[6] A central statement of his article, however, can be clearly evidenced by existing sources: in the second week of the dragnet, members of the special operation staff of the Bundeskriminalamt (Federal

4 Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung.

5 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung: Dokumentation der Bundesregierung zur Entführung von Hanns Martin Schleyer, 198f and 201f.

6 For details on media coverage on RAF terrorism, see Steinseifer: Terrorismus als Medienereignis and Steinseifer: "Terrorismus" zwischen Ereignis und Diskurs.

Criminal Police Office, BKA) actually consulted with the clairvoyant Gerard Croiset. But was Croiset, with paranormal abilities, also able to provide the investigators in the Schleyer case with usable or even decisive information? When attempting to answer this question, one encounters secrecy strategies and opposite standpoints among those involved, as well as a difficult source situation in the form of incomplete minutes and transcripts, hardly plausible statements in the media, and misleading press reports.

Hans Bender and Gerard Croiset

The contact between BKA investigators and Gerard Croiset was mediated by the psychology professor Hans Bender (1907–1991), Director of the *Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene* (Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health) in Freiburg im Breisgau, and at that time the best-known expert in parapsychological research in Germany.[7] Hans Bender had known the clairvoyant and healer Gerard Croiset (1909–1980) personally since 1951. They had collaborated in conducting various parapsychological experiments and, ever since, Bender had considered Croiset one of the most impressive people with paranormal abilities.[8] Their contact did not break off in the 1970s, either. The Freiburg parapsychologist and the Dutch diviner had had to do with each other again and again. In 1972, for example, in the case of the wife of a former colleague who disappeared in the Black Forest, he personally turned to Croiset.[9] In the 1970s, Croiset was at the zenith of his level of

7 Despite the central role of Hans Bender of Freiburg im Breisgau in the science history of parapsychology, there is no overall biographical depiction. Cf. so far solely the popular scientific monograph by Gruber: Suche im Grenzenlosen. As overviews: Bauer: Bender, Hans; Miller: Bender, Hans; and Resch: Hans Bender (1907–1991). On various aspects of Bender's scientific biography, see Bauer: Hans Bender; Hausmann: Hans Bender (1907–1991); Hausmann: Hans Benders Bonner Assistenten- und Dozentenjahre; Kaltenbrunn: Anfänge parapsychologischer Institutionalisierung; Lux: "Vom spielenden Gelingen"; Lux: On all Channels; and Moragiannis: Parapsychologie an der "Reichsuniversität Straßburg".

8 Cf. Bender: Präkognition im qualitativen Experiment. Despite the importance of Croiset (born as Gerard Boekbinder near the Dutch city of Laren) in the science history of parapsychology, there is no reliable depiction of his overall biography. See the sole current popular scientific presentation by Pollack: Croiset, the clairvoyant. On various aspects of Croiset's biography, see Hoebens: Gerard Croiset; Snel: Voorbeelden van de werkwijze een paragnost; and Vermeulen: Adviezen en behandling van de paragnost Croiset.

9 Archive of the Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (in the following: the archive of the IGPP), E/23-Croiset-Fall Elisabeth Heimpel (1972).

international recognition.[10] As in earlier years, Bender was closely interested in several cases on which Croiset, in the meantime famous all over the world, was working, or he mediated contacts between the clairvoyant and affected persons or investigatory offices.[11]

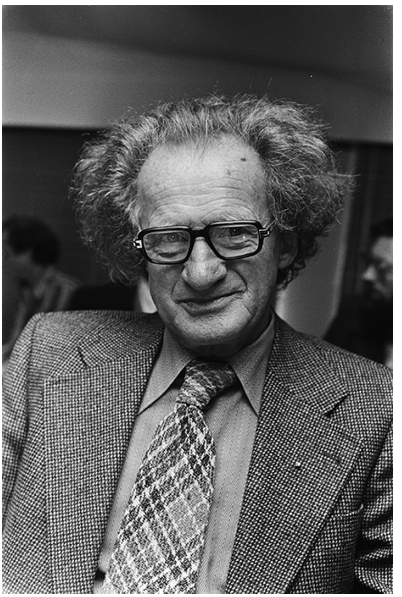


Figure 1: Gerard Croiset (1909–1980).

Police Investigatory Work and Crime Case Solving with the Aid of Paranormal Methods

In Germany at the time of the Schleyer case, the use of paranormal methods for police investigatory work and crime case solving had almost six decades of prior history.[12] For at least as long, concern with the question whether and, if

10 See the autobiography: Croiset: Croiset paragnost.

11 For example in the murder case of Inka Schneider in Hutschenhausen (1974), in the double murder case Inge und Manfred Siefert in Freiburg im Breisgau (1976), and the spectacular case "murder without a corpse" in Heilbronn (1976–1978). See the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1225; the archive of the IGPP, E/23-Croiset-Fälle/Kontakte 1975; and the archive of the IGPP, E/23-Croiset-Fälle/Kontakte 1976–1981.

12 See Schellinger: Kriminaltelepathie; Schellinger: "Kriminaltelepathen" und "okkulte Detektive"; Schetsche & Schellinger: "Psychic detectives" auch in Deutschland?

yes, under what conditions paranormal abilities like clairvoyance or telepathy could and should be used in police investigatory work had been its own field of research for a variety of disciplines. This particular form of a "practical parapsychology", which is often brought into connection with spectacular crime cases, also delivers plenty of material for the mass media.

After the first experiments within the police force that became public, soon after the end of World War I, in the years of the Weimar Republic, the practice – now termed "criminal telepathy"[13] – became a surprisingly widespread method applied, officially or unofficially, in numerous crime cases.[14]

Consultation with clairvoyants and personal mediums for police investigatory work underwent unprecedented expansion in the 1920s, accompanied by many critical and warning voices. Hardly any spectacular crime case was pursued now without recourse to a possible use of clairvoyant mediums in the investigations. The initiative to use "criminal telepathy" could come from someone involved in a crime, for example relatives of the victims, but also from individual detectives or from a police department. Increasingly in Germany, women and men with supposed paranormal abilities emerged and offered private persons and investigatory authorities their services as clairvoyants or telepaths or even operated their own detective offices. Hypnotists like the Bernburg elementary school teacher August Drost, clairvoyants like Curt Münch of Saxony and "Savary" of Hanover, trance mediums like Elsbeth Günther-Geffers, the siblings Marie Hessel and Luise Diedrich of Leipzig, and the famous Hermann Steinschneider alias "Hanussen" were employed in the investigation of hundreds of crime cases and so had a substantial degree of public renown. Most officers in police departments were critical of this development. So, the Berlin Criminal Investigation Department soon set up its own division assigned to collect and analyze such clairvoyant cases. In science, politics, and the justice system, the value of "criminal telepathy" was widely discussed. In the daily

13 The term "Kriminaltelepathie" (criminal telepathy), in use primarily in the 1920s, very probably traces back to the "Institut für Kriminaltelepathische Forschung" that worked in Vienna in 1921. See Schellinger: Trancemedien und Verbrechensaufklärung, 316–318 and Schellinger: "Kriminaltelepathen" und "okkulte Detektive", 18f as well as the fundamental writings of the Viennese detective Ubald Tartaruga: Tartaruga: Kriminal-Telepathie und -Retroskopie and Tartaruga: Telepathie im Dienste der Kriminalistik.

14 Several research works were presented in the past decade: Schellinger: Trancemedien und Verbrechensaufklärung; Schellinger: "Kriminaltelepathen" und "okkulte Detektive", 309–321; Schellinger & Koreck: Okkultismus in der Polizeiarbeit; Treitel: Science for the Soul, 132–161; Wolffram: Parapsychologists in the Gerichtssaal; and Wolf-Braun: Kriminaltelepathie in der Weimarer Republik. But lacking any reception of the existing research literature, Müller: "Sechster Sinn".

press and in parapsychological literature, but also in specialized criminological and practical police periodicals, there were intense debates whether and in what way clairvoyant or telepathic abilities should be allowed to play a role in police investigative work. Proponents and opponents engaged in vehement battles of words.

The intense debates about "criminal telepathy" between about 1921 and about 1929 can be traced to a kind of double scientification process in the years after World War I. This process unfolded within police work and criminal investigation, on the one hand, and in the context of what was called "scientific occultism" in the Weimar Republic, on the other. From both sides, professional ambition led to increased interest in the practice, the possible uses, and the consequences of "criminal telepathy".

Another background aspect of the boom in "criminal telepathy" in these years can be adduced from the substantially increased crime rate after World War I that accompanied massive inflation (until and including 1923). In Germany, the striking increase in offenses met with an all too meagerly equipped police force. In addition, the history of mentality in this period shows the population taking a remarkably great turn toward occult issues. The call for additional, quasi-private investigatory methods promoted the idea of consulting with clairvoyants and mediums under certain circumstances to illuminate issues, especially cases the police had not solved.

It can be shown that, in many cases in the 1920s, police or justice officials themselves suggested or continuously observed the contribution of crime mediums or willingly followed up on what they said. Here, a private, individual interest but also organizational directives appear to have played a role. On the other hand, the increase in "criminal telepathy" stirred up the police leadership. Accordingly, in April 1929, the Prussian Ministry of the Interior saw itself forced to issue a decree once and for all prohibiting its officers from "consulting with clairvoyants, telepaths, or the like to investigate criminal activities or to take part in such measures whose purpose is to solve crimes by means of parapsychological abilities."[15] As emerges from the text of ministerial decree, the interest in "criminal telepathy" had become so widespread within the police force that this directive was considered urgently necessary.

In the years of the National Socialist dictatorship, the practice of "criminal telepathy" played no mentionable role in Germany, but it was then revived in the immediate postwar years, once again, as could be expected, extremely critically observed by police departments and detectives.

15 Seeling: Verbot der Beschäftigung von sogenannten Kriminaltelepathen.

In the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Interior Ministry soon decided to take up the Prussian decree from 1929 and to issue a new prohibition against using "extrasensory means to investigate criminal activities". The ministerial decree of 14 June 1954 made it unmistakably clear to the Ministry's own officers: "Police measures that can have severe consequences for those affected may be carried out only with means that are objectively verifiable. In the execution of such measures, especially in the investigation of criminal activities, it is therefore impermissible to employ extrasensory means oneself or to make use of such persons (clairvoyants, fortunetellers, etc.) who supposedly possess extrasensory abilities."[16]

But North Rhine-Westphalia remained alone with its ordinances; no similar decrees are known from other states. North Rhine-Westphalia's Interior Ministry explicitly expected its police officers to be reserved about using paranormal methods, but in no way did it want to see general scientific research on the topic shelved. The aim of the decree was not to stop corresponding experiments with the "inclusion of scientific specialists".[17] From the 1950s on, the position of interlocutor and evaluator was assigned almost exclusively to the Freiburg parapsychologist Hans Bender. He worked closely and uncomplicatedly with various public prosecutors and police departments, which repeatedly asked for his advice. Together they tried to clarify the background of current cases and basic questions and to exclude wrong tracks in police investigations.[18] With the activities of university professor Bender, there was an additional professionalization thrust in corresponding cases. Hans Bender thereby took an extremely cautious stance in the discussions and pointed out "that the statements of crime-solving mediums can at best point out a trail; but without controls from normal cognition, i.e., without confirmation, they have no value". The then best-known German parapsychologist explicitly warned against private persons or other commissioning parties making use of crime-solving mediums on their own initiative. The often-observed uncritical use of "occult detectives", he said, was probably not only useless, but also a "public danger".[19] Nonetheless, he believed that controlled collaboration between the police and certain medially gifted persons could definitely have favorable results. As a positive example, Hans Bender always referred to the Dutch "paragnosten" (Dutch for "psychic") Gerard Croiset, who had specialized primarily in the search for missing persons. Hans Bender credited remarkable successes to the Dutch clairvoyant, who was meanwhile world-renowned.

16 Wehner: Selbstbezichtiger – Geistesgestörte – Übersinnliche, 113.

17 Ibid., 113.

18 Bender: Hellseher als Helfer; Bender: Ergebnisse und Probleme der Parapsychologie; Bender: Hellseher als Kriminalmedien?

19 Bender: Hellseher als Helfer, 7.

Second Week of the Dragnet: The Special Investigators Contact Croiset

On 12 September 1977 Bender informed his long-time acquaintance Croiset that he should expect a visit from Germany the next day in connection with the Schleyer case: "Dr. Klein . . . wants to come to you in Utrecht tomorrow afternoon, bringing documents and maps of Cologne and Mannheim . . . "[20]

The Head Government Director Dr. Johannes Kurt Klein (1925–after 2002), whom Bender mentioned to Croiset, can be considered the initiator of this measure. At that time, he too had been acquainted with Bender for some time, based in his concrete interest in issues of parapsychological research. During his studies (literature, history, and geography) in Leipzig, Klein, originally from the Land of Saxony, had delved into parapsychology "in intense independent study" and, there in 1949, had written a philological doctoral thesis *Form und Funktion paraphysischer Phantome in der Dichtung der Romantik* (form and function of paraphysical phantoms in the poetry of the Romantic period). Klein had thereby submitted one of the very first German-language university theses on a parapsychological topic.[21] In 1950, Klein fled East Germany. A professional traveling lecturer, in the following years his focus was on the importance of West and East Germany for Soviet policy, while the topics of his dissertation initially took a backseat.[22] Klein was first able to assume a position as Lecturer for Political Science and Political Education at the teachers' college in Neuwied in the Land of Rhineland-Palatinate. Since 1970, he then held a leading position at the school of the German army, the Bundeswehr, for psychological defense and warfare (PSV/PSK) in Euskirchen, where this expert on the Warsaw Pact headed the scientific working group.[23] The anti-Communist Klein was a co-founder of the "Akademie der Bundeswehr für Psychologische Verteidigung"

20 Transcript of the tape recordings of 12 and 13 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216. The transcripts of the tape recordings of the telephone conversations, written a month later, are fragmentary and incomplete, which limits their value as sources.

21 Klein: Form und Funktion paraphysischer Phantome. There, see above all the included "Lebenslauf" (cv). With his work, Klein picks up the thread of various philological dissertations on "occult" phenomena that were already published in the first third of the 20th century. Cf. Hövelmann: Akademische Abschlussarbeiten zur Anomalistik.

22 On his biography up to 1955, see Klein's own description: Stacheldraht, Hunger, Heimweh. Published monographs include Klein: Die Bedeutung der DDR für die Sowjetunion and Klein: Demokratien und Diktaturen.

23 See Drews: Psychologische Kampfführung/Psychologische Verteidigung der Bundeswehr, passim.

(Bundeswehr academy for psychological defense), co-editor of the magazine *Beiträge zur Konfliktforschung* (papers on conflict research), which was funded by West Germany's Federal Defense Ministry, and since 1970 decisively active in the relevant PSV/PSK sub-organization "Studiengesellschaft für Zeitprobleme" (study society for current problems).[24] In his work, Klein propounded a bipolar East-West scheme; for him, the world was divided between the good West and the evil East.

At the beginning of the 1970s, influenced by a much-discussed book by two American journalists about the Warsaw Pact's use of paranormal abilities, Johannes Kurt Klein's interest in parapsychology reawakened and increased.[25] In this connection, a continuous contact with Hans Bender had developed since 1973, so that the cooperation between them in the investigation of the Schleyer case is no surprise.[26] Klein will not have failed to notice that quite a number of persons had approached the police authorities claiming that their paranormal abilities could help find where Schleyer was hidden.[27]

On the telephone on 12 September 1977, Hans Bender gave Johannes Kurt Klein various pieces of advice as Klein was on his way to Croiset in Utrecht. He should bring photos and various cartographic material along and above all deal sensitively with the clairvoyant: "Another remark on dealing with Croiset: he is a half-Jew, was a resistance fighter, and had terrible experiences during the Nazi occupation. Maybe you can allude to the fact that these terrorist acts cut liberal democracy to the quick."[28]

Johannes Kurt Klein went to Utrecht with an unnamed colleague[29] and the young police psychologist Wolfgang Salewski, who was also part of the BKA's

24 Ibid., 285–331.

25 Ostrander & Schroeder: Psychic discoveries behind the iron curtain. A German translation of this book appeared in 1971. See Ostrander & Schroeder: PSI: Die wissenschaftliche Erforschung und praktische Nutzung.

26 See the archive of the IGPP, E/21: Schule der Bundeswehr für psychologische Verteidigung (1973–84).

27 Written information from the Bundeskriminalamt Wiesbaden (Detective Chief Superintendent Steinhoff) to Uwe Schellinger of 6 Nov. 2007 (reference file U. Schellinger, the archive of the IGPP).

28 Transcript of the tape recordings of 12 and 13 Sept. 1977 [14 Nov. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216. An article in the magazine *BUNTE* of 3 Nov. 1977 claims that its author has had insight into the "Ablaufkalender" (sequence calendar) of the special operation staff and that this calendar notes "10:00 a.m.: Salewski and Dr. Klein drive to Utrecht to consult with a medium." Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung.

29 According to Klein, this second companion beside Salewski was not informed about Hans Bender's collaboration. His name does not appear in any of the existing sources. See the transcript of the tape recordings of 12 and 13 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

special operation unit. Will Tremper's Article in *BUNTE* magazine reports without attribution that it was Salewski who had had the "sensational idea about the clairvoyant Croiset".[30]

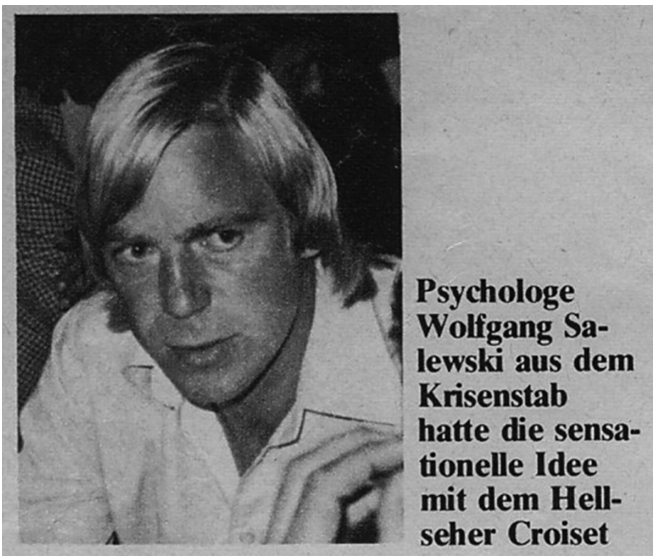


Figure 2: Wolfgang Salewski in BUNTE magazine of 3 Nov. 1977 (archive of the IGPP).

In 1972, in response to the disastrously ended hostage-taking at the Munich Olympic Games, the Munich police hired the certified psychologist Salewski (born in 1943) as a freelancer to develop for the first time systematic concepts for carrying out negotiations with kidnappers or hijackers in hostage situations.[31] Since 1973, Salewski had also had a crucial function in setting up and training the new special unit, the GSG9.[32] In retrospect, Salewski judged that at that time he had been the "all-purpose weapon for the extraordinary" within the police force.[33] Like Klein, the police psychologist Salewski was well acquainted with the Freiburg parapsychologist Hans Bender. Salewski had grown up in Freiburg im Breisgau and had gone to school with one of Bender's sons. In the early 1960s

30 Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung.
31 Cf. Salewski: Luftpiraterie ca. 1975; Salewski: Grundüberlegungen zur Konzeption.
32 On the biography of Salewski, see Bayerischer Rundfunk: Wolfgang Salewski.
33 Sepasgosarian: Stammheim.

during his university studies, he had attended lectures by Bender.[34] Thus, contacting Hans Bender in the difficult situation of September 1977 will have easily occurred to him.[35]

Three years after the events, Wolfgang Salewski, whose publications on such issues had in the meantime helped him advance to become the most influential police psychologist in Germany,[36] is said to have been convinced that the talks with Croiset had indeed resulted in remarkable information. As noted in a report from memory by Hans Bender, Salewski had visited Bender at his institute in Freiburg and had declared about the earlier investigations:

> His [Croiset's – U.S.] information was not pursued intensely enough, or it probably would have led to Schleyer's liberation. Absolutely correct was a statement about a building in which a car was found. Schleyer's cufflinks were there. Additional information from Croiset pointed to Libla[r], which is located between Cologne and Bonn. The suspicion had solidified in such a way that Salewski urged that the building in question be stormed. A higher rank in the BKA prevented this. Schleyer was indeed there, still alive, in a built-in closet in the hallway. He could have been rescued. Hardly anyone knows this, and it should be treated with discretion. Some circles in the BKA were not happy about Salewski's contacts with clairvoyants, while others were convinced that useful information might be obtained in this way [. . .] Making use of Croiset was done officially, with the approval of Heroldt [sic!].[37]

Hans Bender's description of a success in the consultation with Croiset, as set down here retrospectively, and his criticism of the police force's ignoring these tips raises the question of how the collaboration between Bender, the clairvoyant Croiset, and the members of the BKA special operation force in the fall of 1977 actually developed and was structured.

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34 See the transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

35 Whereas Bender already talked on the phone with Klein on 12 Sept. 1977, a first conversation between Bender and Salewski is not evidenced until 15 Sept. 1977, i.e., after the first discussion with Croiset. See the transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

36 Salewski & Lanz: Die neue Gewalt; Salewski & Schaefer: Geiselnahme. In October 1978, Salewski had accompanied cabinet minister Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski to the Somali capital Mogadishu to negotiate with the hijackers of the Lufthansa plane "Landshut". See Aust: Baader-Meinhof-Komplex, 543 and 568.

37 "Gedächtnisprotokoll, über eine Unterhaltung mit Herrn Salewski, München" (report from memory on a discussion with Mr. Salewski, Munich, undated, presumably early 1980), contained in the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1101. It is no longer possible to determine exactly when the visit took place. In the report, Salewski is described as "the 37-year-old", so that 1980 appears to be the probable date. A "report from memory" documents another visit by Salewski to Bender on 7 May 1981.

Croiset's "Impressions"

As documents in a partial legacy of the clairvoyant Gerard Croiset in Utrecht, The Netherlands show, it can be considered confirmed that Croiset was already relatively well informed about the Schleyer kidnapping several days before Klein and Salewski's visit. On the very next day after the kidnapping, Croiset was contacted by a (no longer verifiable) "acquaintance from Germany" who reported to him about the kidnapping. Croiset thereupon spontaneously received an "impression of Cologne [thus in the original, U.S.]".[38] On 8 September 1977, a (likewise no longer verifiable) acquaintance sent the clairvoyant the report from the previous day's edition of the *Münchner Abendzeitung* newspaper on the spectacular Schleyer kidnapping. On 12 September 1977, Croiset had an (again no longer verifiable) friend in Germany check out the statements and impressions he reported about a bridge and the shore of the Rhine in Cologne. Croiset believed that one of the attackers had spent time there. Between 6 and 12 September 1977, Gerard Croiset had thus quite intensely thought about the spectacular kidnapping case that was causing great tension in the neighboring country, Germany, in these days.[39]

At midday on 13 September 1977 Dr. Johannes Kurt Klein and Wolfgang Salewski visited Croiset in Utrecht. Apparently, German Federal Interior Minister Werner Maihofer was informed about this measure; for him, it was urgent that "nothing about it should find its way into the public realm."[40]

Croiset's estate includes a 7-page transcript of a tape recording of the talk in Utrecht. This (undated) transcript's numerous grammatical errors show that it must have been written by a person who did not speak German well. It can be assumed that Croiset's secretary of many years, Dick West, was the author.

38 Notes on this in the archive of Het Johan Borgmanfonds Foundation [in the following: AHJBF], NL Croiset. After Croiset's death, legacy materials of his were long stored scattered among various organizations and private persons, for example with the *Nederlandse Vereinigung voor Parapsychologie* (Netherlands society for parapsychology). On this, see Snel: Voorbeelden van de werkwijze een paragnost. In the meantime, many, but not all materials from Croiset are in the keeping of *Het Johan Borgmanfonds Foundation* (See Kramer: Preserving the History of Parapsychology). I thank Wim Kramer Wim H. Kramer (Bunnik, The Netherlands) very much for his support and the information he shared.

39 Letter [author: illegible] of 8 Sept. 1977 to Croiset and the transcript "Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland: Rapport der Bandaufnahme" (missing person case S. Germany: report of the tape recording), in: AHJBF, NL Croiset.

40 Transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.



Figure 3: Croiset's Partial Legacy in the AHJBF (Photo: Wim H. Kramer).

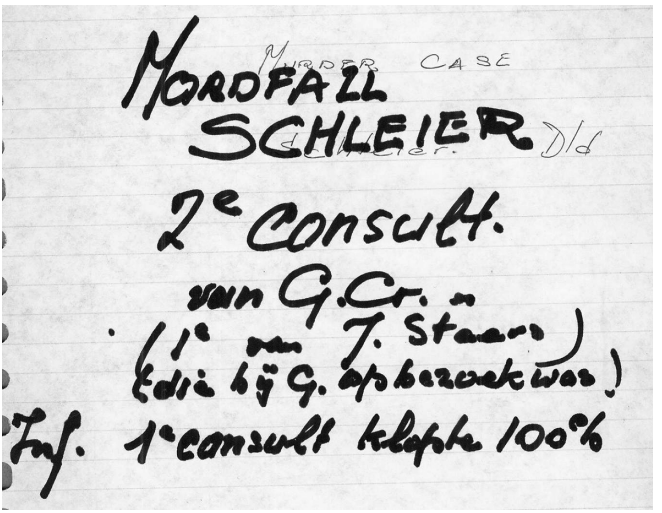


Figure 4: Documents on the Schleyer Case in the Croiset Legacy (AHJBF).

It is unclear who posed the questions to Croiset in the course of the approximately one-hour discussion. The abbreviation is "P." and may simply stand for "police".

During the talk, a map of Cologne was apparently presented to Croiset. The clairvoyant thereupon received an "emotion" for a particular spot on the northernmost bridge in Cologne, and he drew a sketch of it. Croiset suspected that here lay the hiding place of at least one of the terrorists. Croiset also drew a sketch of a specific building on a side street and a particular storey in the building. He also delivered a kind of personal description of the suspected perpetrator.[41]

During the meeting, based on a second map presented to him, Croiset also described a situation near Bonn. He said the perpetrators had driven to this hideout after the kidnapping. Croiset named streets, routes, and buildings. He was particularly emphatic about the significance of a "bus stop". The archive of *Het Johan Borgmann Foundation* apparently still holds parts of the original cartographic material that was shown to Croiset, but it remains unclear which positions and spots in the cities Croiset pointed out so precisely. At any rate, Salewski told Hans Bender that Croiset had "filled the maps so full with drawings" that the investigators wanted to "continue working with them".[42]

The report from memory indicates that Croiset spoke of a "yellow Mercedes" and of transferring to a VW bus: "Was the first vehicle a yellow Mercedes? (This is confirmed.) After that, he transferred to an old car. It looks like a VW bush [misspelled in the German original, U.S.], something like that."[43] He gave another personal description of one of the perpetrators and drew a sketch of his suspected location. Croiset also mentioned Mannheim and Munich as important cities. In the talk with the investigators, the clairvoyant expressed his conviction that the kidnapping victim was still alive.

Overall, however, Croiset's statements, at least as they are documented in the report, seem quite vague, confusing, and unclear. And yet, Johannes Kurt Klein and Wolfgang Salewski were impressed by Croiset, although to different degrees. Immediately after his return, Klein contacted Hans Bender and declared enthusiastically that Croiset had "immediately pulled out all the stops" and had provided "very specific information immediately". According to Klein, this was "knowledge so central to the whole case, and in such detail, that – if it is accurate – we can

41 Transcript "Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland: Rapport der Bandaufnahme", in: AHJBF, NL Croiset.

42 See the transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

43 Transcript "Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland: Rapport der Bandaufnahme", in: AHJBF, NL Croiset, Bl. 6.

Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland.

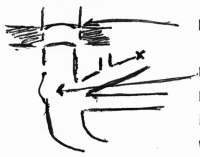
Rapport der Bandaufnahme.

C. Es ist heute 13 September 1977 und es handelt sich un einem Experiment unter den Supervision von Professor Bender, womit die jetzt Anwesenden in meinem Hause,Willen de Zwijgerstraat 21 Utrecht, beschäftigt sind. Meine Herren,erstens gebe ich Ihnen gern den folgenden Information: Schon vorigen Woche bekam ich einen Brief von einem Freund aus München, der auch mit mir in Tokio war,wegen den Parapsygologischen Kongress,und bei meinem Platzversuch Ekperiment bezogen war. Er fragte darin meine Hilfe für die Entführungssache S.
Wann ich spontanischen Imressionen bekam,rufte ich meinen Freund M- an der in der Nähe vom Rheinland wohnt. Ich fragte ihm nach zu prüfen ob es in Köln,bei der nördlichste Brücke eine Rotunde gab,wobei an der rechtenseite alte Häuser stehen. Da bekamm ich einen Eindrü Herr M. Hat es nachgeprüft und hat diesen Situation dort gefunden bei der nördlichsten Rheinbrücke Kölns,(Köln-Mulheim.)
Ich hatte schon gesagt dass der Vermisste nicht dort war,aber ein Mitglied des Ueberfalls-organisations, Das war gestern, ubd ich sagte ich gehe jetzt nicht weiter mit diesem Fall. Es so-lte die Möglichkeit da sein dass anderen Personen diese Sache übernehmen sollten.

Weil dieser Situation da war,welche ich schon angegeben habe,ist es jetzt wichtig das Sie mit die Karte von Köln zum weiteren Präzision voregen. Sie kennen jetzt die Vorgeschichte. Dies ist alles wass ich hiervon gemacht habe und weiter nichts.

Also es handelt sich um der meist nördlicher Brücke (die Karte wird vorgelegt)

C. Gibt es hier ein Verkehrsinsel?
P. Ja,genau hier.
C. Und gibt es hier alte Häuser?
P. Ja,es gibt im Gegend des Rheinufers viele alt Häuser.
C. Ich mache eine Skizze



Hier gibt es eine Brücke.

Und hier,etwas weiter gibt es einen Verkhrsinsel. Dort gibt es Seitenstrasse wie ich hier angegeben habe. Der Emotion bekomme ich auf der Stelle welch ich mit einem Kreuz angegeben habe.

C. Also,wenn wir diese Seitestrasse herein gehen,gibt es wieder einerart Kreuzpunckt.Es ist eine Strasse mit hohen alten Häuser,ubd wo ich angegeben habe sollte den Punckt sein,da soll ein Mitglied der Bände sich aufhalten. Dies ist "eins","das habe ich schon vorher gesehen.

Figure 5: Page 1 of the Report from Memory of 13 September 1977 (AHJBF).

say: it helped." Klein reported, exaggerating, that for his companion Salewski this had been "the greatest experience of his scientific life so far".[44]

44 Transcript of the tape recordings of 12 and 13 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

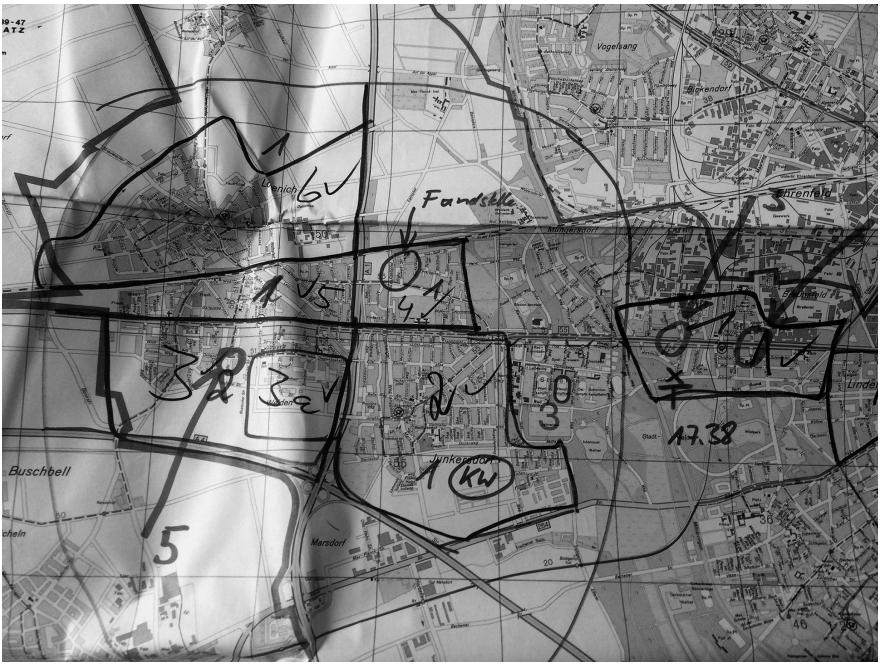


Figure 6: Section of One of the City Maps of Cologne's West presented to Croiset (AHJBF, Photo: Wim H. Kramer).

In fact, the psychologist Wolfgang Salewski was more skeptical. In a first response on 15 September 1977, he reported to Bender on the talk with Croiset: "Yes, the description of the site was verified. It was very conspicuously accurate." But here, Salewski meant the description associated with Croiset's keyword "bridge", while he didn't know what to make of "bus stop". So, Salewski wondered, "Whether this will help the investigation?"[45]

Whereas Salewski thus expressed himself cautiously, Klein and Bender interpreted Croiset's remarks as being very helpful. So, on 15 September 1977, Hans Bender talked with Croiset on the telephone and encouraged him by declaring: "The external characteristics of 'bridge' were found, but not those of 'bus stop'."[46] The consequences of this verification remain unclear. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that, on the following days, the investigators made various attempts to work with the information they received from Croiset and examined

45 Transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: ibid.
46 Ibid.

sites in Cologne and in Bonn's surroundings. In the night from 14 to 15 September 1977, as Stefan Aust reported for the first time in 1985, apparently a certain district of Cologne was observed with direction-finding antennae. Investigators wanted to find any apartments in which television sets were still on after the end of transmission; on the previous day, namely, the Schleyer kidnappers had suggested through an attorney that, two hours after the scheduled end of transmission, the German television stations should broadcast the demand to fly out the released RAF prisoners. During the consultation in Utrecht, Gerard Croiset is supposed to have told his visitors in which district the search should be made.[47] But this situation cannot be unambiguously deduced from the existing reports.[48] At any rate, on 13 September, Croiset had urged the officials: "You should go home now and check out as many of these statements as possible."[49]

On 18 September 1977, Wolfgang Salewski visited Croiset a second time in Holland, this time unaccompanied. Once again, a tape recording transcript was produced, four pages in length. Salewski asked the clairvoyant additional questions and let him know that his first information on the Cologne locations had "panned out 100 percent". In contrast, it had not been possible to verify the information on the area around Bonn ("bus stop with wooden benches"). Salewski now pointed out to Croiset another possible site with a "bus stop" ("new housing development, huge buildings") and presented him various pictures of men and women, presumably suspects. For his part, Croiset made statements about sites in Karlsruhe and Hanover and affirmed again that Schleyer was still alive.[50] Once again, the existing report from memory contains no clear information. No productive information can be recognized in Croiset's documented statements. The search for a hiding place in Germany, where Salewski and Croiset at this time still assumed it was, would have remained futile, anyway: by this time, the intensity of the dragnet led the kidnappers to move Schleyer from the hiding place in the high-rise at Rennweg 8 in Erftstadt-Liblar to a new site in The Hague on 16 September 1977.

47 Cf. Aust: Baader-Meinhof-Komplex, 491.

48 Aust cannot suppress a sarcastic undertone when describing this episode: "The clairvoyant explained his inability to provide more precise information thusly: 'My contact is disturbed' (Aust: Baader-Meinhof-Komplex, 491). Because of the reporting in the press, he was so comprehensively informed that it had a negative effect on his work." According to the magazine *BUNTE*, this was in Cologne's Meschenich district. See Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung. The first edition of Stefan Aust's much-respected book *Der Baader-Meinhof-Komplex* (the Baader-Meinhof complex) appeared in 1985.

49 Transcript "Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland: Rapport der Bandaufnahme", in: AHJBF, NL Croiset, vol. 6.

50 Transcript "Vermissungsfall S. Deutschland", 18 Sept. 1977, in: AHJBF, NL Croiset.

Johannes Kurt Klein and Wolfgang Salewski's interpretation of Croiset's statements remained contradictory also in the coming weeks. Whereas Salewski was very cautious, Klein in particular was consistently content with the idea of having consulted with the famous clairvoyant and tried to persuade Hans Bender of its utility. On 11 October 1977, Klein told Bender: "There are some pieces of information that are completely right". Klein said that it had thus been worthwhile that the decision-making level had been "willing indeed" to "employ unorthodox methods" in the investigations.[51]

It was thus almost inevitable that Hans Bender became convinced that Croiset had indeed contributed something positive toward solving the case. On 12 October 1977, he thereupon sought out the clairvoyant in Holland (Houten near Utrecht) himself. Croiset once again made statements on the case and made drawings of suspected sites.

The clairvoyant suspected that, by now, Schleyer was hidden in Holland; he spoke repeatedly of a "bus stop" and brought into play "Wassenaar" near The Hague as a possible site of the hiding place.[52] Actually, Schleyer's kidnappers had already taken him from The Hague to Brussels on 20 September 1977, almost three weeks earlier.

But Hans Bender was convinced he was on the right trail. Back in Freiburg, he had his secretary type up what was on the tape recordings of the month-old talks on the Schleyer kidnapping and of his own visit to Croiset for the overall documentation of the case.[53]

"Sensational Disclosure": The Mass-Media Reaction and Reception

On 19 October 1977, the corpse of the murdered Employers Association President was found in Mulhouse, Alsace France. Everyone involved now had to recognize that Gerard Croiset had not been able to contribute even slightly to finding Hanns Martin Schleyer. Several days later, Hans Bender had to note that his strategy of secrecy about the matter had not worked.

51 Transcript of the tape recording of 11 Oct. 1977, contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.
52 Transcript of the tape recording of 12 Oct. 1977 [17 Oct. 1977], contained in: ibid.
53 It is obvious that it was not transcribed verbatim. At the moment, we cannot say whether the original tape recordings still exist.

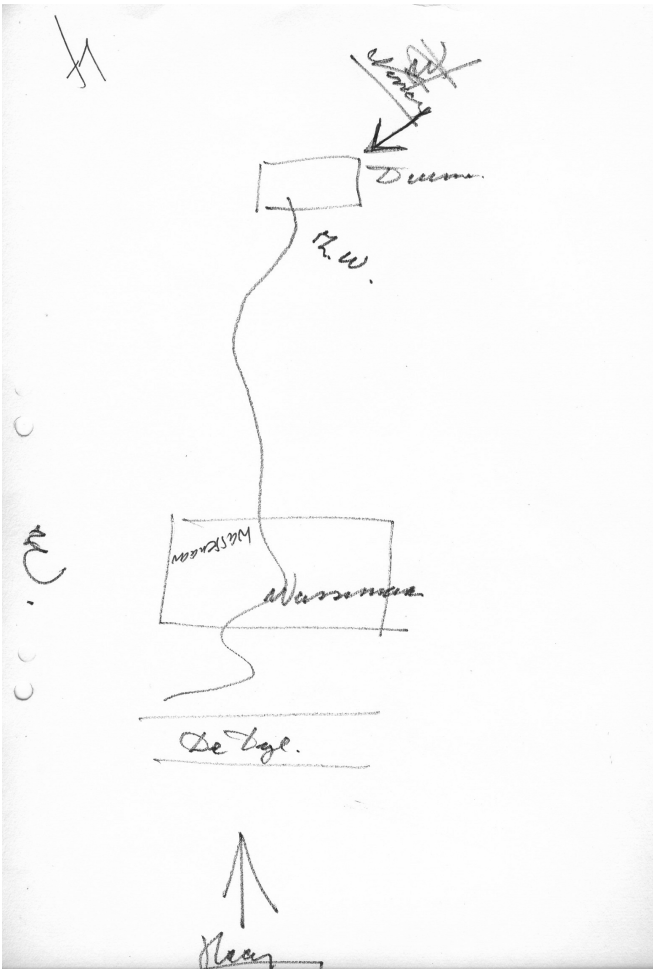


Figure 7: Croiset Sketch, 12 October 1977 (archive of the IGPP).

Characteristic of the case described here is the renewed great interest of the print media. Their editorial boards regarded the reported involvement of a clairvoyant in the search for Schleyer as a windfall that they responded to without delay.

That the BKA special investigators had contacted the clairvoyant Croiset had come to their attention already immediately after Klein, Salewski, and the unknown third official's first visit in Utrecht. On 14 September 1977, one day after the visit from Germany, Croiset's secretary already informed Bender that

journalists from *BUNTE* magazine had gotten in touch and asked for a photograph of the clairvoyant.[54] Representatives of the tabloid press also promptly called up Bender in Freiburg. But Bender was determined to remain in the background in regard to this measure. He even kept his part in it secret within his institute: "I am less worried about my personal security than about that of the institute," he informed Johannes Kurt Klein on 13 September 1977.[55]

A month later, the press's interest in the rumor about a famous clairvoyant's participation in the still unsuccessful search for Schleyer had not subsided at all. In this context, reporters from *BUNTE* and *STERN* magazines again asked Hans Bender about the dubious role of the clairvoyant Croiset. Bender continued to categorically deny Croiset's part and, on 18 October 1977 (the day the GSG9 stormed the "Landshut" plane), declared that he would absolutely reject Croiset's employment in this case for security reasons: "In the S. case, Croiset is at any rate unresponsive." Bender said that, above all, he himself did not want "to be mentioned in this matter."[56] One day after these talks, the murdered Hanns Martin Schleyer was found in Mulhouse.

Then, on 3 November 1977, the first article by star reporter Will Tremper[57] appeared in the *BUNTE*. But, despite the sensationalist headline ("a clairvoyant saw where Schleyer was hidden"), the episode about the employment of the clairvoyant Croiset accounted for only half of the whole report.[58] In the face of the existing reports from memory from 13 and 18 September 1977, the second- or third-hand information on the supposed advice from the clairvoyant Croiset must be termed made up out of thin air.

Two weeks later, on 17 November 1977, a second, longer article appeared, this time in *STERN* magazine. The article by the two journalists Peter Koch and Gerd Heidemann with the title "A clairvoyant is part of the investigation" was Part 4 of a longer *STERN* series titled *The Diary of the Schleyer Kidnapping*.[59]

54 Transcript of the tape recordings of 14 and 15 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

55 Transcript of the tape recordings of 12 and 13 Sept. 1977 [14 Oct. 1977], contained in: ibid.

56 Transcript of the tape recordings of 18 Oct. 1977 [21 Oct. 1977], contained in: ibid. Here, Bender was speaking with the *STERN* reporter Sebastian Knauer.

57 The author, filmmaker, and journalist Will Tremper (1928–1998) was a very well-known and downright controversial figure in the German media landscape. In the 1950s and '60s, he had made a name for himself with numerous books, films, and reportages. See his autobiography: Tremper: Meine wilden Jahre.

58 Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung.

59 Koch & Heidemann: Ein Hellseher fahndet mit.



STERN, Nr. 48, 17.11.1977

Das Tagebuch der Schleyer-Entführung (4) + +

Foto: AP

Im Kölner Polizeipräsidium werden die Fahndungsberichte einfach an Fenstervorhänge geheftet. Das Präsidium gleicht einem Feldlager, die Räume reichen nicht aus für die Einquartierung der Kollegen vom Bundeskriminalamt. 3826 Hinweise gehen ein, jede Spur wird verfolgt. Auch der persönliche Berater der holländischen Königin stellt seine Dienste zur Verfügung

Ein Hellseher fahndet mit

Eine Serie von Peter Koch
Dokumentation: Gerd Heidemann

Der „Gesamtlagebericht Terrorismus" des Bundeskriminalamts (BKA) nennt das Vorgehen der Schleyer-Entführer „einmalig". Neu ist, daß eine terroristische Vereinigung ihre Planung fortführt, obwohl inzwischen ihre führenden Kräfte festgenommen und bei den Festgenommenen Papiere gefunden worden sind, die den Kriminalisten „Einblicke in die abstrakte Planung" ermöglichten.

Die Entführer Hanns-Martin Schleyers, das steht fest, sind nicht nur skrupelloser, sie sind auch besser organisiert, und sie sind insbesondere besser getarnt als die Terroristen-Gruppen vor ihnen. BKA-Chef Horst Herold in einem Lagevortrag im großen Krisenstab: „Die haben perfekte Ausweise und haben eine perfekte Legende. Die haben das Abiturzeugnis und Studiumsbescheinigung, Personalausweis und Kraftfahrzeugnis, und alles ist vollkommen rund." Diese Papiere werden ihnen von „der Szene" überlassen, von Helfershelfern, die ihnen äußerlich ähneln und die meist im Dunstkreis der Hausbesetzer, der Aktionen „Rote Hilfe" und „Folterkomitee" agieren.

Vorbei sind die Zeiten, da sich die untergetauchten RAF-Mitglieder Blanko-Ausweise klauten und dort Phantasienamen einsetzten. Denn der einmal geklaute oder als verloren gemeldete Ausweis ist im BKA-Computer eingespeichert, er würde bei einer Kontrolle, etwa am Grenzübergang, wo elektronische Terminals seine Daten in das

Figure 8: STERN Magazine of 17 November 1977 (archive of the IGPP).

As in Tremper's text, unlike what the headline leads the reader to expect, the mention of Croiset's employment takes up only a small part of the whole article. Of a total of 21 columns of print on 14 magazine pages, only about one and a half columns deal with Croiset's part in the investigations,[60] which is reported to show that the investigators also did their job "very unorthodoxically"

60 Ibid., 93f.

and followed also information "that they would otherwise have thrown in the wastepaper basket". Once again, Wolfgang Salewski is termed the initiator of the Croiset measure, while, as in Tremper's article, the name Hans Benders is not mentioned.

The heart of the *STERN* report is the information that, on 13 September 1977, the clairvoyant Croiset had given the investigators the name of a residential area on the outskirts of Cologne where he suspected that Schleyer was hidden. This residential area – Cologne's Meschenich district – had been searched with directional antennae for television sets operating late in the night from 14 to 15. September 1977. Investigators had thereupon stumbled upon a suspicious Mercedes (with the license plate number BM–A 812) in the housing block "Am Kölnberg" in Meschenich. The car was opened after eight days of surveillance; in it, police found a cufflink of Schleyer's, among other things.

The structure of the *STERN* article suggests that Croiset's information was successful in at least one point: finding the Mercedes in the high-rise's parking garage could supposedly be traced directly to the clairvoyant's advice – an idea that Will Tremper had also delivered in the first article in *BUNTE* magazine. But the Mercedes in question was actually discovered only much later, on 30 September 1977, and not opened until 4 October 1977.[61] It thus appears questionable that this discovery was a direct result of Croiset's statements and of the surveillance of Cologne-Meschenich ordered half a month earlier.

Finally, on 21 November 1977 *SPIEGEL* magazine published an interview with Croiset, based on a visit the journalist Christian Happe paid to the clairvoyant four days earlier. This interview simply assumes Croiset's participation in the investigations, though Croiset did not want to confirm this to the magazine at all.[62]

Within three weeks in November 1977, three high-circulation German magazines had thereby made mincemeat of Hans Bender's original secrecy strategy. Visibly surprised to see this, the Freiburg parapsychologist then complained, initially to *SPIEGEL* magazine: "Such reports in the illustrated press," wrote Bender, were "irresponsible [. . .], because they endanger the paragnosts." He also urgently complained to Johannes Kurt Klein about the methods of the press reporting, because now "a future use of paragnosts in comparable cases

61 See Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung: Dokumentation der Bundesregierung zur Entführung von Hanns Martin Schleyer (press and information office of the federal government: the federal government's documentation on the kidnapping of Hanns Martin Schleyer), 201f.

62 SPIEGEL magazine of 21 Nov. 1977, contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216. A telex dated 18 Sept. 1977 with the concept for the SPIEGEL interview exists in: AHJBF, NL Croiset.

will become ever more difficult".[63] But above all, Bender was outraged over the indiscretion that had obviously happened. As he told Croiset and West in the Netherlands, this must "have come from a government office. The moral of the story: to classify a process as 'top secret' appears to be the most favorable precondition for it's becoming widely known."[64]

Bender, extremely angry, apparently initially suspected Wolfgang Salewski of having passed information on to the press: "It cannot be ruled out that he himself had a part in this," he informed Croiset. For this reason, Bender planned to visit Salewski in Munich and to ask him about the indiscretions.[65] But Salewski insisted on his innocence and at the same time pointed out that he himself "had also suffered great personal damage from this story". He said he had even spoken with the Chancellor about the matter and the resulting problems. If we accept Salewski's description, against the backdrop of the November 1977 press reports, the Federal Criminal Police Office now went on the offensive to distance itself from the consultations with the clairvoyant Croiset, which could no longer be kept secret; Salewski said that it spread the idea that he, Salewski, had acted on his own authority.[66]

How the print media gained access to the information on the special investigators' consultation with the clairvoyant remains an unanswered question. Despite several written queries, it was not possible to induce Professor Wolfgang D. Salewski to give a later statement on the happenings described here. Nor did the Wiesbaden Federal Criminal Police Office provide further information when asked.[67]

After the articles appeared in the press, Hans Bender was even more interested in keeping his name from being associated with the events surrounding the Schleyer kidnapping. He feared that otherwise his opponents, like Senior Detective Herbert Schäfer, would seize the opportunity to intensify their general "campaign against the institute" (meaning: The Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health).[68]

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63 Minutes of 18 Nov. 1977, in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

64 29 Nov. 1977: Hans Bender to Dick West, in: AHJB, NL Croiset; 29 Nov. 1977: Hans Bender to Dick West, in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-Croiset-Fälle/Kontakte 1976–1981.

65 9 Dec. 1977: Hans Bender to Gerard Croiset, in: ibid. But it is not certain whether the planned visit in Munich actually took place.

66 Minutes of a telephone call between Bender and Salewski on 11 Jan. 1978 [12 Jan. 1978], in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

67 Letter of the Bundeskriminalamt Wiesbaden (Detective Chief Superintendent Steinhoff) to U. Schellinger of 6 Nov. 2007 (reference file U. Schellinger, the archive of the IGPP).

68 Minutes of a telephone call between Bender and Salewski on 11 Jan. 1978 [12 Jan. 1978], in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

Summarizing Remarks: A clairvoyant as a Helper for the Police?

Gerard Croiset's clairvoyant search for Hanns Martin Schleyer ultimately failed. The Freiburg parapsychologist Hans Bender, however, was convinced for several weeks after 17 November 1977 that Croiset had indeed provided valuable advice on Schleyer's kidnapping and that the clairvoyant's "extraordinary success" had to be acknowledged. Bender thereupon missed no opportunity to tell Croiset this and to praise him.[69]

Bender's positive attitude was based on the statements of special investigator Johannes Kurt Klein, who, in the face of the surprising press reports, told him that "the information from Croiset in Cologne had indeed led to useful, correct finds in the dragnet"[70] and "the indiscrete information provided by the BUNTE on 2 November 1977 about the finding of Croiset's remarks is based on facts".[71] The psychologist Salewski, however, had completely different things to say about the investigations and about Croiset's participation. In contrast to Klein's description, Saleswki spoke of Croiset's "25% matches" in September 1977. So it was in no way true that "Croiset's statements made finds [sic!]" and it was "absolutely not what stands in BUNTE. [. . .] What STERN wrote is not true."[72]

In their interpretation of Croiset's statements and their estimate of the statements' investigatory usability, the two participating investigators Klein and Salewski took not only different, but in fact opposite positions. In light of Salewski's statement of January 1978, Hans Bender's declaration, documented two years later, that Salewski had said that seriously considering Croiset's utterances could possibly have led to Schleyer's liberation[73] seems contradictory and at least questionable in its process of emergence.

Considering the complicated state of the sources, it is ultimately impossible to precisely determine the character of the successes of the clairvoyant Croiset

69 29 Nov. 1977: Hans Bender to Dick West, in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-Croiset-Fälle/Kontakte 1976–1981; 9 Dec. 1977: Hans Bender to Gerard Croiset, in: ibid.

70 Report from memory of Hans Bender from 18 Nov. 1977, in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1216.

71 Minutes of a telephone call between Bender and Klein on 14 Dec. 1977 [15 Dec. 1977], in: ibid.

72 Minutes of a telephone call between Bender and Salewski on 11 Jan. 1978 [12 Jan. 1978], in: ibid.

73 "Gedächtnisprotokoll über eine Unterhaltung mit Herrn Salewski, München" (report from memory on a talk with Mr. Salewski, Munich) (presumably early 1980), contained in: the archive of the IGPP, E/23-1101.

that were retrospectively confirmed by Klein and Bender but relativized by Salewski. Above all, the process of implementing Croiset's extremely vague information, as captured in the preserved records and transcripts, in specific, concrete options for the investigators' activity remains strangely opaque. But it can be regarded as confirmed that certain statements of Croiset's were examined and that his statements as a medium were thereby judged and processed.

The subsequent reporting by leading German print media (BUNTE, STERN, SPIEGEL) seems enlightening at first glance, but actually contributes to the confusion. After Schleyer's death and in a situation in which the futile investigations and dragnets were subject to scrutiny, the episode around the clairvoyant Croiset was a journalistically welcome thematic anchor to brand the chaos and helplessness of the police work in the dragnet for the kidnapped employers' association president.

In the background of the events at the time of Schleyer's kidnapping, the Freiburg parapsychologist Hans Bender stood as the undisputed professional mediator in questions of the use of personal mediums for police work. Otherwise definitely interested in effective publicity,[74] in this case, Bender had a clear interest that neither he himself nor the Institute for Frontier Areas of Psychology and Mental Health (IGPP) that he headed should appear in public. Nonetheless, the spectacular case interested him greatly. Bender had records from memory prepared and for a long time collected press articles and publications on the issue.

The initiative for the contact between Bender and Croiset came from two persons – Johannes Kurt Klein and Wolfgang Salewski – both of whom had direct personal relations with the renowned parapsychologist Hans Bender and both of whom had an individual interest in questions of parapsychology or the frontiers of psychology.[75] In an extremely tense and difficult situation, Klein and Salewski were apparently ultimately able to gain the agreement of state decision-makers like Interior Minister Maihofer and the head of the Federal Criminal Police, Herold, to "employ unorthodox means" in this criminal case that was so weighty for the development of the Federal Republic of Germany"[76] – although these means were not effective in the investigations.

74 Cf. Lux: "Vom spielenden Gelingen"; Lux: On all Channels.

75 On 7 May 1981, Bender talked with Salewski about astrology, for example, which interested the Munich psychologist. Bender considered the degree to which Salewski "could be helpful for an institutionalization of astrology". See "Gedächtnisprotokoll über eine Unterhaltung mit Herrn Wolfgang Salewski (Besuch im Institut am 7.5.1981)", in: the archive of the IGPP, E/21-1101.

76 For a case in comparison, see the initiative the naval officer Hans Roeder during World War II to use methods of frontier areas for the military security of the state: Schellinger, Anton & Schetsche: Zwischen Szientismus und Okkultismus.

The "sensational disclosure"[77] that, in the extremely volatile case of the Schleyer kidnapping, it was proven that the investigators had obtained advice from a clairvoyant could not remain without reaction. Very soon, voices were raised with massive criticism of this "occult dragnet". Above all, the Mannheim judge Wolf Wimmer gave free rein to his outrage: "That now, after 100 years of natural-scientific criminology, forensic psychologists [. . .] seriously hope for extrasensory help from such 'paragnosts' in solving crimes must, considering the current state of education, trigger the very greatest astonishment."[78]

In retrospect, some things suggest that for this reason it was primarily the circumstances of the Schleyer case during the "Leaden Years" that consequently led to the noticeable strategies of reservation on the part of German police forces in regard to queries about the use of paranormal methods or the examination of mediums' statements in the context of police work.[79] To this very day, the Federal Criminal Police Office in Wiesbaden makes no transparent statements on the case. Apparently, Croiset's search for Hanns Martin Schleyer in 1977 is not documented there, as the office reported in 2007 in answer to a question: "Based on the viewed file material, there is no indication of the involvement of the 'clairvoyant' Croiset. [. . .] What is found here has to do with an investigatory procedure that has not been closed. No further information can be given at this time."[80]

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77 Tremper: Aufsehenerregende Enthüllung.

78 Wimmer: Okkultfahndung auch noch heute?, 109. In the 1970s, Wolf Wimmer was considered one of the most vehement critics of parapsychology in Germany. For another reaction, see Wehner: Selbstbezichtiger – Geistesgestörte – Übersinnliche.

79 Dobranic: Hellseher im Dienste der Verbrechensaufklärung; Schetsche & Schellinger: "Psychic detectives" auch in Deutschland?; Schellinger: Kriminaltelepathie, 224–226.

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Ehler Voss

California Dreamin'. The Invention of Modern Western Shamanism as a Mediumistic Trial of the 20th Century

In 1968, Carlos Castañeda published the book "The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge", launching a series of reports on the apprenticeship he began as an Anthropology student at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) with Don Juan Matus, a self-identifying Yaqui Indio and *brujo* – Spanish for "medicine man, curer, witch, sorcerer. [The word] connotes essentially a person who has extraordinary, and usually evil, powers".[1] The book was followed by ten more[2]; they were translated into many languages and became international bestsellers, accompanied by controversial commentary that is too vast to survey and that will surely not end with this essay, and extends far beyond the bounds of anthropology. Although Castañeda seldom speaks of shamanism, "The Teachings of Don Juan" is interpreted as a "founding document of modern Western shamanism"[3] and Castañeda as the writer "who [. . .] presented shamanism in a way which made people want to be shamans"[4] – a wish that led to a practice to which the terms neoshamanism or modern Western shamanism are applied.

In the guise of an ethnographic report, Don Juan introduces the first-person narrator, to be identified with Carlos Castañeda, to the use of various psychoactive plants. He teaches the narrator to do all manner of unusual things in altered

1 Carlos Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 14. The first edition appeared in 1968 in the University of California Press.

2 A Separate Reality. Further Conversations with Don Juan, New York 1971; Journey to Ixtlan. The Lessons of Don Juan, New York 1972; Tales of Power, New York 1974; The Second Ring of Power, New York 1977; The Eagle's Gift, New York 1981; The Fire from Within, New York 1984; The Power of Silence. Further Lessons of Don Juan, New York 1987; The Art of Dreaming, New York 1993; Magical Passes. The Practical Wisdom of the Shamans of Ancient Mexico, New York 1998; The Active Side of Infinity, London 1998.

3 Kocku von Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik, 155.

4 Robert J. Wallis: Shamans/Neo-Shamans, 44.

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states of consciousness: to see in the dark, to move through walls, to change his own shape, to fly, to speak with animals, to stop the world and prophesize, to establish contact with his allies and teachers in what Castañeda calls "nonordinary reality", and to master attacks and dangers coming from it, with the goal of turning his apprentice into a "man of knowledge". Castañeda reports on his difficulties in understanding and on the hard-to-classify sensory perceptions, insights, and extraordinary powers. He asks himself fundamental questions about the character of these powers and the possibilities human beings have to deal with and use them.

This calls up a field of topics around body techniques and trance states that was already treated in the 19th century, especially in Europe, in a major and public controversy over mediumism that focused on testing and explaining the abilities and potentials of personal mediums and technical media.[5] A wide variety of groups and individuals took part in this debate, which was closely connected with the development and application of new technologies that were able to do things similar to those imputed to the trance mediums: with telegraphy, which enabled bodiless communication across great distances, and with imaging apparatuses, which gave visibility to invisible things. From its beginnings, mediumism was the object of a controversy between secular and religious claims, and its testing is understandable only by recognizing their mutual interpenetration and interaction.[6] The interpretations of mediumism and altered states of consciousness that have become dominant since the end of the long 19th century weakened the public testing of mediumism, but did little to change the fact that mediumistic practices remain a factor of uncertainty and disconcertment. So the testing of the mediumistic abilities and potentials of people and technology did not vanish in the 20th and 21st centuries. In smaller and less public contexts, new controversies developed. If we follow the contemporary actors, California since the 1960s, in particular, proves to be a region in which new organizations and institutions of the mediumistic trial of the 20th century were invented, popularized, and globalized. As can be shown in the example of the invention of neoshamanism, whose most important components will be presented in the following, the debate was thereby tied in part to similar hopes and reached a similar overarching dimension to that in the 19th century.

5 The term "trial" is used in accordance with Science and Technology Studies, which use this term frequently to avoid the common associations with today's (scientific) experiments and to find a more neutral term that is open to various levels and practices; cf. Michael Guggenheim and Jörg Potthast: Symmetrical twins.

6 Erhard Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien.

Component One: The Mediumistic Trial of the 19th Century

With reference to Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer,[7] Erhard Schüttpelz describes mediumism in the 19th century as a "boundary object" "that was robust enough to remain stable between various contexts and at the same time remained so underdetermined that it could suffice various practical and theoretical demands, in particular the demand to serve as the trigger for a dispute about the proper institutionalizability of this 'boundary object'."[8]

The heuristic determination of the emergence of that "boundary object" begins in 1784, a year that the participants already stylized as a starting point. First, in Paris in this year, recognized scientists publicly examined the "animal magnetism" hypothesis postulated by Franz Anton Mesmer. Second, in Buzancy, Mesmer's student Marquis de Puységur began to be interested in the abilities of patients whom he had put into a state of "somnambulant sleep" using Mesmerist techniques and to record his observations. Mesmer asserted the existence of a universal and usually invisible force he called "fluidum". Using various techniques via the physician's body or technical apparatus, like the "Baquet", a tub prepared on the model of the Leiden bottle, this fluidum could be accumulated and transferred to the circle of patients sitting around and connected with this tub, in order to dissolve illness-producing blockages to the flow of the fluidum. Whereas Mesmer did not seem to be interested in the experiences that his patients had while in the unusual states of consciousness his treatment brought about, Puységur discovered in his patients a state of increased receptivity that, among other things, enabled them to make predictions or to diagnose illnesses. Mesmer saw himself as an Enlightenment spirit and was initially publicly treated as an expert who replaced exorcism with a practice that could be explained in terms of natural science.[9] In his terminological presentation of the magnetic fluidum, he invoked the then-known imponderables electricity, gravity, warmth, and light. Mesmer's theoretical explanatory achievement could neither convince nor disquiet his contemporaries; the uproar that his practices triggered in Vienna and Paris arose, rather, from the boundary-transgressing hands-on character of

7 Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer: Institutional Ecology, "Translations", and Boundary Objects.

8 Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien, 134.

9 Ego: "Animalischer Magnetismus" oder "Aufklärung".

his demonstrations and from the "orthopractical" claims that he conveyed technically and staged publicly.[10]

The term "medium" played no role for Mesmer; the use of the term to designate people first became popular in the context of spiritualism that spread transatlantically in the middle of the 19th century, but Mesmerism crucially prepared the ground for it.[11] In Europe between 1600 and 1800, people understood nature as God's medium, situated midway between humankind and God, through which, with the aid of technical media, natural science could become a practice of revelation by reading in the "Bible of Nature".[12] Mesmer shifted this middle slightly by permitting secular and religious interpretations at the same time, thereby founding the mediumism of the long 19th century in its openness for controversial interpretations. With his new imponderability and the practices based on it, Mesmer promised not only a natural-scientific explicability and verifiability, but also an individual and always available utilization of this middle. The mesmerist body techniques remained a constant reference point in the 19th century and formed the basis for a long series of tests of the mediumistic potency of technical and personal mediums that, also when they were carried out in smaller circles,[13] were often protocolled and published for potential examination by a broader public and that had already been conducted in intercontinental interconnections since mesmerism.[14]

For Schüttpelz, in the case of mediumism, the underdetermination required for a boundary object results from the indeterminacy of the participating actors' agency and from whether the powers in question were to be classified as immanent or transcendent: "The agency of mediumism could be attributed to unknown, imponderable natural forces (from etheric to fluidal substances) or to a special human ability, for example the initiator's special receptivity, that made it possible to accumulate and address these natural forces. This ability could be identified as a natural force or with an elite or egalitarian ability to deal with such a force; it could be equated with an ability to manifest dimensions immanent in this world, non-human and otherworldly powers, or nonhuman persons connected with the person of the medium, including in the form of a transcendent "private revelation" or "higher knowledge". And, as already at the beginning of the mesmeristic

10 Schüttpelz and Voss: In jeder Beziehung ebenso wirksam.
11 Hoffmann: Geschichte des Medienbegriffs.
12 Schott: Hieroglyphensprache der Natur.
13 Sawicki: Leben mit den Toten.
14 Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien.

debate, it could be attributed to the charlatanry of the medium, his impresario, or his scientific observer."[15]

In this context, numerous competing explanatory approaches, motifs of thought, and institutions like hypnosis, hysteria, and spiritualism developed that situated ideas of suggestion, the unconscious, the fluidum, Odic force, or the ether in different ways. This was often connected with the attempt to establish one's own teaching by founding organizations and to consistently carry out the corresponding practices. Examples of this include the *Société de l'Harmonie*, founded by Mesmer's students at the end of the 18th century in Paris, and the Department for Neurology, set up by Jean-Martin Charcot to conduct research on hysteria in the *Hôpital de la Salpêtriere* at the end of the 19th century in Paris.

In spiritualism, the souls of the dead filled the interspace and the – now so designated – "mediums", technical or personal, could establish contact with them and enable communication. This was influenced by, among other things, the teachings of Emanuel Swedenborg, whom a "religious crisis"[16] or "dream crisis"[17] turned into an "apparitionist" or "ghost-seer"[18] at the end of the 18th century and who developed a cosmology about the continuance of the dead between immanence and transcendence. For Swedenborg, a *mundus spiritualis* is interposed between Heaven and Hell, an anthropomorphic middle without genuine evil, where angels and the deceased sojourn before the latter reach Heaven or Hell or, through a process of reincarnations, develop into angels.[19] Whereas Swedenborg evaded inquiries about evidence for his experiences, Heaven, shifted from distance to proximity in spiritism, was approached with the demand for experimental verifiability.[20]

An immanentization of the agency was possible in the mediumistic controversy from the beginning, but first developed into the societally dominant interpretation near the end of the 19th century: new academic institutions formed and, with great public effect, Freud's invention of psychoanalysis shifted the source of dreams and other disquieting states of consciousness into the interior of the humans. He promised to make this source tamable – precisely by explicitly turning away from exploring trance states and their practitioners. In this viewpoint, trance and dreams were no longer a potential way of understanding

15 Ibid., 134f.
16 Benz: Emanuel Swedenborg, Naturforscher und Seher.
17 Lagercrantz: Vom Leben auf der anderen Seite.
18 Kant: Träume eines Geistersehers.
19 Stengel: Aufklärung bis zum Himmel.
20 Stengel: Aufklärung bis zum Himmel, 35–54; Zander: Höhere Erkenntnis.

the world, but served solely the understanding and desired purification of one's own self. The growing domination of the immanentization of mediumistic effects began to alter the once great debate and was carried forward and tried out in the context of individual "fission products" of mediumism, like modern art and literature, various psychotherapies, parapsychology, and modern esotericism.[21] The grand controversies of the 19th century about mesmerism, spiritualism, hypnosis, and hysteria were followed by numerous smaller disputes accompanied by "separations" between "official" and "private" practices; a paradigmatic example of this radical change is C.G. Jung's decision to use the "Red Book" of his visions as the foundation of his psychoanalytic theory and practice, but to keep it concealed from the public.[22]

After 1900, a differing time allocation for technical and personal media began to prevail. Taking trancelike states seriously increasingly contradicted a modern self-understanding. Trance mediums were thus attributed to an outmoded archaism, while technological media represented progressive modernity. The result was that the interferences between technological media and personal mediums were lost sight of and that the terms are identical was long perceived, and in part is still today, as a more or less comical homonym or historical misunderstanding.

Component Two: Mircea Eliade

For a long time mostly excluded from the discussion of the archaic that began toward the end of the 19th century was shamanism, which has been a live topic in Europe since the 17th century, although here, too, people spoke of extraordinary states of consciousness in which a shaman established contact with his or her helping spirits; but the early literature on shamanism usually was not about developing a universal theory of shamanism. Instead of regarding shamanism as a religion and speculating about its origin, the focus of study was primarily on the figure of the shaman and his social standing and function; this was limited to individual studies that were skeptical about attempts at universalization. This kind of social-scientifically and historically working research on shamanism dominated, especially in the interwar period.[23]

21 Schüttpelz: Mediumismus und moderne Medien, 130–132.
22 Jung: Das Rote Buch.
23 Voss: Authentizität als Aktant.

A decisive and very consequential turn in the view of shamanism was launched by the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), who in 1951 presented shamanism as a universal "archaic technique of ecstasy – at once mysticism, magic, and 'religion' in the broadest sense of the term"[24] and thereby became very influential – despite no lack of criticism, which continues to this day, of his approach, whose anti-sociological and ahistorical perspective amounts to a private religion.[25] In most writings so far, the liminality of the figure of the shaman has also meant a social liminality with all its positive, but above all negative accompanying effects. But Eliade limits this liminality to ecstatic liminality. He blocks out impurities and incompatibilities and regards shamans as chosen heroes "who stand out in their respective societies by virtue of characteristics, that, in the societies of modern Europe, represent the signs of a vocation or at least a religious crisis"[26] and are able to move from the polarity of the human world into "ultimate reality" of the lost origin and to return from there:

> By crossing, in ecstasy, the 'dangerous' bridge that connects the two worlds and that only the dead can attempt, the shaman proves that he is spirit, is no longer a human being, and at the same time attempts to restore the 'communicability' that existed *in illo tempore* between this world and heaven. For what the shaman can do today *in ecstasy* could, in the dawn of time, be done by all human beings *in concreto*; they went up to heaven and came down again without recourse to trance. Temporarily and for a limited number of persons – the shamans – ecstasy re-establishes the primordial condition of all mankind. In this respect, the mystical experience of the 'primitives' is a return to origins, a reversion to the mystical age of the lost paradise. For the shaman in ecstasy, the bridge or the tree, the vine, the cord, and so on – which *in illo tempore*, connected earth with heaven – once again, for the space of an instant, becomes a present reality.[27]

For Eliade, not every extraordinary state amounts to a shamanistic ecstasy. The shaman, he writes, "specializes in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld".[28] What is

24 Eliade: Schamanism, xix. In another passage he says that "it would be more correct to class shamanism among the mysticisms than with what is commonly called a religion", cf. ibid., 8.

25 Cf., among other sources, Boekhoven: Genealogies of Shamanism; Brown: Eliade on Archaic Religions; Gilhus: The Phenomenology of Religion and Theories of Interpretation.

26 Eliade: Schamanismus und archaische Ekstasetechnik, 8.

27 Ibid., 486. But Eliade did not invent the idealization of the figure of the shaman and of ecstasy. It can already be found at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, for example in Thomas Achelis, who was powerfully influenced by Nietzsche, and it takes up the idealization of the figure of Orpheus that began in the 19th century; cf. Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik, 83–122.

28 Eliade: Schamanism, 5.

special about shamans is thereby that he controls the spirits, which means "that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, 'demons', and the 'nature spirits', without thereby becoming their instrument".[29] In this, a shaman differs from possessed persons, with few exceptions. This leads Eliade to speak of "aberrant techniques", by which he means primarily "rudimentary and mechanical means (narcotics, dancing to the point of exhaustion, 'possession', etc.)"[30]:

> We may ask, for example, if the aberrant aspect of the shamanic trance is not due to the fact that the shaman seeks to experiment *in concreto* a symbolism and mythology that, by their very nature, are not susceptible of being 'realized' on the 'concrete' plane, if in short, the desire to obtain, at any cost and by any means, an ascent *in concreto*, a mystical and at the same time *real* journey to heaven, did bot result in the aberrant trances that we have seen; if, finally these types of behavior are not the inevitable consequence of an intense desire to 'live,' that is, to 'experience' on the plane of the body, what in the present condition of humanity is no longer accessible except on the plane of 'spirit'. But we prefer to leave this problem open; in any case, it is one that reaches beyond the bounds of the history of religions and enters the domain of philosophy and theology.[31]

In many aspects of its conception, Eliade's shamanism is the opposite of spiritualism. Even if spiritualism contains the idea of salvation, spiritualistic practices do not serve the "holy" task of the direct restoration of an original state, but are understood as communication with an intermediate realm that is not yet attributed the status of a paradise. The personal spiritualistic mediums are not characterized by a mastery over spirits, but by the ability to cede one's own body to the spirits and thereby enable this communication in the first place. The spiritualistic mediums are thereby not chosen heroes, but at most somewhat more gifted than others, because, generally and fundamentally, in spiritualism all people, independent of time, are considered to have mediumistic capabilities. In spiritualism, philosophy and theology thereby become experimentally verifiable for everyone.

Component Three: Carlos Castañeda

Castañeda's books come from the context of anthropology, and his third book about Don Juan was accepted at UCLA as a dissertation in the 1970s.[32] While the

29 Ibid, 6.
30 Ibid, 493.
31 Ibid, 494.
32 Castañeda: Journey to Ixtlan.

history of religion as represented by Eliade draws its knowledge from written, usually historical sources, anthropology is based on the participant observation of current practices. The anthropological method thereby demands active participation in social events. While anthropology classically focuses on understanding and describing foreign cultures, usually connected with an often-criticized translation into one's own categories, such as the economy, society, religion, and so forth, ethnomethodology, developed by Harold Garfinkel (1917–2011) in the 1950s and '60s at UCLA, likewise focuses on observational participation in social events, but centers less on grasping cultural systems than on understanding the rules of everyday social interaction and on the negotiation of social reality, i.e., on understanding "ethno-methods".[33] For Castañeda, too, who in "The Teachings of Don Juan" thanks Garfinkel, among others, as the one "who gave me the model and the spirit of exhaustive inquiry",[34] the point is not the reconstruction of "culture" and cultural background:

> Thus, as don Juan had traveled a great deal, his knowledge may have been the product of many influences. And although he regarded himself as an Indian from Sonora, I was not sure whether to place the context of his knowledge totally in the culture of the Sonora Indians. But it is not my intention here to determine his precise cultural milieu.[35]

Not only Don Juan's background and knowledge remain in the dark; one also learns little about his everyday life, for example his social relationships and his livelihood, but Castañeda's writings do not seem to be about investigating the rules of communication, either. Even if his reports are mostly in dialog form and he is often called an ethnomethodologist,[36] the course of the dialog is not systematically taken as a theme. At the end of the first book there is still an ethnomethodologically inspired analysis of the negotiation of a consensus, i.e., an attempt at reconstructing how Don Juan manages to give him the impression of a shared reality during his drug experiments. But this analysis remains vague and sketchy and this approach is not further pursued in the following books. What seems to be the point in Castañeda's descriptions is to achieve an understanding "of his [Don Juan's] way of knowledge".[37] The goal is the

33 Garfinkel: Studies in Ethnomethodology.

34 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 11. In the same passage, he thanks "Professor Clement Meighan, who started and set the course of my anthropological fieldwork." In his last, retrospective book, both of them appear once more; he dedicates the book to them; cf. Castañeda: The Active Side of Infinity.

35 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 19.

36 Cf. the list in de Mille: Ethnomethodallegory, 68. Pierce J. Flynn assigns Castañeda to the third generation of ethnomethodologists, cf. Flynn: The Ethnomethodological Movement, 36.

37 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 25.

reconstruction of a cosmology, without setting it in connection with other aspects of the daily life of a specific culture.

Like Eliade's *philosophia perennis*, Castañeda's writings display tendencies to archaicize this abstracted knowledge, for example when sorcery is called a "vague phenomenon" that "for the American Indian, perhaps for thousands of years, [. . .] has been a serious, bona fide practice, comparable to that of our science".[38] "Our" science here means that of "Western Man"[39] and evokes the meanwhile classical opposition between the modern and the archaic on which Eliade's concept of shamanism is based; and, as with Eliade, Castañeda's object of research seems superior to his own. Don Juan appears as the "primitive philosopher" who is far more advanced than the researcher – a reversal of the modern self-understanding that has a long tradition in the history of anthropology.[40] The interest in alien views of the world is then often tied to the hope for an understanding of the better views of the world. Thus, Castañeda's participant observation is tied to questions of mediumism and works on the assumption that people in extraordinary states experience something about the nature of the world and the right way to live. In this case, participation initially means above all the ingestion of consciousness-altering substances, i.e., the practical performance of what Eliade regarded as an "aberrant"[41] shamanistic technique. The repeatedly sounded goal of the practices is, as with Eliade's shamans, the sovereign mastery of the beings and forces contacted. In Castañeda's books, this serves, first, to achieve knowledge, i.e., to "see". In this way, the sorcerer's apprentice hopes that the beings and forces will, among other things, provide answers to questions about the right way to live: "'Am I doing the right thing? Am I on the right path? What should I do with my life?'"[42] Second, mastering the forces serves to use them to receive "power". For example, Don Juan says about "the smoke":

> You can't talk to it. But you know it exists because it takes your body away and makes you as light as air. Yet you never see it. But it is there giving you power to accomplish unimaginable things, such as when it takes your body away.[43]

38 Castañeda: A Separate Reality, 19.
39 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 19.
40 Cf. for example Radin: Primitive Man as a Philosopher; Griaule: Dieu d'eau. Don Juan is read as a philosopher by, for instance, Margolis: Don Juan as Philosopher.
41 Eliade: Shamanism, 493.
42 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 150.
43 Ibid. 138.

The chosen form of presentation, the dialog, claims to be pure note taking. In Castañeda's second book, we read that this book is

> [. . .] a reportage and should be read as a reportage. The system I recorded was incomprehensible to me, thus the pretense to anything other than reporting about it would be misleading and impertinent. In this respect I have adopted the phenomenological method and have striven to deal with sorcery solely as phenomena that were presented to me. I, as a perceiver, recorded what I perceived, and at the moment of recording I endeavored to suspend judgment.[44]

These notes are above all a record of failure and incomprehension. The cultural-relativistic claim to value neutrality formulated in them, the powerful focus on his own experience, and the constant questioning of his own assumptions and sources of error likewise stand in a long anthropological tradition, in the sense that, inspired by laboratory research, it took as its theme the role of field researchers and their influence on the field and their results.[45] At the same time, unlike Eliade, Castañeda uses the dialog form not to present a finished and coherent system, but to introduce sorcery from the beginning as controversy, just as mediumism in the 19th century always made its appearance as controversy.

The first-person narrator thereby embodies a skeptical and at the same time insecure stance based in a psychologically immanentized domestication of mediumistic effects and a consistent, intersubjectively accessible reality; for this reason he has difficulty understanding and accepting another view of things. This is shown in the following dialog between the first-person narrator and Don Juan:

> 'Is Mescalito[46] God – the only God? Or is he one of the gods?'
> 'He is just a protector and a teacher. He is a power.'
> 'Is he a power within ourselves?'
> 'No. Mescalito has nothing to do with ourselves. He is outside us.'
> 'Then everyone who takes Mescalito must see him in the same form.'
> 'No, not at all. He is not the same for everybody.'[47]

The first-person narrator is overcome with insecurity about the possibility of rational comprehensibility. Thus, he says to Don Juan about his experiences with "the little smoke":

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44 Castañeda: A Separate Reality, 25.

45 Stocking: From Physics to Ethnology.

46 Don Juan uses the word "Mescalito" for peyote, a collective term for various cacti, some of which contain the consciousness-altering alkaloid mescaline.

47 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 90.

> 'I really felt I had lost my body, don Juan.'
> 'You did.'
> 'You mean, I really didn't have a body?'
> 'What do *you* think yourself?'
> 'Well, I don't know. All I can tell you is what I felt.'
> [. . .]
> 'But you saw me as I am now, didn't you?'
> 'No! You were NOT as you are now!'
> 'True! I admit that. But I had my body, didn't I, although *I* couldn't feel it?'
> 'No! Goddammit! You did not have a body like the body you have today!'
> 'What happened to my body then?'
> 'I thought you understood. The little smoke took your body.'
> 'But where did it go?'
> 'How in hell do you expect me to know that?'
> It was useless to persist in trying to get a 'rational' explanation. I told him I did not want to argue or to ask stupid questions, but if I accepted the idea that it was possible to lose my body I would lose all my rationality.[48]

But Castañeda's first-person narrator is no figure of pure failure. He describes primarily his insecurity, clumsiness, and anxiety, the superiority of the teacher, and his repeated terminations of the training. But that he is a chosen being is hinted at again and again – his own power and greatness, which are apparently merely not yet developed, shine through again and again. Thus, Don Juan is confused that, already in the narrator's first drug experiences, Mescalito has already "played" with him and then says: "Mescalito pointed you out to me and by doing that he told me you were the chosen man."[49] And after the first-person narrator rubs a special plant paste on his forehead, despite Don Juan's urgent warning – something Don Juan himself says he has never done, because his benefactor told him that only a few returned from the journey thereby triggered – Don Juan says: "As I see it, either you are very strong or the weed really likes you. The center of the forehead is only for the great *brujos* who know how to handle her power."[50] The repeatedly formulated admission that he is not equal to the task of the apprentice is tied by such hints to the promise that the first-person narrator ultimately is a great sorcerer.

Part of the mediumistic trial, which Castañeda already stages as a controversy, is the suspicion of fraud. Thus, the aforementioned analysis at the end of the first book already partly conveys the impression that the anthropologist wants to take vengeance for his disconcerting experiences with Don Juan by

48 Ibid., 138–139.
49 Ibid., 50.
50 Ibid., 156.

exposing how Don Juan may have created the illusion of a shared reality. And when Don Juan and his friend Don Genaro play a practical joke by making his car disappear, he writes:

> The thought occurred to me, as it always had happened when don Juan had confronted me with inexplicable phenomena, that I was being tricked by ordinary means. [. . .] I began to consider how many confederates don Juan and don Genaro would have needed in order to lift my car and remove it from where I had parked it. [. . .] The only other possible explanation was that perhaps they were mesmerizing me.[51]

The first-person narrator's constant suspicion of fraud fell on Castañeda himself. Very soon after the publication of his first book in 1968, doubts were voiced about the authenticity of his experiences. The lack of fieldwork diaries, sound recordings, and photographic material, as well as the demonstration of contradictions and unrealistic ethnographic details, fed doubts about the reports' authenticity. For example, it was asserted that if he had been in the Sonora Desert at the times claimed and had behaved as described, he would not have managed to write the book, but would have either frozen to death, drowned, or died of thirst.[52] In the Californian psychologist, journalist, and former Scientologist Richard de Mille, a critic lastingly came to the fore who spent much time attempting to prove that Castañeda did not gain his knowledge in the desert, but in the UCLA library, and that both Don Juan and the first-person narrator were Castañeda's inventions.[53] Although de Mille's criticism became very influential, its irony and polemic character provoked objection and it became itself the object of a "debunking the debunker".[54] But along with this, again and again there were also ambivalent opinions, often swinging between hope and disappointment, about Castañeda and his books. For example, in 1978, the German anthropologist Hans Peter Duerr considered Castañeda's books "'half-authentic' [. . .] i.e., doctored reports of true events".[55] In 1981, on

51 Castañeda: Journey to Ixtlan, 239.

52 Cf., for example, Sebald: Die Märchenwelt des Carlos Castañeda.

53 Castañeda was also accused of inventing his biography. While Castañeda often claimed to have been born in Brazil in 1931 or 1935, others tried to prove that he was born in Peru in 1925; cf. de Mille: Sergeant Castañeda and the Photos of Don Juan: Transforming the Special Consensus; Castañeda: A Magical Journey with Carlos Castañeda; Time Magazine: Don Juan and the Sorcerer's Apprentice. It is apparently undisputed that Castañeda died in 1998.

54 Richard de Mille: Castañeda's Journey; idem (ed.): The Don Juan Papers; Desper: Debunking De Mille.

55 Duerr: Traumzeit, 447.

the occasion of the republication of his essay, extensively quoting Castañeda and first published in 1975, "Die Grenzen einer seriösen Völkerkunde" [the boundaries of a serious anthropology], he remarked that the authenticity of Castañeda's texts had "meanwhile been doubted, for good reasons".[56] In the same collection of essays, a diary entry from 1981 about a discussion doubting Don Juan's authenticity is supplemented with a footnote: after "getting to know" Castañeda and "another member of the 'Don Juan group', Florinda D.", he says he was "inclined to believe that both Don Juan and the group of sorcerer's apprentices exists (or existed)".[57] Almost 30 years later, he relativized this judgment again. Asked about his encounter with Castañeda, in 2009 he said:

> I must also honestly say that I didn't believe a large part of his descriptions; everything was so excessive and at some point no longer comprehensible. He probably really did get to know an Indian, that happens often, after all. Perhaps he then attributed his own ideas to this Indian.[58]

The reports on dealing with Castañeda and his writings give the impression that it is often mainly about "boundary work",[59] a practice in which anthropology negotiates its boundaries. Distancing oneself from Castañeda became a kind of foregone conclusion, i.e., he had attained such a degree of ostracism that recognizing Castañeda as an anthropologist or even merely seriously addressing him and his work endangered one's career. The anthropologist Yves Marton reports, unfortunately without saying when it happened, that quotations from her informant in her master's thesis were criticized as "sounding like Castañeda". In addition, the anthropologist Edith Turner had told her in 1988 "that she had been informed that she was not to mention Castañeda if she wanted a book accepted by certain publishers".[60]

Along with Castañeda, conducting participant observation as a religious apprentice seemed to have fallen into discredit, as well. Castañeda became an example of the danger of "going native" by losing anthropological distance. This seems initially somewhat odd, because the assumption that Castañeda had thought up his books, which implied that he had not been a participant observer, should have exempted this method from discreditation. Although a *Time Magazine* title article

56 Idem: Über die Grenzen einer seriösen Völkerkunde oder: Können Hexen fliegen?, 28.
57 Idem: Fragmente eines Tagebuchs, 95.
58 Haller: Interview mit Hans Peter Duerr.
59 Gieryn: Boundary-Work and the Demarcation of Science from Non-Science.
60 Marton: The Experiential Approach to Anthropology & Castañeda's Ambiguous Legacy, 275.

in 1973 had already criticized Castañeda's writings as fictions,[61] the anthropologist Jay C. Fikes reports that, in 1976, he still planned to conduct his fieldwork explicitly in the style of Castañeda.[62] But in a 1987 retrospect, the anthropologist Paul Stoller remembered that, when he received the offer of an apprenticeship with a Songhai in Niger in 1976, he considered.

> I had to make a decision [. . .] should I risk becoming an apprentice [to a sorcerer]? I thought of Castañeda, with whom I did not want to be compared. In general, anthropologists frown upon subjective accounts of anthropological fieldwork. And the questionable authenticity of Castañeda's work made subjective accounts of supernatural acts even more risky in the profession.[63]

In the meantime, it seems to have become a generally accepted fact that Castañeda's texts are "charlantry". At least that is how they are described in more recent articles about shamanism and its history.[64] But outside of anthropology, the accusation of fraud hardly fazed his popularity – Castañeda produced more books about Don Juan that still sell well today. One reason for this may lie in the literary form sketched above, which, despite the obvious inauthenticity of what is described, nonetheless conveys authentic experiences to many readers. Castañeda's descriptions of his difficulties in understanding the text and the effortful dialog prove to be the necessary conditions of the learning process. The learning process of the anthropological research and of the apprentice are synchronized:

> It was clear that Don Juan's knowledge and his method of conveying it were those of his benefactor; thus my difficulties in understanding his teachings must have been analogous to those he himself had encountered.[65]

The notes repeat mimetically the claimed experience of the pupil Castañeda conducting fieldwork, which in turn repeats the experiences of his teacher. And in this way, Castañeda's text becomes a didactic poem for many of his readers. For it is not disputed that he found a large number of true imitators who have read his writings as a call to practical experimentation, the equivalent for them of an experience of enlightenment.[66] From this perspective, the question of the authenticity

61 Time Magazine: Don Juan and the Sorcerer's Apprentice.

62 Fikes: Carlos Castañeda, xxi.

63 Quoted after Marton: The Experiential Approach to Anthropology, 275; cf. Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes: In Sorcery's Shadow, 24f.

64 Cf., among other sources, Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik; Wallis: Shamans/Neo-Shamans; Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive; Boekhoven: Genealogies of Shamanism.

65 Castañeda: The Teachings of Don Juan, 19.

66 Cf., among others, Claßen: Das Wissen der Tolteken; Sanchez: The Teaching of Don Carlos.

of his fieldwork and the question of the existence of Don Juan prove to be irrelevant: "He may be lying [. . .] but what he says is true."[67]

If Castañeda's book are indeed fictions, then he created a myth in a double sense – in the ideology-critical sense as an untrue story and in the religious sense as a story whose truth is revealed in experience. With his fictitious ethnomethodology, Castañeda thereby contributed to the invention of a real ethnomethod: modern Western shamanism.

Component Four: Michael Harner

Michael Harner, another Californian anthropologist, born in 1929, crucially contributed to making modern Western shamanism a global institution today. Harner belongs to the generation of anthropologists who in the 1960s opened themselves up to participant observation of other cultures' rituals and body techniques to change consciousness, at a time when, as he remarked retrospectively, "psychedelics or hallucinogens were not yet a 'dangerous' academic subject".[68] In the 1950s, with the aid of the University of California Berkeley and other institutions, he conducted fieldwork among the Shuar in the Amazon basin, where, in 1961, one of the things he was introduced to was the use of ayahuasca, a consciousness-altering drink made from certain lianas. His fieldwork resulted initially in classical ethnographic monographs.[69] Harner's interest in the consciousness-altering practices of the Shuar came at the same time as the emergence of the drug culture in California, in which popular culture took up the associated experimental culture from scientific laboratories with mixed military and secret intelligence interests[70]:

> In the San Francisco Bay Area I found myself unexpectedly becoming involved in a small but rapidly growing network of adventurous psychologists, poets, musicians, botanists, chemists, and bohemians whose psychedelic experiences with LSD, Mexican mushrooms, peyote, and mescaline were engendering great excitement and discussion. There were now people in Western culture who were beginning to understand something of what the

67 Quoted after de Mille: Validity Is Not Authenticity, 39. On this argument, cf., among others, Shelburne: Carlos Castañeda; Hardman: "He may be lying but what he says is true".

68 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 37.

69 Harner's 1963 dissertation at UC Berkeley ("Machetes, Shotguns, and Society. An Inquiry Into the Social Impact of Technological Change Among the Jivaro Indians") remained unpublished. Not quite a decade later appeared the ethnographic work "The Jivaro. People of the Sacred Waterfalls".

70 Cf. Lee and Shlain: Acid Dreams.

> shamans already knew. They were the avant garde of what would be later known as the Psychedelic Sixties. [. . .] I began to feel that I had found a second home outside academia.[71]

This quotation hints at some of Harner's basic assumptions and themes: an archaizing of shamanism oriented toward Eliade and the question of an equivalent in the "modern West", along with the question of the relation between science and altered states of consciousness. Through brief fieldwork periods including with the Indians of California and culturally comparative research in the literature based on Eliade, he said he had come to the conclusion that the "shamanic state of consciousness" – which, referring to Castañeda's distinction between "ordinary reality and nonordinary reality", he distinguished from an "ordinary state of consciousness" – could be achieved all over the world with the aid of drum rhythms and without ingesting drugs. He experimented with such techniques, including in his anthropological seminars at the New York Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research; in 1979, he founded the *Center for Shamanic Studies*, which was later renamed the *Foundation for Shamanic Studies*; and he gave workshops in which he guided interested people in carrying out techniques, presented as universal, for taking "shamanic journeys".[72] In 1980, with the book "The Way of the Shaman: A Guide to Power and Healing", Harner published a manual with whose aid his readers could learn and test these techniques themselves. In the Foreword to the third edition, he underscored the experimental and thus for him scientific character of his method, which he said was one of the reasons for the increasing spread of shamanic practices in the ten years since the appearance of his book, which he interpreted as the "return of shamanism":

> [The] children of the Age of Science, myself included, prefer to arrive first-hand, experimentally, at their own conclusions as to the nature and limits of reality. Shamanism provides a way to conduct these personal experiments, for it is a methodology, not a religion.
>
> The Age of Science produced LSD, and many who have come to shamanism had already conducted 'experiments,' albeit informally, with psychedelic drug 'trips,' but found they had no framework or discipline within which to place their experiences. They searched in the books of Castañeda and others for road maps of their experiences, and sensed the secret cartography lay in shamanism.[73]

Harner names Eliade and Castañeda as the reference points for his concept of "core-shamanism", which claims to distill the practices of the shamanic practices

71 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 37.

72 Harner: The History and Work of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies.

73 Harner: The Way of the Shaman, xii.

he maintains are spread around the world. For Harner, Eliade is "the late distinguished scholar of shamanism and comparative religion",[74] and he describes Castañeda's books as those that, "regardless of the questions that have been raised regarding their degree of fictionalization, have performed the valuable service of introducing many Westerners to the adventure and excitement of shamanism and to some of the legitimate principles involved".[75]

In his most recently published book, Harner claims that he and his wife animated Castañeda to write his first book at that time. The student Castañeda, he says, addressed him at a conference of the American Anthropological Association in San Francisco, saying he had difficulty organizing his field notes from his research with a Yaqui Indian and that he was interested in Harner's lectures about drugs and reality in the Upper Amazon Basin. Castañeda, he writes, shared his enthusiasm and respect for indigenous knowledge. In the weeks that followed, Castañeda often visited him in Berkeley to discuss his experiences and thoughts, with the result: "Our discussions helped develop the usefulness of a concept of two realities for Westerners".[76] Harner describes Castañeda as having a "great sense of humor and a dramatic earnestness".[77] Even if he doesn't say it explicitly, Harner creates the impression that he considers Castañeda's descriptions to be authentic, especially since he presents them as having been influenced by himself, Harner.

Apart from how one judges who adopted what from whom, we can say that, in 1980 in his instructions for shamanic journeys, Harner combines the universalizing, archaicizing, and technicization of shamanism undertaken by Eliade,[78] the heroization of the figure of the shaman as master of spirits (recognizable in Eliade and in part in Castañeda), the ontological recognition of another reality and the beings existing in it (which Castañeda took as a theme), and Castañeda's claim to have practically tested the debated body techniques – a testing that Castañeda's third book already held to be possible without consciousness-

74 Ibid., xiii. Cf also Harner, Cave and Cosmos, 1.

75 Harner: The Way of the Shaman, xiii.

76 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 38, whereby this distinction, as he wrote in 1980, is actually significant only for "Westerners": "When and if you become a shaman [. . .] you will find it no more necessary than a Jivaro or an Australian aborigine to specify the state of consciousness you were in when you had a particular experience. Your audience, if composed of persons of knowledge, will know," Harner: The Way of the Shaman, 48.

77 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 38.

78 Eliade's book "Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'extase" was translated into English in 1964 as "Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy".

altering substances in 1972, two years after the American government passed the "Controlled Substances Act" making the ingestion of most drugs illegal.[79]

In 1980, Harner leaves it up to his readers to find the obvious parallels between his shamanism and the concepts in Castañeda's books. But Harner does underscore one difference, thereby explaining his appropriation of Don Juan as a shaman:

> [. . .] Castaneda does not emphasize healing in his books, although this is generally one of the most important tasks of shamanism. Perhaps this is because his Don Juan is basically engaged in the warrior (or sorcerer) type of shamanism. [. . .] The way I offer you is that of the healer, not of the sorcerer, and the methods given are those for achieving well-being and health, and for helping others.[80]

The possibility of a "good" heaven, also formulated in spiritualism, is thus also found in Harner. And just as spiritualism democratized mediumism by assuming that every person is a medium, Harner democratizes shamanism, in contrast to Eliade and Castañeda. The Harner method promises the fulfillment of the spiritualistic dream of a scientific trial of mediumism that can be understood by anyone; the resulting knowledge leads to a general improvement of the world. And this testing, from the beginning, is tied to taking notes, which is described as typical for mediumism, with the intent to enable public examination. This includes the attempt to draw a map of the "nonordinary reality", which thereby recalls Swedenborg's traversable heaven. The project calls itself the "Mapping of Nonordinary Reality (Monor)":

> Beginning in the early 1970's Michael Harner began collecting the experiences of Westerners engaged in shamanic practice, with special attention to their shamanic journey experiences to the Upper and Lower Worlds. As this collection expanded, the FSS [Foundation for Shamanic Studies] established its MONOR Project especially to discover what, if any, cross-cultural regularities existed in the experiences of shamanic journeyers, both in the West and in indigenous societies. Today the collection, housed at the Foundation's headquarters in Marin County, California, includes this extensive collection of research material: Over 70,000 pages of researched data on cross-cultural shamanism and shamanic healing, and over 6,000 books and journals regarding the same. Over 35,000 pages of voluntarily submitted descriptions of shamanic journey and other visionary experiences of contemporary Westerners. The collection began with audio recordings of Dr. Harner's experiential and experimental workshops in core shamanism, both nationally and internationally. Found nowhere else in the world, the collection includes the very first shamanic journeys contemporary Westerners have experienced.[81]

79 Castañeda: Journey to Ixtlan.

80 Harner: The Way of the Shaman, xiii–xxiv.

81 This description is found on the Internet page of the *Foundation for Shamanic Studies* at http://www.shamanism.org/fssinfo/research.html, last accessed on September 24, 2019.

The publication of these descriptions has been held back until now, Harner writes, out of fear that it could produce suggestive effects and thus promote another concept from the 19th century, because the descriptions could influence the experiences of the practicing persons.[82] Since many of the protocols are published in Harner's most recent book, already cited above, the project is considered ended for now.

But along with carrying out and taking notes on shamanic experiments, teaching is also one of the goals of the *Foundation for Shamanic Studies*, and this teaching has allied itself with a commodification not atypical for the USA and also already familiar in connection with spiritualism.[83] This commodification found a late and amplified echo in Castañeda. Whereas Harner still launched a nonprofit organization with the *Foundation for Shamanic Studies*, the for-profit corporation Cleargreen Inc. emerged in 1995 around Castañeda. It offered workshops teaching body technologies adopted from Don Juan and modernized; instructions for these practices also appeared as a book.[84] Castañeda now also speaks of Don Juan as a shaman. He and Don Juan's other three students unanimously conclude that Don Juan's knowledge is, in principle, accessible to all people and thus must also be *made* accessible.[85]

In 1987, Harner gave up his professorship to devote all his work to the *Foundation for Shamanic Studies*. In 1994, it moved its seat from Norwalk, Connecticut to Mill Valley, California; since the mid-1980s it has opened many branches in Europe and, in the meantime, also in many other parts of the world. But Harner has never given up the claim to fulfill the spiritualistic promise that, with the aid of his or her own body, anyone can experimentally and scientifically investigate metaphysical questions:

> In a recent anthropological journal, it was said that I left anthropology when I 'entered the "real" world of the Shuar,' formerly called the 'Jivaro'. [. . .] However, I never left anthropology, only academia, in order to expand the boundaries of anthropology and knowledge.[86]

82 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 3.

83 Hochgeschwender: Geister des Fortschritts.

84 Castañeda: Magical Passes.

85 Rivas: Navigating into the Unknown. Whereas in 1993 in "The Art of Dreaming" Castañeda still speaks of Don Juan advising him against using the term "shamanism", in 1998 in "Magical Passes" and in "The Active Side of Infinity", Castañeda's last book, Don Juan is introduced without comment as a "shaman".

86 Harner: Cave and Cosmos, 275.

Junction: California

Despite the waning of the debate about mediumism, in whose context in the 19th century the capacities of human mediums and technological media were tested in a major public controversy, the mediumistic trial has not vanished to this day. The immanent and psychologizing interpretations of mediumism that dominate the public discussion today have not reduced the potential of dream and trance to disconcert and confuse. Despite the end of the great debate, mediumism remains an unresolved problem. Even if in a transformed shape, it continues to be tried out and thereby gives rise to new and hybrid institutions. After World War II, the path thereby frequently led to or through California as a pioneering country of the contemporary mediumistic trial and of dreams of mediumistic potency. Modern Western shamanism that began in California and has globalized in the meantime, with its interferences between science and religion, psychology and modern esotericism, immanence and transcendence, is an outstanding example of this.

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Ilka Becker

Mediators of Trance. María Sabina – Gordon Wasson – Bruce Conner

A Photographic Dispositif as Trial for a Shamanistic Mediator

Origin Myths: The Making of the Mushroom Secret

How do we deal with counterculture's embrace of ethnic alterity that became visible within the discourse of the psychedelic experience in the 1950s and 1960s from a postcolonial perspective in today's visual culture studies? And how can we discuss its ambivalent status, situated between political emancipation, anti-modernist impulse and colonial discourse? These questions occurred to me when I studied a magazine article from the 1950s that often is referred to as the origin myth of the psychedelic movement. I came across Gordon Wasson's well-known contribution "Seeking the Magic Mushroom", published in LIFE Magazine on May 13, 1957, in the context of my research on the allegorical function of mushrooms in counterculture's visual vocabulary.[1]

Gordon Wasson was a banker and an amateur ethnomycologist from New York, who began to research the use of *Amanita muscaria* in Siberia with his Russian wife Valentina in the late 1940s. His article was illustrated with photographs taken by society photographer Allan Richardson, who was also from New York, and with scientific drawings of mushrooms by Parisian mycologist Roger Heim. It describes the journey to the small town Huautla de Jimenez in the Sierra Mazateca in Mexico, where Wasson and his companions took part in shamanistic rituals with hallucinogenic mushrooms led by the healer – in Spanish called a *curandera* – María Sabina.

María Sabina initially didn't want the visitors to take photographs, because "it would be a betrayal" to the secret mushroom ceremony. But she finally gave in on the condition that they "please refrain from showing [the photographs] to any but our most trusted friends".[2] Wasson legitimated the publication of the

1 See my upcoming book on mushroom agency in art history and visual cultures since 19th century.

2 Wasson and Wasson: Mushrooms, 304, cited in Faudree: Singing for the Dead, 84.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110416411-013

photographs by disguising the location as "Mixetecan" and her name as "Eva Mendez", but still making a profit from the story.

Together with the comprehensive book *Mushrooms. Russia and History*, also by Gordon and Valentina Wasson, which – besides the Siberian fly agaric – also included a description of the Mazatec mushroom ritual (that revealed the real name of María Sabina) and was published in the same year, the LIFE article put an unforeseen dynamic into motion.[3] During the following years, an growing crowd of beatniks, hippies and scientists, including Timothy Leary, travelled to Huautla in order to make contact with the local shamans and to be initiated in the spiritual use of mushrooms. In 1976, the large number of hippies camping along the river near the town led the municipal president to ask the army to block off the road to town.[4]

Modern origin myths only function due to additional materials such as texts and photographs, as well as through exclusions which constitute the myth as "meta-language",[5] as defined by Roland Barthes. In this sense, the focus on Gordon Wasson's self-staging in his publications obscures the fact that he wasn't the first or even the only ethnomycologist to come to Mexico looking for hallucinogenic species.[6] Moreover, the way to Mexico had already been paved by European Surrealists and North American avant-garde artists and by Beat poets such as Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs, who sought out a "magic land at the end of the road".[7]

After emigrating from Europe in the late 1930s, Surrealists like Wolfgang Paalen, Alice Rahon and Eva Sulzer met the protagonists of the Mexican avant-garde and artists from the West Coast of the United States such as Gordon Onslow Ford. Thus, during World War II, huge networks connected "exiled artists and writers from Europe with one another and with their indigenous counterparts."[8] Animated by the interest in the psychic dynamics of the unconscious

3 In their book that was also discussed by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Gordon and Valentina Wasson present the thesis that the world is divided in mycophile and mycophobe people which they identify with Slavic and Anglo-Saxon cultures, cf. Wasson and Wasson: Mushrooms. As Lévi-Strauss stated ironically in 1958, it was probably no coincidence that this scheme corresponded with the borders of Cold War, cf. Lévi-Strauss: Dis-moi quels champignons . . ., see also Lévi-Strauss: Mushrooms in Culture.

4 Feinberg: 'A Symbol of Wisdom and Love?', 97.

5 Barthes: Mythologies, 144.

6 Wasson himself states to have been informed by a publication of Richard Evans Schultes, who had found hallucinogenic mushrooms in Mexico in 1939 and published his discovery in the same year, see Schultes: Teonanacatl.

7 Kerouac cited in Gunn: 'The Beat Trail to Mexico', 76. See also Letcher: Shroom, 192–195.

8 See Ades: DYN, 1. See also Bustamante: Non-Objective Arts in Mexico 1963–1983, 226.

as a resource for artistic production, they could inscribe local knowledge about the agency of organic substances into their program of automatic production and the imaginary potential of hallucination and ecstasy. Having moved to California after the war, Beat poets like Allen Ginsberg or artists like Paalen, with their interest in the cosmologies of Native Americans, as well as various other contributors to the *DYN* magazine that Paalen published in Mexico were also influential for the formation of countercultures such as the San Francisco Renaissance that began in the late 1940s.[9] (Figure 1)

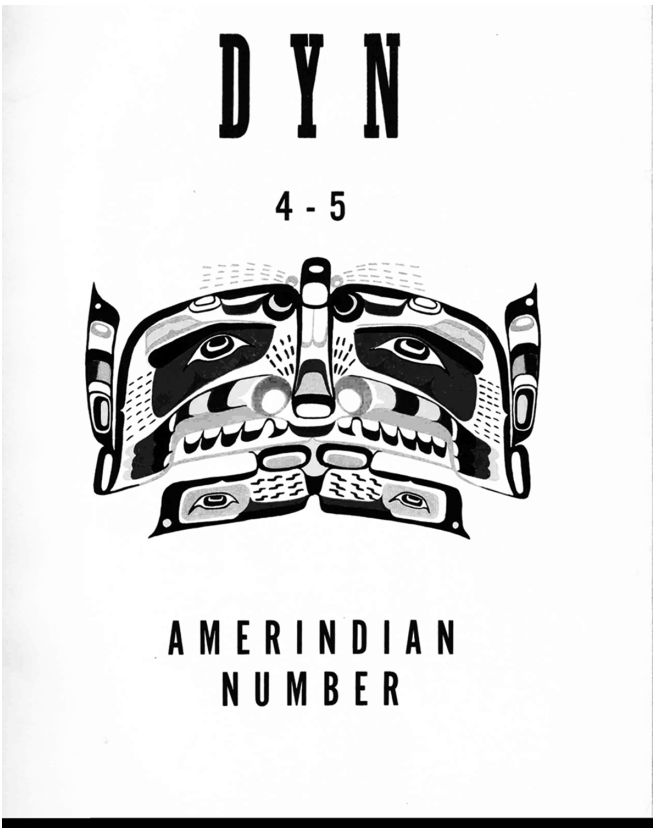


Figure 1: *DYN* Magazine, Nr. 4–5, Mexiko 1943, cover.

As Benjamin Feinberg points out, the foreigners who came to Huautla did not really have a deep cultural or ethnographic interest in María Sabina's religious

9 See Winter: Dynaton.

beliefs and the cosmology of the indigenous locals. With its phantasmatic projection of a "primitive authenticity" on the Huautecan shamans, the discourse of U.S. American counterculture situated them mostly outside of history and time, and used them as a matrix for the "auto-consumption"[10] of their own society, establishing a second Haight-Ashbury in the highlands of southern Mexico. When the Mestizo youth from the countercultural *La Onda* movement in Mexico joined these groups in the 1960s, the "adoption of indigenous elements" was "unwitting" for them, as their own middle class background stood in conflict with the local culture which had been repressed in the formation of the Mexican nation. Further referring to this, Feinberg also describes racial problems that arose with the expansion of mushroom tourism. Thus the Mexican *jipis* (hippies) began to "copy anglo hippies who were copying indigenous Mexicans",[11] without ever completely giving up precisely the hegemonic position which had led to the marginalization of the citizens of Huautla during the colonization process in Mexico.

Following Feinberg's analysis, the mushrooms were placed outside the framework of native spiritual practice in order to be used as a "symbol of membership in a utopian global modernity and to further a specifically Mexican nationalist modernity".[12] Nevertheless, María Sabina became an icon of Mexican identity, because her image connected the topos of the ancient widsom of *indigenismo* with the symbolical capital of philosophers, writers, musicians and other celebrities who came to visit her, that included John Lennon, Jim Morrison, Muhammed Ali or Bob Dylan.[13] Thus, shamanism was mobilized as an economical and identitary resource for the indigenous Mexicans.

The narrativation of the mushroom ritual *as secret event* by the *curandera* and the staging of its revelation by Gordon Wasson were formative for the colonial setting of this encounter.[14] In this setting, the order of the cosmological, oral and bodily enacted knowledge of the *curandera*, which in itself was a syncretism of Mazatec and Christian elements, was dialectally related to Western epistemology and its "coloniality of knowledge".[15] I will show how the theatrical visualization of this revelation in the photographic spread of Wasson's LIFE

10 Feinberg: 'A Symbol of Wisdom and Love?', 98.

11 Feinberg: 'A Symbol of Wisdom and Love?', 105.

12 Feinberg: 'A Symbol of Wisdom and Love?', 105.

13 See Feinberg: 'A Symbol of Wisdom and Love?', 109.

14 See Demanget: Quand le secret devient parure, 171–173. Even if Mexico was independent since 1821 from Spanish colonial rule, it doesn't mean that colonial conditions ended for Amerindian subjects.

15 Mignolo: The rhetoric of modernity, 451.

article served as *mediumistic trial*. This trial should verify the visionary abilities of the shamanist medium Sabina María, as well as mediate between the psychedelic and the scientific expertise of the amateur ethnomycologist Wasson by establishing a stabilizing metadiscourse.

Shamanism Between Authentication and Construction

Counterculture's search for authenticity should be discussed in the broader context of the Western discourse of shamanism. To give a small insight, I will briefly outline two different approaches to this question that are interesting for my discussion of Wasson's photo spread and its effects on counterculture's views on alterity. The first approach is represented by Andrei Znamenski, who looks at shamanism as a *construction* of Western epistemology and imagination. In his book *The Beauty of the Primitive*, he analyzes Western fascination with Siberian and North American shamanism in its historical genealogy.[16] The second is Ehler Voss' view on the problem of shamanistic "authenticity" from the perspective of symmetrical anthropology.[17]

According to Znamenski, the most common and popular definition of the shaman characterizes a person who, in a state of trance or ecstasy, makes contact with spiritual forces of another world. This transcendental realm is only accessible with the exclusive knowledge and techniques of a chosen one. In the 18th century, when the first records on shamanism entered Western discourse in the form of travelogues and illustrations, shamans were described as irrational, non-Western people without a history. Their techniques of ecstasy were demonized and pathologized as something obscure that could not be grasped with the concepts of rationality, enlightenment and historical development. Escaping the Western matrix of senseful social behaviour, the specific features of shamanistic practices where associated with the insane, with darkness, noise, and nonsense.[18] Echoing Michel Foucault, one could say they were just waiting to be brought to light by the sovereign power of the empirical gaze.[19]

The interest in the figure of the shaman grew in 19th century during the period of Romanticism and its specific concepts of artistic creation. Regarding this, one has to keep in mind that there has been a long tradition of naturalizing creative potency as a quality of the male mind in contrast to female beauty

16 Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive.
17 Voss: Authentizität als Aktant, 103.
18 Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive, viii–9.
19 Foucault: The Birth of the Clinic, xiii–xiv.

and weakness. While the female body was identified with reproductive nature – something to be represented and idealized –, male creativity in turn could master nature by studying its workings, stabilized by its female counterpart.[20]

The psychopathological discourse defined deviating mental conditions of women as an effect of their presupposed biology, while male deviance from the social norm was thought of as being acceptable within the tradition of the melancholic genius. Hence, in 19th century, the unconscious dimension of inspiration entered the aesthetic discourse through the figure of the genius and the quality of originality.[21] Nevertheless, as we can see in Schopenhauers writings, the genius was not meant to be merely a mental patient, but someone who was *similar* to, oscillating between loss of self and mastery of will, without being completely disconnected from his intellect. In this conceptualization, the pathological dimension made it possible for him to have inspirational insights or perceptions.[22] But there have also been biologistic explanations of the proximity of genius and insanity in psychiatric literature, denouncing the "mad genius" as an immoral character with a tendency for alcoholism and rumination.[23]

Here, Znamenski comes into play again. According to him, in the 19th century, the focus shifted from the shaman as a cheap trickster to the shaman as a "creative personalit[y]", whose articulations could be considered in terms of "psychological phenomena". This notion in particular can be found in the travel notes of the German-Baltic aristocrat Ferdinand von Wrangel.[24] The Russian romanticists pursued the allegorization of the shaman as "native genius[. . .]" as well, while German literature placed more emphasis on the spiritualist and animistic foundation of nature as a whole.

The "organic approach to nature" present in the transcendentalism of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau with their interest in dreamlike states, intuition and imagination can be directly traced back to the U.S. American reception of German nature philosophy.[25] Interestingly, Thoreau is also an early example of fusing Asian symbolism with Native American cosmology – a motif which can later be found in the early roots of counterculture in Mexico (as in Taos[26]),

20 Christadler: Kreativität und Genie, 258–260, 263.

21 Christadler: Kreativität und Genie, 260–261.

22 Krieger: Was ist ein Künstler?, 108–109. Here, Krieger is referring to Schopenhauer, see Schopenhauer 1819.

23 Krieger: Was ist ein Künstler?, 109.

24 Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive, 21.

25 See Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive, 24–25.

26 In the 1920s and 1930s, the New York bohemian millionaire Mable Dodge Luhan founded a retreat colony near Taos in New Mexico, where she and her Taos Puebloan husband Antonio

whose protagonists were seeking that they presumed were "values lost by Western civilization in the process of its movement towards modernity".[27]

In contrast to Znamenski, who traces Western perceptions of shamanism as part of its cultural history in terms of *imagination*, Ehler Voss investigates the role of *authenticity* as a central category in the discourse on shamanism. As he writes, "detecting authenticity in shamanism generally means asymmetrically distinguishing real from sham shamanism", natural from artficial, original from copy, or: archaic from modern, as Mircea Eliade did in 1951 in his influental text *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'ecstase*.[28] Instead of opposing Western discourse and non-Western "authentic rituals", Voss aims to contribute to a history of shamanism as "a history of mutual mirroring and mimetic practices".[29] With reference to Bruno Latour and his idea of a hybrid modernity that makes such dichotomies obsolete, he looks at the shaman as a *mediator* between human and non-human world and also between cultures. In contrast with the concept of the *medium* that can be described as transparent and immutable in itself, the mediator plays an active role in the process of mediation. As the performative interpreter, he or she not only attributes meaning to the mediated content, but is also transformed him- or herself.[30] In this function, the shaman also mediates who or what is being received as "foreign", how *agency* is distributed and how participants as spirits, patients and objects evolve in in a trance-setting.

María Sabina: Mediation of Visions and Voices

As I can only refer to second-hand descriptions of the mushroom rituals in Huautla and the focus of my research is on the visual *mise-en-scène* and the text-image-relation, I will first take a look at Gordon Wasson's text in *Life* magazine. With a sensationalist and mystifying rhetoric, the paratext (introduction, subheadings and captions) presents the "hitherto unstudied" and "rare vision giving fungi" as "strange growth", producing "wonders in the

Luhan hosted intellectuals and artistis like C. G. Jung, Georgia O'Keefe, Ansel Adams and Aldous Huxley. See Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive, 56–57.

27 See Znamenski: The Beauty of the Primitive, 53.

28 Voss: Authentizität als Aktant, 111; with reference to Eliade: *Le chamanisme et les techniques archaïques de l'ecstase*.

29 Voss: Authentizität als Aktant, 103.

30 See Latour: Reassembling the Social, 27–42.

night" to the readers of *Life*.[31] Wasson's narrative itself is kept in the style of an adventurous field report, fusing autobiographical elements that stress the explorative character of his self-experiments with scientific facts, meant to underline the professionalism of his amateur-undertaking. The passages describing his own hallucinations are characterized by a poetic and metaphorical language. Wasson's textual strategy illustrates how he struggles between entertaining the readers and the risk of sliding into the role of the shaman himself and being regarded as a trickster. Additionally, his excursion is not a field trip in the proper sense of ethnographic methods, but a *chamber drama,* as we will see, in which conflicting orders of knowledge (shamanic, scientific, popular) are staged.

Gordon Wasson had been traveling to Huautla for several years when the article was published. In the article itself, he chronicled a mushroom ritual (or *velada*, in his words) with María Sabina in 1955. On that occasion, Allan Richardson, the New York society photographer that had accompanied him to Huautla on this trip, took some mushrooms himself and couldn't take pictures. Therefore, the photographs shown in the article date back to another, later session, in which Richardson was not involved "somatically" but was present as a seemingly objective observer, equipped with the technical eye of the camera. Moreover, Wasson bears witness to a third session in which his wife and his then 18-year-old daughter Masha ate mushrooms without the guidance of a shaman. He also emphasizes the fact that, when he tested dried mushrooms after returning to his home in New York, they still caused hallucinations – in order to proof their actually chemical, and not spiritual, situation-bound agency.

Wasson describes the ritual with María Sabina as follows: He and his companions were led into the lower chamber of an adobe house, accompanied by 20 male and female Huautecos, dressed in their finest clothes. The mushrooms were carefully placed in a box that was cleaned later that evening in the smoke of burning resin. María Sabina then sat down on the ground and began to distribute the mushrooms in pairs among the adults, while she and her daughter, who assisted her, reserved the largest amount for themselves. Wasson and Richardson each placed the mushrooms into their mouths and chewed them very slowly. Around midnight, all candles were extinguished and in the complete dark Wasson's visions started like a film screening would.

The quasi-cinematic setting of his description is very striking. Some of the elements also call to mind earlier literary drug protocols that verbalize the visions in terms of orientalist and modern art, emphasizing ornamental, abstract

31 Wasson: Seeking the Magic Mushroom.

and coloristic properties. For example, in *The Doors of Perception* (1954), Aldous Huxley compares his perception of a table, a chair and a desk during an experiment with mescaline with the Cubist art of Georges Braque or Juan Gris, "without any attempt at photographic realism".[32] In *Heaven and Hell* (1956), his description of changing geometrical patterns mobilizes the visual repertoire of Western oriental imagination, like "carpets, carvings, mosaics".[33] And what about Wasson's visions?

> We were never more wide awake, and the visions came whether our eyes were opened or closed. They emerged from the center of the field of vision, opening up as they came, now rushing, now slowly, at the pace that our will chose. They were in vivid color, always harmonious. They began with art motifs, angular such as might decorate carpets or textiles or wallpaper or the drawing board of an architect. Then they evolved into palaces with courts, arcades, gardens – resplendent palaces all laid over with semiprecious stones. Then I saw a mythological beast drawing a regal chariot. Later it was though the walls of our house had dissolved, and my spirit had flown forth, and I was suspended in mid-air viewing landscapes of mountains, with camel caravans advancing slowly across the slopes, the mountains rising tier above tier to the very heavens.[34]

Highlighting the dark room and the constant visions despite their eyes being opened or closed, Wasson conceptualizes the chamber and the "inner eye" as a kind of black box. Even more, the inner side of the eye becomes an imaginary screen on which the hallucinations become visible (an idea also used by experimental filmmakers, as we will see). They deploy a vivid spectacle which can only be shared with others by translating it into another medium, be it language or material image (unlike a "mental image"). Furthermore, he provides this contingent and virtual visuality through the aesthetic value of art. One can interpret his approach in different ways. Wasson may have been anxious about not making his visions suspect of regression into the state of a "primitive" and therefore mediatizes them within a visual dispositif of modernity; or his description is simply due to the frequently mentioned phenomenon that hallucinations substantially depend on the cultural and individual socialization of the subject experiencing them. Similarly, the transfer to the framework of modern art provides a possibility to communicate about perceptions that would otherwise be incomprehensible.

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32 Huxley: The Doors of Perception & Heaven and Hell, 21.

33 Huxley: The Doors of Perception & Heaven and Hell, 96. Remarkably, William S. Burroughs finds similar filmic expressions for his description of a hallucinatory mushroom trip in 1961: "I drank the bitter medicine and almost immediately the pictures I had seen of Mayan artifacts and codices began moving in my brain like animated cartoons [. . .]." Burroughs: The Soft Machine, 88.

34 Wasson: Seeking the Magic Mushroom, 102.

Differing from the orientalist's male phantasy of color as voluptuous and feminine (a gendered attribution that can be traced back to Aristoteles and Plato),[35] Wasson does not address the topic of sexual seduction directly; sexual associations are obviously incompatible with the austere surrounding in Huautla. But a little further in the text, a female allegorical figure emerges, a sculptural figure that is – Pygmalion-like – brought to life by his gaze. It seems to evoke "oceanic feelings"[36] and is connected to the idea of alterity by Wasson:

> Three days later, when I repeated the same experience in the same room with the same *curanderas*, instead of mountains I saw river estuaries, pellucid water flowing through an endless expanse of reeds down to a measureless sea, all by the pastel light of a horizontal sun. This time a human figure appeared, a woman in primitive costume, standing and staring across the water, enigmatic, beautiful, like a sculpture except that she breathed and was wearing woven colored garments. It seemed as though I was viewing a world of which I was not a part and with which I could not hope to establish contact. There I was, poised in space, a disembodied eye, invisible, incorporeal, seeing but not seen.[37]

As can be seen, Wasson's hallucinatory experience with the mushrooms is mainly focused on visual phenomena as perceptions of a "disembodied eye",[38] floating distantly above the colorful landscape, while it is neither seen by nor disturbed by outside perceptions. Tellingly, the shaman's bodily enactment during the mushroom ritual is described by him in different terms. This fact is, among others, owed to María Sabina's role as a mediator for the mushroom's (the *cositas*, the little ones, as she calls them) messages and to the focus of the ritual on her chanting and dancing. Wasson calls her voice a powerful "poetic instrument", humming and singing "tender and moving, fresh, vibrant, rich". Sometimes she would "fling forth spoken words, violent, hot, crisp words that cut the darkness like a knife." Then she would begin a "rhythmic dance with clapping or slapping", creating sounds that could not be located in the dark and sounded ghostly, which was emphasized by the setting and by her role within the ritual itself. These observations, registered by Wasson and Richardson in their notebook, point to the mediumistic function of the shaman who seems to receive his or her words directly from the divine mushrooms, as Wasson assumes.

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35 See Batchelor: Chromophobia, 23, 27–28; see also Nochlin: The Imaginary Orient.

36 Sigmund Freud describes the "oceanic feelings" of primary narcissism as main source of religious sentiment, cf. Freud: The Future of an Illusion.

37 Wasson: Seeking the Magic Mushroom, 109.

38 Duke: Gordon Wasson's Disembodied Eye.

It can be noted that Wasson's text addresses two modes of agency attributed to the mushrooms. While the mushrooms are entities inhabited by spirits for María Sabina, Wasson sees them as a material medium for the hallucinogenic agent. María Sabina's active role as a mediator is characterized by an exclusive access to the mushroom's articulations and a creative, poetic use of sounds and language, directed to the social community of the assembled entities (human and non-human). Her creativity is a stabilizing practice to regain order in cases of illness, psychical instability, uncertainty about the well-being of absent persons or loss of things or animals. However, Wasson defines a special role for himself, mediating between shamanic, scientific and popular discourse. He doesn't consult the *curandera* for healing purposes, like the villagers present at the ritual. But instead he takes part as a semi-involved field-researcher who inscribes his spiritual experience with the mushroom agent into the symbolical matrix of Western culture – of art history and literature. It is striking that in his fiction of a "disembodied eye", he never really completely loses control, but his narrative implies a position of a controlling and surveying gaze. But what is photography's role in this setting, which interestingly hasn't been analyzed yet within the reception of the *Life* article?

A Photographic Dispositif as Mediumistic Trial

For Aldous Huxley, photographic realism is specifically not the medial equivalent to his mescaline visions, as mentioned above. Rather, the dimensions of time and space are distorted and incommensurable, as if seen through the "Cubist's-eye".[39] He inscribes the artistic or "creative" side of his visions into cubism's critique of perception and representation, splitting the controlling regime of the photographic picture. Even if Wasson's account of mushroom hallucinations is characterized by a transgressive filmic mode, he takes along a photographer in order to document and control visually the disconcerting scene in the dark. While the darkened room seems to not meet the requirements of a photographic setting at first sight, it reveals itself as a specific agential setting, a photographic *agencement*[40]: a dark chamber with human actors and non-human actants,[41] one of them the photographer, bringing the so far

39 Huxley: The Doors of Perception & Heaven and Hell, 22.

40 Becker: Acts, Agencies, and Agencements in Photographic Dispositifs, 9–34.

41 Bruno Latour distinguishes "human individual actors" from "actants" which can also be "non-human, non individual entities" as a scource of action, cf. Latour: On actor-network theory, 7.

"unseen" to light in a series of photographs. How are *agencies* being distributed in this ensemble, with its active and passive properties? And to which extent is this shared zone shaped by mutual practices and photographic transactions?

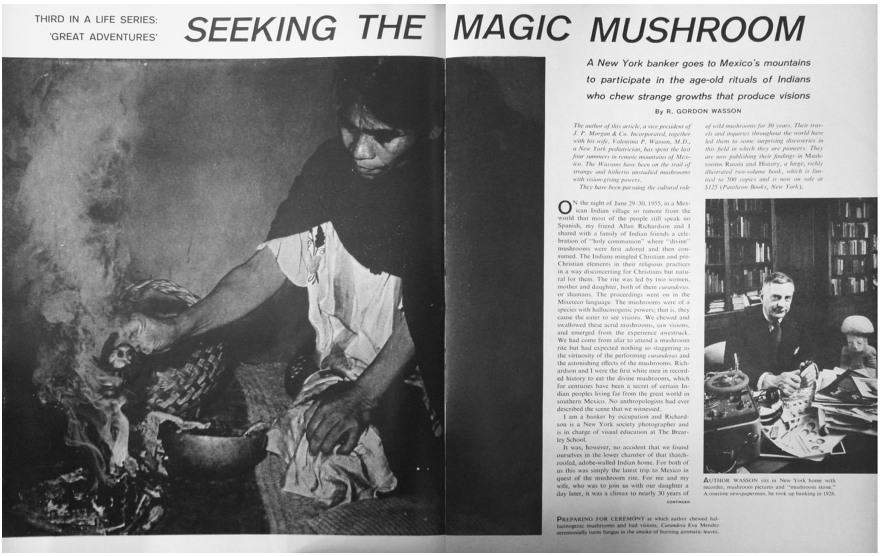
According to a short paratext that accompanies a double page of photographs of María Sabina in the *Life* spread, photographer Allan Richardson "set up flash equipment and, aiming his camera at sounds in the blackness, recorded on film parts of the ceremony." One has to visualize the situation: María Sabina and her daughter are sitting on the ground in the dark house, fully absorbed by their ritual activity, chanting and speaking, while Allan Richardson points his camera in their direction and triggers the shutter without sight. Consequently, the results of his "blind" reactions are determined by the shaman's articulations and by the whispers of the mushrooms that "talk" to her as mediator and can only be examined in retrospect, in the darkroom of a photo lab. Within this setting, Richardson in a sense serves as a prothesis to María Sabinas mediumistic operation. I want to emphasize this specific structural aspect of the dispositif because the visual language of the photo spread somehow seems to tell us a different story: It's the story of someone "caught" by the camera's flash, not being able to look back, and it is also the story of dispossessed pictures.

The introductory double page shows a huge color portrait of María Sabina juxtaposed with a smaller portrait of Wasson in black-and-white (Figure 2) on the right side. Striking a scholarly pose, he is sitting in his office, surrounded by books, a recorder, pictures of mushrooms and a so called "mushroom stone" from ancient Guatemala that is also mentioned in the text.[42] On the left side of the double page, the shaman is captured on photo from an elevated point of view: She is kneeling on the ground, holding a mushroom into the smoke that rises up from glowing logs. Covered with a dark poncho, her figure is almost swallowed by the darkness of the ungraspable space surrounding her, no walls or any demarcation of the floor can be seen. Instead, the dark space is partially made visible by the smoke that serves as an amorphous and ephemeral screen – a "soft display"[43] – for the flashlight.

Here, the photographic becomes visible as dispositif. This fact undermines in a subtle way the ideological apparatus of the photographic document as transparent picture. The "structural congruence of point of view (the eye of the

42 Mushroom stones like this have been interpreted as relics from ancient mushroom cults by some anthropologists. See for example de Borhegyi: Miniature Mushroom Stones from Guatemala, Mayer: The Mushroom Stones of Mesoamerica, and Letcher: Shroom, 148.

43 "Soft display" is the English translation of the term "weiches Display", see Schmidt: Weiche Displays.



THIRD IN A LIFE SERIES: 'GREAT ADVENTURES'

SEEKING THE MAGIC MUSHROOM

A New York banker goes to Mexico's mountains to participate in the age-old rituals of Indians who chew strange growths that produce visions

By R. GORDON WASSON

The author of this article, a vice president of J. P. Morgan & Co. Incorporated, together with his wife, Valentina P. Wasson, M.D., a New York pediatrician, has spent the last four summers in remote mountains of Mexico. The Wassons have been on the trail of strange and hitherto unrealized mushrooms with vision-giving powers.

They have been pursuing the cultural role of wild mushrooms for 30 years. Their travels and inquiries throughout the world have led them to some surprising discoveries in this field in which they are pioneers. They are now publishing their findings in Mushrooms Russia and History, *a large, richly illustrated two-volume book, which is limited to 500 copies and is now on sale at $125 (Pantheon Books, New York).*

On the night of June 29-30, 1955, in a Mexican Indian village so remote from the world that most of the people still speak no Spanish, my friend Allan Richardson and I shared with a family of Indian friends a celebration of "holy communion" where "divine" mushrooms were first adored and then consumed. The Indians mingled Christian and pre-Christian elements in their religious practices in a way disconcerting for Christians but natural for them. The rite was led by two women, mother and daughter, both of them *curanderas*, or shamans. The proceedings went on in the Mexican language. The mushrooms were of a species with hallucinogenic powers; that is, they cause the eater to see visions. We chewed and swallowed these acrid mushrooms, saw visions, and emerged from the experience awestruck. We had come from afar to attend a mushroom rite but had expected nothing so staggering as the virtuosity of the performing *curanderas* and the astonishing effects of the mushrooms. Richardson and I were the first white men in recorded history to eat the divine mushrooms, which for centuries have been a secret of certain Indian peoples living far from the great world in southern Mexico. No anthropologists had ever described the scene that we witnessed.

I am a banker by occupation and Richardson is a New York society photographer and is in charge of visual education at The Brearley School.

It was, however, no accident that we found ourselves in the lower chamber of that thatch-roofed, adobe-walled Indian home. For both of us this was simply the latest trip to Mexico in quest of the mushroom rite. For me and my wife, who was to join us with our daughter a day later, it was a climax to nearly 30 years of

CONTINUED

PREPARING FOR CEREMONY at which author chewed hallucinogenic mushrooms and had visions, *Curandera* Eva Mendez ceremonially turns fungus in the smoke of burning aromatic leaves.

AUTHOR WASSON sits in New York home with microbe, mushroom pictures and "mushroom stone." A onetime newspaperman, he took up banking in 1928.

Figure 2: Double page from Wasson, R. Gordon. Seeking the Magic Mushroom. *LIFE* Magazine (May 13, 1957). © Time Inc., New York, NY; photos: Allan Richardson.

photographer, the eye of the camera, and the eye of the spectator)",[44] as is usual in the documentary use of the medium, guarantees the functioning of the photographic regime of representation, insofar as "we are seeing what the photographer saw in the moment of exposure".[45] Yet in this case we actually see *more* than Richardson could perceive visually in the situation. Embedded in the greater system of mass media, this is constructed through the selection and the discursive framing of the pictures, as if they had been taken with full visual control. Through this, the photographs are given back their documentary authority; as a testimony of something absent (the visions) that they can only reveal with textual support.

The fourth page shows María Sabina passing a mushroom to Wasson, who is bending down towards her (Figure 3). In the second picture, Wasson is sitting next to the room altar, chewing the mushrooms. It is striking that all the photographs of María Sabina are taken from a view down on her while Wasson, in both pictures, is photographed either from a low angle or is placed in a higher position as she is. Thus, the spatial organization implies a symbolical hierarchy between María Sabina and him – the indigenous shaman and the amateur

44 Solomon-Godeau: Who is speaking thus?, 180.
45 Solomon-Godeau Who is speaking thus?, 180.



Figure 3: Detail from Wasson, R. Gordon. Seeking the Magic Mushroom. *LIFE* Magazine (May 13, 1957). © Time Inc., New York, NY; photo: Allan Richardson.

scientist, the realm of matter (or "base materialism",[46] as Georges Bataille calls it) and that of hegemonic Western epistemology with its "ontological machines"[47] producing dichotomies like these.

The most noticeable picture of this spread shows María Sabina's 17-year-old son at the "climax of this session, at about 3:30 in the morning [. . .] as he lies lost in the ecstasy of his visions", while a smaller child is sleeping right beside him (Figure 4). The older boy is holding his head with both hands, his laughing face illuminated by the camera flash. His left eye is ecstatically rolled back and the iris is nearly invisible due to the flash, as if "blinded". Lying on the floor in a dreamlike state, he reminds one of Roland Barthes passive moviegoer in the "pre-cinematic situation",[48] waiting in the darkness for healing, but with the difference that he is not lured by an external stimulus but by an "internal", hallucinated image. Here, Richardson finds an emblematic way of mediating what cannot be seen by the others; the irrational and the ephemeral as well as the paradoxical order of the "inner" or "mental" image. Representative for Wasson, who is never shown in a state of having lost control, and María

46 "Base matter is external and foreign to ideal human aspirations, and it refuses to allow itself to be reduced to the great ontological machines resulting from these aspirations", cf. Bataille: Base Materialism and Gnosticism, 51.

47 Bataille: Base Materialism and Gnosticism, 51.

48 Barthes: Leaving the Movie Theater, 345.

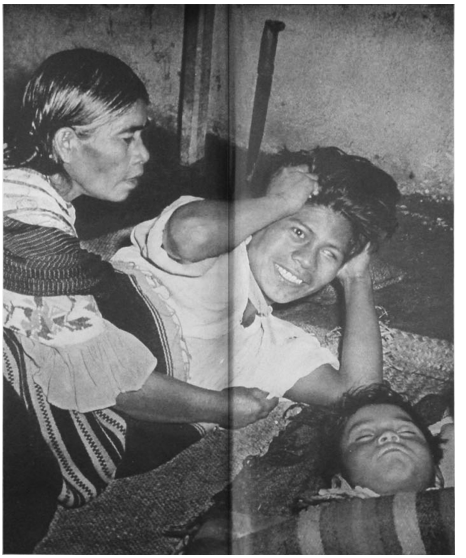


Figure 4: Detail from Wasson, R. Gordon. Seeking the Magic Mushroom. *LIFE* Magazine (May 13, 1957). © Time Inc., New York, NY; photo: Allan Richardson.

Sabina, who in her function as a medium remains in a position of authority,[49] the boy serves to render the hallucinatory phenomena visible on his effeminate body. His body is the subject of the mediumistic trial by means of the photographic agencement. Its function in the context of the photo spread is to show the effects of the mushroom without subverting the credibility of the shaman or that of the amateur ethnomycologist. To ensure this, the scopic regime of photography is subsequently employed, in the selection and editing of the photo sequence, denying María Sabina and her family any authority over how the images were used and thus over the interpretation of this setting. Wasson's interests were also not purely ethnomycological, but obviously economical, as he "acquired the rights to all of Richardson's photographs"[50] right after returning from his visit in Huautla in 1955. As Andy Letcher states:

> The deal with *Life* was agreed before Wasson returned to Huautla and Sabina in 1956. Though the editors were to write the headlines and dines (and in the process would give the world the term ‚Magic Mushrooms'), Wasson retained editorial control over the all

49 According to Bettina Papenburg, this role is characteristic to visionary trance in shamanism. Papenburg: Umkehrungen von *passio*, 224.
50 Letcher: Shroom, 99.

> important body of the text. Nevertheless, he took advice on how to structure the piece, and on how Richardson could capture more compelling and magazine-friendly images. Wasson also brought sound-recording equipment with him to Mexico so that he could tape Sabina and sell the recordings (they were subsequently released on the Smithsonian Folkways label). The return visit to Sabina appears to have been much less about the scientific acquisition of knowledge, and far more about securing the scoop.[51]

Even if Allan Richardson employed the aesthetics of 20th-century-documentarism and didn't address the typological and anthropometric order of early ethnographic photography, his pictures are still involved in the colonial gaze in the way they construct the "Other". The visual subordination of the *curandera* and the way he stages her atmospherically – covered with smoke and darkness – refer to representations of non-Western, Orientalized subjects in 19th-century-art, which attributed to them the clichés of "homogeneity, timelessness, and passivity".[52] They are disguised under the veil of the inherent ideological construction of documentarism as a transparent view on reality, ensuring a powerful subject position for the readers of *LIFE*.

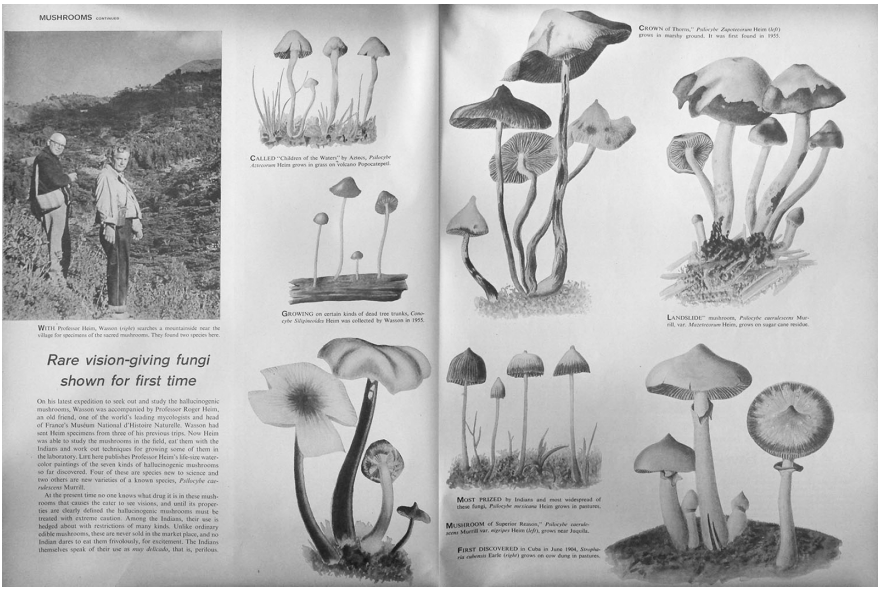
Colonizing the Magic: Scientific Mushroom Illustrations

Concluding my comments on this text-image-spread, I want to briefly focus on the watercolor illustrations of seven species of psychoactive *psilocybe-*, *conocybe-* and *stropharia*-mushrooms by French mycologist Roger Heim that were included in the article. (Figure 5) The illustrations represent the scientific part of the magazine feature supplementing the contingent logic and mysterious aesthetics of the photographs with a typological element from biology.[53] Each illustration shows a small group of fruiting bodies of mushrooms from the same species. They seemingly emanate from a shared mycelium, but are of different sizes, growth stages and are shown from different points of view, e.g. showing the caps or the gills. This would not be possible in a photograph that can only show one cut at a time, one stage of development, one visual focus. Nevertheless, the illustrations are introduced by a black-and-white photograph of a *Psilocybe mexicana* culture in Heim's Paris laboratory, in order to prove to LIFE readers that he took them out of Mexico: "Growing in Paris, cultures brought back from Mexico by Heim produce mushrooms in the laboratory", as the caption says.

51 Letcher: Shroom, 99–100.

52 Çelik: Speaking Back to Orientalist Discourse, 21.

53 For a discussion of the contingent connection of the photograph with its referent see Barthes: Camera Lucida, 5.


MUSHROOMS CONTINUED

WITH Professor Heim, Wasson (right) searches a mountainside near the village for specimens of the sacred mushrooms. They found two species here.

Rare vision-giving fungi shown for first time

On his latest expedition to seek out and study the hallucinogenic mushrooms, Wasson was accompanied by Professor Roger Heim, an old friend, one of the world's leading mycologists and head of France's Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle. Wasson had sent Heim specimens from three of his previous trips. Now Heim was able to study the mushrooms in the field, eat them with the Indians and work out techniques for growing some of them in the laboratory. Late here publishes Professor Heim's life-size water-color paintings of the seven kinds of hallucinogenic mushrooms so far discovered. Four of these are species new to science and two others are new varieties of a known species, *Psilocybe caerulescens* Murrill.

At the present time no one knows what drug it is in these mushrooms that causes the entr to see visions, and until its properties are clearly defined the hallucinogenic mushrooms must be treated with extreme caution. Among the Indians, their use is hedged about with restrictions of many kinds. Unlike ordinary edible mushrooms, these are never sold in the market place, and no Indian dares to eat them frivolously, for excitement. The Indians themselves speak of their use as *muy delicado*, that is, perilous.

CALLED "Children of the Water," by Aztecs, *Psilocybe Aztecorum* Heim grows in grass on volcano Popocatepetl.

GROWING on certain kinds of dead tree trunks, *Conocybe Siligineoides* Heim was collected by Wasson in 1955.

CROWN of Thorns," *Psilocybe Zapotecorum* Heim (left) grows in marshy ground. It was first found in 1955.

LANDSLIDE" mushroom, *Psilocybe caerulescens* Murrill, var. *Mexicorum* Heim, grows on sugar cane residue.

MOST PRIZED by Indians and most widespread of these fungi, *Psilocybe mexicana* Heim grows in pastures.

MUSHROOM of Superior Reason," *Psilocybe zacatecarum* Murrill var. *superior* Heim (left), grows near Jacala.

FIRST DISCOVERED in Cuba in June 1904, *Stropharia cubensis* Earle (right) grows on cow dung in pastures.

Figure 5: Double page from Wasson, R. Gordon. Seeking the Magic Mushroom. *LIFE* Magazine (May 13, 1957). © Time Inc., New York, NY; photos: Allan Richardson; mushroom illustrations: Roger Heim.

Wasson brings the mushroom cult to the "civilized world", while Heim's gift is the mushroom culture. Here, the unpredictable mushroom that seems to have come from ancient times can be revived, classified and observed under laboratory conditions.[54] Heim's illustrations construct a visual analogy between the biological and the social world. He uses this analogy to represent and compare realms that in his system of knowledge are supposed to be separate but that are a single realm in the local cosmology. Thus, his model also refers to the two conflicting orders of knowledge of Western and Indigenous culture, separate and symbolically intertwined at the same time by means of the text-image-spread. Read within this semantic framework, each illustration brings together several generations of one "family", mimicking the social order of the human world. This way, the taxonomical gaze enters Wasson's view on Huautla through mycology.[55]

54 The temporal dimension of the "ancient" is spatialized in the remote site of growth and use by the natives.

55 While the main feature of the ceremony, the chants of María Sabina and her daughter, could only poorly be transcribed into the language of the article, Wasson recorded some of his sessions and published the recordings on Folkways Records.

Finally, I would also like to emphasize that Wasson, Richardson and Heim don't have the last word concerning the interpretation of the Huautecan mushroom. Their article has become the subject of critical postcolonial discussions, some of which I have referred to. Analyzing the production process of the *LIFE* article as well as the precarious social and political situation of Huautla's locals within Mexican's nationalist endeavors in the postwar period, enables a reading of the dispositif's agential structure as a more dynamic, mutual and conflicting formation. This discussion accounts for the fact, that "culture" is neither a homogenous nor completed entity but an ongoing process with readings that "act back" at their materials and the agencies we ascribe to them.

Film as *trance-medium*

The Warm Side of Cold War. Bruce Conner in Mexico

As mentioned in the introduction of this essay, the West Coast became a center of attraction for European and Mexican protagonists of the postwar avant-garde, some of them looking for alternative concepts of cultural, social and also spiritual models in Native American cosmology, aesthetics and material culture. This was not an isolated phenomenon but has to be understood in the wider context of anti-modern and anti-rational tendencies in US-American postwar art and its bohemian milieus. For example, one can find affinities with Gnosticism, Kabbalah and Occultism in the filmic work of Harry E. Smith or Kenneth Anger with their imagery of magic symbols and patterns, both of them being influential on the West Coast.

Bruce Conner, who became a central figure in the Bay Area's underground culture from 1957 on, met Harry E. Smith in 1955 during a stay in New York. Smith was an anthropologist, musicologist and filmmaker, who had spent time with the Lummi tribe in Canada, recording their chants. He was also famous for his album compilation *Anthology of American Folk Music*, published by Folkways Records in 1952, who five years later also released the chants of María Sabina that had been recorded by Gordon and Valentina Wasson. Smith and Conner were producing greeting cards (one of them a jointly designed mushroom card)[56] for Lionel Zilprin's company Ink Weed Arts, Inc. With Zilprin, an "underground figure and renowned Talmudic scholar",[57] Conner "deepened his knowledge of the Kabbalah,

56 This fact was mentioned by Harry Smith's former assistant Rani Singh in December 2014 in a conversation at Getty Research Center in Los Angeles.
57 Singh: Harry Smith, 45.

theosophy, and a number of spiritual traditions",[58] before moving to San Francisco – even though he stated that he was more interested in the visual than in the textual aspects of esoteric knowledge.[59] In San Francisco, he made assemblages from materials he found in his surrounding and started his activities as a filmmaker.

The omnipresence of the United States government's nuclear build-up and the nuclear test sites in the desert of Nevada led Conner and his wife to leave San Francisco in 1961 for Mexico, where they settled near Mexico City for one year.[60] There, he also temporarily hosted Timothy Leary. Leary had followed the path of Gordon, Valentina Wasson and Albert Hofmann, who – in cooperation with Roger Heim – had chemically isolated the mushroom agents psilocybin and psilocin in 1958 for the pharmaceutical company Sandoz in Switzerland.[61] In August 1960, Leary ate mushrooms in Cuernavaca, and after that made use of the psilocybin agent from Sandoz in order to start his *Harvard Psilocybin Project* with Richard Alpert (1960–1963). In this scientific experiment, volunteers, including Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, consumed psilocybin in a relaxed environment and then reported their experiences.[62]

Conner tried peyote with poet Philip Lamantia, one of his friends from San Francisco, and went mushroom hunting with Leary.[63] He also began to incorporate mystical symbols such as mandalas, allusions to Gnostic and Native American traditions into his artistic assemblages.[64] In the drawings he made while in Mexico, the shape of the magic mushroom merges symbolically with that of a mushroom cloud that occurs after a nuclear test, which appears as a monumental natural force in the landscape (Figures 6, 7). Both are not only connected by their semblance, their *morphé,* but also by the inherent logic of the underlying ambivalent status between creative (like "the life process of sex, being born, children birth") and destructive (like "alienation, distancing between people") forces.[65] On

58 Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 200.
59 Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 200.
60 Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 85.
61 Hofmann: Psilocybin.
62 See Letcher: Shroom, 199–200.
63 After their return to the USA in October 1962, the Conner family would live with Timothy Leary's International Foundation for Internal Freedom (IFIF) in Newton Center for some month, until August 1963, when after a conflict with Leary they left the community in Brookline. See Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 91, 152.
64 Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 86.
65 Bruce Conner uses this comparison referring to the semantic structure of his film *Cosmic Ray* in an interview with Paul J. Karlstrom, August 12, 1974, Karlstrom 1974. Quoted in Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 137.



Figure 6: Bruce Conner. Mushroom, September 2. Graphite on paper, 1962, 20 1/2 x 14 13/16 inch. Private Collection. In *Bruce Conner: It's All True*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: University of California Press 2016, 116, pl. 77. Photography: © Stefan Kirkeby Photography. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

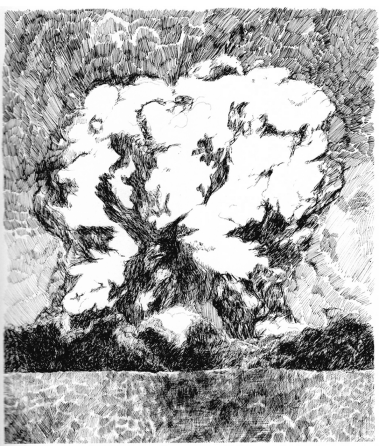


Figure 7: Bruce Conner. Mushroom Cloud, 2313 E. *Kellog St. Wichita, KS*. Ink on Paper, 1963, 20 3/8 x 17 3/4 inch. Collection of Jacqueline Humphries. In *Bruce Conner: It's All True*. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art: University of California Press 2016, 71, pl. 39. Photography: Jason Mandella. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

the one hand, there is the psychoactive agency of the Mexican mushrooms that promise healing, psychedelic visions or horror trips. On the other hand, there is the ungraspable and invisible radioactivity, that Antoine Henri Becquerel had discovered coincidentally with the help of discolored photo paper and that promised to be of benefit to the progress of civilization. In this sense, the symbolic superimposition of the toxic mushroom cloud and the magic mushroom as its antidote lies at the core of the criticism of civilization in the 1960s and 1970s and its political iconography.

Unlike the mushroom ritual's highly linguistic, narrative character and the literary production of the Beat poets, the counterculture spreads phantasmic ideas of preverbal and ahistoric primary structures, made accessible by the psychedelic eye. At first sight, the specific cultural contexts as well as the political situation of the indigenous Latin American cultures whose substances they appropriated (and which themselves had been going through a mutual history of "transmodernity"[66]), does not seem to be of great interest here. The political utopias of the counterculture to a large part seem to filter out the elements that are useful for its emancipatory discourse. The threatening and destructive atomic bomb functions as an apocalyptic counterpart, sampled many times by Conner in his found footage films.[67] But as we will see, his films do not easily fit into this supposed dichotomy.

Looking for Mushrooms

Looking for Mushrooms (1959–1967, Figures 8–10) was Conner's first color film. He wanted his films to be seen in private, like an artwork that one can focus on again and again, so people could connect to the heterogeneous elements in different ways, by chance, similar to I-Ging or Tarot.[68] Conner had begun filming his everyday life and his surroundings after he arrived in San Francisco in 1957 and used some of this footage in *Looking for Mushrooms*. Due to this, Kevin Hatch understands the film as a self-portrait, comparable to Stan Brakhage's experimental film *Aleph*.[69] The rest of the footage was shot by Conner in Mexico and is featured in the first half of the film. As the title implies, the film addresses a mode of looking, the search for desired objects, and for vision itself. According to Hatch,

66 Dussel: The Invention of the Americas, 66.

67 See Conners found-footage films *A Movie* (1958), *Cosmic Ray* (1961) and *Crossroads* (1976).

68 See Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 127.

69 See Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 152–153, 156. Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 316, FN 64: "Stan Brakhage notes the film's many round shapes and other visual references to mushroom tops and peyote Buttons, cf. Brakhage: Film at Wit's End, 142."



Figure 8: Bruce Conner. *Looking for Mushrooms* (1959–1967), screenshot. 16 mm film, color, sound. Courtesy The Conner Family Trust. Courtesy Walker Art Center. Courtesy Michael Kohn Gallery. Screenshot from the DVD *Two films by Bruce Conner: Crossroads; Looking for mushrooms*. Los Angeles, CA: Michael Kohn Gallery [distributor], 2003. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco.



Figure 9: Bruce Conner. *Looking for Mushrooms* (1959–1967), screenshot. 16 mm film, color, sound. Courtesy The Conner Family Trust. Courtesy Walker Art Center. Courtesy Michael Kohn Gallery. Screenshot from the DVD *Two films by Bruce Conner: Crossroads; Looking for mushrooms*. Los Angeles, CA: Michael Kohn Gallery [distributor], 2003. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco.

Conner tries to realize vision as overload in his film, "without a cognitive filter",[70] constituting an intense and floating visual field. I want to go a step further and

70 Hatch: Looking for Bruce Conner, 156.

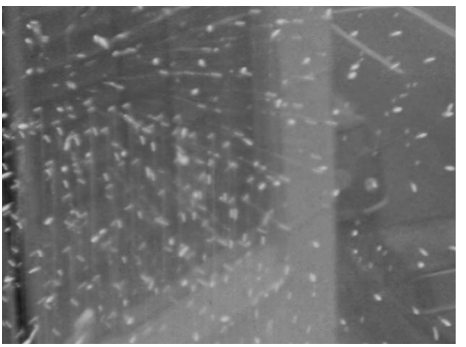


Figure 10: Bruce Conner. *Looking for Mushrooms* (1959–1967), screenshot. 16 mm film, color, sound. Courtesy The Conner Family Trust. Courtesy Walker Art Center. Courtesy Michael Kohn Gallery. Screenshot from the DVD *Two films by Bruce Conner: Crossroads; Looking for mushrooms*. Los Angeles, CA: Michael Kohn Gallery [distributor], 2003. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco.

argue that Conner not only tests film's agency as an explicitly *audio*-visual trance medium, but (in contrast to Wasson) also promotes the temporal complexity and contemporaneity of both locations – Huautla and San Francisco – as a transmodern, mutual relation.

Looking for Mushrooms is a montage of flickering and fragmented images, most of them cut down to a single frame, a method used to disrupt the stroboscopic effect that causes the illusion of movement, but also the filmic continuity and narrative disclosure. In addition, Conner works with different alienating effects such as atmospheric contre-jour shots, filmic negatives or superimpositions. They underline the plastic quality of the filmic projection and expose the ambivalent and illusionary status of the filmic representation.

The first half of the film shows glimpses of Huautla, taken during one or possibly several mushroom excursions. It combines landscape views, rural architecture, colorful patterns, market scenes, male and female workers, peasants farmers, indigenous motifs, tarot cards, shop signs, shoes, clothing and other mundane phenomena in to a patchwork of impressions.[71] There is a strong focus on rapidly changing colors, material structures and patterns, like full-screen ornamental shots of a carpet of daisies growing in the grass, comparable with allover structures in painting, their details jumping from frame to frame.

71 See Bruce Conner's description of the film in the 1975 Film-Makers' Cooperative Catalogue as "[f]amous documentary containing full information. Special effects by Isauro Nava, Rancho del Cura, Huatla de Jimenez, Mexico. Sound by John Liniment and frenz".

Single frames change so fast that they can barely be captured visually. Here, the repetitive logic of the bouncing, discontinuous patterns is mirrored by the filmic medium, laying bare the films perceptual patterns and material properties on a structural level.

Other scenes have a more documentary-like appearance and show Huautlans at the marketplace or in the streets and give a short impression of the surroundings without ever intending to give the viewer any hint as to where the scenes were shot. In one shot we can see Timothy Leary from the back for a second, leaning against a mural. In another, we get a glimpse of hands, passing mushrooms to another pair of hands, forming a filmic zone of transaction and marking the only appearance of mushrooms in the film itself. The second part of *Looking for Mushrooms* features scenes from San Francisco, where street views meet private *interieurs*, asphalt surfaces, a cemetery, a memorial plaque for "faithful Indians", pinups, portraits and signs of bohemian life, like a detail of a Tiffany lamp.[72] These flashes of subjective perception culminate in exploding nocturnal fireworks, mirroring the experience of inner vision with an external sensation.

The Viewer as Mediator

In contrast to Henri Michaux' artistic experiments under the influence of mescaline, *Looking for Mushroom* is not about drug-induced production or a "ciné-trance" condition during the filming process as described by Jean Rouch.[73] I assume that the film is more about expressing the "deconditioned" mode of the psychedelic experience of using mushrooms not by representing a trance-like state from an outside point-of-view but by being a *trance-medium* itself, providing a trance-like experience for the viewers. In 1965, Conner edited a three-minute-version without sound to be presented in a continuous loop so that the viewer could choose the soundtrack himself by simply turning on the radio. Like in this example, the "screening-performances"[74] of experimental film were often settings intended to distort the sensory perception of the viewer, mixing visual and acoustic impulses or slowing down and then speeding up the succession of images, thus resembling descriptions of the distorted perception of space and time in experiences of trance. The brain of the viewer should work as an active mediator, connecting the different stimuli to a new audio-visual

72 Tiffany lamps rate among those objects which Susan Sontag marks with the concept of "camp" sensibility. See Sontag: Notes on "Camp", 98.

73 Conner: Jean Conner in conversation with Gerald Matt, 158; Rouch: Ciné-Ethnography.

74 Pasqualino: Experimental Film, 52.

experience that transgressed the medial input of the film by adding after-images, echoes and other sensual effects.

For the aesthetic operations he employed in *Looking for Mushrooms*, Conner adapted elements and effects that filmmaker Stan Brakhage had developed in the 1950s – referring to his experiments with mediatizing his virtual "inner" visions, which he called "brain movies", or the optical appearances and shapes created by pressing lightly on the closed eyelids.[75] What comes into play here is a questioning of the distinction between supposedly "activated" senses in an "awake state" and "passive" senses in a dreamlike, hypnotic state,[76] which I want to oppose with a model of *distributed agency* between filmic apparatus, images and viewers, which form an *agencement of mediation*. While psychoanalytical film theory often speaks of the "passive" mode of filmic perception (the "hypnotized" recipient as being positioned or even fixed in his seat, at the mercy of the overwhelming presence of the optical-acoustic situation inside the black box of the movie theater), the viewer here is not merely hypnotized or transformed by the medium but he or she is also actively involved into the process of mediation.

This also applies to the process of connecting the two different contexts in the film. The change between the Mexican and the Californian takes is repeated in the looped version of *Looking for Mushrooms*, without establishing an aesthetic hierarchy and without the semantic disclosure of narrative film. For this Conner also drew inspiration from the psychedelic lightshows at the *Avalon Ballroom* in San Francisco, for which he produced slideshows (Figure 11).[77] These shows used stroboscopes to combine the acoustic stimuli of psychedelic music with optical impulses. Therefore, the stroboscope was an important instrument of cognition in psychedelic aesthetics. For example, Brion Gysin experimented with the possible psychedelic effects of the stroboscope in his *Dream Machine*: a rotating light object to be viewed with closed eyes in order to trigger artistic sensibility and to have medical impact. The endlessly repeating abstractions of stroboscopic light in his view reflected prehistorical patterns (thus archaizing the medial setting) as well as Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades.[78] Its effect on the retina was presented as pure hallucination.[79] The after-image it creates on the retina is

75 Pasqualino: Experimental Film, 53.
76 Pasqualino: Experimental Film, 58.
77 Boswell: Bruce Conner, 70.
78 Gysin: Dreammachine.
79 Holl: Immersion oder Alteration, 111.

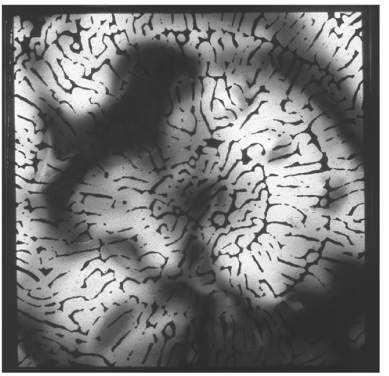


Figure 11: Bruce Conner. Acetat slide, produced for slide shows with the *North American Ibis Alchemical Light Company*, San Francisco, 1967. © Conner Family Trust, San Francisco / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

also similar to the flickering single frames in Conner's first version of *Looking for Mushrooms*.[80]

The psychedelic conceptualization of perception implied new models of subjectivization that reversed the modernist hierarchy between active, intentional subject and passive, material object. On the one hand, the viewer is passively exposed to an overload of images and flashing lights which suspend the imaginary capability to keep the visual content under control. On the other hand, this suspension, which multiplies the interspaces between the frames as "irrational cuts"[81] that belong neither to the previous nor to the subsequent image, encourages the recipient to generate his own cross-references, to spin his own web of connections beyond the succession suggested by the filmic continuity. As Gilles Deleuze shows through the example of Tony Conrad's film *The Flicker* (1965), film projects a "cerebral process": a "flickering brain, which relinks or creates loops"[82]: "Everything can be used as a screen, [. . .] everything can replace the film stock, in a virtual film which now only goes on in the head, behind the pupils [. . .]. A disturbed brain-dead or new brain would be at once the screen, the film stock and the camera, each time membrane of the outside and the inside."[83]

80 Bruce Conner's statement in Conner: Bruce Conner in conversation with Peter Boswell.
81 Deleuze: Cinema II, 206.
82 Deleuze Cinema II, 221.
83 Deleuze Cinema II, 221.

An Audiovisual *Agencement of* Mediation

It is important to emphasize that Conner not only transformed the visual field into what is often called "retinal collage" in experimental film, but that the interplay of images and sounds was also crucial for his version of the Deleuzean screen as a membrane, undermining the usual hierarchy of the senses with its privileging of the eye.[84] Two years after the first version of *Looking for Mushrooms*, Conner added *Tomorrow Never Knows* by the Beatles as a soundtrack, which had been released in 1966 on their album *Revolver*. The title underlines the non-linear, repetitive structure of the song and takes up the synaesthetic agenda of the psychedelic drug experience in the lyric: "Listen to the color of your dreams." It was to a large extent inspired by the book *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964) in which Timothy Leary, Ralph Metzner and Richard Alpert had transformed the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* into a travel guide for psychedelic trips. In their LSD phase, the Beatles experimented with repetitive elements, e.g. by underlying vocals with audio loops of noise. John Lennon borrowed these ideas, which "attacked the brain waves in a direct way",[85] from Indian musical traditions and minimal music, which used repetitive drones and phase shifts. *Tomorrow Never Knows* has a rapid beat and serial, strong syncopes which corresponded with the cuts in the film.[86]

Thus, *Looking for Mushrooms* not only attacks the "retinal screen",[87] but also involves the auditory sense, underlining the effect of an artefactual plastic imagery expanding into the bodily space inhabited by the viewer. The disruptive interplay of images and sound disables the viewer's ability to identify with the representations of the film. But what role do the representations of the Mexican and the Californian localities then play within this context? Why doesn't Conner reduce his imagery to completely abstract images?

As mentioned before, in Conner's oeuvre of the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Mexican refuge served as a countermodel to the destructive forces of Western Modernism. But he obviously didn't aim to represent the shamanic world or any authentic Mexican surroundings (a fact which could be considered as ignorant as well as a conscious refraining from cultural projection). Instead, by taking up a surrealist method also used by filmmaker Maya Deren,[88] he used the foreign

84 MacDonald: The Garden in the Machine, 72.

85 Diederichsen: Das Primäre, 123. Transl. by IB.

86 In 1995, Conner edited a 15 min version of *Looking for Mushrooms* for which he multiplied each frame by five and used the track *Poppy No Good and the Phantom Band* (1968) by Terry Riley as soundtrack.

87 Wees: Light Moving in Time, 152.

88 Papenburg: Umkehrungen von *passio*, 214.

experience as an alienating approach to the ordinary, everyday experience of the Western subject.

In contrast, Wasson is driven by a fascination for "the Other" that can be derived from the etymology of the Latin term *fascinātio*: the fixation of the subject in its supposedly bewitchment and its persistence in the mode of "Othering" that is literally fixed and symbolized in the photographic process. As the author of the LIFE reportage, Wasson hides the fact that his photographer is directed by the vocal agency of the shaman being captured by the camera in the dark room. For this purpose, Wasson combines the rhetorical function of photography as an index of a given event with the authenticating effect of scientific illustration. In this way, he can present himself as a border crosser without having to leave the position of the sovereign, controlling subject in his own narrative.

Even if there are parallels, at this point it is crucial to mention the fundamental difference between the shamanist trance ritual of María Sabina and the experimental film of Bruce Conner. María Sabinas mushroom *velada* with the hallucinatory condition of a passive body and active imagination is focused on healing and thus on bringing her clients back to the normal world and to the state of social, psychical and physical stability after the spiritual metamorphosis. In Conner's work we can make out a diverging operation. The filmic mediation of trance transposes the viewer into another state of perception – not to release him into normality but to leave him behind, transformed as a political subject through filmic experience. Here, healing doesn't mean to be reintegrated into a given social formation, but to instead transform normality in accordance with the experience of alterity. Thus, the *agencement of mediation* emerging from the filmic setting has an impact on the political consciousness of the viewer-subject by introducing a non-Western and also anti-modern perspective by the means of trance.

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Anthony Enns

Psychic Spies. Cold War Science and the Military-Occult Complex

> Mind warfare is the great battlefield of the Cold War, and we have to do whatever it takes to win. CIA Director Allen Dulles (1953)

The concept of "thought reading" was first proposed by William F. Barrett in a paper presented at the 1876 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), which claimed that under hypnosis thoughts could be communicated "without the intervention of recognized organs of sensation."[1] This was an extremely controversial claim at the time, and William B. Carpenter even requested that Barrett's lecture be cancelled.[2] Alfred Russel Wallace overruled this objection and allowed Barrett to present his lecture as planned, although the BAAS still refused to publish his paper in the conference proceedings. Barrett's paper was later published by the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), an organization founded in 1882 with the declared intention of investigating psychic phenomena in a serious and scientific manner. Barrett also helped to compile the SPR's "First Report on Thought-Reading" that same year, which concluded that "further advances along the lines of research here indicated may, and we believe will, necessitate a modification of that general view of the relation of mind to matter to which modern science has long been gravitating."[3] While psychical research soon spread to the United States, where it was embraced by psychologists like William James (who also served as president of the SPR from 1894–1895),[4] such a "modification" never took place, as it remained a marginalized practice within the scientific establishment.

From today's perspective, it is difficult to explain why some scientists maintained their belief in psychic phenomena despite the condemnation of their colleagues and the damage it caused to their careers and reputations. One explanation was proposed by Thomas Kuhn, who famously argued that "extraordinary" sciences often appear during periods of crisis when dominant scientific paradigms are challenged. As these paradigms collapse scientists are forced to

1 Barrett: On Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind, 244.

2 Carpenter was an outspoken critic of psychical research and published a book the following year, in which he argued that psychic phenomena could be explained by psychological factors. See Carpenter: Mesmerism, Spiritualism, Etc.

3 Barrett, Gurney, and Myers: First Report on Thought-Reading, 34.

4 See James: Essays in Psychical Research.

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entertain speculative theories that would have previously been considered unscientific, and over time they gradually construct new paradigms that take into account the anomalous evidence.[5] Roger Luckhurst similarly argued that psychical research first emerged in the late nineteenth century due to a paradigm shift in Victorian physics, as scientists turned from questions of matter (mechanistic science) to questions of force (science of energy). This "counter-hegemonic conception of the physical universe" led to a state of epistemological confusion, which allowed mechanistic models to be replaced by spiritualist theories,[6] and this shows that "extraordinary" sciences appear at "vanishing points . . . where confident demarcations between truth and error, science and pseudoscience, could not at the time be determined."[7] "Extraordinary" sciences thus mark the boundary limit of orthodox science, and the debates provoked by these speculative theories illustrate how such boundaries are established, policed, and transgressed.

This explanation is certainly compelling, as psychical research was condemned by many of the psychologists who followed James, including James M. Cattell,[8] Edward B. Titchener,[9] and John E. Coover,[10] yet it fails to account for the institutional support that researchers continued to receive after the new paradigm was firmly established. In the 1920s, for example, Gardner Murphy and George H. Estabrooks conducted psychical research experiments at Harvard University, and they concluded from a statistical analysis of the results that the phenomenon was real, although they were unable to publish their findings in scientific journals.[11] In the 1930s William McDougall and Joseph B. Rhine conducted similar experiments at Duke University, and they similarly sought to make psychical research appear more scientific (and therefore more credible) by working under laboratory conditions and employing a statistical model that facilitated quantitative analysis. Rhine even claimed that this research represented a paradigm shift comparable to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity,[12] and he predicted that it would eventually be accepted as "a proper branch of science."[13] Like the members of the SPR, therefore, Rhine and his

5 Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 84.
6 Luckhurst: The Invention of Telepathy, 84.
7 Ibid., 2.
8 Cattell: Mrs. Piper.
9 Titchener: The Feeling of Being Stared At.
10 Coover: Experiments in Psychical Research.
11 See Murphy: Telepathy as an Experimental Problem; Estabrooks: A Contribution to Experimental Telepathy.
12 Rhine: New Frontiers of the Mind, 290.
13 Rhine: Extra-Sensory Perception, xxxiii.

colleagues were convinced that it was only a matter of time before the accumulated evidence would become so overwhelming that the scientific community would be forced to revise their outdated theories of the mind.

Despite the fact that the scientific community never accepted this paradigm shift, psychical research also received support from the U.S. government. Government officials had sought advice from the scientific community since the nineteenth century, but the Second World War marked a major turning point in their relations, as the development of radar, sonar, and the atomic bomb clearly demonstrated the potential military applications of modern science, and scientists were subsequently seen as essential to national defense. In 1946, for example, the Pentagon established the policy that civilian science would become an integral part of military research and development,[14] and *Business Week* reported that "federal support of pure science is today almost completely under military control" and "the odds are getting better all the time that pure scientific research will become, permanently, a branch of the military establishment."[15] In 1950 the National Security Council also released a policy document titled "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," which stated that "it is mandatory that in building up our strength, we enlarge upon our technical superiority by an accelerated exploitation of the scientific potential of the United States."[16] These initiatives resulted in an immediate increase in federal support for scientific research, and scientists soon became dependent on defense initiatives, as their interests, objectives, and budgets were inextricably linked. This interdependence also extended to "extraordinary" sciences like psychical research. In 1947, for example, Rhine emphasized the potential military applications of extrasensory perception: "War plans and crafty designs of any kind, anywhere in the world, could be watched and revealed . . . . Every secret weapon and scheming strategy would be subject to exposure."[17] In 1952 he also submitted a proposal to the CIA, in which he requested an annual budget of $30,000 for three years to conduct psychical research experiments. Although this application was ultimately rejected, Rhine did receive a grant from the U.S. Office of Naval Research to determine whether animals possess a form of extrasensory perception.[18]

It is impossible to conclude, therefore, that the increase in institutional support for psychical research during the postwar period reflected a larger

14 See Foerstel: Secret Science.

15 Science Dons a Uniform, 19.

16 Gleason and Aandahl: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1: 283.

17 Rhine: The Reach of the Mind, 195–196.

18 Pratt: Research on Animal Orientation.

epistemological crisis or paradigm shift that resulted in a loosening of the rules for normal research. Rather, it appears that these policy decisions actually reflected the social, political, and economic conditions placed on scientific research during the Cold War period. Instead of defending or debunking the claims of psychical researchers, this chapter will thus attempt to examine the conditions that made their research possible. In particular, it will address the following questions:

- Why did the U.S. government support psychical research despite the fact that it was not accepted by the scientific establishment?
- How was this research evaluated in order to determine both its reliability and its potential usefulness as a means of gathering intelligence?
- Why did psychical research continue to receive government support despite the fact that the underlying phenomenon was never understood or even investigated?
- Why was this research program abruptly cancelled and denounced by the same agencies that had supported it for more than two decades?

As this chapter will show, funding for psychical research was largely motivated by fears of a "psi gap" with the Soviet Union, which forced researchers to emphasize the military applications of psychic phenomena. The continued survival of the program also relied on secrecy and security, as the combined strategies of compartmentalization and classification allowed policy decisions to be made without public scrutiny or the oversight of scientific advisers. The abrupt defunding of psychical research in the mid 1990s also illustrates how rapidly these conditions changed after the Cold War, as policy decisions became more transparent and the program was suddenly perceived as a source of shame and ridicule due to the fact that it challenged the norms of orthodox science. A closer examination of the rise and fall of the so-called "military-occult complex" thus raises fundamental questions about the factors that influence scientific research more generally, as it shows that this research is often driven by social, political, and economic factors that have little to do with established scientific facts, theories, and methods.

Soviet Parapsychology and the "Psi Gap"

U.S. government involvement in psychical research began as early as 1952, when Andrija Puharich presented a paper titled "On the Possible Usefulness of

Extrasensory Perception in Psychological Warfare" at a seminar organized by the Department of Defense.[19] For the next two years he worked at the U.S. Army's Chemical and Biological Warfare Center at Fort Detrick in Maryland, where he studied whether hallucinogenic drugs could stimulate psychic abilities. This project was apparently unsuccessful, but in December 1959 a French journal claimed that the U.S. Navy had conducted a series of psychical research experiments on board the U.S.S. Nautilus – the world's first nuclear-powered submarine.[20] These experiments were said to have taken place over a 16-day period between 25 July and 10 August 1958, while the Nautilus was sailing under the polar ice cap, and they followed the model established by Rhine, as the sender (who was reportedly located at the Westinghouse Laboratory in Maryland) concentrated on a series of cards, while the receiver (who was located in a private cabin aboard the Nautilus) recorded his visual impressions. This report was then followed three months later by a more detailed article, which claimed that the RAND Corporation had recommended the possibility of communicating with nuclear submarines using telepathy, as radio communication was only possible when submarines surfaced and nuclear-powered submarines could stay submerged for months at a time. Rhine was also identified as the civilian scientist assigned to the project, and it was reported that roughly 75% of the experiments were successful.[21] The second article concluded with a series of provocative questions: "Is telepathy a new secret weapon? Will ESP be a deciding factor in future warfare? Has the American military learned the secret of mind power?"[22]

U.S. Navy press officers denied that these experiments ever took place, and one of the journalists later admitted that he had been the victim of a hoax. However, a number of researchers in the Soviet Union cited these articles as evidence that the Americans were gaining the upper hand in the field of psychical research. The study of psychic phenomena had previously been prohibited in the Soviet Union, as "Communist dogma required a strong 'materialistic' base" and "violating this concept would be considered nearly treasonous."[23] In a lecture given at a symposium in April 1960, however, Soviet physiologist Leonid L. Vasiliev reported that "the American navy is testing telepathy on their atomic submarines," and he urged Soviet researchers to "plunge into the exploration of this vital field."[24] In order to stress the importance of this

19 Wilhelm: Psychic Spying?, B5.
20 Bergier: La transmission de pensée, 99.
21 Messadié: Étrange expérience a bord du Nautilus, 30–35.
22 Ibid., 35.
23 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 155.
24 Ostrander and Schroeder: Psychic Discoveries, 6–7.

research, he even claimed that "the discovery of the energy underlying ESP will be equivalent to the discovery of atomic energy."[25] Vasiliev's statements evidently had their desired effect, as he was subsequently given a special laboratory at Leningrad University that was devoted to the study of psychical research, and in 1963 he claimed to have conducted successful long-distance telepathy experiments between Leningrad and Sevastopol.[26] In 1965 the Scientific and Technical Society of Radio Engineering and Telecommunications also established a Department of Bioinformation at the Popov Institute in Moscow, which was directed by I. M. Kogan. In an effort to replicate the Nautilus experiments, test subjects were hypnotized and placed in a Faraday cage, which excluded all radio waves except extremely-low-frequency (ELF) waves. The hypnotized subjects were then awoken at an arbitrary time by a "mental order" from a sender, who remained in a separate room. Based on these experiments, Kogan concluded that telepathic communication with submarines was possible, as there was a radio system built into the human brain that allowed for communication via ELF waves in the 10 Hz region (the "alpha" brain wave frequency).[27]

Between 1965 and 1967 another group of researchers led by Vitali P. Perov conducted a series of experiments on rabbits with electrodes implanted in their brains. Some of these experiments also involved submarines, which was first reported by Pavel Naumov in 1968:

> Scientists placed the baby rabbits aboard the submarine. They kept the mother rabbit in a laboratory on shore where they implanted electrodes deep in her brain. When the sub was deep below the surface of the ocean, assistants killed the young rabbits one by one. The mother rabbit obviously didn't know what was happening. Even if she could have understood the test, she had no way of knowing at what moment her children died. Yet, at each synchronized instant of death, her brain reacted. There was communication.[28]

This report revealed for the first time that Soviet parapsychology was being funded by the military. In 1970 a Soviet film studio also captured footage of an experiment conducted at the Ukhtomskii Military Institute in Leningrad involving a psychic named Nina Kulagina, who was reported to have remotely stopped the beating heart of a frog and to have induced an abnormally rapid heart rate in a human test

25 Ibid., 7.

26 See Vasiliev: Experiments in Mental Suggestion; Targ: Limitless Mind, 131; Kernbach: Unconventional Research in U.S.S.R. and Russia, 41.

27 See Kogan: Is Telepathy Possible?; Kogan: Telepathy; Kogan: Information Theory Analysis of Telepathic Communication Experiments.

28 Ostrander and Schroeder: Psychic Discoveries, 32–33.

subject.[29] These reports seemed to indicate that the ultimate goal of Soviet parapsychology was the weaponization of psychic abilities.

The U.S. government first became aware of these experiments through Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder's 1970 book *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*, which claimed that Soviet intelligence agencies were conducting a nationwide search for the most talented psychics and that they had already established "twenty or more centers for the study of the paranormal with an annual budget estimated in 1967 at over 12 million rubles ($13 million)."[30] Ostrander and Schroeder also urged the U.S. government to develop its own psychical research program, and they argued that this "mind race" was as urgent as the "space race": "If Westerners had bothered to read Soviet publications in the 1950s, we would have seen that much data on the development of Sputnik was published long before it shot into space and astounded the world. Today we are still not keeping up with material readily available in Soviet publications and scientific papers, particularly in the field of parapsychology."[31] In other words, they implied that psychical research could potentially determine the outcome of the Cold War and that the U.S. was already falling behind the Soviets.

Ostrander and Schroeder's book had a tremendous impact on the U.S. intelligence community. In July 1972, for example, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) commissioned a report, which noted that "the major impetus behind the Soviet drive to harness the possible capabilities of telepathic communication, telekinetics, and bionics are said to come from the Soviet military."[32] The report went on to describe the potential consequences of Soviet psychic superiority:

> Soviet efforts in the field of psi research. . . might enable them to do some of the following: (a) know the contents of top secret U.S. documents, the movements of our troops and ships and the location and nature of our military installations, (b) mold the thoughts of key U.S. military and civilian leaders at a distance, (c) cause the instant death of any U.S. official at a distance, (d) disable, at a distance, U.S. military equipment of all types.[33]

The report thus argued that the intelligence community should be aware of the latest developments in Soviet parapsychology, and it cited a number of scientists and experts who were convinced that there was an urgent need to create a similar program in the U.S. Oliver J. Caldwell, who had previously served from

29 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 188; Jacobsen: Phenomena, 78–79.
30 Ostrander and Schroeder: Psychic Discoveries, 7.
31 Ibid., 249.
32 LaMothe: Controlled Offensive Behavior, 24.
33 Ibid., 39–40.

captain to major in the U.S. Army's Office of Strategic Services, was even reported to have said that "if the United States does not make a serious effort to move forward on this new frontier, in another ten years it may be too late."[34] A report prepared by the RAND Corporation in 1973 similarly noted that Soviet researchers were receiving extensive government funding, that their work was oriented towards military applications, and that "there remains a serious need for detailed analytical studies of some of these phenomena by specialists in various scientific disciplines to determine their plausibility, their amenability to experimental investigation, and their potential for application."[35] While the U.S. government was already worried about the possibility of a "missile gap," it now faced the additional possibility of a "psi gap."

As a result, U.S. intelligence agencies immediately began to monitor the progress of Soviet parapsychology. In April 1972, for example, several officers from the CIA's Office of Strategic Intelligence (OSI) met with a member of the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) named Russell Targ, who was in contact with Soviet researchers studying Kulagina's abilities and was able to provide several films.[36] Targ also suggested that similar experiments could be conducted at SRI with the help of his colleague, Hal Puthoff, who was a former Naval Intelligence officer. In June 1927 Puthoff submitted a report to OSI on a recent experiment conducted with Ingo Swann, a psychic who allegedly drew a "reasonable facsimile" of a magnetometer in the Physics Department at Stanford University, even though this device was "located in a vault below the floor of the building and shielded by μ-metal shielding, an aluminum container, copper shielding and a superconducting shield."[37] OSI contacted the Office of Research and Development (ORD), and several ORD officers visited SRI in August 1972. They explained that there was "increasing concern in the intelligence community about . . . Soviet parapsychology being funded by the Soviet security services" and that "they had been on the lookout for a research laboratory outside of academia that could handle a quiet, low-profile classified investigation."[38] Puthoff agreed to organize a demonstration with Swann, who provided descriptions of various hidden objects, and the officers were evidently impressed, as their report to the Office of Technical Services (OTS)

34 Ibid., 40.

35 Van Dyke and Juncosa: Paranormal Phenomena, 27.

36 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 70; Mandelbaum: Psychic Battlefield, 255.

37 Puthoff: CIA-Initiated Remote Viewing Program, 65.

38 Ibid.

recommended that SRI's research should be continued and expanded. In October 1972 OTS contracted SRI for an eight-month pilot study on "Biofield Measurements," and Kenneth Kress was assigned to monitor their progress.[39]

U.S. intelligence agencies thus began to fund psychical research experiments in the 1970s due to a growing sense of paranoia with regard to the military applications of psychic phenomena and the advancements that had reportedly been made by Soviet researchers. It was feared not only that psychic abilities were more effective than conventional espionage techniques but also that they could make these conventional techniques obsolete, as Soviet psychics had the potential to uncover virtually any secret and even assassinate key political figures from a distance. As a result, the CIA sought to gather more intelligence on Soviet espionage programs and to create a similar program that could be used to verify, counteract, and perhaps even surpass the abilities of Soviet psychics. The rise of this program was thus a direct result of the new conditions placed on scientific research during the Cold War, as government funding was primarily dependent on the potential military applications of research projects and policy decisions were being made without the oversight of established scientific organizations. Psychical researchers may have even taken advantage of this situation by exaggerating the perceived threat posed by Soviet parapsychology and emphasizing the potential military applications of their own experiments. Indeed, Kress later confirmed that the decision to fund SRI was largely driven by fears of a "psi gap," as it "was known that the Soviet government was supporting the evaluation and development of paranormal phenomena,"[40] and Edwin C. May, who later served as director of the program, noted that the same process also occurred on the other side of the Iron Curtain: "From the start, the Russians were pointing at research by the U.S. government, and we were pointing at the Russians' work. Due to the milieu of the Cold War, they were using us to get money and we were using them to provide justification for funding."[41] Serge Kernbach similarly concluded that "both countries have used each other in the arguments in favor of such studies and the struggle for funding," as "research on the one side stimulated equivalent studies on the other side."[42]

39 Ibid., 66. See also Richelson, Wizards of Langley, 178.
40 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 83.
41 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 286.
42 Kernbach: Unconventional Research in U.S.S.R. and Russia, 46.

SRI Experiments with "Remote Viewing"

Swann had joined SRI to develop a technique known as "remote viewing," which involved visualizing the locations of human targets.[43] He had conducted his first experiments the previous year at the American Society for Psychical Research (ASPR) in New York, and Puthoff had invited him to SRI to conduct similar experiments.[44] These experiments became more urgent after OTS contracted SRI, as Puthoff and Targ were asked to identify "opportunities for operational use" and they immediately recognized that remote viewing could provide an ideal method of intelligence gathering. They thus decided to use the CIA funding to conduct a series of remote viewing experiments in the San Francisco Bay Area, in which nine human targets were sent to randomly selected locations and nine viewers attempted to describe them. According to Puthoff and Targ, the number of matches was statistically significant, and many of the individual descriptions were surprisingly accurate. Swann, for example, reportedly described the Palo Alto City Hall, including details like the shape of the windows, the number of trees, the designs on the pavement, and the fact that the fountain was not running.[45] Another viewer named Pat Price also provided accurate descriptions of the Hoover Tower at Stanford University and a swimming pool complex in Palo Alto.[46] ORD officers reviewed these results in February 1973, and they were so convinced that they transferred additional funds and "requested an increase in the scope of the effort."[47]

In April 1973 Swann attempted to satisfy this request by proposing a new technique called "coordinate remote viewing," which employed geographical coordinates to identify target sites. The preliminary results were evidently encouraging, as Swann reportedly described a joint French-Soviet meteorological station on Kerguelen Island in the southern Indian Ocean.[48] The coordinates had been provided by a contact at OSI, and it was considered a military target because the Soviets were rumored to be using the station to track missiles.[49] In May 1973 Puthoff arranged an informal demonstration of this new technique,

43 It was initially called "travelling clairvoyance," but the term "remote viewing" was gradually adopted in order to separate this practice from the history of spiritualism and the occult. Swann: On Remote-Viewing, 78.
44 See Mitchell: Out-of-the-Body Vision, 155.
45 Puthoff and Targ: Mind-Reach, 37.
46 Ibid., 52.
47 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 72.
48 Puthoff and Targ: Mind-Reach, 33.
49 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 120.

and Christopher "Kit" Green provided coordinates for a vacation cabin in West Virginia that belonged to one of his colleagues. Instead of seeing a cabin, however, Swann produced a map that featured "a cluster of buildings and an underground bunker." Several days later, the same coordinates were given to Price, who provided even more details: "Price . . . offered to 'go inside' the bunker, where he found a file cabinet with names on the drawers. He read off the names, and gave us the code name ('Hay Stack') of the facility."[50] Green initially believed that the experiment was a failure, but he was surprised to discover that an underground NSA facility was located only a few miles from his colleague's cabin.[51] Puthoff concluded that "not only was Swann's description correct in every detail, but even the relative distances on his map were to scale."[52] Kress also noted that Price provided the actual codename and a "list of project titles associated with current and past activities, including one of extreme sensitivity," although the results were inconclusive, as "some information, such as the names of the people at the site, proved incorrect." Nevertheless, OTS was "favorably impressed by the data," and SRI was asked to propose a new project in the spring of 1974. Kress explained that this new project would proceed "on the premise that the phenomena existed" and that its primary objective would be to determine how best "to develop and utilize them," as "we were confident applications would be found."[53]

This led to the first active intelligence collection operation using psychical research. In August 1974 Deputy Director for Intelligence John McMahon provided coordinates for a "Soviet site of great interest" in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic adjacent to the Semipalatinsk nuclear test area, which was known within the intelligence community as "URDF-3" (Unidentified Research and Development Facility-3). Price described the layout of the complex, which included a giant gantry crane and a cluster of tall, silo-sized cylinders. Satellite reconnaissance photographs confirmed the presence of a gantry crane as well as several gas cylinders, and in their final report Puthoff and Targ concluded that this was "indicative of probable target acquisition," which showed that remote viewing could be "utilized in the future . . . for operational needs."[54] Targ later claimed that Price's performance "was so outstanding that it alone

50 Targ: Limitless Mind, 36.
51 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 110.
52 Puthoff and Targ: Mind-Reach, 4.
53 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 72–73. See also Smith: Reading the Enemy's Mind, 65.
54 Puthoff and Targ: Perceptual Augmentation Techniques, 6, 16. See also Richelson: Wizards of Langley, 179.

assured our funding for the next several years,"[55] yet this is highly unlikely. While Kress agreed that Price had produced "some amazing descriptions, like buildings then under construction, spherical tank sections, and the crane," he also noted that "most of Price's data were wrong or could not be evaluated" and "since there was so much bad information mixed with the good, the overall result was not considered useful."[56]

This difference of opinion led Kress to hire an independent consultant named Joseph A. Ball to evaluate the program. After reviewing the available data, Ball concluded that "a large body of reliable experimental evidence points to the inescapable conclusion that extrasensory perception does exist as a real phenomenon," and despite its apparent "lack of reliability" this phenomenon was "sufficiently sharp and clear-cut to justify serious considerations of possible applications."[57] The following year the CIA also contracted the AiResearch Manufacturing Company to evaluate the program, and their consultants similarly concluded that "it is worthwhile for the United States government to initiate and support systematic research in this area."[58] These evaluations convinced OTS to continue funding psychical research experiments, and SRI was strongly encouraged to "do something of genuine operational significance."[59]

In July 1975 SRI organized another experiment, in which Price was given the coordinates of two foreign embassies whose interiors were already known. He was instructed to view the embassies remotely, locate the code rooms, and describe any distinguishing features. According to Kress, most of Price's information was "vague and incorrect," yet the operations officer concluded that "this technique – whatever it is – offers definite operational possibilities."[60] Price was also given coordinates for a site in Libya, and he produced a map of the installation as well as an underwater sabotage training facility several hundred miles away. According to Kress, this information was submitted to the Libyan Desk, and "the underwater training facility description was similar to a collateral agent's report."[61] Additional information was requested, although Price died of a heart attack several days later. ORD reportedly became disillusioned with the program at this point, as they believed that "the research was

55 Targ: Remote Viewing at Stanford Research Institute, 77.
56 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 75–78.
57 Ball: An Overview of Extrasensory Perception, 1, 3. See also McRae: Mind Wars, 102.
58 Wortz, Blackwelder, Eerkens, and Saur: Novel Biological Information Transfer Mechanisms, 10–11.
59 Kress: Parapsychology in Intelligence, 78.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid., 79.

not productive or even competent," and the director argued that their "charter would not support [psychical] research."[62] All CIA funding was subsequently cancelled, although Puthoff and Targ were able to meet with CIA director George H. W. Bush, who "requested and received a briefing on CIA's investigations into parapsychology" in November 1976.[63] Bush left the agency before making any funding recommendations, but he reportedly told them that "his hands were tied because the Agency was in too much [trouble] with Congress" and that they would need military sponsors to continue their research.[64]

The Military Assumes Command

Puthoff and Targ first approached the U.S. Navy as a potential client, and the Naval Electronics Systems Command awarded them an $87,000 contract for "an investigation of the ability of certain individuals to perceive remote faint electromagnetic stimuli at a non-cognitive level of awareness."[65] This project was immediately exposed by the *Washington Post*, which reported that Samuel Koslov, scientific assistant to the Secretary of the Navy, had cancelled the contract.[66] Dale Graff, a civilian scientist working in the U.S. Air Force Foreign Technology Division (FTD) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, subsequently recommended that the U.S. Air Force fund a classified program with SRI that would focus on remote viewing (with a special emphasis on locating lost airplanes), and FTD agreed to fund SRI on an exploratory basis several months later. In October 1978 Lt. F. Holmes "Skip" Atwater also proposed that the U.S. Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM) create their own "in-house" remote viewing team at Fort Meade in Maryland, as he was becoming increasingly concerned about the potential dangers posed by Soviet parapsychology. Atwater's proposal was approved by Major General Edmund R. Thompson, assistant chief of staff for Army Intelligence, and Puthoff and Targ were appointed as lead scientists in the new program, which became known as "Gondola Wish."[67] By the end of the 1970s, SRI was thus conducting

62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 80.
64 Jacobsen: Phenomena, 200.
65 McRae: Mind Wars, 5.
66 Wilhelm: Psychic Spying?, B5.
67 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 13–20.

military-funded remote viewing experiments at both Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and Fort Meade.

In March 1979 these two groups were tasked with locating a Soviet Tupolev-22 "Blinder" bomber that had crashed in Zaire after its crew bailed out. The bomber had been refitted as a reconnaissance platform, and U.S. forces were hoping to retrieve its contents before the Soviets, but the jungle proved to be extremely dense and search teams eventually concluded that they were unlikely to find it. A remote viewer at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base named Gary Langford reportedly gave a detailed description of the wreckage's setting, and a remote viewer at Fort Meade named Rosemary Smith identified the location of the wreckage on a map. Smith's coordinates were then sent to the CIA station chief in Zaire, and they proved to be accurate within three miles.[68] This was the first time that President Jimmy Carter was briefed on the program, and he was so impressed that he soon became a supporter.[69]

As the existence of the program became more widely known in the Department of Defense, the White House, and various congressional intelligence committees, it also became a source of controversy. William Perry, the undersecretary of defense for research and engineering, argued that the program should be cancelled, while Senator Claiborne Pell, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Lieutenant Commander Jake Stewart, a member of the National Security Council (NSC), supported the program. Following a congressional investigation, Representative Charles Rose, chairman of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Evaluation and Oversight, also became a vocal supporter. In a July 1979 interview Rose not only expressed his belief in psychical research but also stressed the importance of competing with the Soviet Union in this area: "[T]he Russians are very interested in psychic phenomena . . . . They have a national screening program to detect . . . psychic abilities in schoolchildren. The CIA, on the other hand, spends next to nothing in this area . . . . But it seems to me that . . . if the Russians have it and we don't, we are in serious trouble."[70] Rose also urged Congress to fund what he called a "psychic Manhattan project," as he was convinced that psychical research was as important as the development of the atomic bomb.[71]

INSCOM sought to expand the program later that year, and SRI was contracted to screen potential new viewers. One of these new recruits was Joseph

68 Puthoff: CIA-Initiated Remote Viewing Program, 75; Smith: Reading the Enemy's Mind, 97–98; Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 215–219.

69 Puthoff: CIA-Initiated Remote Viewing Program, 75.

70 Stuckey: Psi on Capitol Hill, 24.

71 MacRae: Mind Wars, 47–49.

McMoneagle, who was reportedly able to provide a detailed diagram of a new XM-1 prototype tank.[72] In another experiment, McMoneagle was asked to observe a building at a naval base in Severodvinsk where analysts suspected the Soviets were constructing their first aircraft carrier. Instead, he described the construction of an enormous submarine, which he described as "bigger by a significant factor than any other submarine known to man" and as "having a bulbous nose and an unusually broad and flattened stern."[73] Four months later, analysts confirmed that the Soviets had constructed a new class of submarine known as the "Typhoon," which was 560 feet long and had a flat stern. The National Security Agency (NSA) then asked McMoneagle to target a U.S. consulate where Soviets were extracting information, and he correctly described the location of the electronic bug and the Soviet listening post opposite the consulate.[74]

In November 1979 the DIA's Scientific and Technical Intelligence Directorate, headed by Jack Vorona, was chosen to coordinate all remote viewing efforts. The two groups were then consolidated, and the program was redesignated "Grill Flame."[75] During the Iranian hostage crisis these viewers were asked to locate the American hostages, and McMoneagle was reportedly able to "describe the location where three of the hostages had been taken."[76] In his evaluation of this mission, Lieutenant Colonel Roderick Lenahan concluded that "Grill Flame data has value," as remote viewers "provide insights that would not be readily available through other sources, particularly when working against a target in a denied or hostile environment."[77] In 1981 viewers were also asked to locate General James Dozier after he was kidnapped by the Italian Red Brigades, and McMoneagle reportedly described a circular park and a cathedral in Padua, where Dozier was eventually rescued.[78] Dozier was so impressed that he suggested that government officials, military officers, and politicians be instructed in what to "think" if they were kidnapped so that psychic spies would be able to locate them more easily.[79] McMoneagle subsequently received a Legion of Merit Award – the highest honor an intelligence officer can receive – for "producing crucial and vital intelligence

72 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 51.
73 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 71–72; Smith: Reading the Enemy's Mind, 132; McMoneagle: Stargate Chronicles, 121–124.
74 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 48–50.
75 Ibid., 23–25.
76 Adams: Day of the Pentagon Mindbenders, 21.
77 Lenahan: Interim Evaluation, 1.
78 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 285; McMoneagle: Stargate Chronicles, 116–120.
79 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 80.

unavailable from any other source."[80] According to May, this award clearly demonstrated the intelligence community's "support and satisfaction with the applied aspect of the program."[81]

Major General Albert Stubblebine, commander of INSCOM, assumed responsibility for the program in 1982, and it was then redesignated "Center Lane."[82] When Stubblebine retired in 1984, however, the program was cancelled by INSCOM's new commander, Brigadier General Harry Soyster. It was later determined that Soyster did not have the authority to cancel the program, as it could only be cancelled by the secretary of the Army, and another review of the program was then conducted by W. Ross Adey, chief of staff of the Research Division of the Veterans Hospital in Loma Linda, California, and Fred Zachariasen, a professor of physics at the California Institute of Technology and a member of the Department of Defense's scientific advisory committee. They concluded that "the evidence . . . is too impressive to dismiss as mere coincidence" and "the potential impact of this phenomenon is clearly profound," so the program should continue to receive funding for "the next five to ten years."[83] As a result, the program was reinstated, and in 1986 it was transferred back to the DIA, where it was redesignated "Sun Streak."[84]

At this time the program began to focus on the development of a training program, as it was believed that remote viewing was a learnable skill that could be acquired through instruction and practice. Swann developed the first training protocol, which was divided into six stages that were designed to expand the viewer's psychic abilities.[85] It was later revealed that this protocol had been requested by the Department of Defense, as it was thought that a training program would help to address the concerns of critics. In other words, the emphasis on training was an attempt to distance psychical research from its supernatural or occult origins, just as the term "remote viewing" was an attempt to distance psychical research from earlier practices like "clairvoyance" and "astral projection." It was also driven by financial incentives, as researchers hoped that these training methods could be used to justify future funding requests. As McMoneagle explained: "The higher-ups wanted training methods, and they wanted it right then and there."[86]

80 Ibid., 96.
81 Ibid., 249.
82 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 280.
83 Adey and Zachariasen: SRI Studies in Remote Viewing, 1, 4.
84 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 319.
85 McNear: Coordinate Remote Viewing.
86 McMoneagle: Stargate Chronicles, 172–173.

In December 1988 viewers were also asked to determine how Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi was moving a stockpile of chemical weapons from a facility called Rabta, which was about to be destroyed by U.S. airstrikes. A viewer named Angela Dellafiora, who worked as a civilian analyst for INSCOM, determined that the weapons were being transported on a ship named "Potato" or "Patuta." The actual named turned out to be "Batato," and several days later the *New York Times* reported that the ship had been identified by U.S. intelligence, although "officials declined to specify the source of their information."[87] In April 1989 Dellafiora also played a key role in the apprehension of a Drug Enforcement Agency operative named Charles Jordan, who was accused of taking bribes from drug traffickers. Jordan was believed to be hiding in the Caribbean or South America, but Dellafiora determined that he was actually living "in Indian Territory" near "Lovell, Wyoming."[88] Graff and Vorona arranged to have Jordan's photograph sent to federal employees at post offices and parks in the surrounding area, and a ranger at Yellowstone National Park reportedly found him at a campground near an old Indian burial ground roughly fifty miles from Lovell.[89]

In October 1990 Graff became the new head of the program, which was redesignated "Star Gate." At the time the Department of Defense was shifting resources from the war on drugs to the Gulf War, so viewers were asked to locate Iraqi army units and mobile Scud missile launchers.[90] In November 1991 the *Associated Press* reported that U.S. Army Major Karen Jansen had received "sketches of two sites where the Iraqi leader has supposedly stashed biological weapons." These sketches had been provided by a company named PSI Tech, which had been founded by a group of viewers who were selling their services to private clients, and the company's president publicly revealed that "various techniques of psychic or extrasensory viewing . . . have been researched in secret by military intelligence since the 1950s."[91] Following the publication of this article, DIA Director James Clapper "could not go anywhere without being hounded about the psychic spying program,"[92] and May notes that this exposure had a disastrous effect on the program: "For the next four years DIA did everything they could to create road blocks to make it as difficult as possible

87 Engelberg: U.S. Says Libya Moves Chemicals for Poison Gas Away from Plant, A6.
88 Sun Streak Interim Report, 2–3.
89 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 136.
90 Schnabel: Remote Viewers, 380; Morehouse: Psychic Warrior, 167–168.
91 Sinai: ESP Used in Effort to Ferret Out Iraqi Weapons Sites.
92 Jacobsen: Phenomena, 366.

for the program to flourish or for that matter even survive . . . . The word had come down from the top: Make the program vanish."[93]

When Graff retired in 1993, the Senate Select Committee for Intelligence asked the CIA to conduct another review of the program and to report their findings to Congress. The CIA contracted the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to conduct this review, and they recruited two experts: Jessica Utts, a professor of statistics at the University of California at Davis who had previously worked as a consultant at SRI, and Ray Hyman, a psychology professor at the University of Oregon who was a noted skeptic. Utts and Hyman were asked to evaluate forty remote viewing sessions conducted between 1994 and 1995 in terms of both their accuracy and their operational value. Utts concluded that "psychic functioning has been well established," as "the statistical results . . . are far beyond what is expected by chance."[94] Hyman agreed that "something beyond odd statistical hiccups is taking place," but he added that "even if remote viewing is a real ability possessed by some individuals, its usefulness in intelligence gathering is questionable."[95] The AIR consultants ultimately supported Hyman's position, as they concluded that "in no case had the information provided ever been used to guide intelligence operations" and that remote viewing had therefore "failed to produce actionable intelligence."[96] Based on their recommendation, the program was finally cancelled in June 1995, although this decision was extremely controversial within the intelligence community. May argued that it was politically motivated, as "some of the DIA management had previous negative experiences with senior military officers who had become uncritical fanatics, oversold the program's capability, and were known as 'loose cannons' in the community."[97] May also claimed that "the long-term existence *and successful functioning* of the military ESP programs," "the stature of the scientists involved in them," and the "extensive high-level, and enduring support they received" were themselves evidence of operational effectiveness: "If these programs were ineffective, they would have shut down at the very beginning."[98] Former intelligence officer and practicing psychic W. Adam Mandelbaum similarly characterized the AIR report as a "lie" because the experiments "proved that remote viewing could be operationally

93 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 245.
94 Utts: An Assessment of the Evidence for Psychic Functioning, 289.
95 Hyman: Evaluation of the Program on Anomalous Mental Phenomena, 334, 345.
96 Mumford, Rose, and Goslin: An Evaluation of Remote Viewing, E-4.
97 May: The American Institutes for Research Review of the Department of Defense's Star Gate Program, 105.
98 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 6.

useful in areas where the presence or undetected insertion of an agent was impracticable or outright impossible."[99] This debate thus focused not on the question of the existence of psychic phenomena – an issue that had apparently been settled – but rather on the question of its operational value, which remained subject to interpretation.

While the underlying reason for the program's cancellation remains unknown, it is clear that the CIA knew that the files related to psychical research would soon be declassified. In March 1995, for example, the CIA issued a memorandum indicating its intent to declassify the SRI and "Star Gate" reports. In November 1995, four months after the program was cancelled, 12,000 files including roughly 90,000 pages of previously classified material were released to the public. That same month former CIA Director Robert Gates appeared on the ABC television show *Nightline* to discuss the "Star Gate" program. While the show featured some positive testimonials, science correspondent Michael Guillen presented a scathing critique of the program, arguing that it was "time to take the ESP out of espionage." In order to mitigate the negative feedback from the press, Gates emphasized that psychical research had never been "critical to national interests" and that there had never been "a single instance . . . where this kind of activity contributed in any significant way to a policy decision or even informing policymakers about important information."[100] This claim obviously contradicted the reports of numerous researchers, consultants, and intelligence officers, as May pointed out: "This statement is either blatantly false or . . . a conveniently faulty memory," as "Gates . . . had been briefed on specific examples" in which "ESP provided a stream of actionable intelligence for a number of applications, from military situations to law enforcement opportunities to political issues."[101] According to May, therefore, Gates' comments showed that the CIA no longer wished to be associated with psychical research due to its negative reputation, and he was greatly disappointed by the "bias, ignorance, and mismanagement of what could have been a valuable asset in the arsenal of intelligence collection tools."[102] It thus appears that the cancellation of the program may have been due to its impending declassification rather than its lack of operational value, as fears of a "psi-gap" were gradually replaced by fears of public transparency.

99 Mandelbaum: Psychic Battlefield, 135.
100 *Nightline*, ABC, 28 November 1995.
101 May, Rubel, and Auerbach: ESP Wars, 147.
102 Ibid., 147–148.

Epistemological and Geopolitical Crisis

The proponents of this psychical research program often acknowledged that its successes were unexplainable according to the rules of orthodox science, yet they also claimed that the scientific community's rejection of psychic phenomena was fundamentally unscientific, as scientists should always be prepared to investigate anomalies that challenge their basic assumptions. May argued, for example, that the "analysis of [psychical] research and conclusions and criticism based on such analysis is scientific," while the "dismissal of or bias against doing the research is not."[103] Puthoff and Targ were similarly convinced that their experiments represented incontrovertible evidence of a paradigm shift that the scientific community refused to accept:

> When an anomalous but important phenomenon has been repeatedly demonstrated. . . scientists ordinarily turn increasing attention to it until it is either thoroughly understood and integrated into the current scientific framework or until it initiates a revision in that framework. . . . What happened instead was that the scientific community essentially repressed psi phenomena. . . . The general scientific community was clearly not ready to consider either the evidence for psi or its implications, and the personal and emotional attachment of scientists to their current world views was not going to be disturbed by the evidence. Psychologically, this sort of response is a common human reaction, and it is understandable, but it is bad science.[104]

While the scientific community generally dismissed psychical research as "bad" science because it contradicted established facts, it did not follow strict laboratory protocols, and it could not be reproduced on a consistent basis, Puthoff and Targ thus characterized orthodox science as "bad" because it had failed to revise the dominant paradigm in light of their work.

While Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions would seem to offer a convincing explanation as to why psychical research was not seen as a legitimate field of study at this time, it is unable to explain why this "extraordinary" science received such extensive funding from the government and why this funding suddenly vanished following the end of the Cold War. Instead of representing a paradigm shift, as researchers claim, this history actually illustrates how funding and policy decisions were driven by the following conditions:

- Scientific research was seen as providing an essential military advantage, which made scientists increasingly dependent on government funding.

103 Ibid., 289–290.

104 Tart, Puthoff, and Targ: Introduction, xxv–xxvi.

- Fears of Soviet military superiority also increased pressure on the U.S. government to mirror Soviet scientific research programs.
- Psychical researchers exploited this situation by exaggerating the potential dangers posed by Soviet parapsychology in order to secure funding.
- To justify their funding requests, psychical researchers also emphasized the potential military applications of their experiments and developed new techniques and training procedures that were specifically tailored to the needs of the intelligence community.
- The emphasis on military applications prevented psychical researchers from studying the underlying cause of psychic phenomena, which precluded any possibility of reality testing.
- The emphasis on military applications also required increased security, and the combined strategies of compartmentalization and classification allowed the program to continue for the duration of the Cold War with minimal oversight from the scientific community.

As soon as these conditions were no longer in place, the program was immediately cancelled, and representatives of the intelligence community even went so far as to deny that it had ever been considered operationally effective despite the fact that numerous researchers, consultants, and intelligence officers had consistently made the opposite argument for more than two decades. The fact that these denunciations followed soon after the declassification of the program also suggests that the decision to cancel it may have been motivated by a fear of public transparency rather than a lack of operational value. The history of this program thus shows that "extraordinary" sciences can proliferate during periods of epistemological as well as geopolitical crisis, as social, political, and economic factors also have the potential to challenge established scientific facts, theories, and methods by excluding the scientific community from policy decisions.

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Mediumistic Trials of the 21st Century

Egil Asprem

The Magus of Silicon Valley. Immortality, Apocalypse, and God Making in Ray Kurzweil's Transhumanism

> Humanity lies groaning, half crushed beneath the weight of its own progress. Human beings do not sufficiently realize that their future is in their own hands. Theirs is the task of determining first of all whether they want to go on living or not. Theirs the responsibility, then, for deciding if they want merely to live, or intend to make just the extra effort required for fulfilling, even on their refractory planet, the essential function of the universe, which is a machine for the making of gods.
>
> Henri Begson: *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1935).[1]

The protagonist of this article does not appear on your regular list of usual suspects in discussions about mediumism, spirit contact, and the occult. Raymond Kurzweil (b. 1948) is a successful American inventor, author, and entrepreneur who has founded a dozen companies, registered over sixty patents,[2] and is (at the time of writing, and since 2012) a director of engineering at Google. Born and bred in Queens, New York, Kurzweil's original claim to fame was as developer of the first text-to-speech reading machines for the blind in the 1970s; for musicians, he is perhaps best known as the inventor of the Kurzweil synthesizer, which helped usher in the sample-based sound of the 1980s.

In recent years, however, Kurzweil has moved on to more ambitious projects, such as how to achieve eternal life,[3] make 'spiritual machines,'[4] and bring back the dead.[5] In fact, Kurzweil believes we are on the verge of technological breakthroughs that will lead to the complete restructuring of the fabric of reality, transmuting the universe into a vast, thinking being.[6] This event is referred to as 'the Singularity.' Kurzweil's outlandish estimations about the future of technology have given him the status of a prophet in the so-called transhumanist movement. In this article, I argue that Kurzweil's transhumanism contains a dimension of transgressive, millenarian spirituality that is best understood as

1 Bergson: The Two Sources, 275.

2 According to a Google patent search, conducted November 1, 2016.

3 Ranj: Google's Chief Futurist.

4 Kurzweil: The Age of Spiritual Machines.

5 E.g., Berman: Futurist Ray Kurzweil Says He Can Bring His Dead Father Back to Life. Cf. Kurzweil in Ptolemy: Transcendent Man.

6 Kurzweil: The Singularity is Near.

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an emerging form of contemporary esotericism grounded in expectations about technological progress.[7]

This statement requires some qualifications. When I consider transhumanism a form of esotericism I do not mean to imply that it is the contemporary heir to one of the many historical currents that have been lumped together under this rubric. The claim is at the same time more modest and more ambitious than this: Modestly, I argue that transhumanism shares some key conceptual elements with so-called esoteric currents. Thus, I argue for a *structural similarity* with ideas, worldviews, and currents that are typically labelled esoteric.[8] More ambitiously, however, I entertain that these similarities are not accidental, but tell us something about a Promethean 'deep structure' that runs through much of Western intellectual history, and which is expressed, among other places, in esoteric currents and the transhumanist movement.[9] In this sense, Kurzweil's transhuman ambitions may be viewed as a 'scientification' – or better yet, a *technologization* – of discursive knots often associated with esotericism.[10] Key among these are the quest for immortality, the transmutation of the world, and the making of gods.

There is, however, also a social link between transhumanism and contemporary esotericism. I argue that transhumanism, as a movement, is currently *merging with* and *mobilizing* parts of the occulture.[11] Transhumanist ideas have been percolating in the 'cultic milieu' since at least the 1970s, as evidenced by the techno-utopianism of some psychedelic revolutionaries like Timothy Leary and, on occasion, Terence McKenna. The location of the techboom itself in the valley south of San Francisco Bay also reveals a deeper entwined history between the 1960s counterculture and a futurist brand of utopianism

7 For other examples, see the contributions to Asprem and Granholm (eds.): Contemporary Esotericism.

8 For the views on analogy and comparison that inform these points, see Asprem: Beyond the West.

9 This 'Promethean ambition' is concerned above all with the desire for perfect knowledge, with the acquisition of special powers, and the elevation of the individual. This background 'discursive element' comes close to what Kocku von Stuckrad has in mind when talking about 'esoteric discourse' as a concern with 'higher knowledge' and ways of achieving it. See e.g. von Stuckrad: Western Esotericism.

10 In the sense of von Stuckrad: The Scientification of Religion.

11 On occulture, see Partridge: The Re-Enchantment of the West (vol. 1); Partridge: Occulture is Ordinary.

where networked computers and an ideology of cybernetics was linked to solving environmental, economic, and social problems, while promoting alternative communities sustained by new means of communication.[12]

Transhumanist milieus appear to be converging with the science-oriented, technophilian wing of what used to be the 'New Age movement.' Thus, transhumanism adds a new set of discursive elements to what Kennet Granholm calls the 'discursive complexes' that make up contemporary esotericism.[13] Most crucially, it provides a new eschatological scenario in the form of the Singularity, at a time when the previous big scenario – that of 2012 – has recently failed.[14]

What is Transhumanism?

Transhumanism is a radically utopian movement concerned with the development and application of human enhancement technologies. The baseline assumption is that humanity has the power to transcend its biological limitations, and that such transcendence is desirable, or even necessary for long-term survival. The tools for overcoming biology and reaching our true potential are found in the gamut of recent and emerging technologies, from biotechnology and medical research, to nanotechnology and artificial intelligence. The unrestrained use of such technologies is considered the road to total freedom, promising to make us a species of immortal, omniscient, space-travelling demigods.

The term 'transhumanism' itself appears to have been coined by the evolutionary biologist Julian Huxley – grandson of 'Darwin's bulldog,' Thomas Henry Huxley, and brother to the novelist and countercultural hero Aldous Huxley. In an essay from 1957, Julian Huxley, who, as many science-oriented political progressives of the era was a staunch defender of eugenic policies, wrote that

> The human species can, if it wishes, transcend itself – not just sporadically, an individual here in one way, an individual there in another way, but in its entirety, as humanity. We need a name for this new belief. Perhaps transhumanism will serve: man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.[15]

12 On these fascinating links, see especially Turner: From Counterculture to Cyberculture.

13 Granholm: Esoteric Currents as Discursive Complexes.

14 On the 2012 millennarian predictions and the social movements that coalesced around it, see e.g. Gelfer (ed.): 2012; Whitesides: 2012 Millennialism becomes Conspiracist Teleology.

15 Huxley: Transhumanism, 17.

Although a number of other historical precursors could be mentioned, from the Russian cosmists at the beginning of the twentieth century,[16] to post-war science fiction authors and futurists,[17] transhumanism came to its own as a movement in the late 1980s. Key events in its emergence as a social movement include the foundation of the Foresight Institute (1986), the establishment of the journal *Extropy: The Journal of Transhumanist Thought* in 1988, and the associated Extropy Institute (1991). An international network continued to develop through the late 1990s, with the establishment of The World Transhumanist Association (now renamed Humanity+) and the *Journal of Transhumanism* (now *Journal of Evolution and Technology*) in 1998, and the Singularity Institute in 2000. Dozens of related organizations, associations, journals and institutes now exist – there is even a Mormon Transhumanist Association (est. 2006), exploring the potential of human enhancement technologies for ushering in the Mormon vision of earthly paradise.[18]

While the transhumanist movement has grown to have contributors, spokespersons, and followers in a number of countries around the world, its centre of gravity remains in Silicon Valley. In fact, the ideological, political, and spiritual ideals of transhumanism flourish at the core of the US tech industry. This is understandable, since the transhumanist literature typically imbues the technologies of Silicon Valley with messianic significance.

Ray Kurzweil stands at the centre of this milieu. In 2008 he co-founded Singularity University together with people such as Google CEO Larry Page. Located in the South Bay, with NASA Ames Research Center next door and the Googleplex and Stanford University only a few minutes' drive away, Singularity University is a private educational institution and think-tank, based on Kurzweil's ideas, that aims to "educate, inspire and empower leaders to apply exponential technologies to address humanity's grand challenges."[19] Through its focus on attracting and developing future business leaders and 'disruptive' innovators from all around the world (its 'Global Solutions' course reportedly attracted 3000 applications for 80 slots in 2013),[20] a generation of potentially very influential individuals are being exposed to Kurzweil's ideas on technological development. We are in

16 See e.g. Young: The Russian Cosmists; Hagemeister: Konstantin Tsiolkovskii and the Occult Roots of Soviet Space Travel.

17 See especially the works of the Persian-born author Fereidoun Esfandiary, better known as FM-2030, which include FM-2030: *Optimism One* (1970); *Up-Wingers* (1973); and *Are You a Transhuman?* (1989).

18 See their website: *Transfigurism*.

19 Anon.: About.

20 Miguel: Elite University Aims to Solve World's Problems.

other words not talking about a figure at the fringes of Silicon Valley, but of an influential leader at the heart of one of our days' most powerful industries.

Kurzweil has presented his grand vision of our imminent technological future through a number of best-selling books. The titles of three of these reveal the increasingly ambitious message. In 1990, Kurzweil published *The Age of Intelligent Machines*, arguing that we would soon see computing power explode so that machines would be able to compete with and even beat humans in an increasing number of cognitive tasks. Seven years after its publication, IBM's computer, Deep Blue, broke new ground by beating Gary Kasparov in a six-game match of chess.[21] Thus, when Kurzweil released *The Age of Spiritual Machines* in 1999, the intelligence of machines were no longer in dispute. Meanwhile, home computers were rapidly becoming commonplace and the world wide web had fully emerged, satiating everyday life of the Western middle classes with computer technologies. The next frontier was to make machines more like humans, and eventually to transform humanity itself. By merging human and machine intelligence, Kurzweil argued, humanity will transform itself into a new species of supermen. This far more ambitious project was continued in his 2005 book, *The Singularity Is Near*. In this book, transhumanism's millenarian dimensions emerge fully-fledged, as Kurzweil describes a coming event that will transform not only human life, but the entire universe as we know it: the 'singularity'.

The Coming Singularity: Kurzweil's Millennial Predictions

What is the singularity? To get to grips with this concept, we need to understand Kurzweil's view of history.[22] Transhumanists tend to share a 'macrohistorical' vision[23] by which all of human *and* natural history, even the history of the universe itself, can be understood in terms of a single mathematical concept: the exponential function.

21 Hsu: Behind Deep Blue.

22 Again, the ideas expressed by Kurzweil did not all originate with him. The mathematician, computer scientist and science fiction author Vernon Vinge appears to have been the first to conceptualize and name the technological singularity, more or less in the sense presently understood by singularitarian transhumanists. This happened in essays in the mid-1980s, first in an opinion piece in the futurist journal *Omni*, in January 1983. See Vinge: First Word, 10.

23 Trompf: Macrohistory.

The plausibility of this grand narrative is unmistakably bolstered by the performance of the tech industry over the past half century. It can indeed be cast as a generalization of 'Moore's Law,' originally formulated in 1965 by the co-founder of Intel, Gordon E. Moore.[24] Moore's Law originally predicted that the number of transistors on integrated circuits would increase exponentially, doubling every eighteen months. However, this trend was expected to flatten out when some physical ceiling was met – which Moore predicted would happen by the mid-1970s.

Kurzweil defends a much more radical version of the exponential view, which he has dubbed the 'Law of Accelerating Returns.'[25] It is more radical in three ways. First, it is *recursive*: the results of past changes accelerate the future speed at which change happens. This contrasts with Moore's law, which has doubling-times fixed at eighteen months.[26] Connected with this, exponential growth is seen as practically *unrestrained*. New technological abilities tend to find new and previously unforeseen ways to sidestep limitations. The ceiling is replaced by a stairway: Reaching a 'limit' only means that the exponential process will start over again on a higher level. Third, these overlapping exponential processes are universalized: exponential growth is *not* confined to computing power alone, but applies to *all* of technology, as well as to all of evolution – including non-biological evolution. The exponential function describes the *telos* of the entire universe – from the Big Bang to the end of times.

If one assumes an understanding of historical and cosmological development in terms of the exponential function, the concept of the singularity follows quite naturally. It delineates the final exponential turning-point (that is, relative to the human point of view), where change will accelerate so fast as to practically transform everything in the blink of an eye. In Kurzweil's view, the singularity will be triggered in the near future, when artificial intelligence first outmatches the human brain, and continues to expand beyond human capacity at an exponential rate. This 'explosion of intelligence' will be the tipping-point, and Kurzweil prophesizes its imminent arrival in 2045. But the super-intelligent AI will not be on some lonely computer locked away in the deep vaults of a secret research facility. It will be created in a distributed network of intelligent nanorobots, that will already be infused in, and merged with, the human organism, connecting our individual brains with everyone and everything else.

24 Moore: Cramming More Components onto Integrated Circuits.

25 The following description of Kurzweil's views on exponential grown and its relation to the Singularity is based on Kurzweil: The Singularity is Near, 35–110.

26 For a discussion and modelling of the mathematics involved, see Brunner: Modelling Moore's Law.

The intelligence explosion will not happen separate from human bodies – it will *be part of* human bodies, radically transformed and fully merged with machines and with each other. These enhanced humans of 2045 will not only have telepathic abilities, but the ability to completely merge their personalities and memories with each other to form 'hive minds' if they so wish.

Once this happens, the world will be changed for ever. Kurzweil imagines that the conscious cloud of molecular machines that humanity will now have become will set out to transform and rearrange the matter that makes up our planet. Eventually, all the matter and energy of the solar system will be made part of the expanding network of intelligence. We will transform our surroundings into a massive brain. Matter will become intelligent and conscious; "infused with spirit," as Kurzweil puts it.[27] Expanding exponentially, this process will eventually ripple through the galaxy until "the universe wakes up."[28] Intelligence and consciousness is the destiny of the universe – and humanity's (or at least the tech engineer's) messianic role is to bring its release.

An Intermezzo on Techno-Spiritualism: Transhuman Aspirations, All-Too-Human Motivations

The above summary has portrayed the emergence of Kurzweil's singularitarian transhumanism as an intellectual journey, developed in an unfolding dialectic between the ingenuity of reason and material technological change. This is very much Kurzweil's own story, idealized to the max by the austere rationality of the exponential function. It is, however, a story that obscures a deeper personal motivation based in common human affects.

In a series of interviews, Kurzweil has provided a glimpse into biographical details that have helped determine where he has invested his inventive talents.[29] In a story that rings familiar to historians of spiritualism, the loss of his beloved father at a tender age left a long-standing motivation to circumvent the barrier between the living and the dead. In his 2011 documentary about Kurzweil, director Barry Ptolemy casts the brilliant inventor as a tragic hero

27 Kurzweil: The Singularity is Near, 390.

28 Ibid., 21.

29 See especially the interviews in *Transcendent Man*; cf. also the interview in Berman: Futurist Ray Kurzweil Says He Can Bring His Dead Father Back to Life.

who, devastated by his father Fredric's death to heart disease, invests all his ingenuity into vanquishing death altogether and bringing his dad back to life. Instead of succumbing to fatalism about our mortality, or resorting to religious compensators for what cannot be had (eternal life without disease), people must face up to the tragedy of death and start doing something about it.

The desire to defy and conquer death is, of course, a classic theme, and it permeates the culture of transhumanism. 'Radical life-extension' is one of the core concerns of the movement, whether pursued through existing techniques such as exercise and diet, experimental remedies such as supplements (Kurzweil himself reports taking over 200 different supplements a day), or future technologies ranging from gene therapies to nanorobots acting as intravenous MDs, maintaining the body from within. As is also the case with most religions, the obsession with death and dying has resulted in uniquely transhumanist burial practices: Echoing the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, cremation is viewed as a grotesque and barbaric practice that destroys all of the body's inherent 'information' and thus ruins forever the possibility of reanimation. The correct alternative, provided by companies such as Alcor Life Extension (founded 1972), is to freeze and preserve the body with the latest in cryogenics technology, in the hope that some future technology may thaw the preserved tissue and blow new life into dead cells. When the present author participated in a transhumanist conference in San Francisco in 2014,[30] the culture of death-defiance was on full display – from stalls pushing vitamins and minerals, to a talk by Alcor's CEO, Max More, to the promotion of a children's book entitled *Death is Wrong*.[31]

While the quest for immortality is a commonplace feature of the transhumanist movement, the resurrection of, and contact with, individual loved ones is a somewhat more heterodox feature. Kurzweil's idea of how this can be achieved, even when the body has not been preserved, relies entirely on his views on artificial intelligence and the power of computers. The first thing we must note is that Kurzweil assumes a minority position in the philosophy of mind and personality holding that the mind is, basically, a pattern-recognition algorithm, and that the traits of individual minds – their knowledge, personalities, and so on – are the results of the specific kinds of data on which this algorithm has performed computations.[32] This view, which, in contrast with mainstream cognitive science puts the algorithm front-and-centre while diminishing the role of the biological tissue of the brain and the nervous system to

30 Transhuman Visions 2.0, February 28, 2014, Piedmont Veteran's Hall, Piedmont, CA.

31 Stolyarov II and Stolyarov: Death is Wrong.

32 In his book on the subject, he christens it the "Pattern Recognition Theory of Mind" (PRTM). Kurzweil: How to Create a Mind.

being simply a "substratum" and ignoring altogether the issues of evolutionary and developmental processes, has at least two implications. First, that human minds could, in principle, work equally well on a silicon basis; and second, that individual minds may be replicated by copying data structures across 'devices' just as one would copy files between computers. If this view were correct, it would promise to reduce two central philosophical problems (the nature of the mind and personal identity) into engineering problems.

This is how Kurzweil treats the issues, and this is how he hopes to one day be able to communicate with a man who died in 1970. The mind is information, and information never dies. When the AI technology that Kurzweil is involved with developing at Google becomes sufficiently advanced, all he needs to do is feed the machine learning algorithm sufficient data about his dad, and Fredric Kurzweil will, for all practical purposes, have been reborn in the circuitry of a computer. Precisely for this reason, Ray has been collecting every last trace of ephemera that Frederic left behind, from DNA samples and physiological data, to voice recordings, diaries, letters, photographs, and notebooks. Since Frederic was a musical composer, there is also a wealth of artistic productions for the algorithm to chew on. Following Ray's thinking, when this information is synthesized by the algorithm and embodied in the mediumship of an avatar, conversation with the 'other side' will be just as real as what spiritualist mediums have been claiming. In both cases, communication will be less than perfect, and only bits and fragments of the lost person may pass through the veil. But those parts have a direct continuity with the deceased, and the medium does embody the personality of the dead.

Transhumanism as Esoteric Discourse

It is not hard to draw analogies between transhumanist thought and concepts that are familiar from the study of esotericism. The above intermezzo highlighted a similarity with spiritualist discourses that reveal an analogy between the information-theoretical immortality of the transhumanists and the partial and fragmented 'survival of personality' of the spiritualists and psychical researchers,[33] allowing for a comparison of the AI avatar and the spirit medium. We may view this as a *technologization* of the very human problem of reconciling the brutal reality of death with the desire for contact and intimacy with deceased loved ones. However, it is crucial to note that a technological solution to this problem

33 See especially the theories of Myers: Human Personality.

was precisely what spiritualism itself claimed to provide: a series of techniques, instruments (human and artificial), and theoretical elaborations for how to establish contact, driven by the same Promethean assumption that humanity has the power within itself to solve even the daunting challenge of death.

Other aspects of the transhuman worldview easily inspire similar comparisons. We can, for example, discern an 'alchemical' ideal, concerned with the transmutation of the body, the soul, and the world itself, and the attainment of immortality as a stage towards spiritual perfection. This fairly obvious analogy is also perceived and used with effect by some of the authors who dwell in the borderlands of esotericism and transhumanism.[34] We find a concern with 'higher knowledge' – a vast extension of reason beyond present limitations, requiring the complete transformation of our minds. Combined with both these is an ambition of *apotheosis* – of becoming divine, eternal, perfect beings. There is even a notion of 'living nature,' although expressed through an *eschatological* event where the 'dead' universe comes alive and 'wakes up' at the end of history.

This apocalyptic vision and the combined views on history, evolution, and human potential is perhaps the most intriguing aspect for our purposes. At first sight, it may look as if transhumanism is just another attempt to 'immanentize the eschaton,' in Eric Voegelin's sense: transhumanists, like political and religious utopians before them, seek 'transcendental fulfilment' *within* history and by material means.[35] But this reading does not carry all the way: the Singularity is imagined to lead to a genuinely transcendent eschatological event. In fact, its eschatology resonates with premillennialism and dispansationalism – eschathological theologies that have been strongly influential also on modern esotericism, from Theosophy and Thelema to the New Age.[36] Singularitarian transhumanism belongs to this same theological neighbourhood.

Moreover, the macrohistorical outlook of transhumanist spirituality implies an evolutionary 'theology of emergence,' which it shares with much esoteric thought since the early twentieth century.[37] This aspect is neatly illustrated in one of the many dialogue sections of *The Singularity Is Near*, where Kurzweil casts himself discussing religion with his good friend, Bill Gates. After discussing the need for a new, essentially leaderless religion that can come to grips

34 See, e. g., the conspiratorial and mythomanial exposition in de Hart and Farrell: Transhumanism.

35 Voegelin: The New Science of Politics, 120.

36 See, e.g., Hanegraaff: New Age Religion; Bogdan: Envisioning the Birth of a New Aeon.

37 For this concept, see Asprem: The Problem of Disenchantment, 232–247.

with the concept of the singularity, Gates asks: "So is there a God in this religion?" To which Kurzweil answers:

> Not yet, but there will be. Once we saturate the matter and energy in the universe with intelligence, it will 'wake up,' be conscious, and sublimely intelligent. That's about as close to God as I can imagine.[38]

The divine emerges from matter, with a little help from human ingenuity. There is no Creator god, existing independently of the world. Instead, a divine intelligence is created *by* and *inside of* the universe, in a sort of emergent pantheism. Essentially, Kurzweil has the monotheistic creation story in reverse. Not only that: since it is *human agency* that will create god, Kurzweil's version would also come across to defenders of Abrahamic orthodoxy as the ultimate idolatry.[39] This is Kurzweil as the theurgic, god-making magus, and the ultimate techno-pagan.[40]

Converging Milieus: The Case of the 2045 Initiative

Kurzweil defines a 'singularitarian' as "someone who understands the Singularity and has reflected on its meaning for his or her life."[41] One person who has most certainly done this is the young Russian billionaire and online media tycoon, Dmitry Itskov (b. 1980). Itskov has realized that the singularity is coming in 2045, and has decided to take a proactive approach by investing his fortune in a project for physical immortality through cybernetic bodies that he calls 'avatars.' The first prototypes that his organization, the 2045 Initiative,[42] have forecast will be remote-controlled via brain-computer interface; later, brain transplantation and even consciousness upload will be available – assuming a similar metaphysics of mind as Kurzweil's information focused view. By the time of the singularity, the avatars will have become polymorphing bodies made up of swarms of nanorobots.

But Itskov's vision is a lot broader than this. He believes that the coming Singularity forces us to reform our spiritual and political outlook. To this end

38 Kurzweil: The Singularity Is Near, 375.
39 Hanegraaff: Esotericism and the Academy, 104–107.
40 Davis: TechGnosis.
41 Kurzweil: The Singularity Is Near, 370.
42 See 2045.

the 2045 Initiative aims to facilitate a transhumanist revolution that bridges from technology to politics, culture, ethics, and spirituality.[43] As a part of this strategy, the 2045 Initiative has taken concrete steps towards synthesizing transhumanist ideology with spirituality. In practice, this means lobbying the support of established spiritual authorities. Itskov has, for example, been able to gather the support of the Dalai Lama – at least for long enough to pose for a picture where His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso appears to endorse a poster of the Avatar project together with Itskov during an audience at Dharamsala in 2012.[44]

At the time of writing, the 2045 Initiative has held two big international conferences, one in Moscow (2012) and the other in New York City (2013). The Moscow conference featured a panel dedicated to 'interfaith dialogue.'[45] Besides a Russian Hindu monk, a Tibetan Buddhist, and the Orthodox archbishop of Ottawa, it featured Alan Francis, an American Gurdjieff follower and Fourth Way guru active in California and Russia.[46] The second conference, in New York City, also featured an intriguing list of speakers, bringing together transhumanist ideologues such as Kurzweil, with researchers and engineers in fields like robotics, neuroengineering, and artificial intelligence, and a number of household names in the 'New Age' and 're-enchantment of science' scenes: Amit Goswami of *The Self-Aware Universe* was there, as were the two main theoreticians of 'quantum consciousness,' Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff, and the scholar and advocate of Tibetan Buddhism in the US, Robert Thurman, who spoke about the "merging of our cybernetic and subtle bodies."[47]

Concluding Speculations: Transhumanist Spirituality and the Future

The 2045 Initiative is only a recent and high-profile example of a more pervasive trend: the transhumanist gospel is merging with parts of Western 'alternative spirituality.' Should we expect to see this trend increase in the years ahead?

43 See anon.: International Manifesto of the '2045' Strategic Social Initiative.

44 Anon.: The Dalai Lama Supports 2045's Avatar Project.

45 A video of the meeting can be viewed on the 2045 website: Anon.: Round Table 'Dialogue of Faiths.'

46 See his entry on the Gurdjieff Club website: Anon: Alan Francis.

47 Overview of speakers with video presentations available at *Global Future 2045* website.

There are two reasons why continued convergence does seem likely. One concerns the *persuasiveness* of transhumanist spirituality in a world that is, after all, really becoming more deeply infused with new technologies. Considering that those who create and profit from the new technologies and those who develop transhumanist ideology are sometimes the exact same people, we should only expect this rhetorical force to intensify. Transhumanist spirituality can be viewed as the ideological-religious 'superstructure' offered up by a social class of ascending power. Founded on a radical DIY ethos, an iconoclastic (or, in the new jargon, 'disruptive') attitude to existing political, technological, and economic structures, and a presumption about universal access to the tools for self-amplifications – all rooted in the counterculture of the 1960s – the ideology of technological utopianism tinged with libertarianism and human potential spirituality feels different when it emanates from what is now Silicon Valley's multibillion dollar corporations, and alongside an ever-expanding line of products that each offers a tiny share of participation in the augmentation race. As companies are expected to roll out technologies like self-driving cars and AIs that will displace large portions of the human workforce across a broad swath of professions, we should expect the ideology of 'smart,' 'disruption,' 'augmentation,' and the 'post-' or 'transhuman' to amplify in order to legitimize the dramatic social and political shifts that may result. In this cultural climate, tech-savvy gurus who are able to tap into the symbolic capital of Silicon Valley may thrive.

The second reason why we may expect the trend to continue has to do with the notion of the singularity, and with what Michael Barkun has termed 'improvisational millennialism.'[48] With the singularity now often fixed at the date 2045, singularitarian transhumanism can supply a new eschatological scenario for post-2012 esoteric millennialists. The 2012 phenomenon connected the psychedelic prophesies of Terence McKenna with Maya calendar speculations, UFO-logy, conspiracy theory, and much besides. Now that Itskov's movement is targeting the 2045 singularity directly at Western spiritual communities, we should not be surprised to see this date sail up as a candidate for the final 'transformation of consciousness.' This time it would not be meditation or psychoactive substances alone that would expand our minds and transform the world, but rather the infusion of nanobots into our brains. The rest, as usual, would be the end of history.

48 Barkun: *A Culture of Conspiracy*, 18–24.

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Ehler Voss

Fighting the Fakers and Fooling the Fighters. Skeptics between Triumph and Agony, or: The Birth of the Skeptical Movement from the Spirit of Magic

So, this is the part where we're gonna talk about doing some readings, two different kinds of readings. We're gonna do psychic readings, and we are going to do mediumship. And I'll tell you the difference: Psychic readings have to do with energy in the third dimension. And I'll give you an example of psychic readings [. . .]. You can ask me about relationships: Am I gonna meet the person of my dreams? Is the person I am with the person I should be with? Is my mother gonna stop being psycho? Is my sister going to stop being a bitch? You know those are relationship-related questions. You can ask me a question about career, or finances: Am I gonna get the job? Should I expect a raise, am I gonna get a promotion? Should I look for something different? Am I on the right career track? People ask me all the time for lottery numbers. If I would have the lottery numbers I wouldn't be in San Jose with you guys, I would use them myself. That's not the way it works! You can't ask me about health issues. I am not a doctor, I am not a lawyer, I am not a psychiatrist. I cannot diagnose. It's all energetically what I feel. But that's all I can really do. Good common sense says if you need to see a doctor, a lawyer, or a shrink, go see them! [. . .] So that's a psychic question, you can ask me any of that sort of thing.

Mediumship is interdimensional transcommunication, that really is the term for being able to communicate with other realms or dimensions. And the dimension that I speak with is the dimension of death. [. . .] So, unlike other mediums that you may have seen on television, [. . .] or had a reading with, I typically do not do what is called an open channeling. An open channeling is where any spirit that wants to communicate can come through and communicate. To me that's like everybody in this room trying to talk to me and wanting to get my attention. So instead of doing open channeling I do what's called direct contact. And that is: You tell me who it is you want me to communicate with and I try to reach out to that individual [. . .]. What I need from you is three pieces of information: The name of the person you want me to communicate with, first name will do. The relationship you have with that person and how long it's been since they passed. [. . .] What you're gonna get is an abbreviated version of what I do in my private readings. I do all my private readings by telephone. How that works? I don't know, its's just done. Energetic exchange. What you're gonna get is a little snippet of memory, information, that will show you that the person that you love is gone, and 99% of the time . . . they have gone to a pain-free, peaceful, loving place. If they were snarky or feisty in this world, they may have mellowed a bit. And sometimes, they're going to come through with things that you're not going to understand. That's okay. Hang onto that information and let it evolve because . . . you'll think about what I said, and you'll have an 'Aha!' moment. Do not stretch anything too far to make it fit because, if you have to do that, that's not it.

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I'm sitting with about 100 people in a windowless conference room in a hotel built in 1926 in the San Francisco Bay Area. It's 2014 and I am here doing anthropological fieldwork following people in California who are excited about what is called "the paranormal".[1] Before us on stage stands Kim Cocaine, 60 years old and one of the stars among the "psychic mediums" of the United States. He is stocky, with short blond hair, jeans, glasses, and a scarf, an identical version of which can be purchased for 20 dollars at the book table. His manner seems affected. It feels as if every tenth word is "fuck" or "bitch". The emphasis is on fun, and the audience laughs a lot. Kim Cocaine lives on the East Coast. He has written a cross between an autobiography and a self-help book, and he hosted a television show on which he presents medially gifted children. He is often on stage. "He's a diva", as Larry explained to me a few days earlier when I visited one of his parapsychological seminars, but he's okay nonetheless; he has some abilities. Sitting beside me is Florence, who is about 60 years old and, as it turned out, is a medium herself. But not professionally, she relativizes modestly. Besides, she is increasingly moving away from it since she took on the leadership of a Zen group. She knows Kim from television. "Quite a character", she comments, smiling. She wants to see him once live, since he's in the neighborhood anyway. On television, you can't always take his measure properly, but that's a general problem, she says, his broadcasts are edited, so you never know what's really happening. But this evening, she says, she saw a great spirit and much light all around him when he walked on stage. Farther ahead of us in a separate "VIP area" sits Sandra with a few members of her Ghost Hunting Group. I accompanied them for the first time last week. We had met with about 30 people for an "overnight investigation" on an aircraft carrier from the Vietnam War that has been turned into a museum and we made contact with the ghosts on the ship. She dressed up today and says she's looking forward to the evening and hopes to receive a message. That's why she's taken a seat near the front, even if the tickets here cost 160 dollars instead of the 59 charged a few rows behind, where I'm sitting; that increases the chance of attracting his attention, she says. With the more expensive tickets, one is not only closer to the action; one also has the exclusive chance afterward to have one's photo taken with Kim and to be on hand when he makes contact with the spirits that are in the building known as a haunted hotel.

1 From 2014–15 I spent one year in California, followed by several shorter stays of one to four weeks until 2018. The fieldwork was funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) as part of the research project „The immanentization of spiritualistic effects" at the University of Siegen. All names of the described actors are pseudonyms.

Although at the beginning Kim Cocaine distinguished between open channeling and direct contact and said that he normally primarily carries out direct contact, this evening the deceased repeatedly attempt to get in contact. He turns to a woman in the second row: he has contact with an older woman; is she seeking contact with an older woman? No, the addressed woman answers, she's seeking a man, 30 years old. Here is someone else, Kim says, an older woman. He goes on to ask the woman if the 30-year-old has something to do with a motorcycle accident or committed suicide. Another woman in the row in front of her says she's seeking contact with her sister, who lost her life in the attack on the World Trade Center. Her neighbor joins in; he wanted to ask about his mother. Kim asks if the two in the first row know each other. "Yes, we're friends," says the man. "Remind me of your name again," says Kim. "Walter." Walter, a tall, slender man about 40 with a brilliant turquoise-colored shirt and a bright tie, was already chosen by Kim in the first part of the show, the part during which one could ask him very general questions. Walter had said that he has a strange characteristic and wanted to ask Kim's opinion about it: "You see, I have never been able to wear a watch. When I was young, watches wouldn't keep proper time when I wore them. Later in life, watches that were more expensive would just stop working altogether and defied repair. I finally just stopped wearing watches, and like most people today, use my smart phone to tell me the time. But recently, I had a strange experience going through an airport. The scanner they put me in just stopped dead. Everyone working there looked at each other in shock and surprise, and I finally had to get patted down and wanded by airport security. I asked a friend about this, and one of her friends who is psychic told her that it was a very bad sign, and that I most likely have a demon . . . " Kim interrupted him irritably and vehemently explained to him that he just can't bear to hear this assertion anymore; the man was not alone with this problem; Kim had met many people in whose presence clocks or other technological equipment stopped working; this was nothing exceptional. Then Kim polemicized against the theory of demons, which was trotted out to explain every situation. The phenomenon the man described was simply one that neither scientists nor parapsychologists could explain, but there was nothing demonic about it.

Now it's Walter's turn again:

- "You said you want to talk to an older woman," Kim now says.
- "My mother," answers Walter.
- "And her name is?"
- "Ella."
- "And how long it has been since she passed?"
- "One year."

– “She is a fucking Auntie Mame . . . She encourages everybody to reach their full potential, she would be the ringleader, the one who would bring others through and says, “Come on! Let’s go do this!” . . . An amazing woman . . . an amazing woman . . . and I hear music around her, she was always singing.”
– “Yes.”
– “Are you in arts?”
– “No, not directly.”
– “Should you be?”
– “Well, the whole family is.”
– “Should you be?”
– “You tell me! I don’t know, maybe I should be.”
– “Well, you know a lot about musical theater, correct?”
– “Yes, of course.”
– “Because, you know what I am supposed to say to you? Sing out, Louise! . . . Sing out, Louise! . . . The third dimension is knocking at my door. You make a lot of excuses. And she said she just wants you to live authentically. And everything’s okay. You are right. But don’t make excuses . . . . She adores you. Because you are my love. Hello my love. Make sense?”
– “Yes.”
– “Is that the way she would refer to you? Hi my love.”
– “She called everyone love.”
– “Hi my love,” Kim repeats, then abruptly turns to the woman beside the man. She is holding two photos of a child in her hand:
– “Tell me your name!”
– “My name is Marina.”
– “And the child’s name is?”
– “Matthew, he died 20 years ago . . . It’s my son.”
– “This is quick.”
– “Yes, very.”
– “I am supposed to tell you: It didn’t hurt! [. . .] There is a thing with the feet . . . the kind of thing, with his feet always moving. He has been always moving.”
– “He was just running into the street, and that’s how he died.”
– “He is always moving.”
– “Yes, he is always moving. He is just a busy little boy.”
– “And you have Restless Leg Syndrome, don’t you?”

The woman hesitates briefly and, sounding somewhat embarrassed, affirms Kim’s diagnosis.

– "I'm psychic and shit," Kim quickly says, as if with a stifled voice to himself. The audience laughs out loud.
– "Your kid is fine . . . your kid is fine."
– "Thank you."
– "You have a little shrine. You are so scared, that . . . "
– "I am just so worried."
– "Yes, but he's fine, that's what he tells me."
– "But he was only three", says the woman in a piteous voice. The audience comments on this with a sympathetic Aaaaaah!"

Kim joins in, but then adds, triumphantly:

– "But how old was his soul? TA-DA!!"

The woman begins weeping.

"Who is gonna help?" Kim asks and motions his assistant closer, to give the woman a handkerchief. Then he abruptly turns to her neighbor:

– "9/11?"
– "Yes."
– "Quick, I'm gone! Fuck this, I'm outta here! Did it hurt? "Yeah, it hurt a little bit, but you know what? I'm okay." You need to know that. What's the person's name? Is it a man?"
– "Linda, my sister, my older sister."
– "She's brought through with a man. Oh, my God. It's Aaron."

Kim Cocaine tells how, a few years before, he was at the World Trade Center with a client and met the deceased man Aaron, who told them: Yes, we are here, we are good! And now this Aaron had been to the person the woman was speaking about.

– "Linda," the woman says once more.
– "I hear her with music," says Kim, "rockin' with music, rockin' with music". Then, after a short pause: "The Beatles!"
– "She liked The Beatles".
– "I am psychic and shit!" The audience laughs again, but not as loud this time.
– "Lady Madonna? Just played Lady Madonna." He concludes by saying he's receiving the message "IloveyouIloveyouIloveyouIloveyou" and asks his assistant to pass the microphone on.

That the woman with the sister who died in the World Trade Center, the man with the turquoise-colored shirt whose watch always stops and whose deceased mother advises him to live an authentic life, and the mother with the child who died in an accident and herself has restless legs were all called on today surpasses all their hopes. "In line with the other dupes at the Kim Cocaine Comedy Hour,"

Peter, as the man with the green shirt actually is named, had posted with a photo of the hotel lobby on Facebook. Whenever we run into each other this evening, we act as if we don't know each other. Jack does the same. He is sitting with his wife and the youthful son of Marina, whose real name is Marianne, in the second-to-last row. Jack had driven all three here. Marianne hadn't wanted to take her own car; all the "Darwin", "Science", and "Be Skeptical" stickers could have revealed why we are here: Operation Bee Sting. She had chosen the name because this was indeed a sting operation, and that expression that means both a pain and a trap succinctly describes what the aim was: to expose Kim Cocaine as what he is for Marianne: a fraud. He is suspected of performing what are called "hot readings", i.e., of gathering in advance information about the people who come to him and then selling them this knowledge as the result of his abilities as a medium. This is in contrast to a "cold reading", in which a self-styled medium, in the situation and without prior knowledge, tries to pull off a pretense of knowledge about his interlocutor.

The trick with which they want to expose Kim this evening has been in preparation for months. It was suspected that he and his team glean information about his visitors via Facebook. Since tickets can be purchased solely with a credit card, it's easy to obtain the names of the participants. Additionally, when one pays one is called upon to connect with Kim on Facebook. And the skeptics think that Kim can be sure that the people who pay twice the price just to be able to sit at the front are hardcore believers from whom little is to be feared and who will be easy marks. Skeptics, if they attend the event at all, would choose the cheaper seats. And that's why Marianna, Peter, and Janet bought VIP status. That increases the likelihood of being called on, Marianna says. That was the calculation, and it worked. Four months earlier, with a few other skeptics from their groups in Monterey, Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay Area, Marianne had set up various Facebook accounts under slightly altered names but with real profile photos, building up continuously invented characters. The invented names weren't to deviate too far from the real names, because it had been announced that one would have to show identification to enter the event. And so Marianne became Marina, Janet became Jan, and Peter became Walter, which is his middle name. But this cautionary measure proved unnecessary, because no identification was demanded, and not at Kim's event yesterday in Los Angeles, either. The fake identities conversed on Facebook about the good old days, posted photos of their meals, and shared cat videos – just like people do in real life. A few weeks ago, they began discussing the coming event with Kim more intensively. Thus, Marianne, as Marina, repeatedly underscored how much she hoped that Kim could establish contact with her deceased son. She mentioned in passing that she had paid off the mortgage on her house and now, for better or worse, did not

have to save money for his college. She wrote that she now planned to spend the money on herself. "Life is too short." With a fan like Marina, a fraud like Kim Cocaine must rub his hands in glee, she said in conversation. I'm reminded of the German children's book Kasperl and Seppel by Ottfried Preußler, who want to lure the robber Hotzenplotz with a box on which they've written "Caution: Gold" in large letters. Marianne bought the tickets with anonymous prepaid debit cards. Nine hundred dollars were raised via a crowdsourcing collection among skeptics – in just twelve hours, as Marianne mentions time and again. A few friends of hers had attended Kim's show yesterday in Los Angeles, but to their great regret, he hadn't selected them.

After the messages from Kim for Janet, Peter, and Marianne, I wait in suspense for the exposure of the fake. But the three remain seated, listen to additional readings, and laugh out loud at Kim's jokes, like the other listeners. About half an hour later, the event is over. Marianna, Peter, and Janet go up on stage and have their photo taken with Kim. Florence, the woman who sat beside me, mocks. She's not sure if Kim is really as great a medium as is always said. If he is, then at any rate he had a bad day today; the evening didn't persuade her, it rather disappointed her, she could feel and see hardly anything. She imitates Kim's "Oh, I see many I love yous around you" and laughs dismissively. She is astonished that he didn't begin his mediumship until 2001, as he said at the beginning; that was rather late in his life. Then she asks me if I want to take part in the séance with Kim after the conclusion. We go to the sales stand to see what an upgrade costs. 90 dollars. Florence has to laugh: "Okay, give me five bucks and I'll do it for you." We exchange addresses; if I want, she would be happy to give me, the anthropologist, a reading, "for fun and practice", even if she might be a little out of practice. Then we say goodbye. I am just able to see Janet, Peter, Marianne, and, a little distance from them, Jack, his wife, and Marianne's son leave the hotel. And I, too, head for the bar around the corner where we have agreed to meet.

Fighting the Fakers Between Triumph and Agony

Joe had waited in this bar during the entire show. He had not wanted to play a direct role in the measure because he feared Kim's staff would recognize him; they had encountered him once some time ago at a protest at one of Kim's shows. So, he had been assigned the role of coordinator; he was to maintain a kind of headquarters that watched over the operation and kept it together via Facebook. He also had access to the fake Facebook accounts of the other three

and was to post a few things that the three, themselves, didn't know about – "double blind", as Marianne put it. The assumption was that, shortly before the start of the show, Kim's team would scroll once more through the Facebook accounts to supply him with knowledge about small details. But because Joe had gotten stuck in traffic, he didn't arrive at the hotel until the show had begun, which posed no big problem, since the success of the operation did not really depend on his activity. When I joined them, the mood was exuberant: "Yeah, man, we got him!" I am still a little confused. Was that everything? Is the operation already finished? What are they so happy about? Where is the exposure? Marianne asks me what I'm thinking. I congratulate her but say that I have to disappoint her: all of this was unfortunately not proof of the nonexistence of spirits and the abilities of mediums, because another medium had sat beside me and opined that Kim was incompetent, or at least that this evening no medium-like phenomenon had happened. Jack was miffed at my facetious needling. Yes, he said, that was clear, it was always like that among these people who competed with each other and tried to run each other down and combat each other. I ask Marianna why they didn't reveal themselves and publicly expose Kim. "Well, I wanted a photo with him," she said; I couldn't pick up any sign of irony. Besides, her friend Richard had asked her to get a book with Kim's autograph for him. I press further: I had waited the whole time for them to expose Kim and was then rather bewildered when it was suddenly all over and nothing further had happened. "I'm not the type to confront someone directly," Marianne said, but more a nice guy and outgoing. After a brief pause, she added: "I don't have the personality to stand such a thing." Jack adds that it would make no sense to expose Kim during the event. True believers cannot be convinced. Peter agrees.

My objection, Jack's annoyance, and Marianne's brief insecurity did nothing to spoil the good mood. Everyone drowning out each other, the evening is recapitulated and celebrated as a triumph. Peter prides himself on how his story with the watch apparently convinced Kim that he is a believer and is incensed and disgusted about the reading for the woman who came after him. Kim told a weeping woman who lost her boyfriend in a car accident just days earlier that the dead friend wanted to tell her he had adhered to the motto "Live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse." Then Kim suddenly called out: "Son of a bitch! He's tall and dark-haired, isn't he?!" Whereupon the woman said that her friend wished he were tall, but he did at least have dark hair. At this point, Kim said that he had briefly appeared in the corner of the room, but had then quickly disappeared. It must be still too early; she should wait a while and then book a private reading with him, when they could take a closer look, but first the boyfriend would have to have passed to the other side completely. "Can you imagine it?!" Peter asks, outraged, "bullshitting a woman

who has just lost her boyfriend in this way and taking advantage of her situation to refer her to his 600-dollar readings!" Peter says he is a psychologist and knows how important it is to live through a proper mourning phase. With these idiotic statements, Kim only gives her hopes of continued contact with her boyfriend, thereby endangering this phase and with it a real healing. That's irresponsible. After he has vented with a few insulting terms for Kim, he speaks about the news he himself was given. If his whole family is involved with art, it is, after all, more than likely that he, too, somehow likes it. And then in reference to Jan: considering her age, one could assume with a high degree of probability that her sister somehow heard and liked the Beatles. And then this trick, when he made an occasional false guess, of turning a "you are this or that" into a "you should do this or that". And then Marianne's reading, his talking about the "rapidly moving legs" that he supposedly saw; that, too, was hardly especially original, since it's obvious that children run around a lot and are always in motion. "And then the trick with the handkerchief," Marianne interrupts. Her friend Richard, a mentalist, had always told her: if you offer a handkerchief to someone who's in an unstable phase, they will automatically begin weeping. And that's precisely what Kim did. When she sat there pretending to be messed up, he asked his assistant to give her a handkerchief.

I ask Peter if he had thought up in advance the stories he told. No, they had occurred to him spontaneously. Then he makes fun of the audience. They were all women who apparently always watched Kim's television show, they constantly referred to the characters who appeared on it, and they seemed to know it inside out. And then Kim kept using the word bitch, moving his wrists like a gay, and waving his scarf, which women apparently liked. Marianne says the principle had been to tell all women that they could do anything. For example, there was this Apple employee with her husband in the audience. The couple already had two daughters, aged 17 and 1, and the woman asked Kim if she and her husband would have a son, especially because the father really wished for one, and if she could manage all that and her career at the same time. Her job was pretty strenuous, namely; she was just releasing the iPhone 6 and worked a 50-hour week. Kim had replied: "If you want, you can manage all of it!" "Unbelievable!" Marianne says: "To tell this woman she could manage everything, just because her Hispanic husband was not satisfied with two daughters and absolutely needed a son to feel like a real man!" Jack recalls the woman who said she was a medium and worked with the police. Who knows what that means? No one knows if that is simply someone who, unasked, constantly phones the police; then, to be polite, the police write down her statements – and so she believes she collaborates with the police, who value her input.

Peter tells me that in his youth he himself was a New Ager and believed in all kinds of things. And then one day he was in the famous East West Bookstore in Mountain View, a traditional meeting place for people like he was then, and there he stumbled over a book with the title "Nostradamus". He had always wanted to know more about Nostradamus anyway, and so he bought it. When he read it, first he thought "what a fucking asshole" the author was, because he had cast doubt on everything. The name of the author was James Randi, and with this book, Randi had planted a seed of skeptical thinking in his brain. And today he was on the Board of a local skeptics group and even worked in part for Randi. Marianne's son recites Kim's advice that if a message made no sense to him, he should wait and discuss with friends; at some point he would understand its meaning. Everyone laughs. It was all so transparent, and how could anyone fall for such obvious bullshit?

In the end, we ask a passerby to take a photo of all of us and we head for the car; the mood is still euphoric and triumphant. Suddenly Peter says: "Psst, believers!" At the traffic light stands Sandra with a girlfriend; they, too, are on the way to their car. I say goodbye to the skeptics and turn to Sandra. She is in a bad mood. Now she had spent so much money to sit up in the front and then she didn't even get a message. She would have liked to receive a real mediumship reading, not just a psychic; instead, she had received nothing at all, neither the one nor the other, although she had always waved her hand energetically. I ask her how the séance with Kim afterward went. It was just having a flashlight go on and off for 20 minutes, nothing more. Very little and very disappointing. Then we both reached our cars and said goodbye.

On my drive back, I think about the story Marianne had told me when I recently got to know her. This story already left me bewildered like this evening. A few years earlier, her friend Richard, the mentalist, had exposed a famous medium who had meanwhile died last year in San Jose at the age of 77. He had gone to the medium's show with a few friends; there, one could draw lottery tickets, and then the ticket numbers were called out. They had all given their tickets to Richard, who was then indeed called on. He had then recounted that he always heard voices of spirits; could the medium explain who they were? The medium had said they were his "guides", but Richard had insisted that they weren't guides, but drove him crazy. While the medium insisted that they were his guides, he pretended to lose consciousness. The medium had paid no attention and had simply moved on to the next audience member while Richard was led out of the hall, examined by an emergency physician, and then released. And the medium had apparently not noticed the deception; one could only hope that she felt very guilty. "He really punked her," Marianne triumphantly finished her story. At the time, it wasn't clear to me what the point of this story was, but

since she didn't understand my cautious questions and she told it as such a success story, I didn't insist. Later I learned that she had recorded this operation on video and posted it on YouTube.

When I arrive at home, I take another look at the non-public Facebook Group Operation Bee Sting. Here, after the show, group members' postings continue to make fun of Kim Cocaine and discuss their next steps. The story is to be made public as fast as possible. Marianne passes on the advice of a well-known skeptic with whom she has talked about this and who says they should avoid accusing Kim Cocaine of cold reading or fraud. Instead, they should preface everything with "in my opinion". In conclusion, Marianne asks that the method using Facebook accounts not be emphasized in the publications, first because it didn't play a big role in this case and second to avoid giving psychics advance warning, so that the accounts can be used later for other measures. Among skeptics, however, it should definitely be made public as a form of instructions. Marianne's goal has always been to spur others to imitate the group's actions.

In the coming days and weeks, the story is made public on the Internet. Marianne and Jan replace the profile photos in their real Facebook accounts with a photo of them arm in arm with Kim. Marianne's friend Edward poses, lolling on a sofa holding Kim's book with his dedication up to the camera. An interview with Marianna about the operation appears the next day in a skeptical podcast from Australia, Marianne writes about the measure on the blog of her hometown skeptics group, and Peter publishes a text-and-audio article on his private homepage, which appears on the website of the James Randi Educational Foundation a little later, as well. Here, too, he added the photo for the VIP guests on which Peter lays his arm over Kim's shoulder and both smile into the camera, with the caption: "Me with my new buddy Kim Cocaine (we're buddies until he reads this article)." Jack reports on the action on his personal website about skepticism. Peter links the article to the Bay Area Skeptics webpage with a short description and the summary: "The plan was a huge success!" Kim's Wikipedia page refers to the action, as does the commentary section in the entry about his book on amazon.com. Other appearances in Podcasts and radio shows follow. Marianne appears on the *Skeptically Challenged* podcast, Peter is interviewed in the *Reap Sow* podcast, and both speak in the *Skepticality* podcast from Los Angeles. Marianne gives a lecture on Operation Bee Sting at the *SkeptiCamp* she organizes in her hometown, and five months later, after no further substantial measures are carried out with the fake Facebook accounts, an article by Marianne appears on the website of the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry in which she presents a precise description of and instructions for the procedure.

In the articles, Peter and Marianne mention something I didn't notice that evening: "Using fake names did, however, help us stay in character as we greeted each other loudly in the room, hugging and expressing not only delight in seeing each other again, but also our shared hope that Kim would be able to contact "your wonderful mother, who I am so sorry to hear passed away last year" (Walter), and "your poor sister who died in one of the towers on 9/11" (Jan), and "your little boy . . . what's it been, 20 years now since his death at the age of three?" (Marianne)".

Marianne attempted to increase her odds of being called upon by anxiously approaching Kim's assistant before the show began to inquire as to whether Mr. Cocaine possessed the power to contact small children who had passed over. After all, she explained, her son had died at the age of three, and didn't speak much yet; but, if tonight was successful, she would definitely sign up for a private reading ($200–$850 per half hour). That would not be a problem, the assistant assured her. In the past, Kim has even succeeded in contacting stillborn children. Oddly, a somewhat contradictory statement would be made by Kim during his onstage ramblings when he exclaimed, "People sometimes want me to contact babies, or dogs, etc. What are babies going to say? Dogs are gonna say, 'Ruff! Ruff!'"

That hadn't been clear to me and rendered the operation even less understandable for me. Because if in his readings Kim really did work with the corresponding details from the three skeptics' faked lives, then it wouldn't have been possible to distinguish where he had the information, from Facebook or from the evening talks. Both would have been a hot reading, which means a reading with information gathered beforehand but then it would have been impossible to prove that the data had been collected via Facebook. When I later brought this up with Marianne, she said that already before the event she no longer assumed that he really did hot readings, but simply cold readings. But because she had already put so much time and effort into the preparations, she had nonetheless played the Facebook characters, just without consistently carrying out the actual idea.

As it turns out, I'm not alone with my questions and uncertainties. Thus, a discussion around the question "Where's the sting?" unfolds in the commentaries on Marianne's blog, because no one stood up and said, "This whole thing is invented and the only person I told this to was one of Kim Cocaine's staff." And so, the story merely reinforced the audience that the man was genuine. The mostly anonymous commentators wrote that retroactively asserting that one had exposed him lacked evidential power. "Good skeptic work has a well-defined goal that makes sense. You took other people's money (which they willingly gave you, sadly enough) and gave it to a psychic. Great job!" Similar comments are

also found under Peter's article. A supporter distinguishes three categories of people: "A (we believe!!!!) B (we don't believe) and C (we aren't sure)" and says skeptical operations are aimed primarily at the group of the undecided. Peter takes this up, as well: believers can't be persuaded, anyway. Marianne and he would at least do something and motivate others to become active, as well, instead of merely criticizing other people's actions. And he turns abusive in a way he's known for among skeptics and about which many skeptics I know often make fun of.

After some time, Kim Cocaine, too, speaks up and attempts to turn the tables on his Internet page. He wasn't fooled; the skeptics were. They were deeply dishonest and defrauded him. But he had recognized this group immediately and decided to simply give it what it demanded: fake readings! He apologizes to the honest guests that they had to give up 5–10 minutes of their time, praises himself copiously for his abilities, disparages the skeptics, and explains that he doesn't wear headphones during his performance and that he doesn't memorize any information beforehand, but sleeps. He concludes by thanking the skeptics for their money: "I used the funds to purchase a new refrigerator . . . and it is way cool. (Get it?)."

The Birth of the Skeptical Movement from the Spirit of Magic

The headphones Kim Cocaine mentions refer to an exposure that became famous and that served Marianne as the model for her operation. In 1986, the German-born US "television preacher" or "televangelist" Peter Popoff was publicly proven a fraud by the Canadian-born US magician Randall James Hamilton Zwinge (born in 1928), better known as James Randi, and his English-born student Steven Shaw (born in 1960), who grew up in South Africa and Australia, better known by his stage name Banachek. Randi and Banachek proved that, during his show, Popoff was in radio contact with his wife, who was in the audience and collected information, like names and diseases, from individuals, which Popoff could then present as his inspiration coming from God. Randi presented the tape and video recordings on television on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson"; a year later, this resulted in Popoff's insolvency, because after his exposure many television stations cancelled his show. A few years earlier, in the time between 1979 and 1983, Randi and Banachek had already carried out another exposure operation together under the name "Project Alpha". Under Randi's tutelage, the magicians

Banachek (at the time still Steven Shaw) and Michael Edwards, 17 and 18 years old at the time, respectively, used their tricks, for example, bending spoons without touching them, to convince the researchers at the recently founded Parapsychological Laboratory of Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri of their supposed paranormal abilities. Various series of trials followed until, in 1983, Randi published on the fakery, confirming years of rumors about the two test persons' inauthenticity, rumors that the researchers at Washington University had not believed. In the next year, this led to the closing of the parapsychological program and lab.[2]

Randi was already publicly known as a skeptic at that time. After performing with his tricks in nightclubs and on television shows for years as "The Amazing Randi", he became quite well known above all for his attacks against Uri Geller, whom he publicly exposed in 1973 at a time when Geller's media-effective demonstrations of bending spoons had made him one of the internationally most famous magicians.[3] As early as 1976, Randi joined the *Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal* (CSICOP), founded by the philosopher Paul Kurtz at Kurtz's university in Amherst, New York, which changed its name in 2006 to *Committee for Skeptical Inquiry* (CSI). He soon quit this organization, however, to protect it from financial risks after Geller filed suits against him. The model for this organization was the *Comité Belge pour l'Investigation Scientifique des Phénomènes Réputés Paranormaux*, founded in 1949. The CSI and the *Council for Secular Humanism* merged in 1991 as the *Center for Inquiry* (CFI). After the end of his stage career, in 1996, Randi founded the *James Randi Educational Foundation* (JREF). Long before that, he had already advertised prize monies in various amounts. Until recently, support from the "Internet pioneer" Rick Adams enabled him to offer a million dollars via the JREF for the public demonstration of a proof of paranormal abilities. The trials were conducted at the annual skeptics' meeting organized by the JREF in Las Vegas, Nevada, titled The Amazing Meeting.[4]

A look at the transatlantic mediumistic trial of the 19th century, which is frequently mentioned in this volume, can help us understand the practices of this current skeptics' movement. The mediumistic trial was a controversy over the agency and thereby also over the potentials of technological media and human mediums. In it, every believer's hypothesis about where this agency is located was present from the start and various sides tried to stabilize their

2 Garner: Good, Bad, and Bogus; Randi: The Project Alpha experiment; Randi: The Faith Healers.

3 Randi: The Magic of Uri Geller.

4 Cf. Voss: "I Believe in Science Now!", in this volume. The prize was withdrawn in 2017.

positions through institutionalizations. And the same was true of the various skeptical positions, which shifted all the agency of a human medium into the interior of the person and thereby made the person (or his soul or individual body parts) the origin of all the, in this view, merely seeming, i.e., deception-based paranormal phenomena. This controversy is situated in-between therapy, entertainment, art, science, and religion and in which mediality was tested without the participants already deciding between the categories religion and the secular and that functioned primarily as a substitution trial.[5] This controversy continues to this day, even if, after psychoanalysis's very successful attempts at domestication and the increased institutional differentiation among scientific disciplines, with few exceptions, it no longer reaches the level of public debate that it still had in the 19th century.[6] From the beginning, magicians took a crucial part in this trial and – like Randi's role model Harry Houdini – had also early positioned themselves as skeptical challengers to psychics and psychic mediums, whom they sought to expose as charlatans.[7]

Today's skeptics' scene is also full of enthusiasts and project launchers who found and establish institutions, expand with them, and thus have given rise to an unsurveyable landscape of larger and smaller institutions. To expose their opponents, today's skeptics, too, proceed in the form of substitution trials. And among today's skeptics, too, are countless professional and amateur magicians, who thought that demonstrating the possibility of imitating mediumistic practices was proof that the practices of the mediums they examined must also be tricks.

When Jack, after Operation Bee Sting, responded to my actually ironic remark that the group's action was unfortunately not proof of the charlatanry of mediumism in general, because the medium beside me in the audience, too, was disappointed in Kim's abilities, by saying: "Yes, that's typical of these people, who compete with each other and try to combat and run each other down" – then he's not wrong. A look at the literature about magic, witches, sorcerers, shamans, etc. confirms Jack's suspicion: in contrast to the widespread

5 Schüttpelz: Trance Mediums and New Media; Schüttpelz and Voss: Quite as Powerful, in this volume.

6 The discussion about Carlos Castaneda and his writings can be considered an exception, cf. Voss: California Dreamin', in this volume.

7 Brandon: The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini; During: Modern Enchantments; Jones: Magic's Reason; Lachapelle: Conjuring Science; Natale: Supernatural Entertainments.

myths of the good and peaceful shamans and the wise witches, competition and sometimes a life-and-death struggle reign among them.[8]

The magician's business, like that of the shaman, is ambivalence. Deception and the fight with other magicians is often part of their daily craft, and becoming rich and famous is often part of their business goal, though this need not contradict a healing effect. It's all the more surprising that Jim doesn't see this behavior in himself and his friends, who, like most US skeptics, invoke Randi, who, with his practices as a stage magician, stands fully in the tradition of the 19th-century mediumistic trial and thereby displays all the ambivalent characteristics of a shaman and magician. He can heal and harm; he heals some and harms the others. His homosexuality and his career as a stage magician made him a marginal figure in society, at least in his young years; but he became a charismatic leader who attracted a following that became a community, many of whom find *communitas* in their meetings – for example, the aforementioned annual meeting of the James Randi Education Foundation in Las Vegas, which many experience as a community in which the life of the outside world is turned upside down and as an inverse world with no stupidity or religion, a world that, for many, is connected with special bodily states that become an awakening and an initiation.[9]

In his speeches and writings, Randi tends to divide the world into good and evil and to place himself on the side of the good. Following this view, his adherents see in him the noble magician, the healer who heals the world by annihilating sickness-producing evil. It is a struggle of rationality against irrationality, of science against pseudoscience. Evil takes shape in the magicians who use their arts to exploit people for their own advantage, thereby harming their dupes. Along with Peter Popoff and Uri Geller, countless other current and historical mediums have been the targets of his exposing trials.[10] For some of today's skeptics, this has developed a very special healing power of its own, for example for Peter, who experienced his own personal salvation in his conversion from "New Ager" to skeptic and who traces this to reading Randi's book exposing Nostradamus.

Randi's healings consist of disillusionments. The exposure of fake magic that poses as genuine heals the viewers by protecting them from irrational advice and prevents them from seeking healing in unscientific therapies; the example of Steve Jobs is repeatedly cited among Californian skeptics: wouldn't he surely still live if he had relied on science-based medicine from the start and

8 Brown: Dark Side of the Shaman; Riboli and Torri: Shamanism and Violence; Shirokogoroff: Psychomental complex of the Tungus; Whitehead and Wright: In Darkness and Secrecy.

9 Turner: The Ritual Process.

10 Randi: The Magic of Uri Geller; Randi: Flim-Flam!; Randi: The Faith-Healers.

had not first tried obscure diets to fight his cancer? Accordingly, many skeptics view their activity as consumer protection. This can be easily recognized in the comments on the evening with Kim Cocaine. The evil medium harms people in that his tricks create poverty (he lures listeners to book sittings with him that cost $600 an hour), unhappiness (he advises the overworked Apple employee to have another child), and illness (he prevents the mourning phase needed for healing in the woman whose boyfriend has just died). Theoretically, skeptical disillusionment can heal the mediums themselves, as well, if they are not evil but merely ignorant and the victims of their own illusions. The trials that Randi initiates gives them the chance to experience their own ineffectiveness – even if it turns out that they often seem immune to any healing and explain (to themselves and others) the failure of their powers by referring to the moment and its special circumstances.[11]

And yet, Randi repeatedly raises suspicions, as is only proper for a magician. Be it invented data or quotations, rude behavior, pedophilia, murky financial practices, inhumane opinions, or, finally, the false identity of his 30-year-younger partner from Venezuela: again and again, he is accused of unethical and dishonest deception.[12] But his followers see him as an honest liar, as the most recent documentary film about him calls him. The deception appears as a necessary and therefore legitimate evil. He plays good deception off against evil deception and harms the other magicians only in order to heal the world. All he applies is the old healing principle of like cures like.

The elimination of magic can itself take on the character of magic, as Ludwig Wittgenstein notes.[13] And the skeptical movement also follows magical thinking by not assuming that science consists of the circularity of natural forces and technical apparatuses, defining these natural forces, domesticating or rather creating them in the first place, but rather believing in and assuming pure facts, and that science, in the form of modern natural sciences, can understand the course of the world, which is independent of human beings, that the true knowledge of the universe corrects this universe and that adjusting one's life to the right order of the world leads to the right social order, from which the optimism arises that, in order to save the world, the ignorant need only be convinced of the truth. And this magical purification is only carried out at a small point, the self-proclaimed psychic mediums, which *pars pro toto* have to serve to handle a whole cosmic problem.

11 Voss: I Believe in Science Now, in this volume.

12 E.g. Storr: James Randi.

13 Wittgenstein: Remarks on Frazer's "Golden Bough", 1.

But not just that. The described fight against Kim Cocaine continues Randi's lifelong fight against other magicians. Jack's inner perspective, which sees his own practices and those of his skeptic friends as being outside of the combat among the mediums, psychics, or shamans, seems illusory from this external perspective: the skeptics who invoke Randi and celebrate him as one of their own, seem to have fallen for his greatest trick: Randi has managed, for his adherents, to transpose the magician's ambivalence into unambiguity and to become a leading figure of a social movement that believes in his sincerity. In this way, he has gathered behind him an army of followers who venerate and praise him as an honest hero, who enable him to have an annual salary of almost $200,000, and who help him to get rid of his competitors on his way to becoming the greatest among the magicians.[14]

Therefore it is not only the skeptics' worldview that is based on magical thinking and reveals the birth of the skeptical movement from the spirit of magic. As the example of James Randi shows, the whole skeptical movement can itself be used for the magic of a single magician who can turn the fight against the fakers into a tool. Once this perspective on the modern social movement of skepticism is taken the skeptics' reality turns out to be a deception, and the imputed deception of the others turns out to be the skeptics' own reality. So at least in this respect Randi's followers seem to be right: he is obviously one of the best illusionists of the world.

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14 And when his followers express a desire to broaden the range of topics of the skeptical movement and, for example, to include more general topics such as social equality in their skeptical work, Randi calls them to discipline and insists that solely the fight against psychics is the core business of the skeptical movement (as I heard him say it once in a podcast interview with DJ Grothe). It is a trick that – how could it be otherwise in the realm of mediumism – is unable to exclude paradoxical effects, since in many cases those whom he combats are not killed, but made big. Thus, Uri Geller, one of Randi's greatest foes, thanked the skeptics for their attacks, because ultimately *they* are what made him rich and famous.

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Erin Yerby

Mediating Spirits. Sensation, Form and the Body in American Spiritualism

There Are No Dead! Say the Spiritualists. The spirits of the dead are not dead but alive, making themselves known through the tensed body of the medium. The medium is the middle, standing on a point of mediation between death and life, the world of spirit and the world of the flesh. She is at once both subject and object: the subject of discernment, the medium sifts through the ephemeral sensations besieging a body, to make room for the figuration of a spirit. Yet, her body is also the object of her discernment, as the intensive container through which the spirits make themselves felt. A sensing *instrument* of spiritual discernment, her body becomes a living container mediating dead presences. In this sense, it is from an impossible place that the medium speaks the images that occupy her: a place that include's the impossible vantage of death's otherness. Capturing this sense of life seen from the other side, Benjamin says in *The Storyteller,* that life becomes transmissible only at the moment of death through "a sequence of images [that] is set in motion inside a man as his life comes to an end – unfolding the views of himself under which *he has encountered himself without being aware of it* [italics mine]".[1] However, for Spiritualists, life and death are entwined not only in the moment of death, but always already, as immanent planes in communication with one another. In this way, the practice of mediumship does not, in an ontological sense, distinguish between the unconscious life of fugitive images that visit us daily, and the imagistic experience of the spirit world, for what makes a spirit sensible, comes from both inside and outside of us. Mediumship draws no a sharp line between the insides and outsides of bodies; the inner experience of images and sensations that bubble up within the medium arise from an infinite spiritual outside, within this world. It is then in this interplay between inside and outside, the body and the spirits, that the spirits materialize as recognizable and thus agentive figures.

These thoughts on mediumship, arise from my years of fieldwork among contemporary American Spiritualist mediums – a "modern" tradition of mediumship with its origins in 19th century, upstate New York. This vein of mediumship, as I propose here, concerns a certain doubleness of the body which comes into view through the medium's embodied practices of sensory attunement. Mediumship addresses itself, in this to the movement of images as they arise and intensify

1 Benjamin: The Storyteller, 94.

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within, and also extend from, the body, constituting its doubleness: as physically and indexically placed (there is a body!) and at the same time, spectrally *displaced*. The body is here and there, neither here nor there. As both phantasmic image and material entity, virtual and actual, the body is double, and so, it would seem, is doubly displaced. I would here like to trace the outlines of this doubleness of the body, through the emergence of the spectral image or figure within and from the body, by way of approaching a larger problematic. Namely, I want to consider how the event of modern Spiritualism gives us a particular vision of the body as itself an immanent sensory medium, mediating spectral spirit figures, at once abstract and intimate, that issue from the body as it folds past into the present. Relating to itself as an object or container, the body as instrument becomes an intensive inner milieu of percepts and affects, a tableau-vivant of returned pasts: call it an "inner theater."[2] If the medium authorizes the spirits to body forth, through her body, into the world as communicative potentialities – "what we do is the language of the future," a medium once told me – then the mediation of invisible realities in and through the body addresses itself to a future language, even as it makes the past return. For what returns is not the past itself, but the past different, the past re-expressed as spectre/spirit, and spirits belong neither to the past proper nor to the future, but to repetition itself: the spectre is always revenant.[3] If the body is here the medium of the dead, it is as a medium which displaces the present, a body itself spectralized by the return of the past – not as history – but as animate figures known through immediate affects and sensations, while belonging to other times and spaces. At once operator and instrument, the body of the medium condenses and figures ephemeral sensations into spirit presences, of and for others. Spiritualist mediumship, in this sense, opens onto an understanding of the bodily generation of immanent forms, as much as to the quasi-iconicity of the body itself, through foregrounding the *experience* of a body affected by invisible forces. My aim here is to begin to draw out the specific contours of the bodily sensorium to which the Spiritualist medium in the 19th century gave rise, and which continues to renew itself in the present day practices of mediums who identify with the Spiritualist tradition.[4] Here, I want to say, the

2 Here I have in mind the traumatic repetition of inner scenes found in Freud and Breuer's case studies of 19th century hysteria, from which I take the term "inner theater." Freud and Breuer: Studies in Hysteria.

3 Derrida: Spectres of Marx.

4 More specifically, Spiritualism, as I argue elsewhere, in placing bodily experience at the center of spirit mediation, inherits the problems of a broadly settler Protestant iconoclasm, which leaves its traces in the very notion of the spectral body, and in, what I consider the

body appears as "the medium of all media," troubling the secular/religious divide as it puts in relief the opposition between everyday sense experience and supersensory spirit presence.

Hydesville, New York 1848

> His House was not
> no sign had he
> by chimney
> nor by door.
> Could I infer his residence
> Vast parries of air
> Unbroken by a settler
> Were all that I could see
> Infinitude – hadsts thou no face
> That I might look on thee?
> The soul selects her own society
> Then – shuts the door -
> To her divine majority -
> Present no more
> — Emily Dickinson: "I dwell in Possibility"

An ordinary, homely place of domesticity was imploded by strange spirit presences, as if, in search of a medium, the spirits at last found what they were looking for in this modest dwelling: a space "charged with an aura requisite to make it a battery for the working of the [spiritual] telegraph."[5] The first spirit communications in North America, understood as the founding "event" of what would become the *religion* of modern Spiritualism locates its inaugural scene in a small house in Hydesville, New York. In this story of origins, it is *the house* that first becomes a spiritual telegraph – a medium – mediating signals between two realms: the living and the dead.

A house "unmarked" by those tokens of progress that "the locomotive generally leaves in its track . . . " this modest dwelling, we are told – *not even on the railroad line* – is off the path of emergent infrastructure and industry, a setting

configuration of the medium's body as a quasi-icon. My dissertation thus draws out and constructs, constellary lines between the broader North American discourse of spectral bodies and its specific articulation in Spiritualism, and the Protestant iconoclastic inheritances of settlement. Yerby: Spectral Bodies of Evidence.

5 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism, 29.

"insignificant" and of "lowly aspect" as is befitting "the birth-places of the greatest of the world's social, political, and religious reformations."[6] The memorialization of the "scene" at Hydesville thus stresses the modesty and humble simplicity of this "small wooden house" at the outskirts of Rochester, where the spirits first made contact. This should assure us, says Emma Hardinge Britten, herself an English Spiritualist who would travel across North America promoting Spiritualism, that it is "the last spot" conducive to "fraud or deception [. . .] concealment or trick."[7] Paradoxically, this house that must be free of the "sinister tricks" of technology, is to become the apotheosis of technology as a "battery of the spirit" – a higher synthesis of spirit and matter. While the inaugural event of Spiritualism importantly arises in the margins of infrastructure, locating itself in a place apart, largely unmediated by emergent 19th century communication technologies, the first house of American mediumship will stand, for Spiritualists, as the eventful revelation of a communication technology transcending all others – for what is mediated is death itself.

The Body as Media

Following Bernard Dionysius Geoghegan's recent formulation, I find it helpful to think 19th century Spiritualism as an abstract machine, "not a text, but a machine."[8] Spiritualism did not only imitate, that is represent or reflect, actually existent 19th century media technologies – a narrative that relies on the opposition of "a media-technical base and its supposed cultural reception or interpretation."[9] Rather, Spiritualism is constructive of assemblages of communication which arise from the gaps that emerge between nineteenth century emergent technology's actuality and promise, what Geoghegan calls "the infrastructural uncanny."[10] Moreover, such infrastructural gaps make visible the always "incomplete and

6 Caldwallader: Hydesville in History.
7 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism.
8 Geoghegan: Mind the Gap, 902.
9 Ibid., 901–903. Such readings of spiritualism, according to Geoghegan – as "cultural interpretation" or "fiction"" reflecting, at the level of superstructure, dominant information and communication technologies, and those that focus solely on spiritualism as a site of empowerment for "marginal and oppressed subgroups" – only further obscure the fact that spiritual and occult practices "enabled new forms of productivity in existing scientific and industrial systems."
10 Ibid., 900–901.

partial features of communication," as such.[11] Spiritualism then, composed of a bricolage of bodies, codes, electrical media, and séance theatrics, "offered a means to scale between the gaps in these emerging technical forms, elaborating codes, protocols and instruments for productive communication."[12] Spiritualist experiments in communication with the dead made such gaps – the slight "rupture or assonance, either internal to a networked relay or in its relationship to the embedding environment" – productive in their own right.[13] Not least, insofar as Spiritualisms origin story locates the first "code" of communication with the spirits in an isolated house at the rural outskirts of Rochester, a place at the "margins of infrastructure."

Spiritualism, in this sense, inserts communication where there is none – realizing a form of communication that "refashioned the gaps of irregular infrastructure into a system of *shadow communication* [italics mine]."[14] Here, spirit communication appears as the uncanny shadow side of 19th century infrastructure – ghosts in the machine. And yet, what is not addressed in this otherwise illuminating elucidation of the Spiritualist assemblage as, shadow communication emitted through the gaps of infrastructure, is what I take to be central to Spiritualist practice in the 19th century and today, namely the construction of the bodily sensorium as the *primary media*, rooted in an understanding of religion *as experience*. Embodied mystical and religious experience authorizes spiritual knowing, and thus the body of the medium, as media, is at the center of an assemblage that echoes and exceeds the actualities of modern communication technologies. It is bodily experience itself, I am arguing, spectrally doubled by the spirits it mediates, that here centrally occupies the gap, or crack within communication.

Spiritualism, I propose, through its central practice of mediumship, figures the body as the primordial mediatic extension: the body appears, rather paradoxically, as both a "natural" site for mediating spirits – we are all potential mediums, say the Spiritualists – and an instrument shaped by acquired technique, for the sensory mediation of spirits. I am here emphasizing the *instrumentalization* of the body as central in the Spiritualist re-making of the bodily sensorium into a media of spirit communication, where the body is activated as an intensive space or fold of communication with outside forces – forces at a distance. The mundane body is here mediated by a sensory second-body – acting as an instrument or mediat-

11 Ibid., 900.
12 Ibid., 903.
13 Ibid., 900.
14 Ibid., 900–901.

ing container of spirit sensation: a body capable of sensing the insensible, paradoxically reached through the empirical.

If nineteenth century Spiritualism anticipated today's networked world of communication technologies – not least as a vision of bodies connected by electric and spiritual currents – this vision of energetic and spiritual flows points toward a prior ontological gap within communication itself, the gap of the incommunicable at the heart of communication.[15] The problem of communication is thus a problem of mediation, itself originally a religious problem. As a form of homegrown modern American spirituality partaking in disparate strands of millennial fervor, Spiritualism addresses itself not only to gaps within an emergent media infrastructure, but foremost to an ontological gap: across planes of existence mundane and spiritual, sensible and insensible, life and death. Mediumship opens onto a silence, then, within communication – the silence of death within life – relating the gap or silence within communication, to the silence of the body. Spiritualism renders visible the problem of bodily mediation, then, not (only) in terms of technical extension, but as a religious problem that turns upon the dialectics of the secular and religious, with the body affected standing in the middle, contorting the distance between these poles.

In seeking to make what seems beyond communication (death), communicable, Spiritualism may be said to follow a modern faith in technological progress, and in "the conviction that the right combination of instruments and techniques could produce message from silence to noise."[16] However, if making the spirits speak through the gap of silence concerns, foremost, the problem of the body, and bodily experience, as I'm suggesting, it is insofar as mediumship makes room for a semiosis of affective, imagistic and sensory figures. The body is here the place where ephemeral sensations and images are *housed* to become communicable evidences of spirit presences. What surfaces in the practice of mediumship is a making – making the sensory experience of pasts *a matter of the body*. A making, which demands an intimacy between the far and near, the dead and the living, as it involves a cultivated slowing down and attention to fugitive sensations. In this regard, Spiritualist practices return us to the problem of bodily mediation as a response to, and a refusal of, the alienation of the body within the on-and-on of progress – turning back to the body, not as an outside to modern technology, but as a the first, or "primordeal media."[17]

15 Thacker: Dark Media.
16 Geoghegan: Mind the Gap, 899.
17 Wegenstein: Body, 19–34.

From House to Body

The story of modern Spiritualism begins in that most intimate, and familiar/familial place – the house – made *unheimlich* by the presence of a haunting specter, the trace of an invisible stranger once murdered within its walls. A nexus at once familiar and unfamiliar, the house becomes the central "battery" connecting material and spiritual planes, enabling an inter-cosmic network of spiritual intelligences to be made sensible, even evidential, within this simplest infrastructure of everyday life. As the locus and medium of spirit communication, the house satisfies the definition of media as that minimal enclosure necessary for storing memory and conducting information. And, as Robert Pogue Harrison reminds us, the house is first and foremost a place of the dead: "human beings housed their dead before they housed themselves."[18] This first house of American Spiritualism, the Fox house – (itself to become a monument moved to Lily Dale, New York and eventually reduced to ashes by fire –) was said to hold the *proper conditions* of "human and atmospheric magnetism," pointing to "the ultimation of a science whereby spirits, operating upon and through matter, could connect in the most intimate relations the world of material and spiritual existence."[19]

If the house is here the locus of spiritual intensification, of a "charged aura" attractive to spirits, this locus is displaced by the body itself, I want to say, in the moment when haunting becomes *communication*. Wearied out by a "succession of sleepless nights," the Fox family had become familiar with these haunting nightly visitations. Among the disturbances of the unwelcome spirit were knockings "varied in their character, sounding occasionally like distinct footfalls in the different rooms," and the presence of a body felt: "once something heavy, as if a dog, seemed to lie at the feet of the children [. . .] Another time Kate Fox, the youngest of the Fox children, felt as if a cold hand was on her face," and then came the movement of furniture.[20] Finally one night, as the children "had become familiar with the invisible knocker," Kate merely exclaimed, "here, Mr. Split-foot, do as I do."[21] In the origin story of Spiritualism, it is the nine years old, Kate Fox, who becomes the first to communicate with the haunting spirit of the murdered peddler and thus, the first medium. Modern Spiritualism, the "advent of the greatest spiritual revelation of all times," begins with a child's playfulness, with a girl's mimetic response to the spirits' "rappings." As if the first code of spirit communication is instituted through a

18 Harrison: The Dominion of the Dead, 38.
19 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism, 29.
20 Caldwallader: Hydesville in History 6.
21 Ibid., 6.

form of serious play, as only children understand, whereby "invisible beings were enabled to spell out consecutive messages . . . ".[22]

Spiritualism begins in a house, with nonsensical sounds and disturbances, played out on its walls and floorboards, and finally, with the imaginative intercession of child's play, becomes *communication* – at least, if we define communication as presupposing a recipient. And within this domestic scene from the generative enclosure of the house as battery for the spirits, to the playful gestures of the body, a transition has already occurred. There is here, already, a movement from an amorphous haunting – the disturbances occupying the house – to a nascent form of spirit communication. First mediated by space itself, the spiritual landscape is enframed by the scalable spatial "dilation" and "contraction" of the pastoral American house.[23] If the house is the first locus of spirit haunting – where the spirit is territorialized and thus localized within the walls of the house itself – when haunting becomes communication a subtle transition occurs: the event of communication moves *from house to body*.

After the events at the Hydesville house the Fox sisters travelled from city to city demonstrating this simple form of communication with the spirits, known as rapping. As Emma Hardinge Britten points out in a passing note, leaving the (original) haunted house behind, the spirits *followed* the Fox sisters: they "jumped from one body to the next, to all three daughters in the end."[24] It seems to me this passing note speaks volumes about the modernity of this form of spirit mediation, as much as it prefigures the centrality of bodily experience in what will become a fully-fledged Spiritualist mediumship. In following the body of the medium, the spirits are deterritorialized – no longer emplaced within a specific place and history – and have become properly modern spirits: mobile invisible denizens of this world whose presence is mediated by, and re-territorialized upon, the mobile modern body of the spirit medium. From house to body, this transition marks the beginning of a turning, within the history of Spiritualism, from haunted *outside* to haunted *inside*: from a rudimentary physical communication of knocks and raps on floorboards and walls, to communication arising within the bodily-inside of the medium, become a sensory instrument upon which the spirits play.

The body of the girl steps in, mediating this transition from outside to inside, house to body, through a series of playful gestures. Rapping, or rapping

22 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism.

23 Thacker: Dark Media, 93.

24 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism. Molly McGarry also notes of the Hydesville rappings, when Kate Fox paid a visit to her sister in Rochester "she found that the raps travelled with her." McGarry: Ghosts of Futures Past, 31.

back, in the formation of a simple code, marks this transitional moment in the development of North American mediumship, wherein the body becomes the medium of all media. However, spirit communication by means of this simple binary code quickly becomes more complicated. Kate makes "a number of motions with her finger and thumb in the air, but without noise" and to her astonishment finds that these silent sounds are themselves "re-doubled" by the spirit as auditory knocks: "Only look, mother! It can see as well as hear" and these "words declared a truth that has already become the firm foundation of faith for an ever progressive Spiritual Church [. . .] which moreover, reveals its own attributes to the child and philosopher alike, and provides the missing link between a finite material world and a world of infinite spiritual possibilities by proving the continuity of life."[25] Important here, is that the first spiritual code is understood as a "common" one, one that could, in principle, be decoded by anyone, "child and philosopher alike." And because these "first manifestations did not appear to the high and learned of the earth, but to the plain commonsense of an honest farmer's wife," spirit communication is from the start concretized as a *popular* communication, destined for all of humanity, and premised on the idea that because the spirits on the other end "could see, hear, and intelligently respond [. . .] must have something *in common* with humanity [italics mine]."[26]

In this event of modern spirit communication the premise for a common universalizing language is established, one that can be translated by means of a code between the living and dead. In other words, the "firm foundation of faith" of the Spiritualist – what guarantees this universal vision of cosmic communication – is an idea of the commensurability between the human and spirit, that we can expect there to be someone at the other end of our communications *who sees and hears us* and moreover, understands, even as this someone remains (mostly) invisible. The very delocalization of the spirits, and the claim that mediumship is a capacity open to everyone, further sets up the democratizing mission of Spiritualism. After all, in this inaugural scene at Hydesville, the Fox sisters received the message that "these manifestations were not confined to them but would go all over the world."[27]

Already, in this inaugural scene, the *historical e*vent of spiritual communication at Hydesville becomes an *ontological* event, in that it establishes a new assemblage between spirit, space and body – one realized in the movement from

25 Britten: Modern American Spiritualism, 8.
26 Ibid., 8.
27 Ibid., 8.

house to body, from outside to inside. It is thus through the bodily medium that we move from spirits occupied in sedentary space (the house or landscape) to spirits inhabiting the body as mobile milieu of mediation. In this internalization of the spirits, the body is realized as a third-term linking actual and virtual bodies, via the transmission of a code – at first *externalized* as binary raps – but that will finally ground itself in the *inner* sensory experience of the medium. The spirits who, in this original scene, are intelligences with something to say, move from the haunted house (itself a contraction of the haunted landscape) to the space of the body as contracted and intensified inside, realizing the space of the bodily sensorium as *the medium* of communication. We might even say the body becomes a *house* of spirits. Thus the inaugural scene of mediumship at Hydesville anticipates the mediumistic techniques of making the body itself into a quasi-house or porous container, the medium realizing her body as an instrument *under her control* which mediates and intensifies outside forces (of the dead as living, animate and sensible beings), converting these ephemeral sensations into recognizable figures: spirits of lost kith and kin.

From the house to the séance-circle, Spiritualism understood itself as a universally extendable and thus adaptable plastic form encircling techniques and practices of the body that are, in principle, available to everyone everywhere. This now universalized communication with the spirits, delocalized from place and travelling across the collapsed distances of modern infrastructure, as much as planes of existence, I'm proposing, is grounded in the figure of the body as *mobile media*. In this modern becoming medium of the body, the body is made into a site of experience where, like delocalized and disembedded filmic images, spirit pasts are communicated as living presences. This universality of the spirit world and the corresponding mobility of the medium is betrayed, however, by its historical precondition: the settler colonial displacements of peoples (and thus spirits) from their lands – the story within the story of this universal vision that realizes the modern subject as one who has access to any spirits, any time and everywhere (as I address in my larger work).

The Body as Spiritual Telegraph: From Code to Experience

So, Kate Fox creates the first code with the spirits, a mimetic play of raps. She tells the spirit "do as I do!" and the spirit complies: "the effect was instantaneous;

the invisible rapper responded by imitating the number of her movements."[28] Here, we find a quantitative division built into code in the form of raps of absence and presence, zeros and ones – a simple binary code mimicking the telegraph and, more portentously, the digitization of the typewriter and computer. The rapping body as coding machine, realized here in the serious play of the girl, gives rise to the dominant 19th century idea within Spiritualism of the medium's body as "spiritual telegraph." It is worth recalling however, that the house was first referred to as a spiritual telegraph, further supporting the idea of a transitional movement from house to body, as the center of spirit communication.

In the *spiritual telegraph* body, there is a collapse of time and space, the body transmitting electric currents through the nervous system, traversing distances, including the greatest distance of all – the threshold separating life and death. In the electric "tic tac" of the telegraph, itself coeval with the emergence of the train assemblage, the mediumistic body finds its model.[29] The "strong relationship between modernism and occultism" is thus indicated in the relationship between the emergence of the electrical telegraph and the spiritual or *celestial* telegraph. And the Spiritualists' themselves claimed, albeit retroactively, that the idea of spiritual telegraphy was given to them by the ever practical spirit of Benjamin Franklin, who, in 1851, speaking through the clairvoyant father of Spiritualism, Andrew Jackson Davis, said he "discovered 'this electrical method of telegraphing from the second sphere to the earth's inhabitants.'"[30]

As Jeremy Stolow points out, the idea that the body could do what the telegraph does, only required Spiritualists to enlarge the logic of telegraphy already in place, so it might reach across greater distances. I here follow Stolow's emphasis upon Spiritualist analogy to the "invisibility and intangibility of electric current, and its ability to collapse time and space into a single continuous frame of reference," as providing a framework for the communication between souls, dead and alive – one that enlarged "the range of possible interlocutors," while presenting "a technically plausible explanation for occult knowledge."[31] An idea somewhat complicated, by Spiritualism's emphasis on the body as analogous, on the one hand, yet superlative, on the other, to such technologies.

The spiritual telegraph was "not only a description of the communication between mortal and spirit" but a harbinger of the dematerialization of communication, and thus the global communication age, as Spiritualists' imagined the body passing into electricity, and travelling across the wires, to be re-materialized in a

28 Ibid., 8.
29 Stolow: Saved by Electricity, 678.
30 Sollors: Dr. Benjamin Franklin's Celestial Telegraph, 465.
31 Stolow: Saved by Electricity, 678.

distant location.[32] As Stolow points out, the telegraph, itself an assemblage of different signaling technologies, opened "new possibilities for social relations" based on an "'economy of the signal'" – the realization of communication in simultaneous instances, separating signal from body or place.[33] Spiritual telegraphy, like the telegraph itself, actualized the possibility of collapsing time and space, moving spirit *information* across distances in a network of sympathetically linked bodies forming a "community of sensation," composed of both the living and dead.[34]

If there is a transition from house to body, from the house as a haunted but static locale to the body as mobile media of spirit communication, as I am proposing, this transition eventually takes us from the mediumistic body as spiritual telegraph – beginning with the Fox sisters, and realized in the binary code of "rapps" with the spirits, to mediumistic codes of communication based in a more complicated, less binary model of *experience*.

The Automatization of the Body

The notion of the medium as spiritual telegraph is "more than a convenient analogy for Spiritualist séance practice," as Jeremy Stolow, in his seminal essay confronting the central significance of the medium as *spiritual telegraph*, has pointed out. Stolow rightly dispels the notion that Spiritualism is simply another "religious" and thus "primitive" response to "disorienting effects" of new technologies, asserting that the spiritual telegraph analogy opens onto a "new type of human subject." At the same time, however, by insisting that Spiritualist practices should be viewed as embroiled within a technologically mediated modernity and not dismissed to the marginal spaces of "fantasy," a "primitive" religious response to technology, or the "feminine coded interiority of the bourgeois space" of the séance, Stolow implicitly re-aligns the religious and the feminine with spaces of "fantasy" detached or "hermetically sealed" off from the so-called real world. These sealed-off spaces that house the religious as much as the feminine then need rescuing – here from the charge of primitivism or fantasy or nostalgia –

32 Cox: Body and Soul, 88.

33 Realizing the dream of "'communication without the constraints of geography,'" Samuel Morse' electrical telegraph of 1844 with its universal code of communication via signal, actualized what James Stolow has called the "economy of the signal," as "predicated upon (relative) simultaneity, impersonal contact, and increasingly centralized administrative control." Ibid., 673.

34 Cox: Body and Soul, 86.

which Stolow fulfills by asserting that Spiritualists were "opened to the penetrative powers of the capitalist market."[35] When such "penetration" is ostensibly required to rescue feminine and religious space from the charge of fantasy, it seems to me only to repeat the binary between religious (and here feminine) space, on the one hand, and technology, on the other. Such an opposition reifies the notion that religious spaces that seek to keep out the "capitalist market, the machinery of advertising, and the logics of spectacle, rationalized labor, and scientific induction" are reducible to "fantasy."[36]

Enframing Spiritualist technologies, and the shaping of a new human subject, within modern industrialism, Stolow proposes that 19th century Spiritualist practices of "automatization and dematerialization" resonated with those occurring in the mechanization of the work place where "invisible technologies" threatened the indexical relation between bodily mediation and the authorship of one's work, not to mention one's authority.[37] In other words, Spiritualist practice is likened to the automatization of the alienated industrial worker, insofar as Spiritualism is said to de-authorize the subject, or at least de-center subjective intention through its spiritualization of communication and its focus on the automatic – somnambulant, hypnotic or otherwise susceptible – powers of the body.

More recently, Emily Odgen has shown, in the context of 19th century mesmerism – a precursor to Spiritualism and Christian Science – the extent to which the automatized, and otherwise enchanted body was a means of exerting control over working bodies. Mesmerism, Ogden shows, was first introduced to the Americas from France as a means of controlling plantation and factory laborers. A practice thought to have curative effects on the recipient, mesmerism involved "a series of choreographed gestures called magnetic passes" which induced somnambulent states and put subjects "into thrall to their mesmerists," who were said to manipulate invisible magnetic fluids that pass between bodies.[38] Mesmerism, says Ogden, "ignited the US occult tradition," when it was introduced to North America in 1836 by the Guadaloupan, Charles Poyen, a sugar planter and slave holder. Poyen first demonstrated mesmeric techniques to New England cotton mill owners as a means of curing conditions of fatigue and nervous disorders in their workers (caused by factory work in the first place), as a means of increasing productivity. Thus the dissemination of mesmerism in North America, Ogden's research reveals, was funded on the backs

35 Stolow: Saved by Electricity, 680.
36 Ibid., 680.
37 Ibid., 685.
38 Ogden: Beyond Radical Enchantment, 4.

of profits gained by Poyen's plantations in Guadaloupe. Even prior to its application to North American factory workers, the prehistory of mesmerism reveals that mesmeric technique was first introduced in the 1820's to colonial plantation owners in Guadaloupe, not as a curative technique, but as a means of controlling slave labor. Imposing mesmeric control in the colonies, where the magic of slaves was feared by plantation owners, was a means of "annexing the powers of an enchanted people for use in that people's own discipline."[39] And this takes up the very magic of mimesis, as Taussig has so shown in its dialectical and mysterious complexity, wherein one makes a copy of what one wishes to control – "the image affecting what it is an image of" – drawing it near, making it proximate (as Benjamin said of mechanical reproduction) by means of artifice and abstraction, to harness its power.[40] And here it is not the colonized, but the magic of empire itself – as embodied in the plantation owner – that is made visible; the plantation owner mimetically abstracts and reifies magic in a rational form (mesmerism) to control the "primitive" magic, and thus the bodies, of his slaves.

Against the grain of discourse aligning modern enchantment and occult practices with radical movements aimed at empowering a repressed minority, here mesmeric enchantment, argues Ogden, was a means by which "properly secular moderns could extract labor from those who were not modern yet."[41] With more recent scholarship of occult historians and scholars of secularity, Ogden argues that such modern enchantments do not constitute an outside of modernity, whether repressed or otherwise, but are fully implicated within it – enchantment is "entangled with modern technologies, sensibilities and institutions."[42] Mesmerism as a "re-description in rational terms" of magical ideas, made "spell-casting safe for instrumental rationality," and it seems, made belief in the rational purification of magical means, the most magical tool of all. Purifying occult practices of its primitive roots, mesmerism was a rationalized magical means to bring so-called primitive bodies – bodies considered susceptible to "false religion: primitives, nervous patients, and Christian enthusiasts" as well as women, who made the best clairvoyants – under control.[43]

39 Ibid., 15.

40 Taussig: Mimesis and Alterity, 1–15.

41 Ibid., 3.

42 Ibid., 2–4. As Ogden notes, the secular subject is defined by the imperative to ward off and manage the enchantments of false religion. Thus studies of occult sub-cultures are key to unlocking, as Ogden indicates, "how a dominant culture – a secular culture – wanted to manage enchantment."

43 Ibid., 12.

While Spiritualism holds an important place within a modern secular dialectics entwining occult practices and "rational" control it also blurs the division between active modern rational agents (the mesmerizer) and their passive susceptible subjects. In Spiritualism the opposition between active and passive, control and submission, is at once put in relief and enfolded. Importantly, while Spiritualism reflexively locates its own prehistory in mesmerism, unlike mesmerism – which seems to bifurcate the relation between mesmerist and clairvoyant so as to easily align the "less modern" with the passive somnambulant subject – Spiritualist practice internalized this seems to bifurcation, in the single figure of *the medium*. The division between an active controller, the (mostly male) mesmerizer, and the passive (mostly female) clairvoyant, is unified in the bodily practices of the Spiritualist medium in whom we find both roles taken up simultaneously. I draw out the role of mesmerism as a prehistory to mediumistic practice – and thus somnabulent states in the formation of controllable subjects – to highlight how the division of active mesmerizer and passive somnabulent, as much as modern reason and "magical" beliefs, are significantly complicated within Spiritualist practice.

Here, the automization, or passive susceptibility of the medium's body, must be thought as inseparable from the control the medium exerts over the spirit forces that affect her. Unlike the figure of the somnambulist guided by unconscious imperatives, or the clairvoyant's visionary states, still to some degree controlled by the mesmerizer, the medium, building upon these earlier figures, *authorizes the spirits and internalizes control*.[44] In mediumistic practices we see that spiritual attunement involves the sensitization of the body under conditions of habituated *control*. I am proposing that if we approach Spiritualism from its techniques of the body, we see that the so-called susceptible body – the body affected by clairvoyant visions – is here also in control, actively guiding itself into passive states. In a dialectics itself magical, the female medium takes control of her so-called "passive" powers – the very sensitivity that makes her susceptible to external forces of control – and affirms these, as a power against her own subjugation. It is not so much that the distinction between outside and inside, active and passive, is collapsed within the body – but that the body, as an instrument, enfolds both of these poles while keeping them distinct. This tensed state of active-passivity is a difficult position to maintain, one that is seen as a practiced achievement rather than an a purely automatic entrancement.

44 Ann Taves also points out the division within mesmerism between the mesmerist and the clairvoyant, cf. Taves: Fits, Trances and Visions.

Whatever the liberatory potentialities of Spiritualism, it is a movement clearly implicated in a white spiritual imaginary shaped by colonial control and settler logics, as is visible in practices of channeling of Native American spirits.[45] What is of interest here, however, is how mediumistic techniques at least complicate a modern politics of the body, or rather complicate a modern ontology of the body, as the central nexus upon which modern secular oppositions between enchantment and disenchantment, are played out. In understanding the very automaticity of the body – and thus its "primitive" susceptibility – as a power not opposed to reason, control, or agency, Spiritualism makes visible and simultaneously enfolds, the very modern oppositions between modern and primitive, rational and occult, male and female, active and passive, subject and object.

"I am in control as the instrument . . . we are in control all the time," a medium, lecturing on spiritual attunement at Arthur Findlay College, outside of London, had said during a training course in Evidential Mediumship. As I was often reminded by the mediums with whom I studied, Spiritualists reject the term "possessed" to describe even the deepest trance states, for it is the medium that is ultimately in control, allowing actively for the communication with spirit to take place. This is a very modern understanding of the body – a body in control of itself, even controlling that, which by definition, seems to escape control: unconscious and automatic states, as much as the spirits of the dead.

During mediumistic training, for example, we are taught to protect ourselves from unwanted sensations, from letting the spirit's pain affect us too intensely, so that these sensations pass through us but do not "stick." If you feel overwhelmed or "if a spirit is getting on us too much we have to say NO! That is respect for ourselves and for spirit." Thus the act of decentering one's own authority by letting the spirits take over is seen as a dance, one in which the medium is always in the lead. Paradoxically, as I am arguing, mediumship returns the body to its own sensory *experience* as something that may be valorized and

45 Shadowing its claims to a progressive political agenda (women's suffrage, abolition etc.), Spiritualism seems to reflect, particularly in its communication with Native American spirits, what I call a *spiritual geography of settlement*. The universalist claim of Spiritualism, which includes access to a spirit world of colonized others, can be viewed as a refraction of settlement's spiritual crisis. I understand the body of the medium as a complex site in which colonial logics are repeated while making visible the problem of modern *experience* as such – one irrevocably tied to settlement's logics in the form of colonized spirits and amorphous affects that refuse to settle. Yerby: Spectral Bodies of Evidence.

publicly shared, through the efforts of maintaining an *active* passivity, whereby opening the body to practices of attention and attunement the medium takes *control* of the forces that affect her.

It seemed to me throughout my fieldwork that most of mediums-in-training came to mediumship precisely as cure or resistance to the alienation of de-authorizing institutions and powers – the family, the workplace, gender – and to the alienation of increasingly disembodied forms of communication technology. No doubt there is a dialectic between freedom and capture when it comes to the dissociative powers of the body enabled by mediumship – yet from another vantage, it is the inescapabilty of this very dialectic which mediumship seems to take on, both in its 19th century forms and today. In making the body into an instrument – objectifying the body, so as to differently attune oneself to its sensorium – mediumistic techniques draw the body closer to its own experience, as if to simultaneously de-objectify the body, a modern antidote, perhaps, to the very modern instrumentalization of the body. I want to say, it is a kind of modern cure for the modern body, insofar as Spiritualist practice begins from within the very binarization between mind and body: the body, as the site of automatic, unconscious, and fugitive sensations, and the mind, as author of reason and control. These are not reconciled but internalized, and thereby enfolded within the body – embodied in the controlled mediation of excessive forces of sensation, seemingly beyond control, and held in a mysterious tension.

Experiential Code

Far from simply representing, or even expanding the logics of emergent technological apparatus' by analogizing these to the body as media – as in the spiritual telegraph – Spiritualist mediumship grounds a technology of the body in mundane and religious *experience*. The binary logic of telegraphy, evoked in the Fox sisters rapping, marks the formation of a code between the medium and the spirits that will move, in the development of Spiritualism, from experiments in external forms of mediation – where a physical object is used to materialize communication, such as the floor or wall of the house by the Fox sisters, the table in table tipping, a writing slate, or the manifestation of ectoplasmic figures – to the formation of what I am calling an *experiential code,* or what today goes by the misleading name of "mental mediumship." The way this transition is articulated within mediumistic practice is thus as a transition from "physical mediumship," to "mental mediumship." However, this distinction is

itself misleading, as many forms of physical mediumship – that is, mediumship aimed at effecting outwardly and thus "objectively" sensible proofs of spirit – is also based in an ongoing inner communication or inner experience of spirits. But it is helpful to at least mark a transition from the first rudimentary forms of "rapping," and table tipping, which are said to involve the manipulation of energies more than spirit communication per se, to an increasingly internalized space of spirit communication. In this later formation, the body itself becomes an inner theater for the observation of spirit presences.

When contemporary mediums talk about forming their own codes with the spirits, it is as a code formed in and through the immediate sensation of the spirits, understood to form a language mediated by the medium's own experience in the broad sense – as in, one's life experience and knowledge. Mediumistic communication understood as code formation in a binary sense is only a superficial approximation of the communication which goes on between mediums and spirits, as is apparent in complex training that goes into mediumistic discernment.

We are taught to build a code with the spirits – but upon closer examination, it turns out that this code is constituted by an attention toward a certain threshold of *experience*, of sensations and affections encountered below consciousness. Here, I also have in mind what Robert Cox has called the "crossfiring" in Spiritualist practice, between "affect and physical sensation," that constitutes Spiritualisms' particular vision of a "sympathetic cosmology" of interconnected bodies – both living and dead.[46]

If the body is the medium of encounter with seemingly invisible forces, then mediumship reveals something about the primacy of bodily mediation in intensifying and discerning a *place* of a force. The medium trains her body to become an abstract second-space or second-body, which makes room for, and is thus simultaneously displaced by, the spirits – the body becomes what I call a *container* of sensation. Overlooked affects and sensations are viewed, as if staged in an inner chamber – like the insides of a pin-hole camera – and intensified into discernible forms: active, figures emergent from otherwise amorphous forces. Something becomes visible. Making spirits recognizable is a process of becoming attentive to untimely and fugitive sensations, in order to, as Spinoza says, increase our capacity to be affected. It is a form of knowledge that works through sensation, but sensation understood as that which presents to us *presences of spirit*, and designates the body a container of/for such encounters – the place and time where such presences present themselves *as experience*.

46 Cox: Body and Soul, 4.

“The Panoramic Resurrection of Space”

I dreamt once I was seated in a railway car, looking out of its large rectangular window, framing the world outside. As I looked, landscapes flashed by like so many scenes, one after another. They were the familiar landscapes of my childhood, of my pasts, of all the places I have lost to the on and on of time and dislocation . . . Suddenly gaining a distant view of myself, I realized the boxcar was not moving along a track but standing still, on a shortened track, as if merely a prop. Inside my box, looking out, I was standing still. There was no train moving across space – yet the landscape changed, and my emotions along with it, carried along from one place of intimacy to another, visions chasing one another in rapid succession. I was at once paralyzed and absorbed . . . all I could do was look out from my boxcar enclosure, through a rectangular window – a framed panorama of changing light and color.

How does the body come to be experience itself as a container – a second-body – containing what was once external? A body in which we observe not only what flashes by – all the images, affects, and sensations that occupy us – but a body which doubles itself, a body observing itself as a body, now familiar and alien. By what trick of perception does the body become an inner theater of images, of an outside-now-inside this “boxcar” that is the bodily sensorium?

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Of the emergence of rail-locution in the 19th century, Schivelbush tells us that the railway journey transformed our relation to space and time, as well as “thought, feeling and expectation.”[47] A body carried along on horseback, or jostled to and fro in the carriage experienced the automation of the horse’s body, to the limits of animal exhaustion: the distance of the landscape measured in the expulsion of breath, the throbbing of muscle, and the clicking of hooves on uneven terrain. It was a whole sensory assemblage of horse, man, buggy, ground, weather, in which the traveler would have been highly attuned to the capacities and limits of the animal, as well as subtle change in the terrain. With the horse-drawn carriage, the limits and possibilities of space were experienced through the limits and possibilities of the animal body. What Schivelbush calls a “mimetic relationship,” whether in relation to the animal

47 Schivelbush: The Railway Journey, xiii.

body pulling the carriage or ships drifting with "water and wind currents," was dissolved by the first steam powered engines.[48]

Unlike in Europe, however, North Americans did not experience the railway as an interruption to "a fully-fledged pre-industrial transportation system." Rather, the railway was, according to Schivelbusch, a beginning – the beginning of culture realized as movement. And we might add, culture realized in digital mediation, for Schivelbush compares the steam-driven piston of the train, it's unceasing up and down movement – without "analogue of any movement found in nature" – to a "binary-action," and thus the realization of a binary machine *par excellence*, the "binary-digital logic" of the computer.[49] The Spiritualist notion of the body as electrical telegraph here finds further resonance – after all, the telegraph emerged as part of the railway assemblage, as that binary technology through which signals are mediated, signals which enable or halt the movement of the train, just as the medium mediates the inner movement of diverse spirit bodies and places.

The railway was seen as providing access to and thus opening up the vast unsettled American wilderness: "With the construction of the railroads, American culture began what European culture completed with them."[50] The industrial revolution, argues Schivelbush, began in America not in manufacturing but in agriculture and transportation "and was thus related directly to nature," or we might add, space. So much so that the industrial revolution was seen as a natural development, as if machine and nature were organic extensions of one another. The notion that "machinery and industry as forces [. . .] do not destroy nature but actually realized its potential by cultivating it" is distinctly American: "paraphrasing Emerson, Marx says that the industrial revolution appeared as a 'railway journey in the direction of nature'".[51] In Schivelbush's description of the railway journey it is as if "nature," or the external landscape anyway, is pushed into the body, in the making of a distinctly modern sensorium. Following this American train of thought, where technology is the realization of nature's potential, into Spiritualism, we find an understanding of the body as a model technology, a cultivated instrument of perception and sensation whose task is to realize the capacity for spirit communication conferred upon us by nature.

As Schivelbusch describes it, the railroad brought about a transformation in the experience of space and time, or what he calls the annihilation thereof – a new metric of space and time, collapsed into points of destination. The

48 Ibid., 9.
49 Ibid., xx.
50 Schivelbush is here quoting Max Maria von Weber.
51 Schivelbush: The Railway Journey, 92.

mechanical mediation of a machine, the railroad, gives rise to this collapse or calibrates *an event* at the level of sense experience, in this case, the perceptual transformation of the railway passenger. What is realized is the smooth, non-friction of a system, which demands, Schivelbusch tells us, the land be re-made in its image – flat, linear, even. In this alienating shock-effect generated by the railway's collapse of space and time, there is a concomitant "panoramic resurrection" of space – space now divided into a montage of movement-images that flit by you as you stare out the window of the railcar. Or put another way, as space is "killed by the railways [. . .] we are left with time alone," where space becomes a movement-image, a segment of space-time.[52] Time is no longer a measure of space — space, as cut-up time-spaces, becomes a measure of time, anticipating the presentation of time itself in the filmic time-image.[53] As the landscape is pushed into the body it is resurrected in a *panorama* of fleeting scenes through the window of the boxcar. At the same time, the abstract distances between points of arrival and departure, cut-up by rail-lines, become re-animated scenes resurrected in the body. The body becomes the space of these now dislocated, cut-up time-spaces – a panorama of inner landscapes.

Travel by railcar here involves a transformation in the subjective perception of space-time, and, I would add, in the subtle relation between the body and its outsides. The annihilation of space and time, or rather, the cutting up of the experience of space and time into fragments, realized a total transformation in the spatio-temporal experience of movement – turning space into surface-image, an evanescent, because ever changing, visual image. What Schilvebush calls the "total emancipation from the traversed landscape" because "the traveler's gaze could then move into an imaginary surrogate landscape," realizes a specific experience of the body doubled by a second-body as container – the box-car like container of experience.

Is it not fitting then, as Schivelbusch tells us, the original meaning of *machine* "was not the technical contraption but the effect of being tricked or cheated?" As in D*eus ex machina*, the god from the machine, which I read originated in Greek theater where a machine would suspend actors playing gods above the action to intervene and resolve the conflict of opposing forces in the plot. What a metaphor connecting the way the *machine* of the railroad tricks "nature" by erecting a "surrogate" or second-landscape within the body – anticipating that more overtly deceptive machine, the cinematic apparatus, which reconstructs nature (always a little different!) before our eyes.

52 Schivelbush, 37; Deleuze, Cinema 2. Schivelbush is here quoting Heinrich Heine's *Lutezia*.
53 Deleuze: Cinema 2.

How then, does such a conversion of space into image relate to a new experience of and in the body? Here the body makes of itself a space in which time is intensified and expressed, becoming the place of an outside folded inside. The panoramic surrogate landscape, experienced by the railroad passenger in the nineteenth century, anticipates the "movement-image" in cinematic montage – wherein space becomes "any-space-whatsoever," freeing movement to become perceptible as a measure of time.[54] For if the railroad treats space as something to be conquered, annihilating our experience of space by contracting distance, it simultaneously animates space as an inner experience, where the cut-up image is reconstituted imaginatively into living scenes. Thus what the outer movement across space, extension as conquering, paradoxically brings into view is an inner experience of movement, one entwined with the passage of intensive affects through a body. In this entwinement, the quality of movement comes into view: movement is always a quality of the *present*.[55] Movement as quality, as Bergson says, is always vitally in the present.[56] As such, while the divisibility of space presupposes a homogenous, continuous space to be divided, movement cannot be divided, or rather, it is divisible only into heterogeneous, unique segments – like the living scenes, or milieus, resurrected within the railway passenger.[57] When movement becomes a mobile image, dislodged from external measure yet affectively charged, it takes us for a ride, reconfiguring the very sense of space and time into sensory and affecting milieus of movement. Here, the body becomes a quasi-cinematic container for the movement-image – of an "imaginary surrogate landscape" that flits by, mixing with one's own fancies, day-dreams, inner images.

Spiritualist mediumship, then, evokes a parallel construction of the body. By paradoxically folding outside forces of nature (spirits) once embedded in place, into an inner theater of cut-up images, it realizes the body itself as a modernist boxcar-like container mediating these "resurrected" scenes of an always already dislocated world. As the railway moves the body across space – an extensive movement – there is a parallel contraction of time and space occurring within the body. Likewise, in the case of the medium, there is an

54 Deleuze: Cinema 1, 102–111.

55 Ibid., 1–8.

56 The filmic reconstitution of movement, shot by shot, betrays, Bergson feared, this vital quality of movement – a movement that is essentially present and in the present. For in film, he argued, images are static shots of an always slices of past movements that must be reconstituted into sequences in order to convey to the viewer a sense of present movement. Deleuze, Cinema 1, 1–8; Gunning: "Animation and Alienation."

57 Deleuze, Cinema 1, 1.

intensive movement folding time and space into the body – outside-in – whilst collapsing an ontological distance between life and death.

If with the emergence of the railway time and space is collapsed, the railroad itself constituting an event at multiple levels, we might ask how such an event redistributes itself in another set of singularities, as in the coeval event of Spiritualist mediumship. What is striking to me in these roughly coeval events is the shared juxtaposition of stasis and movement, as well as the radical disembedding of land become landscape-image, on the one hand, and the delocalized nature of spirit or kinship, on the other. In the case of the railway passenger, the external movement of the train through the landscape gives way to an internal movement (the sense of a montage of flitting images, within a body not itself in immediate motion). The body sits still in its compartment, whilst carried across a changing landscape. Similarly, the modern medium is in many ways defined by her stillness, whether seated within a confined cabinet or in an armchair giving messages, the stasis of her body is betrayed only by hints of an inner movement of spirit sensations, finally realized in physical manifestations or messages. "When spatial distance is no longer experienced" the distinction between original and copy – or in mediumship, the actual and the spectral – is also diminished. The sublimation of land into spirit is here likened by Schivelbush to what Benjamin called the loss of aura in artistic reproductions – an effect of the desire to "brings things "closer" spatially and humanly" by accepting the reproduction over the original.[58]

In the moment land becomes landscape and kinship becomes spirit, a sublimation has occurred which reflects the promise and peril of universalization – and thus the homogenization of space and time, as Schivelbush put it. And, in the context of mediumship, this is also the universalization of the dead, who are dislocated from any particular place and time. Like the becoming-house of the body, the transformation of perception in the railcar is likened to the intention or internalization of movement-images, whereby space, now divided into qualities of movement in time, lives on *in spirit,* or as *spiritual milieus* disembedded from actual landscapes.[59]

58 Schivelbush: The Railway Journey, 42.

59 I am here interested in the way mediumship, like cinema seems to affect a looping between the outer movement of the world and the inner, spiritual movement of images that operate within us despite ourselves, or automatically. Insofar as cinema "makes movement" within us, it converts automatic movements (habitual action) to a spiritual movement: "automatic movement gives rise to a spiritual automaton within us, which reacts in turn on movement." It is this shock that cinema affects in us with the movement-image, that awakens a spiritual movement of thought, as an action upon the world. Deleuze: Cinema 2, 156.

The Body as Container

"We can experience, touch it and feel it, but we cannot hold on to it. Mediumship is the power to hold onto it." You must learn to "hold your Space," we were told again and again, in one of the many courses in mediumship I attended in New York and New Jersey. The medium must learn, above all, *to hold her space*, our teachers tell us. This space is one of confidence and trust in "what comes," in what one feels, sees and hears from the spirit world. Yet to hold your space for what comes one must make room in the body, to experience the body itself as a space – a quasi-house capable of holding the haptic phantasms, the many condensations that precipitate into a plasticity of *Shapes,* or as Spiritualists call them, *spirit bodies* or *intelligences*. You must relax your mind while honing your senses to those fugitive and overlooked images that enter into this *space of the body*.

It is not enough to see an image within the minds eye; one must feel it, enter into it . . . and the image will begin to develop, to animate, taking on a life of its own. In this "quickening," there is a collapse of distance. A static image, seen as if from afar, suddenly becomes proximate, an image you can step into. Like films, but closer somehow, to witness spirits is to enter into affective zones – sensuous atmospheres irreducible simply to "my experience," yet arising within me. To make oneself a medium of the spirits, is to enter a state of active passivity, involving a subtle "reaching forth" of the sensuous body. The body extends itself, feeling itself as a space, so as to make room for spirit bodies to enter. "Now it is inside the body that something is happening, the body is the source of movement."[60]

Beholding this inner imagistic space, requires, paradoxically, a moment of alienation, of viewing the body as if from the outside, as object or container. A medium in class put it this way: "It is as if one part of you is present while the other is absent – a splitting, a disassociation. And then you feel you've entered another space, you are now in two spaces at once – in the room, you sit, eyes open, in control, talking to the person in front of you . . . yet you are saying what you see in that other space."

It is from this other space, from a vantage beyond life, the vantage of death within life, that the spirits speak. This is the space you must hold, and, holding it is difficult. Like the shyness of dreams, spirit images evaporate the moment the light of conscious thought enters in. In this way the body makes contact

60 Deleuze: Francis Bacon, 15.

with the spirit world, who are always there anyway . . . "THEY don't leave us," my teachers will insist again and again, it is we who leave or forget them.

In her diaries Virginia Woolf describes an analogous experience: "I am hardly aware of myself, but only of the sensation, I am only the *container* of the feeling of ecstasy, of the feeling of rapture."[61] What is this experience of the body as container – like a box-car reeling across cut-up landscapes, or the dark chamber of a pinhole camera, where light need only enter, to create an inverted-image of the world on its insides?

Acting as both subject and object, the body doubles itself, objectifying itself as a container of sensations, as if from without. What does it mean to conceive of the body as amplifying a second-space in which images and their attached sensations *condense*, forming cloud-like theaters within us?

"Our bodies are our instruments," a medium from a church in New Jersey said to me. The body and its sensory techniques becomes the finely tuned instrument upon which spirit's communications are played. He went on to analogize the body to a musical instrument that must stay "finely tuned," so that the communication received from spirit might "resonate." In the simplest sense it is a two-way street between sender (spirit) and receiver (medium): "they manipulate you, resonate with you, as their instrument. But you must know your subtlest sensations – what is the sound resonating through me? The beat in me? They put out the information, and we have to feel it."

What kind of body is this that experiences itself as instrument for communication with the dead? Here the body becomes an object to itself, or is viewed as an object from another part of itself. It is as if a negative place in the body comes into view through this moment of self-objectification, the view of an outside, inside. And here the outside refers to a space of death within life, as a view from an elsewhere/nowhere, the body takes of itself. The body as the primordial haunted media. As Kittler says: "media always already provide the appearance of spectres . . . ." and this, because all reproduction refers to a copy of the 'real,' doubles the real, and thus hides within it a lingering doubt that the real is itself phantasmic – a copy of copies – or, spirits all the way down.

The Art of Memory, and the Inner Theater

Perhaps given the difficulties of discerning spirits, the first step in this code-formation is to make of the body an intentional "space" for images and other

61 Woolf: Moments of Being, 65.

sensations to appear. The medium must learn to experiences her body, in this circumscribed space of mediumship, as a container and instrument for the intentional appearance of spirits. Locating images within a place to contain them, belongs to the ancient art of *mnemonics*, wherein one conceives an inner architecture, constructing a topological (topoi) memory map linking *places and images*.[62] Constructing an "artificial memory" a second-space wherein memories – as image-sensations – are stored, enables these images to later be recalled when needed: "in order to form a series of places in memory" the orator remembers a building, "as spacious and varied a one as possible, the forecourt, the living room, the bedrooms, and parlors, not omitting statues and other ornaments with which the rooms are decorated."[63] What an image in itself: the ancient orator travels through the dark spaces of the imagination in search of his "memory building," all whilst standing before an audience, "making his speech" urgently, "drawing from the memorized places the image he has placed in them."[64] That memory could be augmented by constructing an inner second-space within the mind is not unlike what the medium does in treating her body as a container to make space for the image-sensations of the spirits.

By way of correspondence, let us take the example of a well known medium of 19th century Paris, Elizabeth D'Esperance, who in her autobiography of 1897 recalls her first participation in clairvoyant experiments during a séance.[65] The participants seated in a circle, would cover one another's eyes to induce clairvoyant visions. "Scarcely had the fingers touched my eyelids before the fire-lighted room vanished, and I seemed to be in the open air, in a strange place, for I could hear the rustling of trees, the soughing of the wind through the branches; but it was black and dark [. . .] and I could see nothing [. . .]"[66] Thus transported to another place and time, the immobile body of the Medium remains "seated in a fire-lit room," the "feeling or consciousness" of which brought a sense of "safety," and "never left me," D'Esperance recalls. Yet, all the while she is "equally conscious" of the "scene witnessed on that dark country road was a reality and interested me intensely," comparing this split-consciousness to being both the actor and the audience, a sympathetic spectator: "as one seated in a theatre" watching "with interest and sympathy the scene being enacted on the stage [. . .]". Taken up into the scene, she walks through an inner-outer elsewhere, which unravels

62 Yates: The Art of Memory, 2.
63 Ibid., 3.
64 Ibid., 2.
65 D'Esperance: Shadow Land or Light from the Other Side.
66 Ibid., 118.

like a film and "affected" her "senses."[67] She is both perceptually and affectively, inside and outside at once.

The way the medium constructs this inner theater, as much as a sensory second-body within the body to make room for the emergence of images, involves, like the art of mnemonics, the folding of an outer space into an inner space — second-space — in which images may condense and momentarily endure. Both the reconstruction of an architectural artificial memory and the reconstruction of the body as an instrument of sense experience, seem to be ways of holding the past, or rather, allowing the past to repeat, albeit differentially. For what returns in mediumship, is the past as living entity – not sequestered to a pastness but inhabiting the present. Thus, unlike mnemonics, mediumship is not about recollection – placing images in an inner architecture so they can be stored and later recalled. While mnemonics concerns being able to retrieve something known for a later moment, mediumship involves making present a past one has never before known (the past of the spirit experienced through the medium). It is akin, I would argue, to the repetition of traumatic states, beginning with the first figure of trauma, the hysteric, who haunts the origin story of psychoanalysis. In the hysteric pasts, it seems to me, are re-presenced as full sensory milieus, appearing in what Freud's famous patient Anna O. called her "inner theater."[68] While ancient mnemonics resonates with the subtle technique in mediumship of sensing from and within a second-space, as much as a second-body within the body, mediumship aims at a repetition that does not recall the spirits (as memories) but re-presences them as living, animate entities.

On Spiritual Discernment

In their *Guide to Mediumship and Psychical Unfoldment*, written in 1903, M.H. and E.W. Wallis said medium "requires considerable patience as well as discernment to learn to differentiate the ideas and impulses that reach him from an outside source, from those which result from the activity of his own spirit and indeed, it is often hard to tell whether the activity of his own spirit is not due to some stimulus that reaches him from a spirit friend."[69] When images appear in the mind's eye of the medium, and I am here speaking of the more common clairvoyant states – for

67 Ibid., 118.
68 Freud and Breuer: Studies in Hysteria.
69 Wallis: Guide to Mediumship and Psychical Unfoldment, 224.

sensations can also be felt in diverse haptic ways as taste, touch, smell or sound – the question arises as to where the image is coming from: does it belong to her imagination, is it a memory, or is it from a spirit? In other words, mediumistic discernment always involves the blurry distinction between inside and outside, what belongs to the medium and what to the spiritual forces affecting her. This hard to tell distinction gets trickier the more to the medium realizes that her inner images, but also the knowledge and experience attached to such images, are the language through which the sprits speak to her.

There are no accidents. Every gesture, word and sound, every bodily sensation, within the designated time and space of mediumship, counts and requires the attention of the medium – the significance of these sensory cues, however, falls upon the medium to discern and intuit. The language through which the spirits communicate is the language of bodily sensations and of fugitive unconscious images that rise to the surface in a moment. Much of mediumistic training involves ways of receiving information, learning techniques to bypass conscious thought, which always disrupts the flow of images and sensations one receives from the spirits. What medium's call "information," the evidential facts of how someone died, how old they were, some intimate details etc., are forms of knowledge communicated in a paradoxical passive-state-of-attention. A controlled automaticity is thus the desired state. Such control involves certain arrangement with the spirits, requesting, for example, that the spirits give one certain kinds of verifiable information, such as names, dates or memories. But the condition of this knowing is foremost trust – you must "trust what comes" – in this space of attention to fleeting sensory cues.

Through the repetition of images and symbols, and their associations for the medium, a mimetic code comes into being, one based upon an agreement between the medium and the spirits. It is this code that stabilizes the meaning of otherwise strange and fleeting images and sensations. Mediumship, I am saying, may be understood as an interpretive art of spiraling through the association of image and feeling, itself based on experience, to arrive at a quasi-stable code of meaning through which one can better read what the spirits seek to communicate. If I see an ocean in my minds eye, and this for me brings up a horrible feeling of anxiety or terror, the repetition of this image experienced, when I "tune in," may become a symbol through which the spirits communicate. Perhaps the spirit is telling me that he/she suffered a horrible experience connected to water; the only way to discern what the spirit is conveying is through an intuitive sense or feeling in the moment – "I feel there was a boating accident," the medium might say, which would then be either confirmed or denied by the sitter. This dialogical space between the medium who puts forward images in words, and the sitter who receives them, is itself be a kind of

language game of verification and negation. The mediums message is not, if the medium is *good*, simply a psychological reading of the sitter's disposition. Nor should a good medium go "fishing" for clues through her subtle questioning of the sitter. While there is a degree of intuitive reading of the person that goes into this exchange, the medium is taught, foremost, to direct her attention away from the sitter and toward an invisible third-term – the spirit world. The medium for her part, in becoming an interpreter of the spirits, is told first and foremost, to "pay attention to your body" – how does the image feel, but also, how does it feel in you, that is, what physical impact does it have? Her attention is directed inward to the subtle sensations that shift and move as the image "develops."

Because the appearance of diverse sensations and images are, in the demarcated space of mediumship, thought to be the direct communications of the spirit through the medium, the task of discerning between the presence of spirits and memory is particularly important. Mediumistic experience distinguishes itself from memory and, in fact, the practice of mediumship requires a constant vigilance around the distinction between images drawn from memory (the mediums' own) and those that appear as *presences* of an immediate sensation or affection coming from a spiritual outside. Since discernment involves associations based in the medium's individual *experience* – a history of associations, these, like all language, being at once private and public, personal and cultural – distinguishing between images of the past and those of the present, or between imagination and spiritual image, is no easy task.

In fact, the practice of mediumship reveals these distinctions to be somewhat dubious, for the formation of a "code" between medium and spirit relies upon recollected images (eg. the ocean and associated affects) to evoke a present-presence of spirit communication. In this way, the formation of a code involves drawing out the past, in mnemonic figures or symbols, within the medium's experience, only to convert these to *signs of presence* – evidences of the immediate present-presence of the spirit. And of course language itself, insofar as it carries meaning, carries the past within it – even in the expression of that which belongs to the present. Perhaps this is why the practice of mediumship is not in the first instance – in its immediacy of sensation – so much a language-game as the expression and interpretation of bodily sensation and affect: for here a presence is conveyed, a presence of sense that must finally be converted into language. Modern mediumship is, of course, chiefly concerned with the production of communicable evidences from these nascent sensory experiences, which are thus immediately converted into linguistic signs, first in the mind of the medium and then for the sitter who receives the message. But I

want to draw attention to the gap here between the sensation of spirits and their translation into linguistic signs. And, more broadly, that spirit mediumship always involves a complex folding of time. The fact that spirits, as spirits of the dead, come to us from a lived past – the past life of the deceased person – means that what arrives as "information" of the spirits' life in the medium, is always an *animate pastness* that presents itself in the mode of presence, as the spirit *impresses* itself upon the medium as a living-presence. In this regard, mediumship is about the failure of the past to stay past, for it communicates the presence – through a continuously modifying experiential code – of spectral forces of the past.

More confusing still, is that this training in discernment between what truly comes from a spirit and what comes from imagination, makes use of fabulation. The medium relies on imagination to *fabulate* a space of communication through explicit exercises of visualization, which co-exists with the effort to discern what is truly coming from spirit and what is only imagination. It is as if the discernment of spirits relies on a capacity to enter child-like states of absorption or dissociation and imagination, giving oneself over to these states. And this, as a Spiritualist teacher told me, sometimes means "making it up until it becomes real," activating an imaginative receptivity so as to allow images to enter and to evolve, while suspending one's anxiety over the source of these images. For example, you can "actively insert a transitional symbol" as you open yourself to the spirits and try to understand something about the changes in that persons' life: using a path, a bridge or a rose and "see what happens," as the image develops within you – where is the path going? Who is crossing the bridge? Is the rose blossoming or shriveling? "You must begin with the image even if you make it up!" Part of the trick, the difficulty, is staying with the image long enough to allow for it to develop, animate and grow into meaning. Mediums love the right-brain/left-brain analogy – we must bypass our left-brain thinking (the analytic side), they say, to let ourselves be in our right-brain, the "place of pretend make-believe and imagination," in communicating with Spirit. "It will always feel like you are making it up," but you have to "trust that everything is true, everything is real," and through trusting you will "get what you give." We are in Nietzsche's territory here and all is metaphor, where to fabulate an image into being is to enter into the space beyond truth and falsity, where images are both really real and really made-up. It is as if only in opening the space of imagination can something become, or rather, enter into collusion with a reality within the image, a secret animacy within the image.

On Mediation

In understanding the body as a media in mediumship, simply taking media in the ordinary sense, as a tool or instrument of technological extension, is insufficient. In order to think the mediation of the medium's body – how invisible spirit presences are materialized, that is, made sensible – we must turn to the problem of mediation in its originary religious sense. I address bodily mediation, not only as an *epistemological* problem of how something is mediated, but as an *ontological* problem that refers back to mediation as the exchange, across gaps, between the sensible and supersensible, the inorganic world of gods, spirits, nonhuman forces and human beings.[70] Modern mediumship, insofar as it concerns communication with those – the dead – who appear beyond our world, and thus beyond communication, attends to mediation across different ontological registers. At the same time, insofar as this mediation takes place in a body, mediumship makes the problem of ontological mediation revolve around the problem of experience: how do invisible forces acting upon a body become spirits we experience, let alone *someone* we can address?

Webb Keane understands this double directionality of religious mediation as an "ontological dilemma" that seeks a "practical expression" and asks: "How does one cope in practical terms with an invisible and silent world, and what can we hope to gain by doing so?"[71] This question of how, in practice, the immaterial is materialized or made sensible, concerns what Keane calls a central difficulty for religious practitioners, insofar as any address made to an "invisible and silent world" is one that involves *the problem* of our own embodied materiality, as much as the constraints of "the media for action" available: material conditions themselves mediated by "specific semiotic ideologies, given certain political, religious, or other historically specific circumstances."[72] There are always two symmetrical directions of mediation at work in religious mediation: the one originating from the "religious perspective" which presupposes a divine or spirit power and asks: "How does that world reach us? How can we

70 See Keane: On Spirit Writing; Barber: Mediation, Religion, And Non-Consistency In-One; Thacker: Dark Matter. I am interested also in the idea that Spiritualism presents us with an image of the mediatic function of religion (however as a problem of the body), yet one outside the dominant discourses on religion. In this regard, I am interested in Barber's call, to look for the "concept of religion, in its mediatic function, not there where we are able to see it, but [. . .] instead where it is no longer noticeable." He thus calls for a genealogy of the concept of religion that would de-naturalize religion in its "noticeable" place, that is, as an "object for philosophy" Barber: Mediation, Religion, And Non-Consistency In-One, 162–163.

71 Keane: On Spirit Writing, 3.

72 Ibid., 6.

reach it?" and the other side, the vantage from the secular outside (as in worldly), begins with the "sensual perceptions of the material world" and asks: "What perceptions will count as signs of something beyond? How do material practices make the invisible world a presupposable ground for what practioners perceive? How do people produce the immaterial using the material means available to them?"[73] These map roughly onto two transformations in an opposing directionality, and involve what Keane calls the "transduction" of different semiotic registers: of "materializing the immaterial," and of "dematerializing the material."[74]

Mediumship seems to enfold both the religious and the secular perspective: the emphasis on producing proofs of spirit presence takes on the religious perspective, in Keane's sense, in that it seeks to materialize, for others, the invisible world of spirits – which are presupposed as communicable presences – while, at the same time, in the sensory attunement of the medium to the spirit world, embodied sensations are spiritualized, that is, dematerialized into spiritual forms (the secular perspective). Thus mediumship addresses itself both to the materialization of the invisible (giving proofs to the world), and the experiential/experimental dematerialization of the sensual, which converts bodily sensations and inner images to an experience of supersensual spirits. Outer proofs, in other words, are here entwined with inner experience, outside with inside, in such a way that the secular and religious position are entirely knotted together. It is not faith, say the Spiritualists, but the *experience* of the spirits, communicated through the body of the medium, upon which evidence stands or falls.

In other words, what seems to be a secular demand for "proofs" beyond faith alone, engages the mundane sensory *experience* of the medium, yet opens onto a spiritual sense beyond material sensation. Thus sense experience, through the mediation of the material body, is the secular ground for proofs of an immaterial spiritual presence, while the production of such mediumistic proofs rests on the presupposition – what medium's call *trust* (if not faith exactly) – that such spirits are present and will show up in the first place. As such Spiritualism, within its own understanding of mediation, not only engages, but draws out, the mutually constituting secular and religious poles of apprehending the invisible world – the problem of abstracting the invisible from empirical experience, and the problem of enfleshing the invisible, bringing it to earth as *experience*.

From the amorphous sensations of spiritual apprehension – what is happening here? – or the more tangible disturbances of a haunting, as in the rapps

73 Ibid., 4.
74 Ibid., 4.

and knocks at Hydesville, we find, in this foundational story of modern mediumship, a transition: from disturbance to address, from outer noise (rapps and knocks) to inner experience. A scene of amorphous communication occurring in the fits and starts of a haunting becomes a scene of spirits directly addressed, first in the errant play of children, culminating in the experiments of the séance parlor and the intimate messages given by a medium to a sitter. In this regard, spirit relations are actualized in an imperative to communicate across impossible thresholds, as the very experiments in communication address themselves to those – the dead – who by definition inhabit the limits of the communicable. Partaking perhaps in what Eugene Thacker has called a "dark" mediation that lies at the heart of communications endless flows – namely, the impossibility of communication, the fact of an *always prior* "excommunication." It is this excommunication, this darkness of the -non- within the imperative to communicate, that evokes mediation in its religious sense – as communication with that which is beyond communication, whether as an address to a generalized "supernatural" or the negativity or unknowability of God within Christian theology.[75] Here, religious mediation always points us toward the doubleness of communication as both imperative and impossible.

Spiritualism, however, seems to surround this impossibility of communication with an *excess* of communication, as much as an excess of figuration – the fact is, one way or another, *the spirits show up,* and keep showing up. Not only in the seemingly incessant talk among mediums about one's spirit experiences, but in the very bodily practices honed by mediums, in transfiguring sensations into spirit evidences for others. What the inaugural scene of Hydesville seems to establish, and Spiritualist practice sediments, is that spirit communication, while not exactly a Kierkegaardian leap of faith across the abyss, reveals the material and sensory *mediation* across gaps, of a seemingly immaterial and incommunicable presence. Yet within this excess of communication, wherein the medium figures the spirit for others, there is always an excess that cannot be figured, sensations that cannot be discerned. The imperative to communicate spirits presence, I am saying, as much as the imperative to make spirits evidential to others, produces a spectre of doubt within the medium, who must continuously submit her experience to internal and external "verification." In this way, spirit communication – in the very moment it claims to convert the supersensible spirit world to sensible, thus communicable, spirits – brings to the surface the hidden condition of communication as such, the always prior excommunication, or impossibility, within communication.

75 Thacker: Dark Matter.

Figuring the Body

Eighth of May, Paris, 1912: A Séance

Present: The Medium, Eva C. aka Marthe Beraud, Mme. Bisson, and Baron von Schrenck Notzing, a doctor from Munich and investigator of psychic and mediumistic materializations, along with his wife, whose name is not given.[76]

Commencement: 9:30 p.m.

The medium, Eva C. sits on a chair inside the four black sides of a "cabinet." Her hands and ankles tied to the chair. The cabinet "consisted of two side walls joining in a corner and a roof, all [. . .] with black lining. The floor [. . .] was also covered with black."[77] A curtained opening on one side of the cabinet allows the medium to be viewed by the "sitters," seated around the cabinet in a semi-circle.

The cabinet is thought to enclose the energy that radiates through the medium's body, thereby intensifying the build up of such energy. Intensification through containment, the cabinet like the body, provides that minimal enclosure for sensations to condense and finally exude as cloud-like bodily forms.

Keeping spirits in a closet, so to speak, is understood by Spiritualists as a way of intensifying and extending spirit energy through the body of the medium. A Russian doll like effect: bodies within bodies, the spirit body in the medium, the medium in the cabinet, the cabinet in the house.

It is as if such bodily extensions (of what exactly? The spirits? A vital force? A filmy figural image?) need a second-medium, a container to intensify the spectral body, making it endure beyond the ephemerality of a fleeting phantasm. What is needed is a medium stronger than the flesh – the flesh is too weak, what is needed is a house, or, here, a cabinet.[78]

From the countless sittings Schrenck Notzing attended in Paris, he notes being "struck by the variety and the wealth of forms" which issue from the medium, always initially as an amorphous substance. This substance is described as webs of gossamer, smoke-like, fibrous, "cool" and sticky" to the touch, comparable to the "slithering cold of reptilian skin."[79]

> Loud and long-continued expirations during the first twenty minutes. At the opening of the curtains a mask-like face was seen attached to the medium's back hair. It resembled a

76 Schrenck Notzing: Phenomena of Materialization, 245.
77 Ibid., 245.
78 Deleuze: What is Philosophy? 178–186.
79 Schrenck Notzing: Phenomena of Materialization, 474.

> half-soft pulp, traversed by softer material, and kneaded into shape. Only the forehead and eyes were recognizable, which gave the impression of a female face. This *shape* was seen, sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left of the medium (on her shoulders), and sometimes appeared to detach itself from her body and remain freely suspended, while her head and hands were under visible constraint. [Italics mine].[80]

The "materialization process" consists of two moments: the "simple spontaneous secretion and formation of a transitory material [ectoplasm]"; and the "utilization of this material for the production of forms, images and living organs."[81] Between the first and second moment – from an amorphous ectoplasm, to the formation of distinct bodily shapes – lies the *event of the figural*, to use Deleuze's language.[82]

As such, these apparitional faces, heads, hands and various other bodily members, appear as if suddenly caught in the act of formation – unfinished, fragmental. Wondering at the fragmentary appearance of these dynamic plastic shapes Notzing concludes, their completion must hinge on their visibility *for* the onlooker: "Here," he says, "we have [. . .] an *intension* of the creative force," a "mysterious intelligence [. . .]" at work, "*with the object of producing a definite impression on the eye of the beholder,"* yet "working with limited means [. . .]" can achieve only "the production of *fugitive material*" an "impression from fragments [italics mine]."[83]

The sudden appearance and disappearance "with lightning-like rapidity" of these fragmental figures starkly contrasts with the constraint of the medium's body – motionless and pinned, as it were, against a black background. In séances where the medium was being tested for fraud, the body was even "sewn up" into straight-jacket, so as to assure no "tricks."[84] Yet, in her very motionlessness, the medium betrays an affective strain and effort: "the symptoms of mediumistic labour . . .": "utterances of pain," "moaning and pressing," and the sheer "effort of will *when, for instance, the materialized limb is to touch one of those present, or carry out definite actions.*"[85] The medium, frozen in place, intensifies in order to exude, the animate figure formed within her, of a moving, ectoplasmic *second-body*. And recall, the cabinet, that bigger version of the medium's body-as-container – containers within containers.

80 Ibid., 247.
81 Ibid., 482.
82 Deleuze: Francis Bacon, 6.
83 Schrenck Notzing: Phenomena of Materialization, 483.
84 Ibid., 473.
85 Ibid., 477.

In these fragmental images, like a half-formed face on Eva C.'s shoulder, the imagistic-shape extending from the body, like a magical image, is not a "faithful" copy but a sensuous one – it does not perfectly resemble (it is always unfinished!) but congeals something, an "influence" – affective, sensuous – of the body it imitates.[86] And here we must distinguish between the *figural* and figuration – for the spectral figures exuded are not "figurative," that is, "illustrative" or representative of an original body (either the medium's or the spirit-person), nor do they offer a "narrative" scene, which would somehow fill in the gaps between the medium and the spirits she gives rise to (biographically or otherwise).[87] There is, I want to say, a non-relation between the medium and the spirits that becomes a *figural* relation (giving rise to spiritual figures) only through the *event* of mediumistic sensation itself – things seen, heard and felt in a body. The figural is an event of sensation, which makes visible the very forces acting upon the bodily medium – the body as medium – in the immediacy of a figural formation that refers to sensory and affective events passing between inside and outside.

Images are always contained in some medium, but the first of these is the medium of the body itself. The body is double: both abstract and sensory, a shape containing sensations, and a milieu of sensation giving rise to shapes. Here the very suspension of context of the black cabinet, intensifies and makes visible, the body in its becoming-image – and thus its displacement in time and space. To witness these events – *an event of seeing* the emergence of the image from the body – returns us to the problem of the body. In this way, the ectoplasmic fragments do not so much recall a whole that is missing (the missing body of the spirit) but, I would say, attend to, and thus draw our attention to, the event of the figural as such, with its condition in the gestational and intensive labor of the body. At the same time, the very intensive immobility of the medium creates a space for a constant variation of these emergent plastic forms.[88] Movement escapes the body, or rather, these spectral figures are fragments of the body escaping itself, in an ecstatic turning inside-out. The shadow Figure or Shape is no less real than the body. It has presence. The spirit is of the body, but also not of the body – it is a real sensory event of the body, through which the spirit-figure escapes the body, making visible the material body as doubled by a figure, an outline, a shape, a spectre. The body is double, and so it is doubly displaced: "This

86 Taussig: Mimesis and Alterity, 51–52. See Taussig's understanding of the role of almost abstract figures or "poorly executed ideograms" in mimetic magic, which Mauss and Hubert spoke of in relation to magically efficacious images, their power having less to do with resemblance and more to do with the "impregnation" of the image and contact.

87 Deleuze: Francis Bacon, 6.

88 Deleuze: Francis Bacon, 14.

is no longer the problem of place," or foundation, like the place of the *house*, "but rather of the event" of the figure – the plastic shape of the body.[89]

This scene of ectoplasmic materialization from Mme. Bisson's séance room in 1912 belongs to a larger category of audial, visual and haptic materializations, of what is today referred to as "physical mediumship." Such "physical" demonstrations are more rare than they were during the heyday of Spiritualism in the 19th century and have largely been replaced by "mental mediumship," or what I've descriptively called, the *inner theater* of visual, haptic and auditory experience, verbally communicated to the sitter as "evidence" of spirit. I have been hesitant to separate these types of mediumship, however, as both physical, and mental mediumship center, it seems to me, upon the realization of the body as an instrument, and the formation of an inner space of experience. Thus the ectoplasmic extension of the body through its containment in the cabinet – itself a second-body – gives us a concrete image of the inner formation of the body itself, as a house or cabinet of spirit experience. Inner theater and figural extension are two-sides of the same coin in the affective relays between body and image. Whether we begin with a virtual figure extending from a material body – inside-out – as in the case of ectoplasmic materialization or, as in mental mediumship with the intensification of outer forces that affect a body folded into an *inner theater* of sensation – outside-in – both movements originate in the body, as a medium-like container of sensation. The body as medium folds in upon itself, contains as much as it is contained by, the forces affecting the body.

Despite the fact that Spiritualists' often write and talk about spirit communication in terms of "intelligences," and "minds," this is always problematized in mediumistic practice, I am arguing, by the very matter of the body as the primordial medium of spirit communication. As such, readings of Spiritualism that understand spirit communication as a merely "cognitivist property of human minds," however understandably – given all its emphasis on spiritualizing matter – miss the mark.[90] While Spiritualism, especially in the 19th century, continuously emphasized the inevitable progress or sublation toward a dematerialized, spiritual world, this self-understanding seems to continuously bump-up against the centrality of the body as medium. It seems to me that Spiritualism does not so much concern the dematerialization or cognitivization of the embodied world, but the spiritualization of the material world – which is not quite the same thing. In the blending of medium and spirit, the body is

89 Ibid., 15.
90 Geoghegan: Mind the Gap, 922.

extended, not de-limited. Moreover, the body in Spiritualism is envisioned as connected to other bodies, both material and etheric, along cosmic "chains of sympathy" and sensation, creating "a universe of the body and a body of the universe," and establishing what Robert Cox, in his important history has called "a true social physiology."[91]

Between Abstraction and Sensation

If the body is the locus of spiritual experience, whether for the materialization of the invisible, including ephemeral "messages," or the more durable "physical" manifestations – like spirit portraits, or spirit writings – these spirit expressions refer back, in the first instance, to the experience of the sensing body as the maker of *icons*. After all, an icon, in the Peircean sense, always contains the firstness of qualities that strike our sensations before they congeal into a representation – these pure qualities such as "color, texture, and shape" thus are carried along, *contained*, in the iconicity of the image itself, as real presences, not merely as representations. In mediumship, it is through the firstness of sensation passing that a figure or icon begins to take shape, and while this shape endures long enough to be expressed or materialized – exuded externally, for example, as in an ectoplasmic figure – the figure itself remains always closer to the plasticity of firstness, teetering, somehow, between formless quality and form (as in the unfinished limbs exuded by the medium, Eva C).

For Spiritualists, instead of making icons of durable materials – images of the divine – I'm proposing mediumship makes of the body a plastic icon, which gives rise to an excess of *ephemeral* images, utterances, words, shapes and other signs of the multitudinous spirits. It is the ephemerality of these figural icons, the spirits – that draws out an iconoclastic resonance within mediumship: images retreat into the space of the body, and emerge only externally as momentary figures, fleeting presences. *They do not stick*. Yet, the centrality of the body as medium makes the body the locus of what I refer to as an immanent iconicity, insofar as the body contains and intensifies the spiritual sensation – making it *endure* only long enough to become "a spirit" *recognizable* to an interpretant.[92] In mediumship the body makes of itself an icon by first

91 Cox: Body and Soul, 90.

92 See also, in a different register, Barber's understanding of "icons of immanence," which draws upon the role of fabulation in Deleuze's thought. Barber: Deleuze and the Naming of God.

understanding itself a spirit among spirits, and at the same time, a *medium* capable of containing the many fleeting spirit-images immanently present. Insofar as the body only momentarily expresses and reflects the spirit-image – whether in speech, ectoplasmic emissions, or other extensions – the body is at once the locus wherein sensation and spirit are bridged, and yet, never holds the image (spirit) long enough to congeal its movement into a static idol. What matters is not the image made and eternalized, but the *experience* of the image.

What interests me is this back and forth, already alluded to, between abstraction and sensation – between a state of abstraction immanent to bodily experience and the *facts* of being affected.[93] On the one hand, the body abstracts itself – as the medium is taught to behold herself an instrument and container of forces; on the other, this abstraction is the condition of emergence of the sensation as a visible entity, a spirit figure. Here, it seems to me, we can speak at one and the same time, of a delimitation and an expansion of sensation. The delimitation or enclosure of what is felt or sensed occurs in time and space – in the intentional creation of a moment in time in which the spirits are asked to appear, and in demarcating a space of attention within the body of the medium. To mediate forces is thus also to contain forces, to give them a finite space in which they are intensified. These diagrammatic spaces, offering a delimitating container for the intensification of forces affecting the medium, are prefigured in Spiritualism's origin story, in the figure of the *house* as original enclosure: a "battery" for spirit energies, the first media mediating the forces of an invisible yet sensible outside. Within Spiritualism one finds these figures of enclosure – containers within containers – themselves diagrams of a particularly modernist conception of the mind-body relation. If the story begins with the centrality of the house at Hydesville, it is replaced by the medium's cabinet – a second quasi-house, a mobile, extendable container that can be set up anywhere and everywhere for a séance (giving the séance its noted democratic form). Finally, as I have argued, the body itself is the primary site of mediation and containment – thus from house to cabinet to body, its containers all the way down.

As Deleuze said of Francis Bacon's paintings, there is always a diagram or a space that marks a contour, a contained geometry, that conditions the appearance of, and sets off, the figure – as if the imperative in Bacon's paintings were: "save the contour."[94] The contour is a place, a minimal place that makes visible the fact of a body affected.[95] This contained space, the abstract

93 I am indebted here to Deleuze's discussion of the fact, and "matters of fact." Deleuze: Francis Bacon.

94 Deleuze: Francis Bacon, 91.

95 Ibid., 9.

contour, is indissolubly entwined with the appearance of the figure, and since it is through the figure that the *facts* of sensation become visible, this abstract space conditions the appearance of the sensation. It is this enframing of a diagrammatic space in painting – and in Bacon's work the actual frame of the painting is doubled explicitly by the painted contour delimiting his figures – that makes room for the appearance of the sensation. Between abstraction and figuration, a tension must be held that does not collapse the figure into a non-sensuous static structural abstraction. The enclosure must contain the chaos – just enough – to make the forces affecting a figure visible. In this tensed relation, the diagram cannot take over and submerge the figure entirely within a codified or abstracted space, nor can the chaos of sensation expressed in the swaths of color in the figure, take over and drown out the contour through which it becomes visible. In this way, painting makes visible what Deleuze calls, a "necessary catastrophe," whereby the abstract form or contour passes through an excess of sensation and yet "emerge(S) from the catastrophe," as that minimal enclosure necessary to make the figure of sensation appear.[96] Bacon's paintings reveal a tensed entwinement of the geometry that enframes, and conditions, the emergence of the figure, and the color-as-sensation that exceeds the enclosure.[97] This tension within the medium of painting is first, I am saying, a tension within the body itself as medium: at once abstract and sensate. Or better, the body is also a spiritual body, "the spirit is the body itself, the body without organs," and this nonorganic body makes visible a nascent power of figuration belonging to the body, as the "zone where forms become discernible."[98]

In Spiritualist mediumship, spirits are signs marking the *fact* of sensation, as much as the place of sensation – and the place is always particular, tied to the particular body of the medium affected – even as their appearance is only momentary. They are concrescences of what is felt or seen and endure only through the parameters offered by the body itself. Their condition is that minimal contour, the abstract space of/within the body where sensations become autonomous figural entities, that is irreducible to the organs of feeling from which they emerge. If the body is a container in mediumship, it is a porous one – one that lets a little chaos through.

Spiritualism, I have tried to show, presents us with a series of practical and historical figures – first the house, then cabinet – that act as minimal contours intensifying the sensation and conditioning the appearance of figural spirits.

96 Ibid., 89.
97 Ibid., 91.
98 Ibid., 34.

And further, we find this moment of abstraction in the techniques of mediumship, in the laying out of an interior space or contour within the body, making the body an objectified space, an *instrument* of mediation that doubles the fleshly body and conditions the appearance of sensate spirit figures.

In the foundational story of spirit communication in the house at Hydesville, we find a transition from noise – the disturbance – to *communication*. A spirit is discerned, a shape or figure emergent from the amorphous background of things felt but not seen. And perhaps more uncanny than the emergence of a spirit from ephemeral sensations, is the fact of figuration itself: what materializes, whether, more commonly, in the inner imagistic theater of the medium's experience, or in ectoplasmic emissions, or more commonly, in the words of a message from the spirits to a "sitter," is the *spiritualization of matter* into form. This spiritualization of matter points to a moment of abstraction – the becoming-figure of the spirit – making spirits sensible to the medium, and to those seeking evidences. The spirit, we might say – whether issuing from the medium's body as an ectoplasmic form, or in the less material more common form, as inner images translated into words – is an affecting figure, at once abstract and sensory.[99] Not only is Spiritualism, then, constructive of new forms of communication at the edges of the communicable, but this form of bodily mediation involves both materialization and dematerialization, the immanent looping of sensation and abstraction: of the intensification of affects within an inner abstract contour or container – the body as house – and the extensification of figural forms, or spirits. What is then perhaps most remarkable about mediumship in practice, is that it immanentizes the abstraction of immaterial figures (spirits) in bodily sensation, and in this sense, returns the problem of abstraction to the body.

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99 See also Eugenie Brinkema's insightful formulation of the relation between form and affect. Brinkema: The Forms of the Affects.

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Carly Machado and Raquel Sant'Ana

Mediating "Mystery". Pentecostalism, the Media, and the Social Production of Hope and Suspicion in the Brazilian Crime Debate

For several years, violence and crime have been major issues in Rio de Janeiro's public arena and a daily challenge for those who live in the city. The narratives produced in the city usually cite the same causes of and the same suggestions for dealing with violence. On the one hand, some claim that slums (favelas) are centers of criminal actions, morally degraded, and filled with a dangerous population. For these people, the only way to deal with violence problems is tougher police intervention and a severe imprisonment system, as they see no possibility to rehabilitate criminals. On the other hand, there are those who believe the causes of violence are Brazil's deep economic and social inequalities, police abuse, and the failure of a security policy focused on repressing the slum population in a long-term process of "criminalizing poverty".

Much of the collective imagination[1] resulting from this debate is built on the circulation of images produced by various social actors who take part in it, such as NGOs, social movements, journalists, moviemakers, victims of and witnesses to violence, and, most relevantly to this paper, religious groups. The output of violent images is a relevant topic in the debate about violence itself. Some interpret depicting violence and making it visible as a form of protest, but others perceive it as encouraging violence. Particularly in Rio, but all over Brazil, there is general criticism of the cultural dominance of images of violence. Even if in

1 Appadurai: Modernity at Large. We are specially interested in Appadurai's concept of "mediascape" and the way this author discusses the "work of imagination", suggesting that the imagination plays a newly significant role in the post-electronic world. Imagination, according to this author, has broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies. It has entered the logic of ordinary life. Appadurai refuses to define imagination as being synonymous with fantasy (that usually carries with it the inescapable connotation of thought divorced from projects and actions) and emphasizes evidence that the consumption of the mass media throughout the world often causes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, agency. He thinks of imagination as a "fuel for action", including and mainly collective action.

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Brazil images of crime and violence are usually more frequent in crime journalism, they prevail on the frontpages of many newspapers,[2] magazines, and national movie productions.[3]

Narratives and images of violence also lead to thinking about its solution. As the State (often experienced in police interventions) is controversially perceived at the same time as the remedy for and as the source of Brazilian violence and crime, the general society's imaginary of a solution to these key problems is occupied by other social actors. The growth of Pentecostal Churches in recent decades and their actions toward violence problems as spiritual warfare have made them important voices in the violence issue. Their efforts to be present at the margins of the State[4] made their role especially important in disputes over the imagination's construction of prisons and favelas. These actors also engaged intensively in producing images of violence, depicting their "battles" against crime in their own ways. Through these images, Churches and pastors are mediating and framing the issue of violence and crime in Rio for an enlarged audience and designing their religious and political work on the city's urban peripheries.

This article analyzes these mediations in multiple dimensions: the body (exorcism practices), technology (the production, distribution, and reception of videos), and policy (using pastors as mediators of conflicts and rebellions in prisons). This also entails examining the social production of hope resulting from and the suspicion of Pentecostal mediating practices as they deal with Rio de Janeiro's violence issue, alongside and overlapping secular State practices.

Crime and Poverty: From Social Issue to Mysterious Devil's Work

From the 1980s to the 2000s, Pentecostal religious practices have gradually occupied a significant space of the social production of hope and suspicion in the face of crime and violence on the urban peripheries in Rio. To understand this, we will remember the context of the arrival of the Pentecostal movement in Brazil and its connection with the favelas.

2 Rondelli: Imagens da violência.

3 Hamburger: Violência e pobreza no cinema brasileiro recente.

4 Das and Poole: Anthropology in the Margins of the State

First, Catholicism has been the main religious denomination in Brazil since it was a colony, back in the 1500s. After independence in 1822, it remained the official state religion until 1890, when Brazil became a secular republic. Only then could Protestantism be legally spread, and it took almost a century until Protestantism accounted for around 10% of the population in the 1990s.

Until the second half of the 20th century, mainstream Brazilian Protestantism was represented by Churches promulgated by missionaries from the United States, such as the Baptists and the Presbyterians. Their importance was related not only to the number of members of the Churches; they also achieved great public importance, especially in middle-class communities. Their strategy was to concentrate efforts on educational and journalistic business.

Although the Pentecostal movement arrived in Brazil in 1910 with the foundation of the Assembly of God, its decisive growth did not come until the 1950s. Brazil's population was leaving the countryside and becoming urban. Hundreds of thousands of workers left their homes and went to big cities, mainly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, to escape droughts and hunger. These migrants caused a huge growth of the favelas, where Pentecostal Churches succeeded. Moral conservatism and sectarian practices, which were also important as a refuge for those migrants, kept this wing of Protestantism relatively far from public debates, despite the increasing numbers adhering to it.[5]

This missionary approach to public issues such as poverty and criminality changed at the end of the century. The military regime in crisis was facing the rise of an organized civil society aching for democracy. This turbulent situation also influenced the Protestants. At that time, the Pentecostal Churches had not only concentrated their work in favelas, but also made huge investments in the media, mostly radio, later television.

In 1988, as Brazil voted on the Constitution that marked the end of the military regime, Protestants were among the groups that achieved seats in the new constitution assembly. That experience was carried on by many of the Churches that took part on it. Through the 1990s, some Pentecostal Churches invested in electing their own candidates and made a change in the relations between Protestantism and politics in Brazil.[6]

The neoliberal policies implemented in the 1990s, as elsewhere, involved a discourse of suspicion toward the State and poverty, seen as a synonym for inefficiency. This had at least two consequences for Pentecostal actions. First, the

5 Mariano: Neopentecostais.

6 Machado: Existe um estilo evangélico de fazer política?; Novaes: Juventude, religião e espaço público.

favelas, where Pentecostal Churches had spread, became the main target of police intervention; second, Pentecostal social work was restricted to individual actions in these areas, accomplished mainly by NGOs and not by government agencies. The Pentecostal establishment in the favelas was then challenged to deal with this conflict scenario in which the favela itself became "suspect" and hope was displaced from State programs.

So, to answer these challenges, the Pentecostal approach moved from a stance of "secluding oneself from the world" to a "rescuing" one. Spiritual warfare theology became an important source of inspiration for local pastors, television evangelists, and songs sold on the Pentecostal music market. Poverty and violence were not seen as a chain of cause and effect, but as the results of the devil's work. As neoliberal discourses reinforced the suspicion about poverty and State programs, hope was increasingly left to moral agendas and the so-called civil society. To those on the margins of the State, this "civil society" often meant Pentecostal Churches.

So, in the last 20 years, Brazilian Pentecostal pastors and their Churches have directed efforts to spread their message at the margins of the State[7]: prisons, slums, and impoverished areas. Dealing with violence and crime as the devil's work, these Churches present a new solution to this issue: exorcism of the devil inhabiting bodies and souls of bandits. Exorcism rituals are practiced on bandits who allegedly contain demons that use the criminals' bodies for evil. Pastors challenge these demons and fight to expel them.

This disjunction preserves the person from direct contamination by crime. The evil is the devil's responsibility and distinct from the person of the criminal, allowing preachers to seek proximity to the criminals with means for liberation from the devil and for conversion. These demons are often called by the names of African-Brazilian cult spirits, such as "Exus", "Trancaruas" and "Pombagiras". The religious war on crime, therefore, is performed on the criminal's body.

The Pentecostal interpretation of the problem of crime in Brazil was that it was the result of the devil's action. So, the sole power that could combat this source of evil was God's power. Pentecostal religious action gave special emphasis to territories of crime: prisons, favelas, and urban peripheries. To liberate these places, the spiritual warfare focused on those who supposedly acted under the devil's possession and whose power was capable of spreading fear in those territories: criminals.[8]

7 Das and Poole: Anthropology in the Margins of the State.

8 *Vital da Cunha: Oração de Traficante.*

A Church for Ex-Bandits: Mediating Citizenship, Producing Mystery

The collection of practices of the Assembly of God of the Last Days (ADUD), a Pentecostal Church in Rio de Janeiro's metropolitan area, presents a relevant perspective on this reality.[9] Headed by a well-known and very performance-oriented pastor named Marcos Pereira, this Assembly of God Church is very active in all the territories mentioned above. Before creating his own Church, Marcos Pereira was a preacher in prisons. After some years doing this missionary work, he decided to open a Church, and for more than 20 years now the main project of this religious community is to intervene in the world of crime.

Along with its presence in those territories, this Church is largely characterized by film images of its actions in the spiritual warfare it produces. These films show scenes of exorcisms, the rescue of people injured or threatened by drug dealers, and testimonies from people who used to take part in actions associated with evil, such as crime, drugs, and prostitution.

These images are carefully produced and have impact on the broad public. Through them, we see the role played by "mystery", a word frequently used by Pastor Marcos and ADUD's members when they describe the events that take place in their rituals and lives. In the next sections, we analyze the production of mystery and its effects, like hope and suspicion, in the public debate about crime and violence.

Mainly over the last 10 years, some Pentecostal Churches that had worked for many years trying to intervene as mediators in the violent everyday life of urban peripheries in Rio decided to challenge the invisibility of their actions by recording them. They did this to show what happens "away", in "territories of crime" (prisons and favelas), to those that don't go there: initially members of their own Churches who remain seatedin their pews and gradually larger audiences, created by the possibilities afforded by Internet broadcasting.

ADUD's images were for many years presented on this kind of video. Pastor Marcos Pereira's actions were extensively shot and disseminated. This Church created an audiovisual crew composed of the ex-bandits themselves, who began to take cameras on all their missions: in prisons, police stations, favelas, funk parties, and their operations of "rescuing" people from the "traffic court".

9 Birman and Machado: A violência dos justos; Machado: Pentecostalismo e o sofrimento do (ex)bandido.

These videos can be bought as DVDs but also watched for free on YouTube on the church's channel ADUDtube.[10] Pastor Marcos' fame actually came from these YouTube videos, and many shows about him were produced for open TV channels because of these videos. Video mediation is, then, a crucial aspect of ADUD's religious and political intervention. Inspired by the principles of an anthropology of media,[11] our analysis was produced not just by spending time in the company of our interlocutors on the ground, but also by keeping tabs on their media productions, listening to CDs, watching TV shows and Church videos of criminal gang members being "rescued" and religious services held in jails. The "voice" of our informants was not just the one we heard in face-to-face situations, but also included their media messages, expressions, and performances.

These videos have specific effects: 1) to provide visibility for the Church's work in distant and dangerous locations; 2) to clearly show the religious intervention in the criminal's body, whether through exorcism or his rescue from death; 3) to provide visibility for the suffering of the criminal's body, showing closely and clearly its wounds when life is at risk or the action of the demon in the unconscious body; 4) to show the pastor in action, the effects of God's power through him, and his own power of political mediation between governors and criminals; 5) to exhibit the long-term result of this religious and political intervention, showing the healed and domesticated body of the former bandit some weeks after his "rescue" as a servant of God actively participating in the church.

The techniques used to produce these videos are crucial to the documentary effect they produce. Images posted on ADUDtube are mainly low-resolution, intentionally creating amatory atmosphere. Cameras are commonly carried in such a way to produce the idea they are hand-held; the image moves from one setting to another in sequence shots, making the audience feel like they are part of the action, walking with Pastor Marcos through the prison cells and the streets of the favela.

Rarely shown is the background or the path to places where exorcisms or services are held; for example, the processes that make it possible to record images inside prisons, which is forbidden by law, or the dark and narrow streets of the favelas, which appear like dangerous places in public imagination. Places virtually inaccessible just appear on the screen as a reference to the imagination constructed around them.

10 https://www.youtube.com/user/adudproducoes, last accessed on September 24, 2019.
11 Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin: Media Worlds.



Figure 1: ADUD in prison (https://www.youtube.com/user/adudproducoes, last accessed on September 24, 2019).

Except for the testimonial films and those that are directly meant to be advertisements for DVDs or CDs, which use the voice of a storyteller, the narrative of most videos is explained by juxtaposing scenes. Exorcisms are usually the climax of the videos, although we rarely see images of the time spent to select and lead those who are going to be exorcised. Even when not shown, the spiritual warfare is presented through the contrasts produced, for example, by the presence of pastor Marcos and the ADUD members in their typical clothes beside people with normal or shabby clothes.

Although we may see subtitles showing the name and post occupied by the exorcists, those who are exorcised are presented as bodies taken by the devil, with the names of entities from Afro-Brazilian religions. The "patient's" social status or further histories are mentioned only in ways that reinforce that they are dominated by evil.

The composition of most videos is very didactic, arranging a narrative in which spiritual warfare is being fought and has its climax in the exorcism of those supposedly under the devil's influence. As we will see, the setting and the bodies of those exorcised are shown as precarious, hurt, dirty, or dehumanized, putting emphasis on the courage and abnegation of ADUD members.

Watching these videos is usually a mixed experience of surprise, suspicion, and hope. If "no better solution" is produced in the secular public sphere, religious

actions like these present a way to stop or at least to reduce violence and crime in urban peripheries. Another effect of these images and this work is the conversion of those who feel directly or indirectly protected and saved by this project. Hope is also a way into the Church for ex-bandits and their families.

Finally, in the last 10 years, these images have produced an aura of political power for the Church and its leaders, who have gradually gotten more and more involved in the political arena of cities where the acts, establishing the Church's pastor as a mediator of conflicts and rebellions in prisons, underlining the importance of his support during election periods, and launching the Church's own political nominations for various public offices.

These allegedly documentary images of religious intervention in territories of crime – criminal bodies, favelas, prisons, and police stations – are interesting products to observe as specific combinations of the mysterious power of religion, crime, and technologies all together. Exorcisms not only mediate crime, criminals, the devil, and God; they are themselves mediated by the dissemination of the filmed performances on TV and the Internet.

Media production is a key element for pastors, and these videos are quite popular in Rio de Janeiro today. Pentecostal preachers say these performances show the "mystery" of God in action, the magic solution to what seemed hopeless: crime and violence. Recording and spreading theses videos are the main strategy to demonstrate the reality, effectiveness, and social outcome of these practices that are, at the same time, religious, political, and medial.

Mediating Hope in Suspicious Scenarios

Favelas and prisons are the settings of most ADUD videos. As stated in the first sections, the public debate on violence and crime in Rio de Janeiro had developed in intimate relation with images of poverty and favelas. The images of violence produced in movies, but also in popular soap operas and the daily news, are often set in these territories.[12]

Since this process of crime and poverty entailed the expansion of imprisonment policies, the images of prison were also impacted. Rehabilitating criminals to be law-abiding citizens, which was the focus of the aforementioned

12 For this reason, many social movements and NGOs that work in favelas have lately stressed defending the visibility of other news subjects on the favelas, such as their music circuits, local art production, and other business, see Oliveira: O que o mundo separa, o Esquenta! junta?.

constitutional debates of the 1980s, was gradually replaced by images of prison as punishment and – as even prison workers and directors refer to it – as hell.[13]

Suspicion about these territories arises primarily because of the presence of suspicious social actors. Reducing the image of the favelas to the domains of drug dealers implies that anyone who lives in favelas isa potential criminal or victim. There is doubt whether prisons can rehabilitate criminals, but also about the commitment of the security agents, who are often denounced as corrupt and conniving with crime.[14]

Along with this, though, the "mystery" that surrounds both territories is a crucial element in the suspicion they inspire. Although most of the city can be seen using popular tools like those produced by, for example, Google (Google maps and Google earth), favelas often appear as big gray areas. Their geography, streets, and walls are not freely recorded or exhibited, since there is a general understanding that the power of drug dealers implies their control over access to such places and to what can be shown. So, what (supposedly) cannot be shown appears in a fantasmatic way. These big gray areas in the maps exhibit the mystery as danger.

Although there is a range of images of prisons in Brazil from fiction and from journalistic denunciations, images from within prisons are rare and often forbidden to take in Brazil. It is a crime to create unauthorized images of cells and prison interiors.

To record anything, even in areas accessible to visitors, one must obtain permits not only from the local director, but also from all the departments reporting to the security secretary and usually even the governor. Since in recent decades this kind of permit was rarely granted even to the most important newspapers and TV channels, what happens inside a prison is, in many ways, a mystery – but not to ADUD's videos.

Prisons and favelas, these mysterious territories, are the settings of many of the most successful videos shot by ADUD, and Pastor Marcos Pereira became famous for them. The mediation the video performs superposes inaccessible worlds, spiritually and socially. The videos never explicate how the Holy Spirit breath operates, how the spiritual battle moves these bodies, or how the videomakers acquired authorization to record inside the prison. But ADUD members use one word to refer to the power of these images: "mystery".

The video chosen by ADUD to be the first seen when its YouTube channel is accessed is a good example. Made to promote the DVD of Nivea Silva, Pastor Marcos' daughter and a Churchsinger, that reached success in the broader

13 Iser: Relatório Religiões e Prisões.
14 Iser: Relatório Religiões e Prisões.

Christian music market, the video takes a prison as its setting and has the effect of promoting not only the singer, but also the Church.[15]

The video begins with Nivea walking with Pastor Marcos through the corridors of the prison, while the camera's position produces a light effect similar to clouds around her. Their distinct clothes and smiles contrast with the precarious painting, humidity, and bars around them. The storyteller starts saying with an echo effect, "The Holy spirit is over me because he has anointed me to preach about freedom to the captives and about opening prisons to the prisoners." While Nivea's songs start to play, he presents the DVD as a thrill, because it was recorded inside a prison, with the bars as background and the sun as illumination. The songs' audience consists of around 400 prisoners of that unit. At that time, the DVD was titled "Prophesying life in prison" and was announced as "the first DVD made inside a prison".

This action in prison is didactically emphasized as evidence of the power these mediators command, entering into restrict territories and achieving the unprecedented. The video mediates this image of power to broader secular and religious audiences. The sunlight on the courtyard contrasts with the bars and, together with the filmed audience's smiles and raised hands, produces an effect that refers to freedom.



Figure 2: Image of a clip of an ADUD singer, entirely recorded inside a prison (https://www.youtube.com/user/adudproducoes, last accessed on September 24, 2019).

15 https://www.youtube.com/user/adudproducoes, last accessed on September 24, 2019.



Figure 3: ADUD pastor praying for prisoners inside a prison unit (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHw02aZaAzo, last accessed on September 24, 2019).

This image of the community of these prisoners after ADUD reaches them contrasts with a video recorded in another prison that shows only unconverted prisoners. Here, the only complete body we see is the pastor's body. All we see of the prisoners are the throng of hands that reach through the bars to try to touch the pastor. This image recalls those produced in the context of denunciations of Brazilian prisons' overpopulation. In contrast to the sunlight of the previous video, this entire scene is set in a dark, dirty corridor with a damaged ceiling, from which we can see water dripping onto the sweaty body of Pastor Marcos.[16]

These images are part of the broader narrative of the spiritual battle as a process of rehabilitating prisoners. Pentecostal action in prison became so important in recent decades that for some time it became a standard institutional policy in prisons to encourage separate cells for converted prisoners, whose behavior was expected to be peaceful, and to put these cells under the supervision of pastors who are themselves prisoners.[17]

The essence of mystery cannot and does not need to be explained, but it is fundamental to note that this arrangement has inspired some criticism. The change seen in the converted prisoners behavior was also seen as suspicious over the years, as they were believed to enjoy privileges in their separate cells.

16 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHw02aZaAzo, last accessed on September 24, 2019.
17 Iser: Relatório Religiões e Prisões.

That makes mediators like Pastor Marcos Pereira even more important, because his work enables authorities to distinguish those committed to the new life from those under the devil's influence.

Another common setting for ADUDtube videos is the favela. Some of these videos are notable for showing rescue actions. In one, filmed in 2011 and already widespread, the darkness of the night and the narrow streets is the background to the image of the injured body of a man lying in a fetal position in the gutter. His face, however, is hidden by the camera's angles and by a defocus effect.[18]

Pastor Marcos Pereira and other members of ADUD can be seen carrying his body to a van, while we listen to the man saying that local drug dealers had threatened to kill him.

For this paper, the most interesting about this video is that it carefully hides things. This contributes to the effect of mystery, reinforcing how dangerous the displayed scene is and that no other explanation could clarify how this action is possible. It also constructs the image of the favela as a general setting. It gives no clue about the social and historical elements involved in the specific case; the generalized spiritual war takes priority.

Another genre of video much produced by ADUD shows public cults in favelas. In these videos, the favela's name is displayed in the title. The setting, however, is the stage, organized in a very generic way, with few references to the specificities of the favela involved. So, even if its name is on the title, the favela is still explored as a generic setting.

The Mysterious Body of the Criminal as a War Territory

In one of the most graphic images of ADUD's actions in prisons and favelas, the pastor throws his jacket over a line of people, making them fall immediately to the ground. The blessed jacket, supposedly full of the Holy Spirit, expels the evil entities from the bodies of those possessed. The pastor's jacket is not the only object that can cause this spiritual effect. There are situations in which he uses the Bible, pointing it like a gun at the person supposedly possessed by a spirit, and "shoots", shouting sounds like gunshots: "tein, tein, tein".

While the pastor is still reprimanding the devil, ordering him to set these people free, someone inthe group lying on the floor can clearly manifest an evil

18 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DSprGcLB0eo, last accessed on September 24, 2019.

entity: just like in Afro-Brazilian religions, the person's body moves in a very specific way, indicating the presence of a spirit. Sometimes the pastor himself calls the name of an entity from Umbanda and Candomblé rituals or repeats randomly different names referring to the spirits, saying: "Tranca Rua", "Pomba Gira",or "Exu", for example. When this happens, it takes some more time to finish the exorcism.

In these cases, the pastor talks to the spirit, usually asking him or her to answer some questions and confess some actions, showing what he or she is forcing the possessed person to do. Generally, the spirit answers these questions, acting in the person's body by performing gunshots, smoking and drinking, confessing to robbery or the use of cocaine and crack, and so on. After all this, the pastor launches the breath of the Holy Spirit on the unconscious person, who wakes up and stands right away.

One of the videos on ADUDtube shows the intervention of the Church in the Cidade de Deus favela. This video is especially intriguing. The video begins with famous singers from this Church, featuring songs with lyrics related directly to "salvation" from violence and crime. After we see some collective exorcisms of people who were brought up to a stage, two pregnant women become the focus of the action.They and their children, still imagined and represented in images only by their big bellies, are blessed and receive declarations meant to protect them and their babies from the demons. The evangelist directs the cameras to focus on the movement of their bellies in response to his words. "Mystery," he shouts repeatedly.

Pregnancy images have played a powerful role historically.[19] The ambiguity of this double body that mediates present and future is its power. The future evokes hope, but also suspicion. As we showed in the first section, in favelas, young people are the main targets of public policy, for they are seen as potential criminals or victims. The currency of the expression "sementinha do mal" (evil little seed), widely used in Brazil, is remarkable for the ambiguity it shows in the imagination of those territories. The exorcism takes place not only in the body of the mother, but also in the incarnated future inside her belly.

Inside prisons, exorcisms are performed predominantly on male bodies. The main image of the criminal is that of the male bandit.[20] Videos of exorcisms in prisons perform above all the reversion of power: dangerous criminals appear in these videos as vulnerable bodies, obeying the pastor's orders and

19 Bakhtin: A Cultura Popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento.
20 Iser: Relatório Religiões e Prisões.

dominated by the devil. Another performed reversion in these videos and directly connected to the first one is related to suffering: the powerful criminal body that, outside the exorcism ritual, is the cause of others' suffering, during the ritual becomes a powerless and vulnerable body that suffers, cries, asks for forgiveness for its sins, and begs for a second chance.

The "spiritual battle" happens inside the criminal's inconsequential body that faces the risk of death on a daily basis and doesn't retreat. This evil body that provokes merciless suffering. This incredibly strong body that resists torture, wounds, gunshots, and beatings and keeps carrying on its business. This scary body that mixes flesh, blood, and weapons. This scarred body marked by and for death. All these qualities add mysterious skills to the imaginary of the criminal body. And to confront these skills, each social actor uses its own weapons. Police officers use guns and bullets; the pastor uses the Holy Spirit. Crime then becomes a synonym for the devil's presence. The spiritual battle and the ritual of exorcism may not result in the instantaneous conversion of the criminal, but they operate at least briefly as a possible reversion of his power and as a performance of control and mastery over crime, though an ephemeral one.

In Pentecostal experience, the materiality of the body and its senses mediates battles and wars between good and evil.[21] The material presence of bleeding, bandaged, wounded, and scarred bodies inside the ADUD church is a concrete feature of the kind of struggle that these communities have faced and is testimony to the Church, its pastor and, ultimately, their God's power.

The religious rehabilitation of injured bodies – their healing, cleaning, cicatrization, disciplining, purification, and moralization – mediates the political transformation of the citizen. The spiritual battle performed and won by the Church in the body of the person at risk, also stands as the victory of a subjectivity project lined up with particular political agendas in which religion, specifically Christianity, is also a model of citizenship and "pacification" is a process also achieved through religious mediation.

Mediating Hope and Suspicion: Fame, Conflicts, and Scandals

After 10 years of media fame, Pastor Marcos Pereira became personally involved in a big, extensively broadcasted scandal. A political opponent, who was for

21 Meyer: Aesthetic Formations.

many years a partner in ADUD's project, decided to press charges against the pastor, accusing him of sexual violence against women of the Church and also criminal association with trafficking. Marcos Pereira was sentenced to 15 years in prison for sexual abuse, but was released after just over a year in prison.

The pastor's opponent was the leader of a well-known Brazilian NGO, Afroreggae Cultural Group, that likewise carries out social projects aimed at the social rehabilitation of ex-bandits and ex-prisoners and that, just like ADUD but in much more professional ways, also conducts media practices with central relevance to its institutional profile. So, the struggle between the Church and the NGO leader was not only a judicial one, but also and primarily a media battle.

The denunciation by José Júnior, the leader of Afroreggae, of Pastor Marcos used media dissemination as a strategy and central element. José Júnior first made his accusations in the mass media and only then went to a police station, already accompanied by the press, to formalize his complaint that Pastor Marcos was putting José Júnior's life at risk in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. JoséJunior claimed publicly in many different ways that the pastor was "the greatest criminal mind of Rio de Janeiro".

José Junior and AfroReggae turned their media arsenal against the pastor. In 2008, the audiovisual crew of Afroreggae had produced a TV show presenting the work of Marcos Pereira to a large audience in a complimentary way; in 2012, it produced a video complaint against him and posted it on the Internet. The video "Against the evil empire"juxtaposed images available online of Pastor Marcos made by the Church itself with images produced by the NGO in which ex-bandits and former Church members denounced the pastor in interviews conducted by José Júnior. Respondents appeared with their backs to the camera or with their faces covered, with distorted voices, delivering the message that making such denunciations put them at risk. In the video, people who present themselves as directly involved in the cases testify that Pastor Marcos had directly solicited bandits from Rio de Janeiro favelas to provoke rebellions and conflicts in the city and then to request his presence as mediator. One of the testimonies accused Pastor Marcos of ordering a murder. Former female members of the Church accused Marcos Pereira of sexual abuse.

These images taken from the Church's own productions suffered a moral inversion in the script created by the NGO. Scenes originally produced to demonstrate the pastor's strength and the effectiveness of his actions were cropped and interspersed with other images to denounce the pastor. This shows the power of editing images, regardless of the intentions of their original production. This inversion is often carried out with the images produced by ADUD, especially those that have Pastor Marcos as protagonist, given the performative

intensity of his actions: speeches, movements, exorcisms, material resources (his jacket, his blowing, the Bible as a weapon), and prophecies. All of this is done in a very emphatic and energetic way, and out of context, it can easily be caricaturized. The pastor's images of screams and loud and brutal movements, which in the context of the Church represent his divine and saving power, appear in the AfroReggae video as the confirmation of his potential for danger and violence – his evil.



Figure 4: Services at pastor Marcos'Church were fervent. Denunciations by the Public Ministry affirm that the religious man used to attack women and hide weapons in the temple.22 (http://odia.ig.com.br/noticia/rio-de-janeiro/2014-08-06/pastor-marcos-pereira-e-marcin hovp-serao-ouvidos-por-videoconferencia.html, last accessed on September 24, 2019).

In March 2013, Pastor Marcos was arrested on charges of rape. In September of the same year, he was tried and sentenced to 15 years in prison. The pastor, who for more than 10 years had been requested to perform services in Rio's prisons, was imprisoned in its biggest penitentiary complex. While the pastor was in prison, the Church glorified his actions, interpreting his time behind bars as a mission given to him by God to save those who needed redemption. On the other hand, the Church also called for justice, and it came, in the form the Church expected. On December 24, 2014, Pastor Marcos was released. Almost two years after he was released, Pastor Marcos remains at large, leading his Church. His release was a surprise and a mystery to the public.

The details of the process that condemned Marcos Pereira were as obscure as those that set him free, as analyzed by Sampaio.[22] Different reports in the print media indicated unusual procedures during the prosecution of the pastor, including testimony given at police stations at dawn, recordings of phone calls showing combinations of testimony exchanged for jobs, and the excessive speed with which the case was tried and Marcos was condemned.

To the public, this rupture of the relations between José Junior and Pastor Marcos is also surrounded by mystery. A specific dimension of "suspicion"in this case is manifested by doubts part of the Brazilian public has about the integrity of the leader of the NGO. It was not easy to attribute evil solely to the pastor. For some, José Júnior was a proud and vain man, particularly interested in public controversies that spread his image in the media, who could be using the whole situation to benefit in some way. Doubts, suspicions, and mysteries about these two men have never been clearly resolved. And both follow their controversial trajectories to this day in the public sphere, always accompanied by those who support them and persecuted by those who criticize them

Religion, politics, and images were elements of the pastor's accusation and defense as inseparable principles of this social reality. Mystery was also continually cultivated and mediated: if some regarded Marcos Pereira judicial conviction as evidence of his guilt, some regarded his unexpected and obscure release from prison as evidence of his innocence and unjust imprisonment, while others saw it as evidence of his dangerous influence.

While Pastor Marcos was in prison, ADUD produced no film showing his activities as a prisoner. His image as mediator could not be conflated with the other prisoners, whose stereotype was that of evil and satanic possession.

Technology, religion, and crime are effective producers of heroes, villains, and freaks. Their power and mysteries can reinforce images of potency, evil, and bizarreness. Superheroes, villains, and grotesque creatures are often attributed magical, miraculous, and supernatural characteristics, great influence and exaggerated desires to control and dominate the world, hyper-sensibility or cold-hearted skills, bravery and courage, and technological devices capable of creating or destroying almost everything that exists.

Often, the same person can experience all three of these forms. That's exactly what happened to Pastor Marcos Pereira. For some time, he was framed as a hero, the brave pastor who faced criminals with no fear and acted on behalf of the weakest. When in jail, he was depicted as a villain, the worst kind of person who pretends to be a good person but secretly practices the worst things. In

22 Sampaio: A prisão e condenação do Pastor Marcos Pereira da Assembléia de Deus (ADUD).

the end, Pastor Marcos became a freak: after his release from prison and his attempt to regain fame and political prestige, he became a caricature of himself, a has-been, advertising himself and trying to open new avenues of work, but concluding extremely weak alliances and presenting them as prestigious in front of the camera.

Mediation as Mystery

The mystery claimed by ADUD's members to point to unexpected elements of their social reality is an important key for thinking about the power carried by mediations and mediators. Mystery, for example in the power of mediation, appears in the capability to move between territories imagined as opposed, from evil to God, from prison to church, from crime to citizenship. Mediators such as Pastor Marcos Pereira build bridges in a configuration that gives heightened visibility to the contrast between the territories connected and invisibility to the bridge itself. How the connection is made is often the mystery.

The issue of violence is the main topic we aimed to discuss in this chapter. Central to discussions in Brazil's public sphere, crime and violence are part of lived realities in national everyday life, but also in imagined experiences shared by groups and collectives. Part of this imagination, as analyzed here, is built together with a myriad of images of violence produced by different (and divergent) social actors. These images dispute distinct frames of violence: victims and perpetrators, dangerous and safe settings, harmful populations and legitimate ways of combating and preventing violence and crime.

In the last 20 years, Pentecostal Churches legitimized themselves as relevant agents in the battle against crime in Brazilian urban peripheries. Through them, crime became a mysterious, devilish problem, and they presented innovative solutions to this problem. Their actions, including the images of violence they produced, became part of the scene of violence. This complex action lent these Churches religious, political, and media powers.

In this article, we used the actions of a pastor and his Church located in the peripheries of Rio de Janeiro to discuss ways in which religion, crime, and the media together conduct the work of imagination and mediation in the face of the reality of urban violence in Brazil, producing passages, frontiers, hopes, and suspicions. We analyzed the social production of mystery through the configuration and occupation of suspicious scenarios, rituals of exorcism on (un) controlled bodies, and mastery of the dangerous effects of the mediator's mysterious and liminal social reality.

As defined by Velho,[23] mediations are precisely passages through distinct levels of reality[24] or, in Howard Becker's words, through different social worlds.[25] Humans not only inhabit and build diverse physical territories, but also produce social worlds with distinct rules, meanings, and frames. Being part of a social world means framing reality in specific ways that its members often take for granted.

As we live in complex societies, it is common to pass daily through these different frames, although worlds in which, for some reason, one does not belong may seem incomprehensible and mysterious, with their own rules and inherent logics. The mediator's existence and his power lie in his capacity to build bridges to worlds that seem mysterious to those that have not been (or fitted) in them. The means used to effect this passage, which includes operating with different levels of reality, are also wrapped in mystery.

According to Stolow,[26] religion and media belong to each another because the very act of mediated communication implies fundamental questions about the limits of human experience – our fragile bodies, our faulty memories, the difficulty of keeping in touch with others, and the dream of the disembodied and transcendent communion that has long been the province of religious imagination. Stolow's effort to describe the aspects of media that connect their work of mediation so intrinsically to religion leads him to ideas of "ecstatic communion", "apocalyptic destiny", "transcendent vision", and finally"mystery". To explain his argument about "religion as media", Stolow raises the possibility of thinking about "mediation as mystery".

We can also think about Meyer's discussion of "religion as mediation" and the way she addresses the issue of "materiality". According to Meyer (citing Van Keulen[27]), materialities, like images, make it possible for people to get a glimpse of something that exceeds representation, but that can still gain presence through mediation. This brings people to what Meyer calls "sensations of awe" (the sublime) and how they are generated. Mediation generates the mystery of these "sensations of awe", which Meyer says are hard to define but are clearly experienced as wonder, reverence, respect and fear.

Through this frame, we could say that the mystery that brings hope and suspicion to ADUD's actions is not specific to it, but a characteristic of mediation itself. Media processes (like religion) are built over the gaps that appear

23 Velho: Individualismo e Cultura.
24 Schutz: Phenomenology and Social Relations.
25 Becker: Art Worlds.
26 Stolow: Religion and/as Media.
27 Van Keulen: The future of the aesthetic past.

when different worlds encounter each other. Further, media themselves can be conceived as multiple dimensions of the mystery of the encounter with different levels of reality. The body, techniques, and images are the same mystery that State policies cannot create. The greater the distance imagined between the world of crime and the world of citizenship, the more mysterious it became to cross that gap. So, the hope ADUD inspires could not be conceived as related only to some truth or lie, as accusers argue. It lies in the mediation process itself and carries elements of hope and suspicion that makes it powerful and enables it to cross a bridge between worlds imagined as irreconcilable.

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Mirko Uhlig

"It Is Easier to Stay Out than Get Out". A Sweat Lodge Ritual, the Entangled Ethnographer on Trial, and Irony as a Stance for Anthropological Analysis

A Brief Outline

For some time now, the concept of the "mediumistic trial", as presented by the editor of this volume, provides a productive heuristic to confront the mainly naturalistic explanations (and rejections) of so-called anomalistic phenomena[1] with interpretations that focus on the historical embedment. The concept may help to understand that phenomena like for example clairvoyance and telepathy – but also the question to what extent "extramundane" entities (e.g. "spirits" or "power animals") exist in an ontological meaning – have for long been discussed in most diverse milieus. Even in supposed "enclosed" social groups, different or conflictive notions, justifications, and confutations circulate.[2] Regarding the notorious "folklorism debate" in German Volkskunde or the even better-known debate on "writing culture" of post-colonial anthropology about two decades later,[3] today, it may be perceived as a mere platitude to point out that members of the scientific community engage in more or less public discourses – and do of course shape their objects of research to a certain degree.

To some extent, it may appear that empirical disciplines like (cultural) anthropology work with a similar "trial" as well. Thus, when ethnographers enter experiential space of the accompanied and interviewed groups and get a chance to take part in corresponding practices – for instance: collective rituals. It is a common process in field work that researchers get informed previously about personal experiences and views on a specific practice by the interviewees and then try that specific practice on their own. It seems self-evident within this

1 Mayer, Schetsche, Schmied-Knittel and Vaitl: An den Grenzen der Erkenntnis.

2 Schüttpelz and Voss: In jeder Beziehung ebenso wirksam; and Fragile Balance.

3 Moser: Der Folklorismus als Forschungsproblem der Volkskunde, Dow: German "Volkskunde", and Kohl: The End of Anthropology.

Note: My sincere thanks go to Thomas Schneider for valuable hints.

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context that such an inductive approach cannot be about simple falsification or verification at all (the ritual does/does not "work"[4]), but rather about the (not that new) idea of dialogic research. This means the development of new dimensions of understanding other people's ways of coping with their everyday life by exchanging own and foreign knowledge in favour of a synthetical ethnography. Beside the widely discussed advantages for cultural analysis, entering other people's worlds can also lead to jarring situations for all parties involved. This might be the case if the researchers suddenly see themselves being put to the test as probands of some kind of a mediumistic trial and their own truthfulness seems to be at risk. Advocates of a more "distanced" ethnography will not bother about this problem. Loosely based on a quote by Mark Twain, it will be easier for them to "stay out" in the first place.[5] Naturally, the case looks much more entangled to supporters of "thick participation"[6] who cannot "get out" easily without causing any problems once they have become a more or less active part of the explored field.

Given the personal experience of a so-called sweat lodge ritual, I would like to discuss the aforesaid aspect of ethnographical work along a specific understanding of irony.

Experiencing a Sweat Lodge Ritual in Rural Germany

The following description and interpretation base on chapters of my monograph on forms and functions of contemporary shamanism in the Eifel, a predominantly rural district in Western Germany.[7] From Spring 2011 till the beginning of 2015, I interviewed and accompanied women and men who either, at that time, worked with "shamanic" concepts, who followed "the way of the shaman",[8] or who picked up the manifold offers of the former persons

4 Sax: Ritual and the Problem of Efficacy.

5 Twain: Following the Equator, 179.

6 Spittler: Teilnehmende Beobachtung als Dichte Teilnahme.

7 For the ethnographical context see Uhlig: Schamanische Sinnentwürfe?

8 But who also finally maintained a critical distance to Michael Harner's "Foundation for Shamanic Studies". "The Way of the Shaman" (first released in 1980) is the title of a book written by one of the shamanic scene's most popular protagonists, anthropologist Michael Harner (1929–2018), who founded an institute for spreading his idea of "core-shamanism", a concept that in Harner's understanding "define[s] the key features of shamanism" (Harvey and Wallis: The A to Z of Shamanism, 60).

(e.g. spiritual "supervision", life coaching, practical healing etc.). I met with people who – on the one hand – literally saw themselves as shamans, but I also got to know persons, who – on the other hand – strictly refused to be regarded as "true" shamans or even shamans at all due to an expressed criticism of a "western takeover" of allegedly non-western traditions.

Interview and Ritual Partners – The Context

In the summer of 2012, a friend of mine introduced me to Julia and Dirk, a couple, both around 40 years old, of whom he was convinced they would fit in to my research project perfectly because of their interest in shamanism. In a group interview that took place later in the couple's flat one afternoon in March 2013, we talked about their experiences especially with sweat lodge rituals. At the end of our meeting, we decided to participate in a sweat lodge ritual together, so we could talk about it afterwards. Shortly before our interview, Julia had come across a weekend-workshop at a regional seminar venue where interested people could engage in such rituals. After our meeting, we registered for the event. Up to then, I had already attended five lodges. Most of them I had perceived as physically and emotionally strenuous. So, admittedly, I set off with mixed emotions. Nonetheless, I was happy I was not on my own this time.

Since not all readers of this article will be familiar with sweat lodge rituals and the cultural phenomenon of shamanism, to which they are often linked, I am going to sketch the issue(s) briefly along general lines.[9] In scientific as well as in popular texts the term shamanism[10] is repeatedly used to refer to an indigenous institution (in Malinowski's understanding as a manmade fulfilment of human needs[11]) with specific rituals and definite notions of life and afterlife. It is widely said that a belief in autonomous souls and spirits and their tangible influence on human beings is of vivid importance for shamanic cosmologies and succeeding aetiologies.[12] Due to exceeding capabilities the shaman is able to mediate between mundane and supernatural forces by going on a self- or

9 For more detailed treatises see Francfort and Hamayon: The Concept of Shamanism, Harvey: Shamanism, and DuBois: Trends in Contemporary Research on Shamanism.

10 Though often translated as "seer", the origin of the word shaman has not been varified in a satisfying way yet. For details on the linguistic controversy see Voigt: Shaman.

11 Malinowski: A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays, 39–42.

12 Hadot: Shamanism and Greek Philosophy, Harvey and Wallis: The A to Z of Shamanism, 207–209, and Rieken: The Prehistory of Psychotherapy and its Implications for Psychotherapy Science.

externally initiated soul flight interacting with spirits, good and evil.[13] After being initiated by otherworldly forces, the "practicing shaman must adapt himself more than hitherto to the demands of the community and must keep an eye on the role expectations directed to him; it is not enough that he has visions or is in a state of trance – he must himself formulate interpretations of them which will serve the community."[14]

However, as an object of research, shamanism still represents a controversial issue in cultural and religious studies.[15] The suffix "-ism" alone evokes "something orderly and systematic that everyone would recognize, which is not the case."[16] Thus, the perception of shamanism as some uniform phenomenon or archaic religious system is highly misleading. As the history of research suggests, the use of shamanism as a defining category[17] did (and does) produce a lot of diverse topoi to date. In his overview Thomas A. DuBois concludes that "the very concept of 'shamanism' can be regarded in some measure as a product of Western imperialism, a device for homogenizing and diminishing the distinctiveness of indigenous religious traditions and of displaying them as somehow a single entity, inferior to the religious traditions of empowered polities."[18] Let us leave aside the question if one actually has to hold an extreme constructivist and Foucaultian position which claims that shamanism, as described by explorers, had never existed as an autochthonous phenomenon at all. The important hint all those historical re- and deconstructions may offer is that for European observers and rapporteurs shamanism did serve as a screen for own tendentious, educational, and/or power-political purposes.[19]

13 For this aspect see Müller: Schamanismus, 38–49.

14 Honko: Role-taking of the Shaman, 39.

15 Hamayon: Shamanism, and DuBois: Trends in Contemporary Research on Shamanism.

16 Harvey and Wallis: The A to Z of Shamanism, 1. On the matter of epistemological challenges see Uhlig: Schamanische Sinnentwürfe?, 21–24.

17 As contoured in the public discourses since accounts by explorers and scholars of the Enlightenment like Johann Georg Gmelin (1709–1755) or Denis Diderot (1713–1784) as well as romantic artistic examinations (see Stuckrad: Reenchanting Nature; and Refutation and Desire) and subsequent anthropological or neurological attempts to explain human behaviour respectively certain mental states (see Winkelman: Shamanism).

18 DuBois: An Introduction to Shamanism, 291.

19 See Jilek: Vom dämonischen Scharlatan zum psychisch Gestörten zum fachkundigen Therapeuten und post-modernen Seelenführer, Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik, Mayer: Die Figur des Schamanen, and Grünwedel: Schamanismus zwischen Sibirien und Deutschland for analyses of changes of social attributes. On my behalf the mentioned ideological connotations can also be found in the apodictic categorical distinction between "classic" shamanism and so-called neo-shamanism (see Johansen: Shamanism and Neoshamanism).

Back to my interviewee Dirk: He first had encountered what he calls shamanism at the end of the 1990s. Around that time, Dirk was a student of biology. One of his friends got interested in "esoteric stuff" (447),[20] as he labels it, shortly before the millennium and invited him to a sweat lodge ritual, something Dirk had never heard of before. The friend's "former girlfriend [. . .] had been to one of these famous Indians touring through Europe, giving workshops and sharing the sweat lodge tradition" (448). Later, that friend would come up with the idea of arranging such a ritual on their own – and with a circle of close friends they did. With an enthusiastic voice Dirk told me his first sweat lodge experience had been "magical" (ibid.). "To this point, I had no approach to esoteric themes, to spiritual themes, nothing – except of enjoying being outdoors [. . .]. It was a decisive experience [. . .]. Then I began to deal with the topic more intensively, also theoretically" (ibid.). At the beginning, he frankly had no idea of differences within indigenous traditions. In the first instance, Dirk and his friends simply improvised. "We just did it. The more I got into the matter, the more I realized that the way we do it perhaps is not that good" (449). Dirk began acquiring knowledge by reading books of popular protagonists like Vincent LaDuke (aka "Sun Bear"; 1929–1992) and John Fire Lame Deer (aka "Tahca Ushte"; 1903–1976), sharing that new knowledge with friends, discussing the dos and don'ts of a "traditional" sweat lodge ritual. During that period of intensive exploration, Dirk felt more and more uncomfortable with executing Indian rituals. He started asking himself whether and to what extent he and his friends would be allowed to do the sweat lodge ritual, because for Dirk the ritual "is a sacred Indian ritual. As Germans, as Europeans, as Non-Indians – are we permitted to noodle around with that?" (449)

In the context of my own fieldwork, numerous interlocutors assured that practising a sweat lodge – which technically is a vapor bath conducted outdoors – must be of very old age. Reportedly being an universal and ubiquitary praxis, the majority of my informants attributed the sweat lodge to a (Oglala) Lakotas' traditional repertoire which, from a historical point of view, is a bit difficult. In his reconstruction, ethnologist Raymond A. Bucko points out that there has not been such a thing like a singular Lakota tradition, but rather a bricolage of regional or even local habits responding to diverse contemporary individual and collective needs. In the late 17th Century, the vapor bath essentially "was used for its curative power."[21] It cannot be answered conclusively if

20 The numbers in round parentheses indicate the respective page in Uhlig: Schamanische Sinnentwürfe? where the complete quote can be found.

21 Bucko: The Lakota Ritual of the Sweat Lodge, 27.

the sweat lodge had also religious connotations to that time. "As among the Dakotas", Bucko points out the ritual's multi-functionality about two hundred years later among the Lakotas, "the importance of the sweat lodge [. . .] is borne out by the variety of context in which it was used. [. . .] The Lakotas used it before undertaking anything of importance, to ensure success in the chase and abundance for the people's needs [. . .]. Unique in the Lakota material is reference to the sweat's ability to purify a person morally. Medically, it was used to refresh oneself, to cure illness, to promote longevity, to strengthen the life *(ní)* or ghost, and to purify the body."[22]

A comparison of various historical sources and Bucko's own empirical findings shows that the sweat lodge ritual "has undergone a broad transformation in thematic content. That change has been partially in response to the radical social transformations in Lakota lifeways imposed by government agencies and missionary groups. Equally importantly", as Bucko outlines the situation at the end of the 20th Century, "individual participants have actively altered the sweat ceremony by creative symbolic interpretations and innovations in response to both personal inspiration and contemporary needs."[23] He concludes that the ritual "was and has reemerged as a pan-Indian ceremony, one that today has taken on a Lakota form in many areas. It has moved beyond its original practitioners and examination by anthropologists and missionaries to examination by and utilization for individuals outside of the Lakota people who seek spiritual enlightenment and ecological integrity through Native American rituals."[24] During my own research, I met several people who were proud of practicing the "authentic" Lakota sweat lodge ritual without distorting the "true" form via personal modifications. When he began, Dirk used to argue this way – do not change the "old tradition", because that, in his early understanding, would have desecrated a sacred act. According to Bucko's considerations the sweat lodge ritual nowadays – no matter whether it is conducted by Lakotas or people like Dirk and his friends – can be seen as the result of a dialectical process, a meaningful dealing with one's own past, biography, and requirements in the here and now.

As we delved deeper into that issue in 2013, Dirk conceded that his view on sacrosanct traditions had undergone a crucial change. It had been always important to him to treat indigenous traditions in general and the sanctity of the sweat lodge ritual in particular with greatest respect. Around the year 2000, he thought

22 Ibid., 35 f.
23 Ibid., 252.
24 Ibid., 252 f.

like: "Actually, it is an Indian ritual and we are no Indians. In my eyes, that conflicted with each other for a while. [. . .] I joined in a sweat lodge that was done by a real Indian. [. . .] Of course there is nothing such a picture book-Indian like we all imagine. Of course, he's there sitting with his baseball cap and sunglasses in front of the sweat lodge preparing his ritual. No problem." (454) Dirk realized the obvious differences, the fractions, and the pragmatism of that alleged traditional form and he understood that there was not anything like "the" Indian sweat lodge ritual that could be desecrated by young German academics, either.

This (emic) debate on terms like historical authenticity and honouring indigenous traditions are certain traits that not only I encountered quite frequently.[25] Of course, one should not hastily oversimplify this to a general self-critical, self-reflective stance,[26] but when we're talking about an "esoteric", an "alternative spiritual" or a "neoshamanic" movement it is important to emphasize that the articulation of self-doubt is a significant facet of the "New Wave of Esotericism" since the 1990s,[27] which itself is a diffuse social phenomenon that is not seldomly described pejoratively as a pastime for postmodern hedonists free of qualms.[28] In order to avoid any potential misunderstanding: I do not intend taking sides with a social minority here, but we should consider this circumstance of uncertainty as part of the protagonists' self-perception for a differentiated interpretation of contemporary spirituality.

But beside doubt or playful interaction there is also seriousness. Though our meeting in March 2013 had a general casual atmosphere, Julia as well as Dirk became very pensive when explaining the sweat lodge ritual's relevance for themselves and both had a precise understanding of how a scientist could and, as I understood, should explore contemporary shamanism. Especially Julia's access to the topic derives from an afflicting personal circumstance. Around the age of 20, she began dreaming "that something is restricting me,

25 Also Mayer: Schamanismus in Deutschland and Voss: Authentizität als Aktant broach the issue of a more ambivalent emic perspective.

26 With Thomas Bargatzky one could discuss this attitude along the concept of "intellectual colonialism": "In my opinion the glorification of the otherness as ‚primitive people' has to be called ‚intellectual colonialism', because it leads to a distortion of the image of members of foreign cultures who in return get dehumanized and hence colonised." My translation of the German original passage: „Die Verherrlichung des Andersartigen in Form sogenannter ‚Naturvölker' ist meiner Ansicht nach als ‚geistiger Kolonialismus' zu bezeichnen, da sie zu einer Verzerrung des Bildes von den Angehörigen fremder Kulturen führt, die somit wiederum ihrer Menschlichkeit beraubt und daher kolonialisiert werden." (Bargatzky: Einführung in die Kulturökologie, 21 f.

27 Voss: A sprout of doubt.

28 Vazeilles: Shamanism and New Age.

the ceiling is coming down or the walls are getting closer, very abstract, it is dark and I get kind of crushed, squashed or whatever." (457) It's not uncommon that Julia feels dead or close to death at the end of such episodes. She suffers from what physicians diagnose as "pavor nocturnus", a "nonorganic sleep disorder" also known as "night terrors" or "sleep terrors". What is special about her case is that this chronic strain rarely occurs at adult age. Therefore, the phenomenon was not very familiar to most of the specialists she did consult. A psychoanalytic treatment as well as an examination in a sleep laboratory did not help to ease the suffering. Then Julia met Dirk and after a while she told him about her problems – whereupon Dirk had the idea of contacting an acquaintance who did shamanic rituals.

In our interview Julia characterized herself as a person strongly influenced by natural sciences, very rationally thinking (459). If Dirk would not have recommended this alternative, Julia never would have been to a shamanic ritual, certainly. So, during a "shamanic journey", the consulted person, Bert, realized that Julia had not lost a part of her soul, as initially assumed. She was told she would be "totally whole" (460), rather she would have the so-called shaman sickness which indicates the person concerned is kind of destined. "Nothing specific was told – only that I shall set forth [. . .] and follow my heart." (460) Julia was absolutely taken by surprise and for a moment she did not know what to do. Bert offered to show her how to take the first steps on the "shamanic way" and became a mentor for Julia. Though the shamanic work did not end the sleep terrors, the image of the shaman sickness, here understood in terms of hermeneutics as a "living metaphor",[29] and its associated narratives of hope and progress did help to find meaning in a desperate situation – very similar to another woman whom I met in 2011.[30] On a more abstract level this points out a central purpose of cultural techniques: coping with contingency and reducing complexity.

The Anthropologist Between Stranger and Medium

Beside a widespread self-characterization of anthropologists as "strangers" in the explored fields[31] there also exists a self-perception as a crosser, as a medium.[32] Initially, this may sound odd, but the comparison gets much more

29 Grätzel: Die Wahrheit der Fiktion, 107–122.

30 Uhlig: Trübe, dunkle Monde?

31 Manyoni: Eager Visitor, Reluctant Host and Gottowik: Der Ethnologe als Fremder.

32 Duerr: Dreamtime. For a retrospective of that rhetorical figure see MacClancy: The Literary Image of Anthropologists.

traceable when considering that, conventionally speaking, anthropologists deliver information from specific "provinces of meaning" (Alfred Schütz) to which most of us have no access. That, of course, directly raises ethical issues about representation and authorship: What are we allowed to disclose? How can we present emic perspectives in an adequate way and why should we care about these problems after all?[33] Of course, this was the central issue of the "writing culture"-debate, but I would rather like to emphasize the fact that by now many of our research partners are aware of our science as an enterprise of translation,[34] as a project of – broadly speaking – mediating between inside and outside perspectives and hence have very concrete *ideas of* and articulate certain *demands on* our ethnographical work. And this notion brings us to the mediumistic trial or better: its ostensible inversion. I am going to illustrate this with a brief incident that took place during the sweat lodge ritual with Julia and Dirk in 2013.

Giving Credit to a Soup

With a certain temporal and cognitive distance, one can understand own writings as a source for further interpretation. So I would like to translate the pertinent passage of a published field report in which I describe what happened in the sweat lodge. The following text of this chapter is directly taken from my monograph.

"In general, I completely comply with the request to keep silence about private and intimate things other participants revealed inside the lodge during the ritual. But I think it is acceptable to mention a specific incident that refers to the potentiality of friction between field and field researcher. Completely naked, sitting, crouching and later lying on straw and towels, Frederick [the ritual conductor] leads us through the four rounds of the ritual. Since December 2011, this is my fourth sweat lodge. By now, I had acquired a technique to stand the ritual physically. As recommended by different parties I try to lie down on the ground at the first convenient opportunity – mostly in a fetal position for reasons of space, pressing my face to the wall of the tent to receive some constant fresh air supply through this small act of 'cheating'. It may be objected that I would not take the ritual seriously. Indeed, I am keen to 'endure' the heat and the stuffy air

33 For reflections on this topic see Clifford and Marcus: Writing Culture, Koepping: Introduction, and Kohl: The End of Anthropology.

34 Koepping: Authentizität als Selbstfindung durch den anderen, and Lindner: Zur kognitiven Identität der Volkskunde.

of the first 20 minutes. But after that time, often longer periods of relaxation came up [. . .], so I was able eventually to go along with the ritual's point. Although I had no transcendent experiences throughout all my sweat lodge participations I could enjoy the peaceful atmosphere and chants in most of the cases. [. . .] In the last round, we get invited by Frederick to express our gratitude. Even though it is up to every participant in which way those thanksgivings may occur, all do articulate their thoughts and feelings aloud. [. . .] Although I am free to say nothing, I would like to contribute, not so much because I believe in the energetic paradigm, but to pay tribute to the others. Apparently, even in this ritual constellation, the social convention of 'do ut des' represents an overriding principle for me. At this moment, I guess I am what Julia had described in the interview before as 'being in the head'. But addressing 'Wakan Tanka' or the 'little people' like participants did before appears strange to me and could also be understood as insincere and even disrespectful by the others around me. Since even this sweat lodge has brought me temporarily to my physical limits [. . .], I am yearning for the imminent end of the ritual. For my thanksgiving I take up a remark by the sweat lodge conductor he made during the break before the last round: The prospect of being received with a beneficial and nutritious vegetable soup in the warm kitchen [of the venue] is mobilizing my last reserves of strength. With a hoarse voice I express my sincere gratitude to the cook, who would help us to recover via her work – also by means of the 'fruits' that 'Mother Earth' would provide for us; so my rough wording.

Possibly, the addendum would not have been necessary and may occur a bit exaggeratedly, but given that moment and that atmosphere close to nature it felt consistent and appropriate to me. Later, when taking the soup together, Julia sits down next to me and lets me know that apparently one could have clearly recognized [. . .] that I had not succeeded to engage in the spiritual level of the ritual. She raises slight doubts about my project's objectivity qualities. How could I describe the phenomenon in an adequate way if I would not engage in it completely? Altogether some important dimensions of the ritual obviously remained sealed to me. I am dismayed by this direct criticism because I assumed that I had set out the limits of my empirical research quite clearly."[35]

35 Uhlig: Schamanische Sinnentwürfe?, 474–476.

Ethnographical "Misbehaviour", being on Trial, and Irony

Referring to a prominent anthropological concept, one could suggest in an unagitated manner that the previously described situation shows typical characteristics of a conventional "social drama". "Self", as Victor Turner has highlighted, "is presented through the performance of roles, through performance that breaks roles, and through declaring to a given public that one has undergone a transformation of state and status, been saved or damned, elevated or released. Human beings belong to a species well endowed with means of communication, both verbal and nonverbal, and, in addition, given to dramatic modes of communication, to performances of different kinds."[36] This implies that ambiguity and even unfeigned disagreement have to be seen as integral parts of our everyday interpersonal relationships – and hence as parts of our ethnographical efforts as well. Nonetheless, in my experience it does make a significant difference whether this aspect is discussed on a methodological level in an academic "safety zone" or you get actually confronted with unexpected dissent in person.

Even today I still ask myself why Julia's criticism troubled me that much. For the interpretation of interpretations (and representations) of empirical findings – what should also be part of our hermeneutic approaches[37] – we must still bear in mind the personal situation of the author. I guess that many people can understand that the unease might be of a different quality when you're not a highly respected scientist but a more insecure person doing her/his field study in the scope of a qualification work – and success or failure do not only depend on the quality of the empiric data, but on its mere availability at all. It might then feel quite devastating when your own truthfulness, that means the identifiable accordance of words and deeds, is up for discussion and you're close to losing a research partner and moreover valuable material for your text.[38] To be honest, this seems to be an overdrawn pessimistic and undoubtedly selfish view, because when we recall what intimate information Dirk and even more Julia entrusted to

36 Turner: On the Edge of the Bush, 187.

37 See Simon: Ethnologische Anmerkungen zu Bernd Riekens "Gesprächen mit Einheimischen" in Galtür, 105.

38 The use of the word "drama", regardless of being such a common category for cultural analysis, might be inapposite in this context, because it turns a dialogue into a dramatic incident in a much too artificial way.

me during our interview situation another plausible interpretation occurs: Patently, Julia had high expectations. She was disappointed and maybe that disappointment was rooted in her perception of me being not the right "medium" to inform a readership about the issue. From here on, it would not take much to presume to claim that the whole weekend did function primarily as an opportunity for testing the ethnographer. However, beside its unpleasant egocentric colouring, this interpretation appears questionable due to an undue speculative imbalance. It promotes the idea of a planned action (putting somebody to the test) which is not as much an interpretation, but rather an assertion.

Of course, there are indeed moments in which ethnographers get tested by their research partners on purpose, but – and this makes a difference – in a more ludic, quasi mutual way and ceasing the cooperation is not seriously considered. Classic examples can be found in Laura Bohannan's anthropological novel "Return to Laughter" (as Elenore Smith Bowen) from 1954 or in Edward E. Evans-Pritchard's monograph on the Nuer. "On one occasion", Evans-Pritchard records, "some men gave me information about their lineages. Next day these same men paid me a visit and one of them asked me, 'What we told you yesterday, did you believe it?' When I replied that I had believed it they roared with laughter and called the others to come and share the joke. The one of them said, 'Listen, what we told you yesterday was all nonsense. Now we will tell you correctly.'"[39]

When I was invited quite spontaneously to a group meeting in late summer of 2011 to get an idea of how shamanic work can be done, I quickly found myself in the middle of a group therapy where the participants finally made good fun of me. I am sure this should demonstrate that facing current precarious and oppressing life situations with humour is an important part of the group members' "coping strategies".[40] A stance of (self-)irony has been cherished by most of my interviewees which means that I had (and have) to be serious about the fact that a lot of people I met are not serious about themselves to a certain extent. This central, but often neglected aspect of fieldwork[41] leads me to my concluding thought.

All in all, my experiences with people engaging in contemporary shamanism, with the interviews and situations of thick participation reinforced me to sympathize with a position that can be described as an ironic one. When I started to study anthropology, I soon got the advice to formulate thoughts in

39 Evans-Pritchard: The Nuer, 83.

40 Uhlig: Schamanische Sinnentwürfe?, 114–117.

41 The Danish anthropologist Rane Willerslev has addressed this problem in his paper on practiced animism in North Siberia, see Willerslev: Laughing at the Spirits in North Siberia.

the most possible lucid way, to avoid a figurative language and to avoid irony because irony – in a common understanding – may foster obscuration (maybe in the desire of getting closer to truth). Even worse: Someone who claims to be ironic could arouse the suspicion of not taking research partners and their needs seriously as well as the scientific work and community in general. I am far from that attitude. What does irony mean here? When I am speaking about irony, I refer to a philosophical position developed by Richard Rorty in 1989. For Rorty, an "ironist" is a person who bears "radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered".[42] Ironists, in Rorty's interpretation, are "never quite able to take themselves seriously because [they are] always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves."[43] I am fully aware of the scathing criticism of Rorty's philosophical work on the part of contemporary philosophers for being theoretically incoherent and/or irresponsible in ethical terms.[44] From epistemological and moral-philosophical points of view, these submitted objections might appear reasonable, but from a less normative perspective, Richard Rorty's explanations could be adapted in a science of interpretation – within the approach of understanding and describing multiple, sometimes even contradictional and conflicting interpretations of the world(s) in which we (want to) live in is a main task.[45] Basically, it is about a realistic multiperspective approach and contextualism,[46] which simply means to accept and to display different and even diametrical views on one social situation in the ethnographical representation. Whereas Julia and Dirk apparently seemed to be irritated about my behaviour at the end of the ritual, another present participant – a historian who accompanied a befriended physician to the venue and with whom I talked about the criticism – had a problem with Julia's and Dirk's objectivism on his part, arguing in a straight constructivist manner everything depends on specific perspectives. So, when examining multi-layered and multivalent everyday life phenomena, one cannot expect obtaining unambiguous and definite results in the end.[47] Often we must admit

42 Rorty: Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity, 73.

43 Ibid., 73–74.

44 See Brandom: Rorty and His Critics or Boghossian: Fear of Knowledge.

45 See Kohl: The End of Anthropology, 95 and Streck: Das Auge des Ethnografen, 38.

46 For the philosophical basis of this agenda see Gabriel: Neutral Realism.

47 Apart from this statement which indeed can be understood as an unambiguous and definite result.

that the vocabulary with which we started an anthropological survey is way too concluded or narrowed and that we should see things from different angles. "A performance of irony opens a field of possibilities and so invites the listener/reader to entertain a wide view across the topic and to suggest a range of not necessarily mutually exclusive interpretations at once. Irony", how anthropologist Michael Carrithers concludes, "is a stance of detachment."[48] This intended distance, as the author will clarify in a subsequent paper, does not "bestow a god-like certitude" on the ethnographer in the sketched sense but only underlines "that she stands in a particular position, which may be 'above' or 'beside' other positions, but in any case separated from them."[49] This can hastily be mistaken as a postmodernist rejection of, for example, the idea of universally valid ethical standards. As an ironist in that sense (sympathising with structuralist universalism) I presumably would be alienated by an anthropologist defending the apodictic position that cultural performances are always masked and that there's no deeper meaning behind such a masquerade.[50] Being ironic also implies being sceptical about such radical varieties of (de-)constructivism (or even nihilism) when its use of vocabulary is not that persuasive in the light of one's own experiences and empirical findings. As far as I am able to assess, irony alone hardly can found a coherent theoretical program. But its reference to our potential perspective narrowness and fallibility could help to reflect on what we're doing in our roles as ethnographers,[51] to avoid dogmatisms and help to sharpen awareness of ambiguities and discrepancies – in everyday life culture as well as in our own scientific approaches. With a hefty dose of irony, we could pretty well accept that we probably will never fully do the complexity of our research objects justice – at least not without remaining in exchange with differently minded people using different vocabularies.

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48 Carrithers: Seriousness, Irony, and the Mission of Hyperbole, 52.

49 Ibid., 128.

50 See Streck: Fröhliche Wissenschaft Ethnologie, 210.

51 See Koepping: Lachen und Leib, Scham und Schweigen, Sprache und Spiel, 297.

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Ehler Voss

Shamanism on Trial. Acting in a Hall of Mirrors

Shamanism is the subject of a controversy that can be understood as a dispute about authenticity. The focus thereby is on the difference between the real and the unreal, the natural and the artificial, the original and the copy, the serious and the playful – that is, between *shamanism* and *sham*. The dispute imposes itself ubiquitously and unavoidably, and the discussion is often, if not usually polemical and authentic in the sense that it is often very serious, even when it comes to fun, that it seems to be about everything, sometimes even about life and death. The controversy leads to stabilizations and destabilizations of ritual practice and is conducted both in the academic context and in what anthropology calls "the field". Academic and non-academic theory construction and academic and non-academic shamanistic practice are irrevocably intertwined in its genesis through their global and mutual feedback effects. Entrance to this field thus resembles entrance to a hall of mirrors.[1]

The following asks how it is possible to move in this labyrinth of mutual mirrorings and imitations without thereby taking part in the controversy by seeking for a definition of the authentic or by celebrating the inauthentic. This is done by taking recourse to what today, following David Bloor,[2] has become known as the symmetry postulate of the actor-network theory and that, in its specific way, takes up the anthropological tradition of relativizing what is one's own. Part of this postulate is viewing as equally valuable the true and the false, i.e., successful and unsuccessful ways of explaining something, taking social factors into account as well as applying the same categories, including to science itself. This is accompanied by rejecting eschatological modernization theories and bidding farewell to the unambiguous distinction between the modern and the archaic, as well as through a new interpretation of the separation between human and nonhuman actors, and thus between subject and object and between nature and society. With his claim that we have never been

1 Inspired by the German translation of Taussig: Mimesis and Alterity.

2 Bloor: Knowledge and social imagery.

Note: This paper was first published in German as „Authentizität als Aktant. Schamanismus aus Sicht einer symmetrischen Anthropologie", in *Paideuma* 59 (2013): 103–126. With thanks to Erhard Schüttpelz for discussions and inspiration and Mitch Cohen for his translation.

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modern,[3] Bruno Latour attempts to replace these dichotomies with the terms, among other things, of the collective and of human and nonhuman actors: "[W]e live in a hybrid world made up at once of gods, people, stars, electrons, nuclear plants, and markets"[4] For Latour, nonhuman actors – that he sometimes calls actants to avoid the human connotations of the term actor – also have agency. Knowledge arises through interplay within this collective of human and nonhuman actants, and the modern dichotomies are to be understood as the product of a purification of the original mixtures, whereby these themselves in turn constantly give rise to new hybrids. From this perspective, Bloor's constructivist approach is supplemented in that theories and categories can become influential and sometimes corporeally experiencable actants that – like the idea of authenticity in the case of shamanism – can be subjected to an ethnographic consideration.

Authenticity as Actant

The starting point for the following thoughts is a piece of anthropological fieldwork in which, mostly in the years from 2005 to 2007, I followed the metaphor of mediumistic healing in Germany and set off in search of people who regard themselves as mediums dealing with usually invisible, nonhuman beings capable of healing people. I encountered people who, in various ways, apply the concept of shamanism to themselves and their practices, which is problematic, as soon became evident. First, a quote from an interview with a woman who offers her services as a shaman:

> And all these ceremonies in the Catholic Church, that is really pure shamanism, it just wears a Catholic bonnet. All the colors, alone, the color symbolism. At any rate, in this context I became aware that it is extremely important to cultivate the ritual if you want to reach the point of making it authentic and not like core shamanism maintains: So, now I'm a police officer or bookkeeper or something. And I go there and turn on my drum CD and then set off somehow on a shamanistic journey. I'm not saying anything against these professions, but somehow, yes, I want to move away from that. In terms of my personal development, I want to move more toward what's authentic. I want to be authentic! And for me as a person, a personality, ritual acts are simply part of it. [. . .] Through the ritual, you come into this state that leads you to authenticity. To really live it, and not just play-act it. There's a difference between playing at shamanism and getting there, to say: I am a shaman! Because in our society, we can't really be shamans. People who present themselves and say, "I'm a shaman," well, I don't start out believing them. To be a

3 Latour: We Have Never Been Modern.
4 Latour: Pandora's Hope, 16.

> shaman, you need a path of initiation that is given by the society, the indigenous society. Until then, you have to have a teacher, that is, a shamanic teacher, who takes you in an apprenticeship for many years. And that just doesn't exist in our society. Just because you've absolved five courses with Paul Uccusic doesn't make you a shaman. So, people use shamanistic techniques to achieve something, but that is not really authentic. In core shamanism, the ritual is taken away, and with it the path to being it authentically and to live it.[5]

Judith – as we'll call this woman[6] – is the initiator of what is called a "drum group", in which people come together to pursue the method of going on shaman journeys, as developed by the US anthropologist Michael Harner under the term "core shamanism" and presented in 1980 in his book "The Way of the Shaman: A Guide to Power and Healing", in order to contact their "power animals" and "spiritual teachers". After I had already taken part in monthly meetings in the group's rooms for a year, shortly after the interview mentioned above, Judith explained her exit from the group with her aversion to core shamanism, as expressed also in the above quotation.

Judith's formulated goal is thus to be "authentic", and in her opinion the core shamanists are "not really authentic". For her, being authentic means "to live" shamanism and not merely "to play-act" it. The first she associates with the concept of "ritual", the latter with "technique" – a reduction in which "the ritual is taken away". A criterion distinguishing between these two concepts is thereby the factor time: ritual requires much time, technique little. Authentic shamanism is characterized by a "path of initiation" and a "shamanic teacher who takes you in an apprenticeship for many years", inauthentic shamanism, in contrast, by playing a "drum CD" and absolving "five courses with Paul Uccusic".[7] Along with the factor of time, Judith also mentioned the site where the authentic and the inauthentic are distinguished. The authentic, she says, is found in "indigenous societies" that, although in plural, are sketched as a unified counter-image to "our society" in which pure shamanism is clothed "in a Catholic bonnet".

Despite her rejection, Judith shares essential assumptions of Harner's core shamanism. One of them consists in what has become known in anthropology as

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5 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 157–158 (translated for this chapter by Mitch Cohen).

6 This name is a pseudonym from the ethnography "Mediales Heilen in Deutschland" (Mediumistic healing in Germany, 2011). There is also found a detailed description of the persons and contexts involved in these statements. The same applies to all the figures referred to by their first names in this chapter.

7 Paul Uccusic (1937–2013) was an Austrian journalist who, with others, promoted in the 1980s the spread of the Harner method in Europe; Judith took courses from him.

the classic great divide, the synchronic and diachronic dichotomization between the "archaic, primitive, heathen"[8] and the "modern". That is, what was once omnipresent throughout the world has been lost because of Christianization, the Enlightenment, and industrialization, but – unfortunately or fortunately, depending on one's perspective – still survives today in many non-Western cultures. Archaism is thereby seen as the timeless, unchanged, traditional, and rural; modernism, in contrast, is what continues developing and changing, what lacks tradition, and what is urban. Judith, like Harner, thinks that an authentic shamanism can be found in the archaic. The dominance of this viewpoint is usually traced to the historian of religion Mircea Eliade, who in 1951 idealized shamans as archaic specialists in ecstasy who were in contact with the holy; he thereby furthered the expansion and transformation of the term.[9] The term had been established since the end of the 17th century and especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, initially as a category that European and especially German (researching) travelers used to describe religious practices in Siberia; since the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, it was increasingly applied to other parts of the world, as well.

By specifically connecting shamanism with a universal archaic ur-religion, Eliade crucially transformed the discourse about shamanism – in a way that is still effective today. The travelogues from the 17th to the 19th century often led to a speculative Enlightenment-based or romanticizing use of the terms shaman and shamanism, whose diversity, however, does not fit simply in the schema of a dichotomy between modernism and anti-modernism.[10] In the European and American anthropological debates of the 19th and early 20th centuries about archaism, primitivism, animism, and fetishism, shamanism played only a peripheral role. Shamanism generally was not regarded as a religion; research concentrated instead on the figure of the shaman, but less as a "primary" than as a "secondary complex". And if this figure was in part universalized, then particularly in relation to its social position and function.[11] An idealizing and archaizing interpretation of shamanism – usually in the context of theology and religious studies – referred above all to the figure of the shaman, which was equated in elitist manner with the figure of the artist. But the point thereby was less the social embeddedness and role of this figure than its particular abilities, and often it was used in the effort to create a national identity.[12] In the 20th-century interwar period,

8 Streck: Fröhliche Wissenschaft Ethnologie, 39.
9 Eliade: Shamanism.
10 Boekhoven: Genealogies of shamanism, 31–64.
11 Cf. Johansen, Ulla. Zur Geschichte des Schamanismus
12 Boekhoven: Genealogies of shamanism, 65–128.

anthropology was dominated by individual ethnographic and psychological studies, like the one by Sergej Michailovic Shirokogoroff from the year 1935 on the "Psychomental complex of the Tungus" in Siberia, in which the local shamanic collective and its agency were traced in great detail without tying to it a general theory of shamanism.[13] Shirokogoroff even explicitly rejected universalizations. Instead, his and other writings tended to sketch regional differences, to emphasize syncretistic components, and to be skeptical about archaizing hypotheses of origins.

The history of shamanism was thus neither always already a history of primitivism, nor one of pure veneration, as Andrei Znamenski suggests with his choice of the title "The Beauty of the Primitive" for his book about this history.[14] This title rather proves to mirror Eliade's view into the time before his universalization and archaization of shamanism became effective. Eliade turns his studies of shamanism into an esoteric project – a search for a *philosophia perennis*, combined with an anti-modern stance and in part coupled with a nationalistic search for identity.[15] With his diagnosis that the modern *homo faber* suffers from a "terrible crisis of spirituality" and his claim to be able to contribute to its healing, he found favorable resonance, including from the "Eranos circle", a loose network of researchers who, beginning in 1933, met annually in Switzerland and in which Eliade regularly took part from 1950 to 1963.[16] Its members saw themselves in part like a kind of lay priests who wanted to pursue religion and science as a united project.

A connection between academic and religious stance was also initially found in Michael Harner and Carlos Castaneda, two protagonists in the invention of a practice that is later called neo-shamanism, which was owed to what may be a unique historical constellation beginning at the end of the 1960s. In it, the Californian "freak", drug, and consumer culture and the beginnings of neo-liberalism came together and turned esotericism, traditionally a rather bourgeois and elitist phenomenon, into a pop-cultural one. The often anti-modern stance that was often initially tied to an interest in shamanism – as seen for example in Castaneda's first books about his apprenticeship with the sorcerer (*brujo*) Don Juan in the figure of the doltish first-person narrator, who repeatedly fails because of his modern opinions and way of living[17] – increasingly shifted since the early 1980s to a more positive stance toward modern

13 Shirokogoroff: Psychomental complex of the Tungus.
14 Znamenski: The beauty of the primitive.
15 Turcanu: Mircea Eliade.
16 Hakl: Der verborgene Geist von Eranos, 273–284.
17 Castaneda: The teachings of Don Juan.

culture. This development paralleled a turning away from the university and the establishment of a new institution and practice: Michael Harner, who at the end of the 1960s first became known for his participating-observing and drug-accompanied anthropological fieldwork among the Shuar in the Amazon region, quit his professorship at the University of California, Berkeley in 1987 to work at what he founded in 1979 as the Center and later renamed the Foundation for Shamanic Studies. Its purpose was to spread his idea of shamanism in workshops and seminars. Harner propounded and explicitly referred to Eliade's concept of universal shamanism. The idea of a timeless archaism not tied to particular cultures enabled Harner to conceive of his drug-free "technique" that was supposedly based on the claimed universal core components of shamanism (hence the name "core shamanism") and that supposedly could adapt to various cultures, including "modern" culture. Additionally, the concept of shamanism as a reducible archaic technique, theoretically learnable by all people, enabled the core modification, adoption, and acceptance of shamanic practices in the "Western world".

The Authenticity of Inauthenticity Concerning Culture

"But that somehow doesn't fit here," is a statement I often hear as a first reaction when I speak of my fieldwork and about shamans in and above all from Germany. If the impression of inauthenticity arises, it is often expressed in the form of feelings of embarrassment and aggression – on the part of both the observer and the practitioner. For example, a participant in a "basic seminar" held by the Foundation for Shamanic Studies: "At the beginning, when for the first time I saw this drumming and everything, I thought it was all totally silly and embarrassing." Accordingly, I wasn't the only one who felt embarrassed to take an active part myself and, for example, to fulfill the request that I dance my power animal; other actors in the field also report touches of this feeling if friends or acquaintances hear about their shamanic activities. Another actor in this field, who didn't learn his techniques in the Foundation's courses, said that, in the first two years, it was too embarrassing for him to talk outside his family about his daytime or nocturnal visions in which his spirits gave him instructions. A participant in the aforementioned drum group who was considering buying a drum said she certainly wouldn't want to get one as a gift from her parents, because it was out of the question to tell them about her shamanic activities. And when in this group we once sought a substitute venue for one of

the meetings that otherwise regularly took place in the rooms Judith rented for her shamanic services, it became clear that, out of fear for their reputations, everyone would prefer that no one in their neighborhood learn anything about it. When we finally decided on the municipal park, on our way there we hid our drums in plastic bags, and in the subsequent quite noticeable drumming, it looked like not only I wished that the shrubs around our area had been planted a few years earlier.[18]

Although I could justify my active participation to others and myself with the specificity and necessities of anthropological research; with other understandings of what constitutes science, this kind of embarrassment-avoiding distancing doesn't always function. For researchers, it can be embarrassing if they or those associated with them show too little distance from shamanic practices and thereby seem to others neither authentically shamanic nor authentically scientific. For example, the anthropologist Galina Lindquist reports on watching several film recordings that show her in a trance during a trip to Siberia organized by the anthropologist Valentina Ivanovna Kharitonova and Kharitonova's husband:

> The sight of myself and all of us in trance was truly disconcerting. When I watched this video, I only hoped that Valentina would cut it all out when montaging the film, and that these images would never reach my own university department [. . .] For the Khakasian media, we represented "the international science", and the scientists, in Russian understanding, must be objective and dispassionate. The sight of the foreign guests in trance effectively undermined our images as "Western scholars", and discredited Valentina, who repeatedly introduced us as such to the local colleagues and the media alike.[19]

So, all the co-travellers were warned against careless utterances to journalists, but the latter's presence was not always adequately taken into consideration:

> A leading journalist there, a good Russian Orthodox, made a program where he inserted recordings of our words, with his comments. This radio program apparently caused much embarrassment in the local scientific circles: the "Russian Orthodox journalist" made all of us ("especially you, Galina", as Valentina acrimoniously pointed out to me) look like a bunch of stoned junkies, hunting flaky experiences, with blurred vision, devoid of objectivity; the soft-minded space-outs who, in the words of the journalist, "confused spirits and spirituality". Valentina was worried that if this program reached the administration of her own institute, she would have no money allocated to the studies of shamanism ever again.[20]

18 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 292–293.
19 Lindquist: The quest for the authentic shaman, 58.
20 Lindquist: The quest for the authentic shaman, 59.

Aggressiveness, along with embarrassment the other reaction to perceiving the inauthentic, often results in exclusion and devaluation. Thus, in our interview, when Judith rejected core shamanism as "play-acted", she expressed this with an aggressive undertone that emerged even more powerfully when she shortly thereafter announced that she was leaving the aforementioned drum group for this reason.[21] Anja Dreschke[22] mentions a viewer's aggressive reaction to her documentary film about the "Tribes of Cologne" (Kölner Stämme).[23] In one scene shot during the summer camp of the "Tribes of Cologne", in which its members are costumed and dwell in yurts, one sees in the background a beer wagon. The viewer's question about this beer wagon later leads to an aggressively presented denigration of the active protagonists and a questioning of the value of reporting on this: this is all thoroughly inauthentic and not to be taken seriously.[24]

People in the so-called West who use the term shamanism to describe themselves or who make use of an aesthetic associated with it run the risk of being exposed to ridicule and in part of feeling ridiculous themselves. A commonplace polemic describes them as artificial "instant", "pseudo-", or "plastic shamans" from a "tribe called wannabee"[25] – as "city", "sofa", or "weekend shamans" who believe they can purchase being a shaman on a weekend through superficial borrowings from alien cultures without having to take the long and painful path of a calling and initiation. But not only modern Western shamans are confronted with the rebuke of cultural inauthenticity. Non-Western shamans recognized as traditional have specific ideas of cultural authenticity, too, which, especially because of international shaman tourism, lead to a constant inter- and intracultural negotiation and distinction between new and old shamans, as reported for instance by Veronica Davidov from Ecuador[26] and by Judith Schlehe from Mongolia.[27] Other non-Western shamans who open their rituals up to tourists and the field to modern esotericism, and who, among other things, appropriate the corresponding vocabulary and behavior, are subject to the hostility of purists in their own culture, who call them

21 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 162.

22 Dreschke: Die Bibel der Schamanen.

23 These are people who gather in Cologne under this title and with reference to, among other things, the concept of shamanism, adapt practices primarily of the Huns and Mongols.

24 These utterances were made on December 1, 2011 at a public screening of her documentary in the framework of the anthropological film festival "An/Ver-Wandlugnen" in Leipzig's Grassi Museum for Anthropology, where I was present.

25 Green: The tribe called wannabee.

26 Davidov: Shamans and shams.

27 Schlehe: Shamanism in Mongolia and in new age movements.

inauthentic and blacklist them, as has happened with the founder of the Bear Tribe Medicine Society, known internationally as Sun Bear, and with Harley SwiftDeer Reagan, the founder of the also internationally active Deer Tribe Metis Medicine Society. While Western actors involved with shamanism see themselves confronted with the accusation of colonialistic exploitation through stereotyping and commercialization, the non-Western actors are accused of selling out their own culture; and general and specific discussions of the modern idea of intellectual property arise, along with its application and prevalence in, for example, the context of "Indian spirituality".[28]

The asymmetry inscribed in the term "shamanism" since the 1950s in the aforementioned form derived from Eliade also led to a continuing discussion in anthropology about the question of genuine and fake shamanism, a discussion articulated in the repeatedly renegotiated and often polemic attempt to distinguish authentic, traditional shamanism from inauthentic, modern "neo-shamanism".[29] The result is an unequal treatment of true and false theories, an insisting on one's own authority to define, and the judging of a supposedly incorrect use of the term. Thus, for example, in her ethnographic work on shamanism in Iceland, Merete Jakobsen chooses one of the countless definitions of shamanism, asserts it as universally valid, and from this position assesses particular practices as not being genuinely shamanic.[30]

Academic and non-academic authors often attempt to counter the negative aftertaste often accompanying the use of the term neo-shamanism by using new terms. But speaking of "modern Western shamanism"[31] or distinguishing between "shamans" and "shamanists"[32] carries the risk of suggesting a division, a distinction between the West and the rest, in which we hear an echo of Eliade's dichotomy between the archaic and the modern. An exception is found in the nominalistic reference to "shamanisms",[33] which, like many pre-Eliade approaches, refuses to postulate a general theory.

Harner, too, adopts a division as described. He thereby distinguishes between authentic and inauthentic shamanism and recognizes authenticity in

28 Roch: Plastikschamanen und AIM-Krieger.

29 See for example Jakobsen: Shamanism, Johansen: Shamanism and neoshamanism, and Hoppál: Schamanen und Schamanismus.

30 Jakobsen: Shamanism.

31 See for example Høst: Modern shamanic practice, von Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik, and Voss: Von Schamanen und schamanisch Tätigen.

32 For example Boekhoven: Genealogies of shamanism, 1.

33 See for example Atkinson: Shamanisms today, Holmberg: Shamanic soundings, and Oppitz: From one shaman to the next.

non-Western shamanism – another common ground that Judith shares with the core shamanism she rejects. But unlike with Judith, this does not lead Harner to look down on the inauthentic, nor to regrets about his own inauthenticity, nor to the goal of becoming authentic. Rather, Harner acknowledges his inauthenticity with a certain humility: we are not shamans, we are merely shamanic practitioners, is the prescribed terminology of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies that one hears also in the courses in which one learns the Harner method. In the words of Regina, another woman I got to know during my fieldwork and who learned to do shamanic journeys primarily from the Foundation for Shamanic Studies:

> I think there are shamans only in the old cultures that have worked that way traditionally forever. Of myself, I say that I am shamanically active, that I work shamanically, or that I give shamanic consultation. Everyone else always calls me a shaman, but I don't, myself. Maybe it's splitting hairs. [. . .] But I have the feeling that I don't have the right to choose such a title. [. . .] it seems presumptuous to me to choose this term. I really think someone is entitled to it who still stands in an old tribal tradition. I've gotten to know shamans. For example from Tuva, some years ago. And there I would say: Yes, these are shamans as I conceive it. They stand in an old tradition [. . .].[34]

Judith feels the wish to achieve the state of authenticity, but official core shamanism regards this as impossible or at least inappropriate.

In the mainstream of current anthropological theory formation, this idea of authenticity in the sense of cultural purity, combined with an ambivalent dichotomization between modernity and tradition, long cultivated also by anthropology, is mostly rejected. Rather, the current and historical omnipresent hybridity and incompleteness of culture is usually underscored instead, and research no longer focuses on coherent cultures, but on cultural processes. From this perspective, authenticity in the sense of cultural purity is always only the product of purging an original impurity. Thus, Dreschke reports that, when editing her aforementioned documentary about the "Tribes of Cologne", she repeatedly had to persevere against the producers who wanted, as much as possible, to cut out from the ritual scenes all objects from modern everyday life along with everyone present who was not costumed, because in their view the film would not have seemed authentic, because it would not conform with how non-European cultures are conventionally represented on television.[35] James Clifford shows[36] how the traces of modern materiality and ways of living, as

34 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 117.
35 Dreschke: Die Bibel der Schamanen.
36 Clifford: The predicament of culture.

well as the presence of anthropologists, are eradicated from the pictures and objects in exhibitions in anthropological museums, in order to have what is depicted seem as pure as possible and thus authentic; this is seen also in the stylization of the figure of the shaman. In part, these "purified" pictures feed back to the field, for example when shamans seek confirmation of their own tradition through consultation with anthropological museums or ethnographies[37] or when, as in the case of the "Tribes of Cologne", a book by Erika und Manfred Taube about shamanism in Mongolia, as a "Bible of the shamans", becomes the model for imitating foreign cultures.[38] These pictures often give rise to stereotypes that, for example in tourists' contact with supposed genuine shamans, can lead to disappointments when they don't correspond to the local realities. But the stereotypes can come true, mirrored as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecies, for example, as Peter Bolz writes, "the cliché of the Indian as an ecological saint" is now spread by many American Indians themselves, although it lacks any historical foundation[39] – as he ascertains, exposing its inauthenticity. In part, this image is taken up also in other regions, like Mongolia, and can thereby lead to bewildering performative contradictions when the shamans' actions are difficult to square with what they say in this connection.[40]

But anthropological writings are not the only things whose reception indirectly influences the everyday life of non-anthropologists. In part, anthropologists also exert direct influence – as in the described case of Harner and the Foundation for Shamanic Studies he founded. Harner, in whose method even some indigenous shamans seek instruction, has so effectively and sustainably connected anthropological theory and shamanic practice that not only the dichotomy between archaism and modernity, but also other concepts like that of shaman sickness, which many regard as a criterion for authentic shamanism, and the discourse of "culture" in neo-shamanism and beyond it are firmly established.[41] The rise and transformation of modern esotericism can accordingly be traced in part to research on esotericism itself. In the 17th century, the polemically intended systematization of such research by Protestant scholars like Ehregott Daniel Colberg is what gave its object an independent identity in the first place[42]; in the 20th century, this is fueled by esotericists themselves, who

37 Znamenski: The beauty of the primitive.
38 Dreschke: Die Bibel der Schamanen.
39 Bolz: Indianer als Öko-Heilige?
40 Schlehe: Shamanism in Mongolia and in new age movements, 293; Schlehe and Weber: Schamanismus und Tourismus in der Mongolei.
41 Voss: Von Schamanen und schamanisch Tätigen.
42 Hanegraaff: Esotericism and the academy.

as religious protagonists in turn influence the esoteric practices and, like Harner, invent them in part anew.

From a constructivist perspective, with examples like these in mind, "authenticity" becomes an empty referent, a conscious or unconscious, individual or collective construction, and this turns our gaze to its strategic application – a "politics of authenticity". In this sense, Michael Knipper, for example, examines "traditional medicine" in Ecuador as a "strategic resource", whereby he distinguishes between economic, political, and societal-administrative resources, "which various actors use to achieve goals that go beyond the field of medicine".[43] In the context of neo-shamanism the connection between the construction and the commodification of authenticity has turned into the common accusation of commercialization, as mentioned above.

From here, it is a short step to discovering the authentic in the inauthentic. And so the aforementioned Sun Bear, criticized by many for his inauthenticity, justifies his rituals for non-Indians by calling himself a mediator between the cultures, and he explains his special suitability for this role with his own hybrid descent.[44] The aforementioned Harley SwiftDeer Reagan, too, says his overstepping and blurring of boundaries is his task and distinction. His own hybridity thereby becomes a trademark, when an event with him is advertised in the "Swedish neo-shamanic magazine *Gimle*"[45] as follows:

> Harley SwiftDeer (Cherokee/metis) is a shaman, a medicine man, a Rosicrucian, a PhD in humanist psychology and comparative religion, an outstanding healer, and a master in karate and jiu jitsu.
>
> He has been an apprentice of a Navajo medicine man, Tom Two Bears Wilson, also known as Don Genaro from Carlos Castaneda's books. Another of his teachers is a Cheyenne medicine man, Hyemeyohsts Storm.
>
> SwiftDeer works, among other things, with sweat lodge, crystals, medicine pipe and medicine wheels, runes and Western magic. His three apprentices from his own institute "Native American Lodge of Ceremonial Medicine" will be helping him at the course.[46]

With his reference to Castaneda, Harley SwiftDeer Reagan authenticates himself with someone who himself has been accused of inauthenticity, in part because contradictory and unrealistic-seeming information has been found in his books – both in regard to himself and to the person he describes.[47] And yet, after the artificiality and staged quality of the anthropological classics has been

43 Knipper: Traditionelle Medizin als strategische Ressource in Ecuador, 205.
44 Roch: Plastikschamanen und AIM-Krieger.
45 Lindquist: Shamanic performances on the urban scene, 22; italics in the original.
46 Quoted after Lindquist: Shamanic performances on the urban scene, 33.
47 De Mille: The Don Juan papers.

presented in detail, Castaneda, too, appears in another light. Some, for example in dialogical anthropology, thereby then sought new authenticity or, as with Stephen Tyler, thoroughly rejected the notion of the authentic and instead celebrated the inauthentic and unrelated.[48] From this latter perspective, the question of fact or fiction appeared irrelevant, and Castaneda's books were interpreted as the prototype of anthropological writing.[49] And if the "Tribes of Cologne" generally speak of themselves as "only leisure shamans", as Dreschke reports,[50] then they are following a pattern of recognizing one's own inauthenticity that resembles Harner's modesty. But here, too, there is the possibility of a different interpretation of one's own and others' behavior: thus, Dreschke receives an explanation from a woman who introduces herself as a Hunnic king's daughter: just as the Huns once plundered all over the world and appropriated whatever they wanted to, so, too, the "Tribes of Cologne" today wander through the flea market and bag items they like.[51] By highlighting the "impurity" of what is imitated, this woman makes her own inauthenticity authentic again here.

The Authenticity of Inauthenticity Concerning Effectiveness

Returning to Judith and her initially paradoxical-seeming statement that, on the one hand, she wants to be authentic but, on the other hand, authentic shamanism is not really possible "in our society": this leads to an additional facet of authenticity that does not legitimize itself on the basis of cultural purity and tradition alone, as discussed so far, but through experience: "Through the ritual, you come into this state that leads you to authenticity," Judith says. First, shamans or shamanic practitioners can individually have an authentic experience through the feeling of being in contact with an external force, energy, spirit, power animal, or other being that is not oneself. Second, an act that patients or the public visibly experiences as effective in the form of healing or injuring can prove to be authentic. Judith, for example, mentions her first shamanic journey and describes it as an experience of recognizing, for she thereby came to a place she knew from childhood and in which she regularly

48 Tyler: Post-modern ethnography.
49 Koepping: Castaneda and methodology in the social sciences.
50 Dreschke: Die Bibel der Schamanen.
51 Dreschke: Der hunnische Blick.

took trance journeys, as she says she knows today. And the fact that many of her initially skeptical clients have been persuaded by her treatments convinces her, too, of the effectiveness of her methods, even though she feels she has not yet reached the state of lasting authentic experience.[52]

With this kind of authentication of shamanic practice, Judith is again not far removed from core shamanism – with the aforementioned difference that core shamanism does not disdain this cultural inauthenticity. Harner lets the issue of cultural authenticity move into the background and become unimportant when, by taking recourse to an Eliade-like universalism, he adduces results and effectiveness as the decisive criteria for shamanic authenticity and says about the participants in his workshops:

> [T]hese new practitioners are not "playing Indian", but going to the same revelatory spiritual sources that tribal shamans have traveled to from time immemorial. They are not pretending to be shamans; if they get shamanic results for themselves and others in this work, they are indeed the real thing. Their experiences are genuine and, when described, are essentially interchangeable with the accounts of shamans from nonliterate tribal cultures. The shamanic work is the same, the human mind, heart, and body are the same; only the cultures are different.[53]

Regina, quoted above, reports persuasively on spirits releasing her from being tied up, dismemberments, assemblings, and experiences of God during shamanic trance journeys, as well as healings that repeatedly astonish her herself.[54] Harald, who calls himself a light-bringer and shaman, relates that, by following instructions that came to him in visions, he was able to recover from a sickness his doctors could not diagnose and that had made him unable to work.[55]

But this kind of authenticity, too, is repeatedly questioned by outsiders and patients and in part also by the shamans themselves, in regard to both other healers' and their own practices. And here, too, the suspicion of inauthenticity often triggers aggression in the form of denigration and exclusion. A common, often reflex-like imputation is that of deceit, i.e., of conscious fraud, usually for the purpose of personal gain. In his 1577 report on his stay with the Tupinamba in Brazil, Hans Staden suspected that behind the actions of practitioners not yet called shamans lay the pursuit of hidden aims.[56] Staden was closely involved, endangered, and trying to understand; the sociologist Jeroen Boekhoven describes a

52 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 151–161.
53 Harner: The way of the shaman, xiv.
54 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 120–125.
55 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 164–168.
56 Münzel: Natürlich oder gespielt?, 146.

contemporary reaction after a colleague's lecture that was based less on participation: "Right after I finished the presentation of my paper on 'Shamanism in the Netherlands', the chairman of the research group, a renowned scholar, exclaimed: 'Charlatans!'"[57] But deception need not be traced solely to conscious fraud: if a closer view by many researchers who open themselves up to shamans as participating observers finds that the supposed charlatans are clearly serious and honest, the diagnosis is often: (pathological) self-deception. A widespread interpretation categorizes shamans as nervous, hysterical, psychotic, or schizophrenic[58] or as naively self-deceptive, making them into wannabes. With the latter interpretation, Harald, for example, places himself above core shamanism: "Most of what happens there are fictions. If you want to see something, then you will see something. And that's how it is in these shaman courses: if you want to find your power animal, then you will find it; after all, you don't want to be a loser"[59] – an assessment that nevertheless doesn't protect Harald himself from being judged pathological. At any rate, a female shaman mentioned in my ethnography told me Harald was pathological after she read his portrait in the published work.

The issue of authentic experience and effectiveness is not restricted to a discussion here or today: "I desired to learn about the shaman, whether it is true or / whether it is made up and (whether) they pretend to be shamans." This, for example, was the first sentence of a text written in 1925, in which Quesalid or George Hunt – the hybrid primary source of information for Franz Boas in his book about the religion of the Kwakiutl – reports on his shamanic apprenticeship.[60] It becomes clear in the text that skepticism about the authenticity of the shamans is ubiquitous among the Kwakiutl – skepticism that the shaman apprentice soon finds to be justified: for example, he learns to hide a bundle of feathers in his mouth and at decisive moments to pull it out, bloody, as a sign of successful healing and of his shamanic ability. He exposes other shamans and must discover that his actions have effect: not only does his charisma grow as Giving-Potlaches-in-the-World (his name as shaman), his deceptions lead to the recovery of his patients and to the death of a competitor. Although he recognizes his own shamanic actions and those of many of his colleagues as inauthentic, he does not abandon the idea of authenticity, and does not doubt the possibility of authentic shamanic power and of the existence of

57 Boekhoven: Genealogies of shamanism, 11.

58 Cf. Ohlmarks: Studien zum Problem des Schamanismus; Silverman: Shamans and acute schizophrenia

59 Voss: Mediales Heilen in Deutschland, 166.

60 Boas: The religion of the Kwakiutl Indians 2, 1.

authentic shamans in other places.[61] Perhaps Hunt, or Quesalid, would thus have followed Harner's dictum and would have said of himself, though in another sense: "I am not a shaman, I am just a shamanic practitioner."

Like authenticity, inauthenticity can be interpreted as a strategic resource – for example, Harner's inauthenticity as a marketing strategy. The procedure of the shaman described in Hunt's text also finds a common strategic interpretation: the shaman thereby proves to be a psychotherapist with knowledge of the power of suggestion.[62] Boas considers interpreting Hunt's skepticism a defense strategy against the prejudices of "the Whites". In this view, the Kwakiutl actually believe in shamanism, but, knowing their interlocutors' value system, they don't want to appear irrational to them and therefore only pretended a skeptical stance in a kind of cultural appropriation.[63]

As in the discussion of cultural authenticity, there is also the attempt to discover the authentic in the inauthentic in relation to effectiveness. Thus, Michael Taussig[64] interprets Hunt's report from 1925 against the background of other, earlier versions of the text in which he appears far less skeptical.[65] Thus, the skeptical stance stands not at the beginning, but at the end of his training as a shaman: he does not shift from skeptic to believer, but from believer to skeptic. Insight into the inauthenticity stands at the end of his path to knowledge, and the knowledge is that belief and skepticism are inseparable. But anthropologists generally do not recognize that, in the shamanic game of deception and exposure, they themselves often take the necessary role of the skeptic. In the case of the Kwakiutl, Taussig takes recourse to the research of Stanley Walens[66] and sees the explanation of the deception in the emic idea of a mirrored world of spirits: it is the spirits who are deceived and then carry out the actual actions analogously to the shamans' actions. The copy is effective, because it serves as a model: this is the highest form of knowledge. Only in this way can the spirits heal, and therefore the trick must be perfect, i.e., the actions must proceed smoothly without stoppage. Anything else is dangerous, can expose the deception, and is often punished by death. With this, the deception in Taussig's interpretation makes sense – just like, according to Rane Willerslev,[67] the shamans' laughter about the spirits among the Jukagir in Siberia: the

61 Boas: The religion of the Kwakiutl Indians 2, 1–56, Boas: Kwakiutl ethnography, 120–148.
62 Schmidbauer: Schamanismus und Psychotherapie.
63 Boas: Kwakiutl ethnography, 121.
64 Taussig: Viscerality, faith, and skepticism: another theory of magic.
65 Boas: Kwakiutl ethnography, 120–148.
66 Walens: Feasting with cannibals.
67 Willerslev: Laughing at the spirits in North Siberia.

inauthentic jokes and the inauthentic deception become authentic because they appear to be necessary protective measures against the dominance of the spirits, whose reality is not doubted, and thus protect one's own life.

As Taussig and Willerslev show, based on tracing emic perspectives, in certain cultural contexts, the inauthentic can become the authentic because it mimics; Mark Münzel, too, promotes recognition for the inauthentic. He too recognizes a simultaneity of belief and skepticism, but he tries to take the inauthentic seriously in the sense that he does not try to capture it in a serious sense. As in the aforementioned case of the discussion about Castaneda's writing, some of his defenders, referring to literary-theoretical questions, emphasize the creative role of the recipient; in the question of truth and fiction in shamanism, Münzel, too, pleads for the consideration of the debates in literary studies and suggests "understanding myth as literature and shamanism as a specific literary genre, akin to theater".[68] Staging becomes the universal normal case, when Münzel attributes it not only to "modernity", but also to the "natural human" who was created as a counter-image to modernity. Münzel thereby denies, as he writes, "the original genuineness of humans in their natural state. They are as false as we are. The 'natural people' are always the others. The others are good. We are deceptive actors – and so are the supposed wild people, if we see us in them."[69]

When anthropologists who, as participant observers, open themselves up to shamans, recognize their deceptive play-acting – which seems to occur at least as often as the recognition of unacted genuineness – then they are closer than they may think to the recognition of the other on an equal basis, as demanded by anthropology. The play-acting recognized by all authenticates itself, then, primarily through its effectiveness.

Mutually Mirroring the Conditions of Mutual Mirroring

From a symmetrical perspective, the history of shamanism proves to be neither a history of one-sided "Western" projections or imaginings,[70] nor a history of a pure counterculture or primitivism.[71] And although social practices are thereby

68 Münzel: Lügen die Schamanen?, 100.
69 Münzel: Natürlich oder gespielt?, 148.
70 Hutton: Shamans; von Stuckrad: Schamanismus und Esoterik.
71 Znamenski: The beauty of the primitive.

taken into consideration, shamanism proves to be not solely a strategic struggle for social, cultural, or economic capital or an expression of socio-economic conditions.[72] Rather, following the analysis of mimetic practices of, for example, Fritz Kramer,[73] Michael Taussig,[74] and Erhard Schüttpelz,[75] the history of shamanism is also and in particular a sequence of mutual mirrorings, imitations, and appropriations, a sequence constituted out of the figure of the shaman him- or herself. For, however different the definition may be, the shaman is generally conceived as a go-between – as a mediator between different worlds or spheres: between a human and a non-human world, between an ordinary and a non-ordinary reality, and between differing cultures or symbolic systems. Inherent in this mediating role is the question of the attribution of agency, because in mediating and translating between or in the imitation, presentation, and embodiment of alien cultures, people, animals, ancestors, and spirits, everyone involved, whether performing or watching, faces the question of what influence the shamanic medium has on the alienness to be mediated, whether what is alien is transferred in pure form or if it influences what is alien, and if the latter, to what degree. Or does what is alien even issue completely from the shamanic medium, i.e., does the medium merely simulate what is alien, and if the latter, does he or she do so intentionally or unintentionally and to what purpose. And whether or not the deception also has an effect, and if it does, then what effect and why.

In addition, shamans act in altered states of consciousness that can possess and disorient not only themselves, but also everyone around them. They answer crises with crises into which they are plunged and into which they plunge themselves and others, in order to emerge from them again. Through séances or trances, agencies and identities can be further distributed, varied, and exchanged and thus trigger a constant shift in the positions of everyone involved: from the margin to the center, from observer to observed, from scientist to medium, from skeptic to believer and back again. Schüttpelz demonstrates these shifting motions with the example of Edward Burnett Tylor's participation in a spiritualistic séance in 1872.[76] Schüttpelz[77] also shows how this shifting is mirrored mimetically in Levi-Strauss's texts on the "magic atom", as he suggests

72 Boekhoven: Genealogies of shamanism.
73 Kramer: Der rote Fes.
74 Taussig: Mimesis and alterity.
75 Schüttpelz: Die Moderne im Spiegel des Primitiven.
76 Cf. Schüttpelz: ‚We cannot manifest through the medium', Schüttpelz: Medientechniken der Trance, Schüttpelz: Auf der Schwelle zwischen Animismus und Spiritismus.
77 Schüttpelz: Der magische Moment.

calling its object. In these texts,[78] Levi-Strauss lets the agency in shamanic séances oscillate among shamans, patients, and publics and thereby, at least in a magic historical moment, takes a symmetric perspective in his own way, before his always implicit and preferred position of exposure emerges, gets the upper hand, and prevents further reversals.

Like Tylor observing spiritualistic séances, other anthropological observers studying shamanic séances are drawn into them, like all other participants in the disorienting shamanic hall of mirrors, and are thereby involved in dealing with authenticity – whether in direct contact during participant observation or, as with Levi-Strauss, mediated by literature. They thereby also change positions and perspectives, turning, like Harner, from anthropologist into shaman or, like Hunt or Quesalid, from shaman into anthropologist, or the positions fuse, as with Robert Wallis[79] in the figure of the auto-ethnographer. They attribute agencies, discover authentic ones and expose inauthentic ones, but are also repeatedly exposed to others' interpretations, are themselves observed, exposed, appropriated, and changed. A symmetrical viewpoint also appears in this and becomes part of the game. It is a viewpoint in which the success and the failure of shamanic acts are viewed with the aid of the same category, in this case that of authenticity; in which anthropology does not act as judge of justified and unjustified interpretations and does not see itself as the guardian of authentic shamanism or authentic anthropology; in which, accordingly, neither of the participating positions takes a privileged position or is excluded from consideration, which accords equal status to the observer, the observed, and the observer of the observers. For our consideration, one of the things this means is initially accepting value-neutrally the "shamanthropologists" like Michael Harner as participating players in the field of shamanism – as is expressed by Ekkehard Schröder, who, as an anthropologist and psychiatrist, as well as the former driving force of the "Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ethnomedizin" (Association for Ethnomedicine) has long been familiar with a wide variety of attempts to bring together the practices of anthropological research and medical healing:

> The transfer of medical knowledge has always been open and never one-sided. [. . .] That means, first, that what Harner does is perfectly normal. The shamans change, too, after all. If, vice versa, shamans incorporate or appropriate things from our medicine, then

78 esp. Lévi-Strauss: Sorciers et psychoanalyse; Lévi-Strauss: The Sorcerer and his magic; Lévi-Strauss: The effectiveness of symbols; Lévi-Strauss: Introduction to the work of Marcel Mauss.

79 Wallis: Shamans/neo-shamans.

> they are shamans of the 20th century and not shamans from the primeval forest before the colonial epoch. And we can say that Harner has succeeded in integrating certain shamanic components, but they are not then classical shamanism, into our modern, broad health landscape. One can then say, okay, that has been successful, definitely. And finally, by expanding and opening the horizon for many people, Harner has also changed the shamans; something new has emerged. [. . .] The exchange of knowledge is perfectly normal. Knowledge is passed on and exchanged if there are corresponding clienteles. Trade as the primal situation – the French said it. Desires are aroused, and that is then a business story. And so, what Harner does is not bad at all. Actually, it's not bad, and I wonder why anthropologists have criticized him so vehemently. [. . .] But why shouldn't an anthropologist also be a healer?[80]

Such a perspective does not view modern neo-shamanism's adaptations of the supposedly pure tradition one-sidedly, which then appear as projections or impermissible falsifications; it also sees the changes in supposedly pure classical shamanism. Considering one's own role brings the interactions between science and everyday life into view. Sociology regrets these interactions as "theory effects", folklore studies has long considered them "feedback effects"; but in anthropology, they have been too little considered, much less systematically investigated. Such consideration views not only the influence of the individual researcher's presence on his specific field, but also the influence of one or more disciplines and their theories on the overall field that they have partly generated. Thus, for example, the modernization-critical reinterpretation of the formerly pathologized shaman as an archaic hero and the universalization of shamanism as primal religion have made it possible for members of Western societies to experience (in)authenticity accordingly – initially in the form of the figure of the chosen and especially gifted artist, then in the form of a countercultural imitation of alien shamans, and later in the form of a democratized technique that conforms with their own culture.

A symmetrical perspective attributes no essence to authenticity, which, as in constructivist approaches, remains an empty referent that can be employed also situationally and strategically in the pursuit of a wide variety of goals. The question of the genuineness of the shaman is substituted by the questions of why and how someone terms himself or herself a shaman and of who questions this, why, and how. But authenticity cannot be reduced to such a "political" dimension and to a mere struggle to accumulate power, charisma, and sovereignty over the discourse, a struggle in which one can use this category as one pleases. Understanding authenticity as an actant means taking this category seriously in the sense that one grants it a certain degree of autonomy and resistance

80 Voss: Generation Ethnomedizin, 228–229 (translated for this chapter by Mitch Cohen).

to being used. The question is then no longer solely what the actors in the field do with the category of authenticity, but also what this category does with them. Thus, as described, it becomes corporeally experiencable for observing as well as practicing actors in a historically and individually determined way: as wish, as experienced reality, or – if it does not occur – as the cause of one's own or someone else's aggression or embarrassment.

The key to understanding the special presence of the question of authenticity in the field of shamanism lies in the figure of the shaman, who, as a mimetic mediator and symmetry-producer in the shamanic séance and beyond, entangles all participants in a disorienting process of mutual mirrorings and shifts in position, in which the clarification of authenticity promises a necessary anchor. With this, the figure of the shaman is the key to understanding the role of authenticity as an omnipresent and unavoidable actant that coerces everyone who enters this field to give an answer and that makes shamanism in the form described into an object of dispute. The effects of the answers that a symmetrical perspective develops in the field of shamanism thereby remain to be participatorily observed.

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Heike Behrend

“I know . . . but still.” Popular Photography and the Mediation of Luck in Japan

The French philosopher, anthropologist and psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni[1] has explored an epistemological predicament that we all know in everyday life. It was, however, ascribed rather often to children, “savages” and mad people because it acknowledges a contradiction while at the same time tolerating it. “I know . . . but still” expresses the refusal to renounce an impossible wish and therefore eliminates the knowledge of this impossibility. Mannoni’s formula forms part of an art of reconciliation that questions common knowledge by offering justification for the exploration of other venues.

In her famous book “Deadly Words. Witchcraft in the Bocage” (1980), Jeanne Favret-Saada referred to Mannoni and described the intellectual attitude of French marginalized peasants with the above mentioned formula: “I know . . . but still”.[2] She suggested that this very modern attitude is common in historical situations when the dominant discourse and its conventions claim to create a social field of rationality, enlightenment and truthfulness, often backed by the state and its institutions in alliance with science, while those who do not share this field are transformed into “idiots” who do not know but instead are superstitious and have faith in imaginary beings and forces. They are the “other” of the knowledgeable scholar and scientist.

When I did ethnographic research in Northern Uganda in a war zone in the 1980s and 1990s, I myself became such an “idiot”. As part of my research, I began visiting spirit mediums, talked with them and observed their practices. Yet, there was one lady who did not allow me to stay an outside observer. She turned me into her patient. I paid the registration fee and visited her almost every day to consult the spirits. These visits became my routine and, as I realized later, allowed me to speak of the menace and fear I felt, making them public to a restricted audience – the spirit medium and other clients. By “treating” me she (and the spirits) helped to acknowledge, reduce and at least partially deal with the uncertainties in a situation of war. “I know . . . but still” became also my attitude. Like other people, Ugandan clients or French peasants, I tried to satisfy my impossible desire for security while at the same time knowing that it was futile. Although we all more or less may have doubted the efficacy of

1 Mannoni: Clefs pour l’imaginaire.

2 Favret-Saada: Deadly Words, 51.

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rituals, we did them because they were consoling.[3] And sometimes they worked. Also in my case, the (impossible) wish was strong enough to allow for the testing of the capacities and potentials of the medium and her spirits. In fact, it is the aspect of protest against normative knowledge inherent in "but still" that generates pluralism, different forms of engagement and social experimentation.

When in 2010 I had the chance to live for half a year in Japan,[4] I met this attitude again in the context of a new cult that was centered on the mediation of luck and happiness through the medium of photography. This cult emerged in Tokyo at a time of economic crisis when numerous people had lost their jobs and – though before Fukushima – felt highly insecure. In 2009 in a TV-Show, a TV-star had declared the well in the garden of Kiyomasa of the Meiji Shrine in the heart of Tokyo a "power spot". He told the audience that he had been without a job for some time. After he had visited the sacred well and taken a picture with his camera phone and put it on the display screen he immediately got a lucrative employment. His story was repeated in other media and people began to visit the well and took pictures of it. As more people told a success story after having photographed the well, thousands of people came to visit and photograph the site.

In the following, I will deal with the interface of spiritual powers and the medium of photography. I am interested in the various ways, photography as apparatus, act and object is used to generate and mediate spiritual energies. I will show how, in particular, digital photography was made to harbor positive spiritual powers providing (hopefully) well-being, health, a job or a (good) husband. Although confronted with some ridicule and the reproach of being superstitious in the mass media, visitors of the cultic site practiced the "but still" and tested a variety of different ritual practices at the well to produce luck and to fulfill wishes. They opened up a social field that was characterized by pragmatism, some-times even skepticism and could be characterized as "try it and see it", as a visitor told me. It was an attitude that did not accept the exclusiveness of "either – or" but instead was willing to accommodate both sides of an opposition: "Not only but also" and "I know but still".

3 Behrend: Alice and the Holy Spirits, 12.

4 I would like to thank Osamu Hieda who was so kind and generous to invite me as a visiting professor at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.

The Pathos of Things and Technology

Mono no aware, literally "the pathos of things" is a Japanese concept that denotes the power of things, but also their frailty, transitoriness and finiteness. *Mono no aware* alludes to the attraction of a thing too and the emotional and aesthetic reaction of the beholder. It opens a mediated space that includes the object as well as the viewer. Things are thus not dead, "dead material", as Martin Luther characterized them but instead, following Kobayashi Issa (1763–1827) "the living things have the right to pain". They have agency and can afflict pain and wounds or become wounded themselves.

Mono no aware is thus a religious-aesthetic category of an animistic cosmology, grounded in Shintoism that continues to affect (post)modern Japanese people. In this cosmology, *kami*, deities as well as non-personal forces and powers, can take possession of humans, animals and things and empower them. *Kami,* as mediating powers, transcend the boundaries between men, animal and thing, boundaries that have been made so strong in the Christian West. In fact, the world view and the rites of Shinto reject all attempts to exclude by acknowledging a spiritual being in all things of the universe, including stones.[5]

The technologization of things into complex machinery and apparatus did not eliminate their "humanness". To the contrary, as the history of technologies in Japan shows, technologies, animism and animation merged in specific ways and lead not only to a strong anthropomorphization of technical devices but also to their "animation" in the sense of movement and spiritualization. The *tamagotchi* of the 1990s is only one example in the long history of production of robots that increasingly have learned to act and speak interactively.[6] It has to be seen as part of the long Japanese tradition of ascribing human as well as spiritual properties to the inanimate world.

The tendency to spiritualize things, animals and human beings has not decreased in modern and postmodern times. Instead, since the Meiji era new religious movements have reestablished the conviction of many people in Japan that spirits and spiritual forces exist and that they can be manipulated to satisfy human needs and fulfill personal wishes. They are seen to co-exist with science and the scientific-technological world and provide a link as well as answers to questions that deal with the causes of suffering, (mis)fortune and death.[7] This spiritual revival in Japan should however not be seen in isolation but as part of

5 Levi-Strauss: Die andere Seite des Mondes, 33.
6 Hornyak: Loving the Machine, 10.
7 Young: Magic and Morality in Modern Japanese Exorcistic Technologies.

a global "return of the religious" that is characterized by mediumship, techniques of trance and possession, exorcism, the invocation of spirits and otherworldly beings and their mediation in (new) technologies. Not only in new religious movements all over the world but also among the old monotheistic religions have these practices gained new value.[8]

Against this background I am interested in the media and their specific involvement in processes of persuasion and knowledge-making, the capabilities and limits of photography and other media, such as TV, and the forms of audiences and social relations accompanying them. How was credibility and authority produced and how were inferences made, proofs offered and established? What were the ritual procedures to produce the spiritual power of the photographic images and how was it tested? I will deal with the fundamental role of conventions, practical agreement and the labor of creation and positive evaluation of experimental knowledge in everyday life[9] but also with the other side, critical assessment and skepticism. And I will examine the role of institutions and mass media such as TV in empowering or disempowering rituals and convictions in the existence of spirits and spiritual forces. But before I give the details of the new cult at the Meiji shrine, I will give some insights into the history of photography and the history of spiritual powers in Japan.

The Introduction of Photography

There is no country in the world where photography is practiced with more intensity than Japan.[10] This observation is shared by Japanese as well as foreigners. In fact, the "Japanese" has emerged as a shorthand for a kind of photographic frenzy bent on turning the world into an endless series of photographs.[11]

In 1848, a Japanese trader brought the first daguerreotype camera to Nagasaki. At the same time, more cameras were brought from the Netherlands to Nagasaki, from America to Yokosuka and from Russia to Hakodate in Hokkaido. In the 1850s, the first Japanese were photographed by the official photographer of Commodore Perry, Eliphalet Brown and in 1856 Shimooka Renjo was instructed as the first Japanese photographer. He later in 1862 opened a studio in Yokohama.

8 Behrend and Zillinger: Introduction. Trance Mediums and New Media, 1ff.

9 cf. Shapin and Schaffer: Leviathan and the Air-Pump, 13.

10 In the following paragraphs I refer to Ono: PhotoHistory, 1646–1867.

11 cf. Spyer: The Cassowary will (not) be photographed. The "Primitive", the "Japanese", and the Elusive "Sacred", 305.

Western photographers like Felice Beato or Adolfo Farsari who came to Japan and opened studios created in their photographs of Japanese people and landscapes a new kind of exotic imaginary. Although photography became strongly connected to modernity, in their studios these photographers produced also pictures of Samurai and courtesans in "traditional" costumes that as postcards and, in particular, in albumens were distributed all over the world.[12]

It is significant that from the beginning, Japanese scholars and scientists not only adopted the technical apparatus but also tried to improve it. In the newly established Institute of Western Studies, the camera and the photographic process were systematically studied.[13] Educated in chemistry, the photographer Ueno Hikoma experimented with different papers and textiles as material support for the images as well as with different liquids to fix and wash images. Already in 1873, a lens factory was built; and in 1903, the first portable camera was made by Konishi Honten (Ono).

Though the elite of the Meiji era immediately adopted western technologies and attempted to understand their working and to improve them, there was a strong refusal of photography among ordinary people who took the camera as a blood sucking machine, an apparatus that could bewitch and even kill the person photographed. As in many other parts of the world, including Europe and Africa,[14] the medium of photography was associated with foreignness, inversion, theft, misfortune and death. Thus, from its beginning, photography was associated with magic, in this case harmful magic, the opposite of luck.

It took some time to transform the new medium from a wondrous, dangerous and deadly machine to a part of everyday life and a technical device that could be used to produce luck and well-being. Paradoxically, it was at times of war, despair and violent death – when too many young people died – that photography became increasingly accepted and "democratized". Already in the 1860s, *Samurai* would come to have a final photograph taken before they left for the battle field, prepared to die.[15] During the wars with China and Russia, *Samurai* and later also ordinary soldiers developed a desire to leave a photographic picture behind before going to the battle.[16] When young men were drafted as soldiers and gathered at the harbors to board the battle ships, they would visit the photo studios before they would be shipped off, the act of

12 Hockley: Expectation and Authenticity in Meiji Tourist Photography, 115.

13 Kiyoko: Innovational Adaptions. Contacts between Japanese and Western Artists in Yokohama, 100.

14 Behrend: Contesting Visibility, 17ff.

15 Naoyuki: The Early Years of Japanese Photography, 18,24.

16 Kohara: Between Life and Death, Public and Private, East and West, 237f.

photography thus marking their (sometimes final) parting and the beginning of a somewhat liminal period.

In 1872, the photographer Uchida Kuichi took a picture of the young Emperor and Empress Meiji. Since viewing the face of the Emperor (as well as hearing his voice) by his subjects was forbidden, the photograph was not shown in public. Only after 1889, his official portrait was circulated as part of nation building and became very popular.[17] While the medium of film – in spite of a growing and very successful film industry – never gained a high status in Japan because it was associated with popular theater and (low forms of) entertainment, photography – elevated to represent the emperor – succeeded in being accepted as respectable and later, in the 1920s, became part of the (high) arts.

Already in the 1870s, a new picture industry emerged based on photography. As Kinoshita Naoyuki has suggested, after 1873 prosperity came to photographers "who set up shops throughout the city to photograph portraits on the spot if someone so desired and to photographers who lined their shops with photographs of every possible thing for sale".[18] Photographs rather early were used not only for portraiture but also as part of advertisement for a diversity of commodities. In addition, photographs were sold as mass produced pictures of famous *kabuki* actors, *geishas*, politicians as well as landscapes and monuments thus connecting to the already existing tradition of multi-colored woodblock prints called ukiyo-e.[19]

It is only after WW II (according to Mr. Kawana from JPC) that photographs were put on walls. Before photographs like other precious objects and like jewelry were wrapped and kept in boxes out of wood or in drawers. When moderate price cameras – such like the Ricoh Reflex – could be bought also by ordinary people, photographs were more exposed to visitors and hanged on the wall. In addition, they were also inserted into the family altars representing ancestors and substituting *iei*, painted portraits of dead relatives.

Since this time, in Japan, to photograph and to be photographed has become deeply inserted into everyday life. In fact, in the 1970s there emerged a special category of people called *otaku* and/or *mania* who were said to be obsessed with cameras (and railroads).[20] Cameras became part of their bodies, extensions of their eyes, and with the introduction of the camera phone also of their voice. Decorated camera phones were carried around like jewelry by women. As Mr. Kawana from the Japan Photo Culture Association suggested

17 Hockley: Expectation and Authenticity in Meiji Tourist Photography, 114.
18 Naoyuki: The Early Years of Japanese Photography, 23.
19 Naoyuki: The Early Years of Japanese Photography, 24.
20 Murakami: Little Boy. The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture, 170.

"Japanese people are natural born photography lovers"; thus, in his view photography has become part of Japanese nature.

Besides of having produced the best cameras of the world that have found a global market, photography has not only created various institutions, museums, galleries, associations, clubs etc, but has created a diversification in connection with other media. There are numerous magazines about photography, photographic competitions and shops with gadgets and utensils.

Since the 1960, with the emergence of a new form of mediated mass society through the medium of TV, photography entered an alliance with this new medium. A number of photographers began to appear regularly on TV, achieving popular status in response to a demand for photography as easily understood entertainment.[21] In addition, there existed and still exist TV-Shows in which contacting or "channeling" ancestor spirits through photographs is provided. Up to today in TV shows, people bring photographs to priests to discern if the images harbor good or bad spiritual powers. The pictures are publicly examined by a priest and if found dangerous or harmful, he takes care of them and burns them. Like tools that have been used for a long time and in a way have become extensions of the body of the user, so also photographic portraits have gained a special ambivalent status that makes it impossible for many people to just throw them away. Photographs – as well as dolls, tools, needles and charms – are burned by the priest in the same way also human corpses are burned in funeral rites. Here again, in their destruction, the equivalence of certain things with humans is brought to the fore.

It is important to stress the rather close relationship between TV and photography, a development that did not take place in Europe in the same way. As mentioned before, also the new cult that emerged at the Meiji shrine found its beginning in a TV-show in which a TV star declared the well a power spot. The repetition in TV and other media as well as the mediation of first success stories of more people who had followed the advice and also taken a picture at the Meiji Shrine created credibility and persuaded even more people to try their luck at the well of the Meiji shrine.

As scholars such as Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, for example, have suggested, photography has special affinities with magic and in certain situations may dissolve the boundary between magic and technology. Far from a Foucauldian understanding of the camera as merely a technology of surveillance and domination, photography also "does magic". In fact, also in Japan, photography as a modern technical medium has created its own magic and

21 Kotaro: The Evolution of Postwar Photography, 220.

produced new fusions between modernity, technologies and magic.[22] While at the beginning the camera was associated by many people as an instrument that would bring misfortune and death, it nowadays, as I will show in more detail, is related more to attempts to capture luck.

Shinto and the Production of Luck

As Gerald Figal[23] has demonstrated, under the Meiji regime – when Japan was forced to open up to the West and photography was introduced and spread – also the spirit world was reorganized and various (evil) spirits were relegated to the realm of folklore and superstition. Local ways of mapping the world and living in it were scientifically nominated as "superstition".[24] But spirits were not eliminated; instead, it was the Meiji state that took over their control and through a hierarchy of shrines offered cures for disturbances, misfortune and disease. Through the institution of nationalized education and medicine the world of local spirits was redefined towards a homogenized belief in a unique nation state in which the notions of civilization and enlightenment were instrumental.[25] As early as 1873 orders were issued through the Ministry of Religion that proscribed against shamans, faith healers, exorcists, fortune-tellers etc. who were said "to blind people with their practices". The following year, the Ministry ordered the control of those who practiced with talismanic prayers and declared the use of such talismanic prayers a crime. In 1908, a revised code further enumerated followers of "superstitions" that now included persons who spread gossip and false rumors and those who without authority tell fortunes or otherwise mislead people by conferring on them things resembling talismans or impede medical care by giving amulets and holy water.[26]

The complement to these sanctions against unauthorized "superstitions" was an enhanced bureaucratization of spirits under the aegis of the authorized superstition of the divinity of the Emperor who descended in an unbroken imperial line from the kami Amaterasu enshrined at Ise. The Meiji government's spiritual management policy was thus a massive program to streamline the

22 Behrend: Photo-Magic: Photographs in Practices of Healing and Harming in East Africa, 130ff.

23 Figal, Gerald: Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan, Durham (Duke UP) 2007 (1999).

24 Ibid.: 4.

25 Figal, Gerald: Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji Japan, 199.

26 Figal: Figal, Gerald: Civilization and Monsters. Spirits of Modernity in Meiji, 199f.

hodgepodge of people's shrines throughout the country and integrate them into a hierarchical system with the Grand Shrine of Ise hovering about all the other shrines in a category of its own. Yet, the bureaucratization of spirits and sanctions against unauthorized "superstitions" were not enforced without contestation and protest.[27] Up to today the struggle over spirits, spiritual forces, bureaucratic reason and alternative visions of communities is going on.

The Meiji theocratic government with its politics of shrines attempted also to regulate the access to luck and fortune. While the charms and amulets that Shinto priests sold were authorized to bring good luck and help in various situations of distress, other potential providers were criminalized. Especially, practices of harming another person through witchcraft or sorcery were strictly forbidden. It was only the ritual pursuit of luck and happiness that was officially allowed at the shrines. All shrines, Shinto as well as Buddhist, I visited during my stay provided highly diversified and often commercialized opportunities to generate luck and well-being for one-self and for others. They supplied no direct possibilities to find out the reasons for misfortune and to identify an enemy.

With the end of the Meiji era, and especially after WW II, the control of Shinto priests weakened and with the emergence of new religious movements a new and more open economy of wishes and their potential fulfillment has evolved at the interface of religion, entertainment and business.

A Photo Cult at the Meiji Shrine in Tokyo

The Meiji shrine is the largest Shinto shrine in Tokyo. It was built after the death of Emperor Meiji and his wife in 1912 respectively 1914, was destroyed during the air raids of WW II, rebuilt and completed in 1958. It is a religious-political shrine that up to today is visited by important states men also from foreign countries. In 2010 the well of this important shrine suddenly became a popular center of attraction for thousands of visitors who wanted to experience "positive energy" to improve their lives.

When we visited Kiyomasa-ido, the well at the Meiji shrine garden, the 17th of April 2010, it had snowed the night before and because of the coldness only few people visited the well. While before, people had to wait for five hours to get to the site, we could advance directly through the garden to the well. About hundred meters before the well, a guard in uniform waited for the visitors to

27 Ibid.: 203ff.

come and directly at the well; another one stood to organize and control them. He told us that it was not allowed to drink the water or to take it away.

It seems that the priests of the Meiji shrine were taken by surprise when suddenly thousands of people rushed to the site. Immediately they started to organize the crowds, put up guards, gave out time cards and allowed visitors only to stay at the well for a short time, thereby reducing the waiting time to one hour. But they kept quiet about what happened at the well and no one gave an official comment on the events. They neither claimed that the well harbored special powers nor did they deny it. This silence, I would suggest, is symptomatic for an attitude that does not want to take a decision between the alternatives of accepting the well as a site of special powers and its denial. As the priests made a lot of money because every visitor had to pay an entrance fee (500 yen), they silently organized the access to the well but did not enter the debate about the efficiency of spiritual powers and their mediation through the camera.

When we asked visitors why they were here some said that they were "trend followers", others were "power spot visitors"; one young man said he had visited many power spots all over the world. A young woman told us that she felt her powers weakening and so she came here to recharge them. Two construction workers had visited the site because they were working very near the well and their colleagues had advised them to go and visit the site.

Most people were looking for good luck, wishing good health, a job, a husband or wife, success in business or examination at school or university; others just wanted to get power, to "energize" themselves. Among the visitors there were singles, couples and small groups of friends or families who would together advance to the well. They would take a picture of the well and also pictures of each other at the well. This brings to the fore the relational aspect of photography, people visualizing social relations through photographs.

Most visitors, young and old, women and men, to whom we talked, came from Tokyo, a few from Osaka, Kyoto and other places. A few people were serious about the whole event and would not laugh or make jokes; most said, with a smile, that they did not know if it was true but they wanted to try and find out. I had the impression that the prevailing attitude of the people present at the shrine equaled the attitude I have described at the beginning of this text, an attitude that attempts to reconcile magic, technology and modern life. "I know that a photograph of the well may not bring luck or fulfill my wish, but nevertheless I try . . . " In fact, what we observed at the site was a variety of "experiments", people inventing all sorts of different ways to produce luck. Against common knowledge, the "but still" was highly productive enticing people to generate and test different procedures.

All visitors took some pictures of the well and its water; some even brought two cameras and took pictures with both. While various visitors attempted to take photographs of the well from different angles, others just took one picture. To ensure the production of luck, some men and women took great pains to take "good" pictures. The guard told us, that, for example, an old lady who had already taken a picture, cued a second time explaining that she had to take a picture again because the photo had not come out well. In addition, some visitors came to the well three times or even more because their wishes had been fulfilled, others to "intensify" their opportunities. And the guard told us that he was very happy to have the chance to be at this spot for such a long time. Thus, the amount of time that visitors (or the guard) spend at the well, was associated with better chances to become happy.

Contrary to the logic of digital photography, to generate luck, people had to visit the site in person and photograph it themselves. It was not possible to send a photograph of the well to another person who was not able to go to the well. As (digital) photography is per se a medium of technical reproduction and circulation, this capacity would not work in the process of procuring luck. Thus, in spite of the technical possibilities of modern digital media, it was the corporeal presence and the individual act of photographing that would generate luck. Like the classical magic of contagion of James Frazer, also here a somewhat material trace had to connect the visitor with the site.

Furthermore, a few visitors claimed that they actually could see the powers emanating from the well; and Kiyomi, my interpreter, suggested that even on one of the pictures I had taken some sort of vapor or cloud could be seen. Also on some photographs positioned on the website of Kiyomasa-ido in the internet by various people, a range of mist or vapor emanating from the well can be perceived. For Kiyomi and others, the camera made visible what most people could not see. Here the camera became a tool to penetrate and reveal the invisible aspects of the spiritual world. In fact, a synthesis of technology and the spiritual was forged that endowed photography with a spiritual dimension and – by making the powers visible – supplied the site and the photographs with some sort of visual evidence. In this way photographs became visual proofs of the presence of special powers. Photography's double identity as an instrument of scientific inquiry and an uncanny, almost magical process able to make visible what before had not been seen were brought together and to a certain degree reconciled the two opposite sides of "I know but still".

To generate luck, the photographs taken from the well had to be put on the screen of one's cell phone. Though virtual, not printed out, the picture on the screen gave an appearance of participation. In addition, as a container of spiritual power it turned the camera into a talismanic device, carried around as an

extension of the body, attempting to contact or lay claims to the world of spiritual powers. As various scholars have observed, to photograph something is a sort of appropriation. The camera is not only an instrument of knowledge and visualization or an experience captured but also an instrument of possession.[28]

Yet, photography was not the only medium to generate luck. The water of the well, though not allowed to drink or take away, was the main object of ritual attention. All visitors dipped their hands in the water; others washed their face and hands and one lady even dropped some water on her hair. A few dipped their bracelets with power stones into the water whereas many soaked the memorial paper that was given to each visitor together with the ticket. The memorial paper depicted two chrysanthemums, the symbol of the emperor, in addition to a poem; and it gave information about the seasons when certain flowers such as iris are flowering. When we asked a woman what she would do with the wet paper she said that she would dry it and keep it as some sort of storage of the powers of the water. Thus, while visitors directly got in touch with the water, a medium of transcendence, cleansing, healing and empowering, memorial papers and photographs offered an inscription that stayed immutable though they were displaced.[29] Whereas the water and its powers as such were not allowed to be stored, soaked in the memorial paper and mediated in the photographs, they could be contained, accumulated, stored and taken home.

The moment when taking a picture of the well or when dipping their hands into the water, people would formulate their wish. Some would do this in silence; others spoke out their wish like a prayer. They thus attempted to synchronize wish and ritual action, both mutually enhancing each other.

In conversations, some visitors stressed that wishing, dipping and photographing as part of the production of luck was not enough. People also had to work hard to make the wish come true. In their view, personal effort and ritual actions had to be brought together to produce luck.

Thus we have here an attempt to reconcile individual endeavor, work and technology with some (impossible) wishes. Visitors of the well did not just "believe" in magic and in power spots, but instead produced highly reflective practices that had the status of tests. "I know . . . but still" offered a starting point for experimental engagement; especially the "but still" seems to have enticed people to act, search and test a variety of possibilities and potentials in the mediation of beings and things. As Levi-Strauss suggested, though Japan has embraced science and technology, after the excesses of the Meiji-Regime, it has increasingly

28 Sontag: On Photography, 3f; Berger: Ways of Seeing, 83ff.
29 Latour: Visualisation and Cognition, 8.

attempted to free itself from dualisms to reach a state in which the opposition between, for example, spirit and materiality makes no sense anymore.[30]

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J. Brent Crosson

Burdens of Proof. Obeah, Petroleum Geology, and its Mediums in Trinidad

The Trials of Obeah

The theme of this edited volume hinges on a particularly polysemous word – "trial" – that encapsulates divergent regimes of evidence in the project known as "the West."[1] As painful or taxing experiences (i.e. "trials and tribulations"), the word "trial" recalls the legal technique of the "ordeal" in medieval Western Europe, in which the infliction of bodily pain produced divine signs of a subject's innocence or guilt. A trial, however, is also an experiment or test run, signaling a shift towards the experiment as the ascendant juridical and philosophical method in the early modern period. In this same era, the preternatural phenomenon of witchcraft was submitted to repeated randomized trials in courtrooms during the zenith of Western European witchcraft prosecutions, and these trials pioneered a more general turn towards experimental methods of evidence during and after the so-called "Scientific Revolution."[2] Finally, a trial obviously signals one of the dominant juridical formats of proof in Liberal democracies – the criminal trial as a proceeding of argumentation and evidence decided "beyond the shadow of doubt" by judge and/or jury. These divergent meanings of the word "trial" outline the epistemological shifts of Western modernity, moving from divine signs and embodied pain toward the experimental method and the burden of empirical proof.

In Europe's first colonial theater, the Caribbean, the subaltern spiritual workers and mediums of this region were subjected to trials that clearly merged the infliction of pain with the burden of proof, revealing the entanglement of evidence, embodied pain, and colonial power. Death, flogging, hard labor, deportation, and

1 On the West as a project rather than a place, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, North Atlantic Fictions.

2 Darr: Experiments in the Courtroom, 152–175.

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imprisonment were all punishments for "obeah" – eventually defined as "any assumption of supernatural power" – over the shifting terms of its criminalization in the British Caribbean from 1760 until the present. In the first obeah trials, the leaders of the eighteenth century British Caribbean's largest slave rebellion were publicly tortured, experimented upon with the latest scientific fascinations, and juridically condemned. This colonial blurring of the lines between disparate kinds of trials questions the Liberal democratic (and scientistic) notion that a trial is a process of displaying evidence and producing a burden of proof for rational observers. Rather, the trials of obeah in the Caribbean were demonstrations of power and sovereignty – whether the power of European rationality, science, or colonial government – as well as denigrations of the subaltern mediums of powers that were often deemed illegal and atavistic.

With this background of the colonial "trials" of mediality in mind, this article performs a strange comparison to question the very applicability of the "burden of proof" to both subaltern mediums and scientists. I look at the problem of proof not only in the field of subaltern spiritual work, but also in the practice of petroleum geology and the history and philosophy of science. By tacking back and forth between "science" and "obeah" in the Caribbean, I hope to problematize the burden of proof that the trials of mediality have often sought to produce – from the experiments with witchcraft in early modern courtrooms to the Victorian trials of psychical research. Might there be other ways of understanding what is at stake in mediumship than the burden of proof? The setting of this admittedly preliminary comparison is Trinidad, the southernmost island in the Caribbean.

The Trials of Obeah, Science, and Fossil Fuels

Just a few miles from the coast of Venezuela, the southern part of Trinidad arguably possesses the world's oldest oil industry.[3] Petroleum seeps from the earth there, forming lakes of asphalt and tar in places. The ocean that meets the shore of the town where I have done research for the past nine years is brown, colored by the dead things that the Orinoco River washes down. From the hillside farm of the family I stay with, one can see the low-lying outline of the mangroves of the Orinoco's delta. The first time I climbed the hillside to help pick tomatoes it was

3 While the 1859 Drake Oil Well in Pennsylvania, amongst other early wells, is often recognized as the world's first modern oil well, the American Merrimac Oil Company had drilled an oil well two years earlier in the vicinity of Trinidad's pitch lake.

all brown mud, so slick we had to take off our shoes to get a grip. The earth there is the accumulation of the dead things the Orinoco has washed down, layer upon layer of silt compacted into stratified sandstone. Deeper down, as the pressure increases, the Orinoco's dead things made oil, just as they did in Venezuela. Trinidad's economy remains heavily dependent on the extraction of these subterranean hydrocarbons, but with less than two decades of known reserves remaining, economic futures depend on the seismic exploration and development of unseeable reservoirs of energy beneath the earth's crust (as well as on the foreign capital that will make these ventures possible).[4] These surveys use buried dynamite and underwater cannons to generate shockwaves powerful enough to penetrate the earth and echo back to geologists and geophysicists.

Like the earth scientists involved in seismic surveys, the African diasporic spiritual workers I have done research with over the past fourteen years in southern Trinidad also use the medium of sound to seek knowledge about what lies below the earth. They elaborate a realm of spiritual and natural powers known in Afro-Trinidadian religious practices as "the Depths." Instead of looking towards the heavens, these spiritual workers often "sound the Depths" with sung melodies that are the "routes" used to navigate subterranean worlds. I worked with healers who avowed varying allegiances to what is often known as the "threefold path," which combines complimentary devotion to the three principal strands of African diasporic religious practice in Trinidad: Spiritual Baptism, Kabbalah, and Orisha. The body of the earth for these healers was inhabited by Powers that included an exiled previous creation of beings, the dead, or the Biblical figure of Ezekiel who made dry bones live. In Orisha practice, the body of the earth was Mama Lata, a peculiarly Trinidadian Orisha whose name in French patois literally means "mother earth." Oil was the carnal blood of this living earth-body, a vital substance whose depletion carried consequences.

Despite their very different positioning in terms of class and educational hierarchies, both spiritual workers and petroleum geologists often referred to their sensing of subterranean realms as science. Unlike the practices of geologists, however, the work of Afro-Caribbean healers was rendered as the superstition that science was supposed to dispel in colonial discourse. These healing and problem-solving practices were referred to as "obeah" and rendered illegal under colonial laws that began in the eighteenth century in the Anglophone Caribbean. To this day, only Trinidad and Tobago (in 2000), Anguilla (in 1980),

4 Using the 3P (proven, probable, and possible) reserves of oil and condensate reported in a U.S. firm's audit, Trinidad and Tobago Minister of Energy Kevin Ramnarine stated in 2015 that there were about 17 years of oil and condensate remaining at current production levels.

St. Lucia (in 2004), and Barbados (in 1998) have repealed their anti-obeah statutes. Despite these heavy stigmas of atavistic superstition that hang over contemporary spiritual workers, they have referred to their practices as science since at least the late nineteenth century. Anthropologists interpreted this talk of science as a legitimating (if superficial) European front for African traditions.[5] They thus concluded that spiritual workers had nothing substantive to say about "science," which they assumed was another European mask for Afro-Caribbean religious practices, like the Catholic saints that supposedly masked African deities. But I found something different during fieldwork in southern Trinidad. Science was not simply a legitimating mask, and the ideas and theories of experimental practice that spiritual workers offered transformed my own often unexamined preconceptions about what science was.

Science is not a unitary object, and I propose in this piece neither a project of inclusion nor one of relativism. Inclusive paradigms, such as those proposed by philosopher of science Sandra Harding, argue that the category of science should include any and every culture's practices of dealing with the "natural world" (though a Western category of "nature" remains the unexamined foundation for the terms of inclusion).[6] Projects of relativism, on the other hand, are often voiced in terms of non-Western "ethnosciences" that exist in a relation of cultural relativity to "modern science" while remaining external to the practice of this ethnically unmarked science. In programs of relativism, as Helen Verran noted, oppositions between Europe and Africa, or science and traditional knowledge, remain the bases for apparently innocuous projects of recognition.[7]

Rather than relativism or inclusion, I look for "partial connections"[8] amongst spiritual workers and geologists who talk about science, and this piece begins to enact a symmetrical analysis of geologists' and healers' science by comparing the work of two specialists – Simon Bideau and Marianne Granger (known hereafter as Mother Marianne) – who sound the depths in Trinidad. Through this comparison, I hope to contribute, in some preliminary way, to discussions about evidence and the limits of science, in particular the relationship between evidence and proof. I will argue that, in contemporary worlds, scientific evidence is often conflated with proof, producing a science that is closer to the aims of modern theology than experimental practice. Popular discourses of science thus produce an implicit impasse for those scientists who, as Nietzsche noted, "*still have faith in truth*" but remain committed to an empirical project in which certainty is

5 Herskovits: Trinidad Village.
6 Harding: Objectivity and Diversity; Sciences From Below.
7 Verran: Science and an African Logic.
8 Strathern: Partial Connections.

always underdetermined.[9] Spiritual workers, however, often claim a science that has given up on proof. Following the words of Mother Marianne, I begin to explore how an ontological commitment to the fundamental limits of knowing can form the basis of an experimental ethos that differs from the regime of truth that the juridical trial, with its burden of proof, offers.

Geology, Spiritual Work, and Proof

In early 2011, a heavy-set man known as Tatu showed up at the house of the family I lived with in Rio Moro in a brand-new pick-up truck wearing the orange jump suit of the Canadian management firm that was running the seismic operation in Rio Moro. Tatu was known as a "bad man," meaning that he was both respected and feared for his potential to use violence to enforce his interests, and he informed the father of the family – known as Papoy – formal hat the company would need to use some of the hillside farmland he squatted on for the survey.

A few months later, a white truck that looked like an oversized ambulance parked at the foot of Papoy's farm where the rugged paved road stopped. Orange tentacles were attached to the body of the vehicle, connecting the air-conditioned interior of the truck with the hard-to-access forests of the Southern Range. The most time-consuming and laborious part of the work was the cutting of tracks through dense forests and the manual lugging of heavy cables for miles along GPS lines, with the local laborers carefully skirting the marijuana fields armed with pipe-gun traps. With very little other employment in the area, many of the seismic workers were engaged in this type of farming, and it was their knowledge of the ganja fields that made the survey possible. This knowledge of terrain was both absolutely essential and totally incommensurable with the language of scientific reports and the grid of GPS lines that the seismic cables ostensibly followed. After workers bushwhacked the trails for these cables, holes were drilled deep in the forest and dynamite was placed in them, with orange tentacles running all the way from the holes back to the white truck that had just arrived after months of all of this hard labor. A group of people known as "scientists" sat inside the air-conditioned truck for a few days. Though it was hard to see them, surrounded as they were by armed guards, Papoy and the spiritual workers I knew speculated on what these scientists did. They

9 Nietzsche: On the Genealogy of Morals, qtd. Rubenstein: Worlds Without End, 230. On the underdetermination of scientific arguments and the problems with ideas of empirical proof see note 13.

compared the work of these geophysicists and geologists with their own complex notions of science as the morally ambivalent investigation and use of esoteric, subterranean forces. To understand how the earth scientists conceived of their own practices of subterranean sensing, however, I had to travel to the capital and to the national university. The armed guards, tense labor relations, and class differences that surrounded the seismic survey meant that this comparison has been an experimental diffraction rather than a face-to-face dialogue between Marianne Granger and Simon Bideau about the limits of science. On diffraction as both a physical phenomenon and a methodology for critical theory, see Barad: Meeting the Universe Halfway.

Simon Bideau is a foreign-trained geologist, former head of the national oil company, and current head of the Petroleum Studies Unit at the national university. Like the healer Mother Marianne, he has lived almost his whole life in Trinidad and identifies primarily as someone of African descent. Like most of the petroleum geologists in Trinidad he is a man. Marianne, on the other hand, is one of the most respected elders in the African-inspired religious practice of Orisha in Trinidad, a noted medium for a deity known as Mama Lata, and a talented spiritual worker. Both Marianne and Bideau often talked to me about science, though they spoke about it differently.

While Bideau had all of the credentials that we might associate with recognized scientists, he remained unsure of whether he was practicing science much of the time. The first time I asked him if he considered petroleum geology to be a "hard science," he answered in the affirmative, but as we got to know each other better he revealed to me that he thought of himself "more as an artist than a scientist." Science, for him, stopped with the geophysicists who recorded the sound waves bouncing off subterranean surfaces. This recording was science, he told me, but after that what he called story-telling or art began. In explorations of new fields, he reminded me, petroleum geologists are wrong in their predictions about seventy-five percent of the time. This, however, was not what oil companies wanted to hear. One other petroleum geologist I interviewed, however, insisted that the large multinational company he worked for came to appreciate his honesty about the indeterminacy of seismic surveys. He distinguished himself from other geologists, who he regarded as "unscientific" precisely because they remained committed to shouldering the burden of proof. As Simon knew, they wanted science – meaning visual maps, convincing evidence, and ostensible facts – and this was where his work as story-teller began. Certainly this seemed to bother him; he wanted to be a scientist – this was definitely how many others typically saw him – but he was not sure if he was one much of the time. He had to convert overwhelming uncertainty into science, which for him and others meant

clear and compelling evidence for a certain interpretation. Yet, really there was often no definitively compelling seismic evidence that forced him to choose one of the hundreds of possible interpretations over others. Simon told me that over the years he had developed a repertoire of embodied sensations – "gut feelings" he called them – that told him which interpretation he would follow and present to others. After months of computer processing, in which a variety of different filters and complex techniques of computation aimed to separate signal from noise, he was left with this sensation of conviction in his abdomen that told him which way to go.

Mother Marianne, on the other hand, did not have a science degree from a foreign university but sometimes seemed more comfortable talking about what she did as science. She earned her living performing spiritual work for a wide variety of clients who came to consult her for readings on Thursdays. These works could range from intervention in the criminal justice system in cases of police brutality to the healing of ailments that she usually interpreted as at once psychological, somatic, and social. On spiritual work, policing, and the criminal justice system, see Crosson: Experiments with Power. While others called what she did obeah, she more often called it science, and while I expected her to call the material practices she performed *rituals*, she called them "experiments." This choice of words was not accidental. Ritual, in the anthropological and religious studies literature, has often connoted the repetition of prescribed action in the maintenance of convention or the affirmation of certainty and order.[10] As a fundamental feature of definitions of religion, the notion of ritual as a performance of subjunctive proof has often established the conceptual limits of how scholars interpret the actions of religious practitioners. Marianne's techniques, however, were *experimental*; they followed a pragmatic ethos that remained open to improvisation. Like Bideau, she dealt with complex cases in which embodied sensations gave her convictions about what course to take. A complex nexus of forces converged in an ailment or a court case, and Marianne relied on the Powers that lived in the earth to guide her. The primary Power that she lived with in her home, and which inhabited her body during consultations, was Mama Lata, a Trinidadian Orisha that represented the body of the earth. Embodied sensations were the evidence of Mama Lata's Power,

10 For two widely influential examples of this definition of ritual in religious studies and anthropology, see Rappaport: Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity or Smith: The Bare Facts of Ritual. For a more recent and resonant definition of ritual as a performance of subjunctive order enacted against a "fractured" or contingent world, see Seligman, Weller, Puett, and Simon: Ritual and its Consequences. For an example of an alternative account of "ritualization," that critiques the tendency to conflate ritual with the reproduction of order, see Bell: Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice.

but these sensations were somewhat different than Bideau's gut feelings. For Marianne, her body was not one body, and the sensations were not necessarily hers. They represented the presence of an other-than-human force that was *not* totally comprehensible to Marianne. This was a very intimate alterity, in which other-than-human powers inhabited and exceeded human corporeal, ontological, and epistemic frames. This ontological limit to knowing for Marianne separated her science from what she called "laboratory science." When she was younger she had wanted to understand how the Power worked, to come up with some kinds of regular laws that governed the Power's actions. As Marianne sometimes reminded me, however, she had, in her science, "give[n] up on proof."

Giving up on Proof

This piece begins to dwell on the differences that Marianne and Bideau drew between their own practices and a science associated with the act of proving. Bideau associated science with a good amount of certainty and objectivity that, to his chagrin, he could not measure up to in practice. He felt that there was a gap between his art of gut feelings and the scientific certainty that he was supposed to represent to oil companies. Despite this situation, and his embrace of a vocation as story-teller, he had not given up on proof. He imagined that as seismic and remote-sensing technologies advanced, petroleum geology would become a "hard science" and knowledge would become more and more certain.

Marianne, however, imagined her science as a practice in which, to borrow a phrase from philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers, it was a matter of "curing not proving."[11] For Stengers, this signals a pragmatic ethos, in which the primary aim is the resolution of intransigent problems rather than falsification or corroboration of claims. It was not even possible to fully "know how the Power works," Marianne felt, though it was possible to listen for the evidence of powers that composed and exceeded her fabric of experience.

This brings me to the crux of this piece – the relationship between evidence and proof. Certainly, the two are often conflated in popular notions of science. Bideau imagined a horizon in which evidence and proof could begin to marry, and this horizon was the science he could not quite reach. This notion of evidence speaks to its etymological rooting in notions of self-evidence – that which can be seen by all. It also speaks to the long-standing entanglement between inductive

11 Stengers: The Doctor and the Charlatan, 11–36.

methods in the sciences and evidentiary procedures in state law (a theme that I feel requires much further explication than I can offer here). Indeed, Boyle and other seventeenth century members of the Royal Society explicitly authenticated the experimental method by comparing it to a legal trial.[12] The laboratory was a kind of courtroom in which authoritative evidence could be marshaled and witnessed. Whether they knew it or not, they drew upon the pioneering of experimental methods in courtrooms during the apogee of witchcraft trials in early modern Europe. As Orna Darr has recently argued, the century preceding the founding of the Royal Society saw a profound shift from medieval practices of proof via the ordeal to the use of what were called "experiments" in witchcraft trials.[13] Utilizing control groups, repeated trials, and randomization, these experiments aimed to produce convincing evidence of an invisible crime – the act of witchcraft. This was the very act whose criminalization helped to form the basis for subsequent anti-obeah laws in the Caribbean, generating a paradoxical need for the legal evidence of an act of "superstition" whose powers were supposed to be empirically non-existent and false.

As this genealogy of experimental evidence shows, evidence was not simply what was self-evident, but represented the marshaling of support in cases of protracted uncertainty. The act of witchcraft or the vacuum of Boyle were, in many ways, invisible and doubted by many in early modern Europe.[14] Experimental/juridical evidence is what arose in these situations of uncertainty, calling attention to the profound duplicity of evidence as that which offers irrefutable proof and that which is called upon in a moment of danger, a contested situation at the limits of epistemology.

Evidence implies both contested situations of doubt and appeals to the certainty of proof. But is it possible, as Marianne suggests, to give up on proof while listening for evidence? One of the most prominent twentieth century philosophers of science, Imre Lakatos, saw the incessant association of science with proof as a profoundly *theological* and (to him at least) stale project.[15] In some way, many of the best-known twentieth century philosophers of science from Popper onwards were working against the common sense notion that science is simply about accumulating evidence that offers proof.[16] In Bideau's

12 See Latour: We Have Never Been Modern; Shapin and Schaffer: Leviathan and the Air-Pump.

13 Darr: Experiments in the Courtroom, 152–175.

14 See Darr: Experiments in the Courtroom; Shapin and Schaffer: Leviathan and the Air Pump.

15 Lakatos: Philosophical Papers 1, 2–3.

16 See, for example, Feyerabend: Against Method; Kuhn: The Structure of Scientific Revolutions; Popper: Conjectures and Refutations.

account, science would eventually enact a theological feat of ultimate causation, but Marianne's science (the one that others would probably label religious ritual, magic, or superstition) remained agnostic as to proof. It seems to me that one might accurately call Marianne's practices experimental, while Bideau's work aspires to enact an evidentiary *ritual* of proving.

The space of the laboratory, like the space of ritual, arose as a subjunctive realm in which the variables and vagaries of everyday experience could be controlled. While the lab language of Jonathan Z. Smith's well-known definition of ritual remains unacknowledged, it is clearly present: "*ritual represents the creation of a controlled environment* where the variables (i.e., the accidents) of ordinary life have been displaced *precisely* because they are felt to be so overwhelmingly present and powerful."[17] As Smith's definition suggests, Marianne's specific choice of *laboratory* science and religious ritual as the kinds of activities that diverge from her own scientific practices is not accidental. The laboratory and the ritual have been conceived as spaces of proof that seek to control variables, even as these aspirations to control might conceal networked contingencies. Is it a coincidence that these two preeminent (and *supposedly* opposed) categories of modern activity – science and religion – are both bound to rituals of proving?

With what some scholars have called "the evidentiary turn" in late liberal worlds, rituals of proof have become increasingly important across a range of divergent practices. The increasingly *legal* articulation of the rights claims of social movements, the "audit culture" of aid and development projects, the cognitive turn in a variety of disciplines, or the "evidence-based" evaluation of medical and educational methods demand authoritative evidence that is often mediated by processes of standardization and claims to scientific truth.[18] In this context, it remains profoundly important to talk about rituals of evidentiary proof, but the aim of this piece has been to explore, in a very preliminary way, what Marianne's science of giving up on proof might look like. How might it speak back to some popular and pervasive duplicities held within the words "science" and "evidence"? How might evidence imply an experimental process of listening in situations of uncertainty rather than simply a ritual enactment of proof?

Marianne first told me that she had given up on proof after a long, five-hour conversation that ended with me attempting to explain my own project in relation to her science. I explained that I wanted to counteract the long-standing and

17 Smith 1980: 124–125, italics in original.

18 See, for example, Lambert: Evidentiary Truths; Power: The Audit Society; Strathern: Audit Cultures.

pernicious stigmas of criminality and irrationality that attached themselves to her work by insisting that what most people called obeah actually formed a part of the category of science. Yet, as I detail below, rather than a project of inclusion, she insisted on a difference between her science and a "laboratory science" of proving. More than that, she was not sure if she wanted to sign up for a project of rationalization. Rationality suggested an instrumental logic, in which non-humans acted in determinate ways. Yet, she did not even totally understand how the Powers she lived with worked. Sometimes she cussed their unpredictable demands; sometimes she was overwhelmed by their proximity.[19] How might such a project of living with non-human forces alter the ethics of Bideau's geology, which artfully tells the story of science's proof in the abeyance of irrefutable evidence? Rather than a project of inclusion, on the one hand, or relativism, on the other, perhaps we can begin to talk about partially connected sciences, where traversing these partial connections transforms what we can talk about as science and the ethics of evidence.

The Burden of Proof

What did Marianne Granger mean when she said that she had given up on proof, and what was the difference between her and Bideau's relationships to the "proof" that science is often called upon to give in contemporary societies? As the Enlightenment increasingly relegated the supernatural to a question of "belief," Lakatos felt that Christian theological preoccupations with supernatural truth were displaced onto a concept of Nature as a knowable and ordered object. Contemporary critics of the alleged hegemony of belief in modern concepts of religion, on the other hand, insist that ritual practice provides another way of conceiving of religion that rejects the immateriality of belief in favor of repetitive embodied practices that model exemplary order.[20] By giving up on proof, could Marianne only turn from theological or natural facts towards belief or ritual?

It was significant, however, that Marianne used neither word to describe what she meant by giving up on proof. "We doesn't deal in belief" Marianne told me, because "belief is doubt." Though belief might seem to convey a sense

19 I am indebted to Julienne Obadia's title for our 2020 special issue of Anthropological Quarterly for the felicitous phrase "overwhelmed by proximity." See Crosson: Don't Study People or Obadia: Introduction.

20 See Asad: Genealogies of Religion; Seligman et al: Ritual and its Consequences.

of conviction, it remained within a dialectic of epistemological doubt/certainty. While she explicitly rejected belief, she never used its apparent foil – ritual – in our conversations. That Marianne spoke about her material practices of healing as experiments rather than rituals was no accident. As a fundamental feature in definitions of the North Atlantic universal known as religion, the notion of ritual as a repetitive performance of order has (alongside a complementary notion of belief) often established the conceptual limits of how scholars interpret the actions of religious practitioners.[21] Marianne's techniques, however, were *experimental*; they followed a pragmatic ethos that remained open to improvisation. Granger addressed context-specific problems rather than aiming for an ideal of repetition or a systematic proof of her worldview, which her multiracial and multi-religious body of clients did not necessarily share.

While I never spiritual worker Marianne describe her work as "ritual," I was surprised to hear the geologist Bideau use this word in our conversations. "Hard science," Bideau asserted, happened in controlled environments that allowed for replicable procedures, and for this reason science only happened during the beginning and aftermath of a seismic survey. In the beginning stages, geophysicists monitored seismic readings in a white truck, and in the aftermath (if companies had been convinced enough to drill a hole) samples from a variety of depths were taken to a laboratory to be analyzed by geochemists. In the initial measurements after dynamite charges exploded or air cannons fired, geophysicists sat in the air conditioned cabin performing an ideal of what the seismic contracting firm's public relations brochures called "passive monitoring." For Bideau, this was a "ritual of science" that represented an empirical and repeatable process of registering physical phenomena, a process that replaced the subjective "gut feelings" of expert interpretation with the alleged objectivity of other-than-human instruments. After the white truck, however, what Bideau called the "ritual of science" stopped, and what he called his "art" began. This art involved not simply the delimited material apparatus of the seismic equipment, but his own embodied intuitions, the powers of industry and capital, or national economic interests. This he said, was not science.

As Bideau assumed that the instruments of the seismic truck could transparently listen to nonhumans' testimony, he made the white truck what Actor Network theorists might call a technological black box.[22] As networked assemblages of humans (geophysicists, seismic laborers, or fishermen and

21 On the relationship between ritual, repetition, and belief, see, for example, Asad: Genealogies of Religion; Rapport: Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity; Seligman et al.: Ritual and its Consequences 2008; Smith: The Bare Facts of Ritual.

22 See Latour: Pandora's Hope.

women) and nonhumans (specialized microphones, computers, GPS systems, or cables) ostensibly produced reliable data, their functioning could be assumed rather than interrogated. This blackboxing rendered certain forms of knowledge local noise and others objective signal. Fisherfolk at my field site, for example, asserted, based on empirical experience garnered before and after seismic surveys, that the air cannons had serious and lasting effects on nonhuman marine life, but in obligatory community consultations the company officials marshaled accounts of North American scientific experiments that showed these effects were minimal and controllable (and thus compensation to the owners of the fishing boats during seismic surveys could be minimal). Local laborers, rather than GPS devices, knew about the locations of pipe gun traps that protected ganja fields in the forests that the survey had to traverse, but their knowledge was not a part of the transportable black box (or white truck/ship) that official representations of seismic technology touted. In spite of these important networked contingencies, the white truck still represented a scientific ritual of empirical objectivity for Bideau that his gut feelings could not match. It was his faith in this ritual that allowed Bideau, unlike Granger, to not give up on proof despite frequent uncertainty.

While I expected the healer Marianne Granger to talk about her rituals and Bideau to talk about his scientific experiments, their words overturned my expectations. Although Marianne's work was the one that most might easily label ritual, magic, or superstition, her practices were avowedly experimental. Bideau's work, on the other hand, aspired to an evidentiary *ritual* of proving that he could not quite enact. While religious rituals and lab procedures might seem opposed within the modern divide between natural science and supernatural religion, Bideau's claims about the controlled environments of the white truck or the geochemical laboratory resonated with scholarly definitions of ritual action as the production of certainty under "*a controlled environment* where the variables (i.e., the accidents) of ordinary life have been displaced"[23] The laboratory and the religious ritual have been popularly conceived as spaces of evidentiary proof that seek to control accidental noise, even as these aspirations to control conceal networked contingencies and improvisations.[24] Rather than turning from proof towards immaterial belief, Marianne obviated the terms of the modern divide between religious practice and scientific truth by giving up on their common

23 Smith: The Bare Facts of Ritual, italics in original.

24 On networked contingencies in scientific research, see Callon: Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation, Latour: Pandora's Hope, or Masco: Nuclear Borderlands. On the role of invention in religious ritual practice, see Crosson: Inventive Traditions.

grounding in a certain kind of determinism that could only be enacted through contingent efforts at controlled replication.

In the history of science, from Newtonian mechanics to the quantum wave function, time reversible equations have been assumed to predict material phenomena, even as twentieth century natural scientists and philosophers of science often spoke about the end of this kind of determinism and the impossibility of proof as an end-goal.[25] By giving up on proof, Granger's science gave up on determinism to interact in situations of instability, non-equilibrium, and complexity, where the "cuts"[26] between experimental apparatus and surrounding noise were not quite so clean. This was precisely the unclear distinction between signal and noise that Bideau confronted when he received the data from seismic surveys. Theoretically, physical laws about the rate of sound waves' travel through different kinds of subsoil materials should render interpretation fairly straightforward. The shock waves that dynamite or air cannons generated, however, were not laser beams, and they bounced multiple times off a number of surfaces, including the hull of the seismic ship or transverse layers of rock. In the situations that Granger and Bideau faced, the material apparatus of experimentation was not entirely delimitable, nor was knowledge of nonhuman powers exhaustive. Yet, if Granger listened, noticed, and waited, the embodied evidence of the powers, like Bideau's gut feelings, told her which way to go. In this way, I concluded, the radically empirical and embodied ethics of Bideau and Granger's practices might not be that different, except that Marianne gave up on a ritual of proof that Bideau hoped to approach as remote sensing technologies advanced. I am no longer certain, however, if agree with my own conclusion.

The Ethical Burden of Co-Existence

The first time I made my way down the trace to Mother Marianne's home, I had to ask for directions from a woman who turned out to be Marianne's daughter. After talking with me (I later learned) she called Marianne to tell her that an "Indian man" was looking for her. No one (to my knowledge) has ever said that I remotely resemble someone of South Asian descent, but Marianne had dreamed the previous night that an "Indian man" would look for her seeking what she

25 See, for example, Popper: Conjectures and Refutations, Prigogine and Stengers: The End of Certainty.

26 On the "agential cuts" that make experiments partial, see Barad: Meeting the Universe Halfway.

called "a better understanding." She was thus surprised when I showed up in front of her board house, but the conjunction of the dream and her daughter's description convinced her that talking to me was a good idea. She always understood me as a student, and she shared the depths of her experience in conversations that lasted for three, four, or five hours (without bathroom breaks). On some occasions, however, she reversed the direction of our conversations by interviewing me about what I was doing and how I conceived of my research. In one of our last conversations, I responded to her question by telling her that I wanted to counteract the long-standing and pernicious stigmas of criminality and irrationality that attached themselves to her work by insisting that what most people called obeah actually formed a part of the category of modern scientific rationality.

By engaging in this project of including Granger's practices in the realm of rationality, I was traveling well-trod paths in the anthropology of both the Caribbean and what scholars have called "witchcraft." Ever since Evans-Pritchard's *Witchcraft Amongst the Azande* (1937), the anthropology of "witchcraft" had often revolved around an insistence on its rationality. Evans-Pritchard broke with his anthropological predecessors by insisting that African witchcraft could be entirely rational, but concurred with their opinion that this type of mystical causation was not real. He was able to insist on both the falsity and the rationality of Azande practices by keeping culture and nature separate. There was one nature that Western science could know, and this was a universal reality. Culture, on the other hand, could be relative rather than universally real; within different cultural systems there might be statements that contradicted those of other cultures, but within their own culture these statements were consistent and thereby rational. Evans-Pritchard thus took a stand of cultural relativism that was founded upon a non-relative nature. Azande beliefs were false precisely because they lacked the empirical science that Evans-Pritchard and other Europeans claimed to have. The Azande, according to him, had failed to engage in empirical experimentation and seemed unlikely to do so based on their lack of a distinction between "nature" and the "supernatural." Since the Azande allegedly lacked the empirical proof of the experimental method, in Evans-Pritchard's view, it was their *rituals* that could produce a sense of immutable certainty simply through prescribed repetition.[27] In a seeming inversion of Marianne's experimental approach, Evans-Pritchard's representation of Azande rituals asserted that witchcraft was entirely rational without being experimental or empirical.

In a more recent argument for the rationality of "witchcraft," Stephan Palmié asserts that the "little understood lexical equivalence between obeah

27 See also Rapport: Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity.

and science" reveals that the practices of Caribbean healers are eminently rational and modern.[28] For Evans-Pritchard, rationality suggested the logical coherence and concordance internal to a culture, but for Palmié rationality characterizes a modernity that is not confined to what anthropologists formerly saw as neat lines between African, European, or New World culture groups. In this way, Palmié follows an important and well-travelled path in scholarship that addresses the Caribbean. If Bruno Latour's mission was to tell white Euro-Americans that they have never been modern,[29] much intellectual work within and on the Caribbean has been to proclaim that the Caribbean has always been modern.[30] While typically excluded from the West on the grounds of race, civilizational hierarchies, or tropicalized representations, scholars have instead insisted that the Caribbean was not simply external to the making of Atlantic modernity. In fact, it was the ground zero of this project, a place that was modern, in many ways, before Western Europe. In this way the neat lines between cultures (particularly the entities known as Africa and Europe), which formed the basis for Evans-Pritchard's relativization of rationality, gave way to a modern rationality that firmly held the Caribbean, Western Africa, and Europe in its grip.

Palmié takes such a tack when he argues that the long-standing lexical equivocation between science and obeah reflects their shared genealogy within modern Atlantic rationality.[31] In this version of the "we have always been modern argument," the instrumentality, rational time-labor discipline, and human commodification of slavery precedes and models the very characteristics that will epitomize capitalist modernity as a process of alienation. According to Palmié, it is this very rationality that obeah or alleged African witchcraft embodies. "Whether to call it *witchcraft* or *world capitalism* may," he writes, "be a choice of words."[32] The potential harm of science in the Caribbean, which its association with obeah foregrounds, thus reflects the rationalization of social relations and the instrumentalization of human and nonhuman forces, forming an internal critique of a North Atlantic universal. "What we face [in the identification of obeah and science]" Palmié writes, is "arguably an Afro-Atlantic analysis of the witchcraft of modernity."[33]

28 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists.

29 Latour: We Have Never Been Modern.

30 See, for example, Mintz: Sweetness and Power, Scott: Modernity that Predated the Modern, Williams: Capitalism and Slavery.

31 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists.

32 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists, 67.

33 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists, 208.

I tried to explain all of this to Mother Marianne, telling her that I wanted to claim, along with Palmié that what obeah and science share is "a fundamental rationality that is hard to deny."[34] As on other occasions, Marianne did not quite agree with my project, and she disagreed in a way that evoked physical discomfort in me during and after our conversation. Yet, she differed with me in such a manner that I would only realize later what she had told me, and I was unable to articulate the source of my visceral disconcertment at the time. On these and other occasions, it was as if she was planting a seed in me that would ramify and root over a course of months, leaving me feeling odd and even a little irritated. Marianne did not agree with my intent; there was a difference between her science and what she called "laboratory science." This difference hinged precisely on the divergent notions of rationality that Palmié and Evans-Pritchard used to re-value Caribbean obeah or Azande witchcraft. But why, Marianne asked me, did one need to demonstrate the value of what one did by proving it was rational? If rationality suggested the abstraction of generalizable values from local cases, signaling a logical concordance (Evans-Pritchard) or the brutal rationalization of humans into property values (Palmié), then Marianne was not interested in this project. Rationality can suggest an instrumental logic, in which nonhumans (and humans-as-property) act in determinate ways, and this is precisely the logic that allows Palmié to identify both slavery, science, and obeah with rationalization. Yet, far from being forces that either enslaved Marianne or submitted to her control, the powers that she lived with both exceeded and composed her embodied frame. Like some of the more inspiring recent work in anthropology, she questioned this notion of instrumental rationality because other-than-human forces, such as Mama Lata, acted in ways that she could neither completely control nor entirely excise from her being.[35] She nor they were simply subject or object, breaking (or bracketing) the pervasive dialectic of alienation/liberty or slavery/mastery that defines what Palmié calls "the witchcraft of modernity."[36]

Marianne's response led me to conclude that by rejecting claims to generalized rational proofs, she embraced her empirical sensations as case-by-case guides. In this way, I thought, her work was not that different from Bideau's idiosyncratic practice of gut feelings. As I talked to Bideau more, however, I began to feel as though there were important differences between their embodied sensations. Like Marianne, Bideau felt the evidence of hard-to-perceive

34 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists, 207.

35 See De la Cadena: Earth Beings.

36 Palmié: Wizards and Scientists. See also Geschiere: The Modernity of Witchcraft.

subterranean power in his guts, and he also spoke about the earth itself as a body. In Bideau's most consistent metaphor during our conversations, the earth was a pregnant belly and seismic sensing was an ultrasound that attempted to transduce a visual representation of what was inside this female patient through an act of sounding her. It was Bideau's own belly that made this transduction possible, and in his prioritizing of expert judgments over a mechanical and impersonal objectivity he was far from alone in the fields of petroleum geology or a range of natural sciences since the early twentieth century.[37] Yet, the celebrations of expert judgments in a number of scientific disciplines did not prevent Bideau from feeling that there was an unresolved tension between the idiosyncratic scale of his gut feelings and the universal scalability that he associated with science.

For Marianne, however, it was precisely because she felt other-than-human powers in her body that science could become scalable. Like Bideau, Marianne spoke about the earth as (amongst other things) a female body, but it was not another's body that she was trying to know. Marianne's body was not one body, and the gut feelings that she had were not necessarily manifestations of her own expertise. These sensations were not empirical evidence of or for something else, but the visceral presence of another that both composed and exceeded her.

Anna Tsing has recently noted that science, within Western genealogies, has been characterized by scalability – the transposition of rationalized procedures and properties from localized laboratories or research stations to more universal proportions.[38] As an antidote to some of the violence that the ethos of scalability and its accompanying processes of translation impose, Tsing offers a "non-scalable science" of local and empirical "noticing." Marianne, however, did not conceive of science along this opposition between scalable and non-scalable knowledge, a dichotomy that seems dangerously close to reproducing a division between empiricism and theory, on the one hand, or the local and the universal, on the other. By giving up on proof, Granger was not simply embracing a local empiricism. She could scale up (or down into the earth), but through a fractal logic of embedded complexity that differed from the scalability of rational procedures and deductive or inductive proofs. In contrast to the scaling of proofs, in which particulars add up to provide overwhelming evidence for universally generalizable principals or general laws scale down to explain specific cases, Marianne's sense of connection between scales operated through self-similar resonances that neither added up to

37 See Daston and Galison: Objectivity.

38 Tsing: The Mushroom at the End of the World.

produce proofs nor derived from general laws. In this kind of fractal scaling, Marianne Granger's own body, the bodies of her clients, the bodies of ritual objects, and the body of the earth were partially connected through recursive resonances. Marianne was multiple, composed of Powers that were also multiplicities. Mama Lata was a woman without a male partner, everything brown, a hole in the ground of Marianne's yard filled with offerings, a power from Africa with a French patois name, a bundle of leaves, a ceramic statue of a market woman, a tree branch polished into a walking stick, a slow limping movement, the exceedingly protracted scale of geologic time, and the body of the earth. Power, in other words, connected divergent scales of time and physical presence without creating a unitary physical body.

This sense of scaling created non-local bonds of influence that operated differently from the logics of mechanical cause and effect or part-whole relations. While Marianne Granger had never travelled that far from home in terms of geographical space, her person and her yard were eminently nonlocal, scaling outwards (and downwards) through fractal senses of complexity. In her insistence on what physicists might call non-locality, Marianne's science was one of "entanglement," but not in the colloquial sense with which this word has come to be used in much scholarly and popular work. Entanglement did not simply refer to things that are tangled up in a vision of intimate proximity or inclusion across human and nonhuman scales, but to diasporic bodies that seemed to influence each other (or that came into existence) across potentially infinite distances, disrupting classical notions of time, space, and causation.

Non-local scalability, in this fractal sense, was inseparable from processes of localization. Marianne accessed powers that existed on geologic scales by "planting" them at a specific spot of ground and "feeding" them regularly at that spot. In this way, spiritual workers obviated pervasive Western Christian oppositions of matter and spirit, or immanence and transcendence that have shaped assumed oppositions between obeah and the North Atlantic universals of science and religion.[39] Drawing on pervasive discourses about alleged African superstition or African fetishism, nineteenth and twentieth century colonial observers assumed that obeah was both not material (or "natural") enough to be science and too material to be religion. For Granger, however, the powers she lived with in embodied, mundane ways were eminently material, natural, and immanent, while also partially transcending her human frames of understanding and experience.

39 See also Beliso de Jesus: Santería Co-Presence and the Making of African Diasporic Bodies, Beliso de Jesus: Electric Santeria, Hirschkind: Media, Mediation, Religion.

It is precisely at this point of difference in technologies of scaling, that questions about the ethics and politics of science begin to take shape. If one's body was partially shared with the earth, then the extraction of its fluids and gases rendered one's own body vulnerable. For Marianne and Papoy, oil was "the blood of the earth." "The more they suck," Papoy told me looking at his crops, "the weaker the earth get." To compensate for this weakness, farmers were told by government agencies that they needed to apply fertilizers made in Trinidad from the very gas that was extracted from beneath Rio Moro. By taking gas out of the earth and feeding it to edible plants, that gas went from the body of the earth into the body of humans, causing what Papoy felt was intestinal, moral, and mental flatulence. Were these concerns, which linked the bodies of humans and the body of the earth, simply unscientific and incommensurable within discussions dominated by global warming or economic development, or did they signal another ethics of science and extraction that existed beyond the complex translations of seismic surveys?

Despite all of the verbal criticism (and organized opposition) directed at projects of hydrocarbon exploration and extraction by residents of Rio Moro, a recent anthropological work has characterized Trinidadians as a group of persons who "have collectively benefited from the lethal hydrocarbon system," while skirting responsibility for their actions by simultaneously claiming to be vulnerable to the negative effects of hydrocarbon production.[40] My interlocutors, however, neither skirted responsibility by claiming a "victim slot"[41] nor shared in the (imagined) collective of citizens that was supposedly reaping the economic rewards of Trinidad's oil and gas. Rather than using vulnerability to geologic and environmental forces as a means to escape responsibility for the effects of hydrocarbon extraction, vulnerability was the condition of responsibility for my interlocutors, the condition of their own bodies being partially shared with the body of the earth. Such disjunctures in conceptions of ethics ask what worlds enter anthropological analyses of politics and what concerns remain invisible within such treatments.[42]

One of the last times I saw Marianne, I drove with her back down a trace that had originally been constructed six decades ago by a British petroleum company to access the oil wells that dotted the forests on either side of us. She was on her way to perform a ritual in the bush, which Mama Lata preferred as a site for her offerings. I had to slow at one point in the road, as several felled

40 Hughes: Climate Change and the Victim Slot, 571.
41 Hughes: Climate Change and the Victim Slot.
42 De la Cadena: Earth Beings.

tree trunks lay on either side of the trace leaving a narrow passage. I had heard from a young man known as "Organize" (for his labor militancy) that a group of local youths had constructed the barricade to protest the poor labor conditions attributed to the Canadian management firm that was conducting the current series of seismic surveys in the area.

At the sight of the barricade, Marianne remarked that the island of Trinidad took its name from these mountains that contained the peaks of the "three sisters," the trinity of hills that Columbus allegedly sighted, making his first landfall after a long waterless stint. They gave the island of Trinidad its name, Marianne told me. How much dynamite can they explode in them, how much oil can they pull from beneath them without effect?

Marianne Granger's question of how long we can extract oil from the earth without serious effect remains an urgent one, and to some extent it hinges not only on atmospheric pollution, but on whether the subsoil body of the earth can respond to humans and how. The effects of hydrocarbon extraction have been voiced more in terms of what lies above the earth – the atmosphere and the accumulation of carbon dioxide there. For good reason, proposals for the naming of a new geological era – the anthropocene – have often hinged on these atmospheric questions of climate, air pollution, and global warming. The subterranean effects are less a part of the air we breathe, though the growth of unconventional methods of hydrocarbon extraction in formerly depleted reserves has recently forced these questions to geologists' attention. Controversial tremors of consequence have issued from areas where the waste water from fracking has been inserted deep into the body of the earth, and there is a scientific consensus that humans are inducing earthquakes around these sites. A 4.8 magnitude quake attributed to fracking waste-water shook South Texas in 2011, and a U.S. Geological Survey report issued last month proclaims that enhanced oil extraction has made Oklahoma as susceptible to earthquakes as California.[43] Both hydrocarbon extraction and Marianne's relationships with subterranean Powers raises ontological questions about the ability of the earth to respond to humans. Hydrocarbons are made of dead things, but for Marianne the dead are not inert. They are what she calls "coexistences," and living with them involves a different ethics of evidence and mediality. If mediumship is construed through a logics of matter and spirit in which it is less about the transubstantiation of the supernatural into material evidence, and more about the communication between equally spirited forms of matter, then the burden of proof can become the ethical weight of co-existence.

43 Wines: Drilling Is Making Oklahoma as Quake Prone as California.

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Rukiye Canlı

Sufi Practices, the Masters' Role and the Media of Legitimacy. On the Coincidence of Technical Media and Sufi Mediums

The close and interdependent relation between spiritual and modern or rather medial facts is well known. Thus the interaction between media and religion is gaining importance in scientific discourse.[1] Analogous to that, a strong *popularization of Sufism (tasavvuf)*, that is the Islamic Mysticism, as well as an increasing *interference with medialisation and technological development* has been observable (especially the evolvement of digital media and the generalization of global networks). This paper will examine this interference using the practices of the Turkish Mevlevi order as an example, a Sufi community named after the scholar Mevlâna Celâleddin Rûmî[2] from the thirteenth century.

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, Sufi convents were closed in Turkey as part of the modernization and secularization efforts. Sufi official titles, ritual clothing and practices were prohibited. However, Sufi practices such as the whirling dance have been preserved until today: Initially it was just practiced in private rooms but since the 1950s it also emerged in public as tourist attraction and cultural property. Today it can be found not infrequently in new cultural topographies and settings such as restaurants, cultural centers, theatrical stages and wellness-establishments (Ethnomusic therapy). With the development of technical media (especially the Web 2.0), it is translated increasingly into media spaces and backed up to sacred centers.

The main focus of the paper is on the *relationship between media and rituals*.[3] What is the coincidence of technical media and Sufi practices? What negotiations and friction points does exist? The religious 'archaic' takes on new profane characteristics.[4] Sufi rituals are constituted as global cultural and economic (also political) media events by modern media technologies. This refutes

1 See Thomas: Medien – Ritual – Religion; Hjarvard/Lövheim: Mediatization and religion; Scannell: Media, Culture & Society; Hirschkind: Media, Mediation, Religion; Hosseini: Religion and media, religious media, or media religion; Hjarvard: The Mediatisation of religion.

2 Special characters in the name will be waived hereinafter.

3 See Couldry: Media Rituals; Grimes: Rite out of Place; Thomas: Medien – Ritual – Religion.

4 Turner: Das Liminale und das Liminoide in Spiel, 'Fluss' und Ritual; Liminalität und Communitas.

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the assumption about religious rituals of becoming disappeared or going to be replaced with modern, presumed secular media technologies. Instead of this, both components coincide and are overlapping.

Based on media analytical and media ethnographic[5] findings the aforementioned relationship is discussed by four essential aspects: by the mediality of today's whirling dance at the annual memorial celebration of Mevlana Rumi (among other things as technical hybrid medium of mediation) (1.), by the role of Sufi masters (*evliyāullah*),[6] who are personal mediators or mediums for production of nearness to God (figurations of nearness about co-presence and telepathy) (2.), and by the mediums of legitimation[7] or authenticity of body practices (healing rituals vs. cause of damage) and its agents, above all of the *shaykhs* (spiritual master) or ceremony conductors (3.). The tension between trust and doubt manifests itself above all in the discourse on the authenticity of ritual actors and their practices whereby their legitimation of authenticity is medialized thoroughly. The spiritual teacher is put to different tests: he has to give proof of his holiness sporadically material (letter of approval of Mevlevi authorities) and in some districts (additionally) immaterial (miracles, dreams, healing) (4.). In conclusion, concrete touch points and alternating increases of Sufi and media technical processes are considered taking into account the authenticity matter (5.).

5 This essay is based on data of my stationary field research in different cities in Turkey (such as Konya, Istanbul, Bursa, Afyon und Ankara; in total approximately seven months) as well as in Germany and Switzerland (in total approximately two months), which I performed from August of 2009 to May of 2012 in the context of my dissertation with the working title "Media and Cultural Transformations of Sufism". The focus was on practices of the Mevlevi Sufi Order. The data collection took place through participant observation, interviews and (informal) conversations with supporters of numerous Sufi communities and with participants at various Sufi events and Sufi rituals.

6 The term *evliyā* or *evliyāullah* refers in Islam to people who live a godly life and are rewarded by God with his nearness (see Devellioğlu: Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat, 276). As 'Beloved of God' or 'Friends of God' (*Allah dostları*) they enjoy the privilege of performing extraordinary or miraculous acts (*kerāmet*). This is a matter of a special spiritual stage, the so-called *velāyet makāmı*, which can be attained according to Sufi conviction by everyone through personal contribution and godly present. *Evliyāullah* are comparable with saints in Christianity. All non-English words are in Turkish. Although the Turkish terms are usually of Arabic origin, I will be using the Turkish spelling (unless stated otherwise). That is because my research focuses on Turkish sufism and the fieldwork was mainly located in Turkey.

7 See Boltanski and Thévenot: Über die Rechtfertigung.

Mediality of the Whirling Dance

The Sufi whirling dance, the so-called "*sema*",[8] expressed itself in the form of an intuitive state of frenzy during Mevlana Rumi's lifetime – without being bound to either a specific time or place. After his death, it was formalised and institutionalised by his son Sultan Veled (1226–1312), the founder of the Mevlevi Order. This type of contemplation has been kept upright, despite *sema's* disharmonious history. Whereas it has always been stamped heretical by strict Muslims, the modernisation process during the ruling of the founder of the Turkish Republic Atatürk lead to the closure of many Sufi institutions (*tekke*, *zaviye*) and the execution of the whirling dance to be banned in 1925.[9] Nowadays, there are many forms of Mevlevi Sufism and its practices. Even though the whirling dance is still prohibited as a religious ritual, it is performed in private. In public areas however, it has been reduced to a tourist attraction. The state and Mevlevi Rumi's blood relatives sell it as a cultural good. Every year a state-organised whirling dance ceremony is held in Koya, where Rumi's grave lays, to commemorate him. According to Erika Fischer Lichte's "performative turn",[10] the whirling dance, being more of a cultural performance than Sufik, is taken out of its local spiritual context and turned into a global culture, economic and political media event (see Figure 1). It has gathered more of a worldwide popularity not only, but partly due to its appointment as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity" by the UNESCO in the year 2005.[11]

8 The Turkish word "sema" derives from the Arabic "samā'" or rather "sima", meaning to listen, to perceive, to eavesdrop but also "the spoken word" and "good reputation". Narrowed down, it refers to "the process of listening to musical sounds, the state of movement triggered by emotion involvement", according to Sezai Küçük. In Sufi culture, it touches upon "the Sufis' state whilst standing upright and to think of God whilst being in trance" (Küçük: Hz. Mevlânâ'nın Semâ'ı, 33). In today's Sufi culture, it's more about the practice of rotating around one's axis with whirling movements accompanied by Sufi music and hereby praising God (through the constant exclamation of God's name "Allah"). Even though Sufi circles claim that the whirling ritual is only one of many forms of commemoration and that its execution is not bound to specific Sufi brotherhoods, it is seen as *the* Mevlevi practice nonetheless.

9 To be compared with the "Law [Number 677] on the closing of the Tekke, Zaviye and Türbe including the prohibition and annulment of the Türbe service and other titles" [*Tekke ve zaviyelerle türbelerin seddine ve türbedarlıklar ile bir takım unvanların men ve ilgasına dair kanun*] from the 30th November 1925, which became effective as of the 13th December 1925. The institutions of the Mevlevi (*Asitâne*, *Mevlevîhâne*) were also affected.

10 Fischer-Lichte: Ästhetik des Performativen.

11 In the year 2008, the ceremony was included in the UNESCO's "Representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage".



Figure 1: *Sema* in Mevlana Cultural Center (Konya, 17th December 2010, RC).

The Commemorative Ceremony in the Mevlana Cultural Centre und its Media

Every year a state-organised *sema*-ceremony takes place in an especially for the ceremony erected building, where the recurrence of the Sufi scholar Mevlana Rumi's date of death on the 17th December (*Şeb-i Arus*, 'wedding night') is commemorated. The "ritual media event",[12] which starts off with political talks, is broadcast live by the Turkish public-service broadcaster TRT as well as by the regional TV channel Kontv.

Just a few words on the ceremonial evening programme of the 17th December 2010. The mayor of Konya at that time Tahir Akyürek gave the opening speech, followed by the chairman of the opposition party Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu and ending with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Whereas some of Mevlana Rumi's verses pleading for tolerance and peace were quoted in the speeches, critical allusions became apparent between the lines. Afterwards a concert by the famous Classical Turkish Music artist Ahmet Özhan took place, accompanied by a Sufi

12 Hepp and Krönert: Medien – Event – Religion.

music group. It was meant as a musical attunement and to mentally prepare for the "sema". At the same time it enlightened the slightly tense atmosphere.

Two hours passed before the actual show began. The hosts reminded the audience that flashlight photography was forbidden during the ritual's performance – it was an „*âyin*" (ceremony) after all and not just any odd show. The hall was darkened and the audience fell silent as they eagerly, somewhat apprehensively waited for the show to start. Another musical introduction followed. Someone played the reed flute (*ney*), symbolising the human being and his spiritual journey in striving for excellence in Mevlevi Sufism. Only the "ney"-player (*neyzen*) and the ceremonial leader's (Postnischin) fur carpet were illuminated, representing God's position or rather Mevlana Rumi as his representative and order head. Once the introduction had finished, the Dervish[13] slowly entered making great strides, wearing black capes symbolising the worldly, and fur hats symbolising the human gravestone. They sat down on the specially designated fur carpets on the far right corner of the whirling area. Following the traditional Mevlevi greeting (*mukabele*, 'encounter'), the Dervish – now without their capes, i.e. free from anything worldly – started whirling. Initially having crossed their arms in front of their chests, these were reached out both to the left and the right whilst rotating; the right hand pointing towards the sky, the left hand towards the floor. The sky stands for the divine or rather the super natural in Sufism, whereas the ground symbolises the material world. This particular body posture visualises the Dervish's function; receiving from God and passing on to the world either the materialistic (i.e. possessions) or the unmaterialistic (divine knowledge, good deeds).

Both the cameramen and photographers or rather artists, all placed in front of the public gallery, aimed at capturing the Dervish's best body movements. The ceremony's artificial character seemed to have triggered their creativity so that some photographers even threw themselves to the floor in order to record moments of spiritual encounterings. Journalists were glued to their laptops and were already uploading their news on the performance together with their very recent shots.

The stage lights' colours and movements were precisely in tune with the process of the ceremony – its four sections, each one symbolising the next spiritual level, were colour-coordinated. One after the other, the stage light changed from red to green to blue. A white light enlightening the Dervish's robes, marked the last and highest level. In all this is a form of spirituality, which makes use of modern stage technology. Presumably, they want to meet the exceedingly high expectations of the contemporary event society, which is accustomed to all of modern media's technological advancements, by portraying the

13 Sufis, or more specifically those on their way to spiritual maturity.

âyin (the ceremony) in a particularly attractive way. The celebrations ended with a recital from the Qur'an and the traditional Mevlevi prayer.

Generally, the technical media are used as a means of representation, distribution and for archiving perfomative moments. In the represented case however, "the human-technological media" – understood as a hybridized body of film and photo cameras and their operators – themselves became part of the ceremony. As a hybrid of human and machine or body and device the 'cameraman' (see Figure 2) is a symbol of the coincidence of human und technical media in itself. At the same time, the similarity between the two operations (technichal and spiritual mediality) becomes clear or even more: it is the technical mediation of the moment of the spiritual mediation.[14] One process is not more secular or religious than another.



Figure 2: Hybrid media bodies (Konya, 17th December 2010, RC).

This "mediazation of spirituality" was seen as being disruptive by some of the people from audience I spoke to. It had a strong impact on how they experienced the *sema*. At the same time there were some, who by referring to the "true" and "traditional" and the fact that the Dervish' subjugated themselves to such an

14 See Behrend/Dreschke/Zillinger: Trance Mediums and New Media; Hahn and Schüttpelz: Trancemedien und Neue Medien um 1900.

open format and the medialization, saw this as a lack of spiritual authenticity. Authenticity presupposes modesty and integrity. Others were thrilled by the possibility of letting people all over the world partake in such a momentous cultural heritage act thanks to the use of mass media. Thus technical mediation can be considered as lacking authenticity in sufism.

In private, *sema* is of minor importance or rather is merely used to accentuate the idea behind "zikr". The *zikr*, literally 'rememberence', is a form of prayer, which is carried out by repeatingly moving backwards and forwards or softly swinging to the left and to the right and which is connected to the praising of God and a certain breathing technique. Whereas the *sema* is also understood as a form of *zikr* among Sufis – the Dervish loudly shouts out Gods name with every turn – this was unperceivable with the performance the Dervish gave at the cultural centre. One of the reasons for that could be that in Turkey, *zikr's* outlined state of being is associated with anti-modern ways of thinking and thus is frowned upon. The Dervish's public dancing performance seems to be a "controlled" form of commemorating God and showing emotions. Seemingly, the medial opening up of bigger territories for the *sema* to be watched in different regions and by different members of the public requires spirituality only in moderation.[15]

In his explanations on "Techniques of the Body", Marcel Mauss states: "The human's primary and most natural technical object and at the same time technical medium is his body."[16] In Sufism the body is central, too – both physically and symbolically speaking. It is the medium through which during the ritual of *sema* (or rather *zikr*), a connection or feeling of oneness with God is made. There is an "interaction between the body and moral and intellectual symbols" (as before). The Sufi-technical medium of the *sema* – as a personal medium between the divine and the worldly – manifests itself in the Sufi dancer's attitude (*semazen)*, as previously outlined. Body practices are used to cultivate both a group of (ritual) participants' thinking processes and ideologies.[17] Cultural transformations are expressed through these practices, too. If you take the "controlled form of frenzy" during the *sema* in the cultural centre

15 This also seems to be the case, even though requirements have been eased. Back from doing my field research, I was allowed to watch a *zikr*-ceremony being performed stage on Konya's regional TV channel Kontv (*Âyin Meclisi*/'church service'; programme from the 25th November 2011). It was practiced by the same group who had regularly performed at the cultural centre (*Konya Türk Tasavvuf Müziği Topluluğu*/'Turkish Sufi music group Konya'). The audiences' dissociation expressed itself in the same way it had done before whilst in private. It was the first time since 1925 in Konya that a *zikr*-ceremony was publicly staged and broadcasted on TV.

16 Mauss: Soziologie und Anthropologie, 206.

17 See Shannon: The aesthetics of spiritual practice and the creation of moral and musical subjectivities in Aleppo, 382.

as an example, it becomes clear that this body technique can be used to refer to the legal framework – introduced in Turkey in 1925 – which formed the ways in which the ritual could be performed. Moreover, the setting provides an insight into the ritual's placement within the context of cherishing national culture and political control. All of today's forms of *sema* thus derive from (local) socio-political and socio-cultural as well as medial and economical developments and have a history.

Mediality of the Sufi Master

In the Turkish-Islamic context, the term "medium" or "mediumism" is far less influenced by the controversy between religion and secularity as in the European-Christian context. Whereas the Turkish term "medyum" applies to people acting as fortune tellers (*falcı*) in areligious elite circles (so called *sosyete*) without referring to Islam, religion plays a central part in the magician's role as a personal medium. Even though the magic practices (*büyü*) are generally regarded as outdated and implausible by secular circles, religion and secularity come together (because of the increasing value of technical media for the practices of TV and digital media). The practices of mediumism (*medyumculuk*) and magic-ism (*büyücülük*) both promise to influence the well-being, health, success and prosperity, hence other people's fortunes, thanks to the use of magic formulas and making contact with the spirit world. Both the role of the *medyums* as well as the one the *büyücü* beholds have a negative connotation in Islam (black magic). They are regarded as a form of blasphemy (*şirk*) and are forbidden. Following the practices of the prophet Muhammad, merely the citation of *suras*, prayers and religious formulas to shy away harmful magic or their precautionary use as positive magic as a means of protection and to strengthen the physical and mental condition, are allowed.

One has to differentiate between this form of mediality in Islam and the role of the Sufi master, the so called "friend of God" (*evliyā*). In Sufi communities, spiritual masters are granted a special status. A master functions as a "medialising figure" between his disciples and God.[18] As a ritual actor, he therefore has effective power to act, which is tied to the task of taking up the spiritual mediating role[19]

18 In some strictly religious circles and salafistic tendencies this is seen as blasphemy. Hence, they consider Sufism to be unislamic.

19 Heike Behrend calls this role a "spirit mediumship" and understands it to be "an indigenous technique of transmission" (Behrend: Electricity, Spirit Mediums, and the Media of Spirits, 191).

of the Prophet and enabling it continue.[2021] Tied to this role is the goal of obtaining and exchanging the power of blessings (arab.: *baraka*, turk.: *bereket, feyiz*) through the connection of ritual elements.[22] Such a linkage is supposed to establish an enhanced closeness to God, the prophet, the *shaykh* as well as to the other initiators. The heart plays a crucial part for the disciple as it is the local medium for generating closeness to God (*kurbiyet*) as well as to the *shaykh*. The *shaykh* himself acts as a "personal medium"[23] in order to obtain a proximity to God besides that to other human beings and "God's loved ones" in far-away "non-places".[24] The mediums of closeness appertain the "collective intonation"[25] of God's names[26] (arab.: *dhikr*,[27] turk.: *zikr*), the

20 In Sufi circles, the necessity of a *shaykh* as a spiritual leader is explained with the fact that spirtual maturity and the closeness to God (*kurbiyet)* cannot be obtained without a mediator. Just as God's revelation initially reached Muhammad through the angel Gabrielle, who transmitted Qur'anic verses and the specific form of practicing religious rituals based on the master-disciple principle, the Prophet also acts as a mediator of the revelation or rather as a living role model for religious practices to his companions (*sahābī*), according to my conversation partner. The transmission chain was continued after the prophet's death by his successor, the first caliph Abū Bakr as-Siddīq. Through Allah's friends/loved ones (*evliyāullah*), the personal placement is still being talked about today.

21 See Meyer: Wechselnde Agencies, 313.

22 See Zillinger: Die Trance, das Blut, die Kamera, 468.

23 Hahn and Schüttpelz: Trancemedien und Neue Medien um 1900.

24 See Augé: Orte und Nicht-Orte.

25 Zillinger: Die Trance, das Blut, die Kamera, 448.

26 God has 99 names according to the Islamic belief. "Allah" is the basic designation for divinity in Islam, which embraces all these names. Even though the name "Allah" is crucial in the ritual of commemoration (*zikr),* other names such as "*Al-Hayy*" ('the Living One') or "*Al-Kayyūm*" ('the Eternal One') are integrated in *zikr* according to the ceremonial process.

27 The word *dhikr* (turk.: *zikr*) stems from the term *ezkār* (arab.) and means "to commemorate, to express" (Devellioğlu: Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat, 1383). The process of the *zikr*-ceremony deviates not only within certain brotherhoods, but also within groups of the same brotherhood (tarikat) in different locations. The ceremony has a closed structure. As a general rule, it starts with a short sermon by the ceremony leader, which, together with the collective glorification of the Prophet Muhammad and the repeating of the creed (arab.: *lā ilāhe illallāh*, 'There is no God, but Allah') by the followers of the ceremony, leads to the actual part of the ceremony. In the Ottoman hostel ('Osmanische Herberge'), some Qur'an verses are additonally collectively repeated in a tuneful form. Subsequently, God's names are melodically recited before moving on to the recital of the "name" accompanied by Sufi music. The recital performed with a special breathing technique usually proceeds with an increase in intonation, speed and volume, which at the same time signals the intensity of the spiritual atmosphere and the end of the *zikr*. The ceremony ends with the recital of short paragraph from the Qur'an, the praisal of the Prophet and the "friends of God" as well as a collective prayer.

clothes,[28] physical gestures, the dream as well as the connection of the hearts through the *shaykh*'s imagination (*rabıta*).[29] Establishing a connection between the disciple's heart and the *shaykh* (*rabıta*) for maintaining the relationship to him in order to make use of his spiritual power is of utmost importance for the master-disciple relationship[30] in Sufism.[31] "It's like constantly thinking of your lover or mistress", that is according to one disciple. The category of proximity, which i.a. is closely related to a connection of the hearts, therefore also always includes the category of love. This closeness (to the *shaykh*, the Prophet, to God) is both the result of love and one of its conditions – just as love is both the result and one of the conditions for closeness.

Another interesting point is the routine establishment of this proximity in the ritual practice of *rabıta*. At the beginning of each ceremony, the leader in the 'Osmanische Herberge' (Ottoman hostel)[32] in the Eifel asks the participants to connect their hearts with the *shaykh*. There is complete silence for about thirty seconds; everyone has shut his eyes in order to envision the *shaykh*. It's only afterwards that the ceremony officially starts.

The online courses, which are on the transmission of the teachings of the Sufi master, support the up-keeping of the relationship between the disciples and their masters in Sufi communities. In the Ottoman hostel, the evening sermon, which is projected onto a screen, is collectively recited with the participants. Not only does it function as a compensation for the physical absence of the personal medium (or rather the *shaykh*), but also offers an opportunity for the

28 The strict upkeeping of the *sünnet-i seniyye* ('the prophets actions') creates a spritual as well as a physical closeness to the Prophet and his comrades. Through the recollection of the times the Prophet lived in, which symbolises the climax or rather the most beneficial time in human history for Muslims (see Schimmel: Die Zeichen Gottes, 99), Muslims are above all hoping for intercessions from the Prophet to the God of Eternity.

29 A connection established by means of imagination, which is supported by the technical mediums of online streamings, images and videos. For more information regarding the connecting chain between the *shaykh*, participators and technical media such as the broadcasting of online courses of the master in the 'Osmanische Herberge', see Canli: 'In einer Stunde nach Amerika und zurück . . . '. The digital transmission of the *shaykh's* daily evening sermon (turk.: *sohbet*, arab.: *suhbah*) also fulfills the function of *rabıta* for the followers.

30 For more information regarding the master-disciple relationship, see Hammoudi: Master and Disciple.

31 However, this is not a common practice in every Sufi brotherhood (*tarikat*).

32 This is the German group of the Naqshbandi-Haqqani Order, whose ceremonies (named *hadra*, literally 'presence') include practices of the Mevlevi. The Grand Shaykh Nazim Adil al-Haqqani (also knowm as Şeyh Nazım Kıbrısi) from Cyprus died in 2014.

synchronized participation in devotions to the Prophet and to God with a huge network effect among the disciples living all over the world. At the same time, the spoken word is understood by the participants as a personally addressed message, aimed at each individual and his specific circumstances. A big part of the people I interviewed in the Ottoman hostel claim to have received answers to their personal questions through the (online) sermon. The *shaykh*, acting as God's servant, knows exactly which message is needed in a general context and which one in a specific context or rather he is ordered by God to recite just that. He functions as God's mouthpiece and as a spiritual advisor. For this reason, some disciples sporadically utter ecstatic vocalizations whilst listening. For the followers, the closeness to the *shaykh* is closely connected to the closeness to God as he has the honour of being close to God. Regardless of the enthusiasm for the possibility of following the sermon via technical media, a certain technology pessimism is to be recorded in the Shaykh Nazim's sermon as well with the representatives in the Ottoman hostel. The technological advancement has only harmed humans (interview with Shaykh Hasan on 2nd April 2010).

The Compression of Time and the Expansion of Space

The discussion on the movements in time and space as well as the topic of presence are not only relevant for the description of modern media technological processes, but are also important for the religious, pre-modern deemed cultural practices of Sufi communities. Also with regards to mediality, mobility and the presence of the Sufi master, the phenomena of "time compression" (*tayy-ı zamān*) and the "folding space" (*tayy-ı mekān*) are effective in Sufi teachings and practices. These phenomena enable them to overcome big distances in short amounts of time or even to be present at various places through "co-presence". Followers of religious Sufi communities claim to pray to or phone their *shaykh*,[33] their religious leader, in difficult times. The personally "appears" and offers help in an apparantely outstanding way (*kerāmet*).

The Sufi concepts of time and space show different particularities than those claimed in secular circles. Inspired by the interpretation of one of the Suras of the

33 The term "*shaykh*" (arab.: *shaykh*, turk.: *şeyh*) means "scholar". In Sufism it stands for people taking on spiritual leadership towards their disciples (arab.: *murīd*), which give themselves in for spiritual maturing. Whereas the disciples are submissive to their spiritual master on the one hand, their *shaykh* (also *murshid*) offers them security and maturity on the other.

Qur'an (41:53), there is a division between a "worldly time" (arab: *zamān āfāqī*) and a "spiritual time" (arab: *zamān anfusī*) in Islam.[34,35] Moreover, there is talk of "spaces within space" and "times within time" (Başar: „Bast-i Zaman ve Tayy-ı Mekân Ne Demektir?"). What is significant here is the phenomena of time compression (*tayy-ı zamān*), which enables the simultaneous happening of several actions within a short linear time frame. The fact that these actions happen at different, geographically widespread locations can be explained by the phenomena of *tayy-ı mekân*, through which a person can be present in several places by overcoming spatial boundaries.

In the US, the Naqshibandi-teacher *shaykh* Hisham Kabbani speaks of the "reality of folding" (arab.: *haqiqat at-ta'i*), which he sees as one of the seven truths of the human existence.[36] Regarding the ability of overcoming the linear time and the arbitrary movements within actual as well as virtual reality, Kabbani says the following:

> [. . .], this is a considerable miracle, a feat that we can't understand, but one the 'awliyā' can perform at will. For us, the soul is hopelessly locked in the body, like a bird in its cage. If only we knew how to unlock it, we could fly out the door! In the case of 'awliyāullah', once free of this physical prison, their souls soar skyward. This advanced mobility involves a curious inversion technique. The suddenly liberated soul can then turn around and enclose the very body from whence it emerged in a special sort of time bubble, which lift it to a dimension that crosses boundaries of ordinary temporal limitations. Provided with this vehicle, both body and soul (spirit) can then be transported instantaneously to a distant point. [. . .] For us, the soul will only escape our bodies at death, but for highly developed individuals, the soul is powerful enough to emerge and equip its body with wings and energy to propel it swiftly and silently through space and time.[37]

The ability of expanding time (*bast-ı zamān*) is owed to the "*tayy al-lisan*",[38] that is the above-average ability of recitation according to the Sufi understanding. This fact, however, is only accessible to humans once they have reached a higher spiritual level.

The chapter *Time Travel and other Realities*, which gives further explanations by Kabbani, draws up an analogy with the physical transport by airplane. Just as traveling by plane works through a certain "energy of quick transmission" – it being trivial and not in the least surprising – the "traveling" of the *evliyā* ('friends of God') is not supposed to astonish either. The latter relies on a much stronger

34 Schimmel: Die Zeichen Gottes, 109.
35 For more information refered to Islam see Schimmel: Die Zeichen Gottes, 75–119.
36 see Kannabi: Who are the Guides?, 92.
37 Kabbani: Who are the Guides?, 135.
38 Ibid., 91.

source of energy, namely the spiritual one.[39] The *evliyā* – according to Hahn/Schüttpelz the "personal"[40] and according to Meyer the "human"[41] medium – is like a crane lifting iron blocks of two tons each thanks to the spiritual power. Traveling within language (arab: *tayy al-lisan*) runs parallel to spatial traveling (*tayy-ı mekân*)[42] and thus also parallel to traveling through time (*tayy-ı zamān*). How the tongue manages to do this, Kabbani describes as follows:

> Under the tongue, Allah created an artery which goes directly to the heart. If the 'murīd' [disciple, RC] follows the 'murshid's' orders and makes progress, darkness is removed from the tongue and the heart become ›nurani‹ [a source of divine light, RC] – no longer the body or the tongue, but using the light of heavens. Anything related to heavens can do anything; nothing is impossible, there are no limits.[43]

The phenomena of the "reality of shrinking distance"[44] thus happens with the heart. When a person possesses the "godly light", he will acquire a heart, which God praises with the following words: "Neither Heavens nor Earth can contain Me, but the heart of My believing servant."[45] Thus the heart is seen as the place where the closeness to Allah is manifested. This place as a medium of proximity can work wonders according to Kabbani, as it is bound to eternity in contrast to the worldly intellect – however, only if the human being teams up with a personal medium, the so called *evliyā/evliyāullah* ('friend of God').

It is claimed that *dhikr* is about very real physical (psychosomatic or rather body technique) processes. The definitions of "time compression" and "expansion of space" are based on the events of *zikr*, namely the physical and spatial

39 See Ibid., 92. – Kabani: "When 'awliyā' want to move, they take the body and put it in the spirit and move with the speed of the spirit. When they arrive at their destination, they take the body." (Ibid.)

40 Hahn and Schüttpelz: Trancemedien und Neue Medien um 1900.

41 Meyer: Wechselnde Agencies, 313.

42 According to Başar, from a time perspective, this is achieved through time compression or rather "time dilatation" (Becker: Gottes geheime Gedanken, 177) – *bast-ı zamān* (Başar: 'Bast-ı zaman ve tayy-ı mekân' ne demektir?). It enables the perception of time as being expanded but within linear time, whereas it only makes up a fraction of time in relation to the linear one. Dreams or the night journey and the ascension of the Prophet (*mīraç*) are often stated as such examples. For more information see Nursi: The Flashes, 22–24.

43 Kabbani: Who are the Guides?, 93.

44 Ibid., 92.

45 Within the context of the traditions of the Prophet, these words are defined as *hadīs-i kudsī*. In Islam, these are textual thoughts or requests God passed on to him. The Prophet then put these into words (see Devellioğlu: Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat, 356). Therefore, they are not words directly declared by God (like the Qur'an), but rather godly inspirations or revelations brought forward by the Prophet himself.

blurring of borders, resulting from the infinite repetition of Gods name. The repetition seems to circle around and multiply itself, thanks to the creation of sounds and the own orientation ("intentionalty") – according to Kabbani with the "tongue" and the "heart".[46]

The Murshid's Glance and his Co-Presence

In order to present the power, time compression and space expansion have, Kabbani starts off by talking about the *murshid* (arab., 'spiritual leader', 'master') controlling the *murīd* (arab., 'desciple'). Here he draws a comparison to the control functions of the US Federal Aviation Administration, which guarantees the technical sufficiency of the electrical wiring in airplanes. The machine would potentially be unable to fly, should a fault occur. The same happens within the complex network of the nervous system – its cell structures, which conduct electrical impulses, the sensuous pathways leading back to the brain. Kabbani is surprised that "[s]trangely, our very consciousness rides on a wiring network we never inspect".[47] The *murshid* is authorized to control the human's electric impulses. In doing so, he carries responsibility for hundreds or thousands of people:

> In the time of one breath, he [the *murshid*, RC] has the power to inspect the wiring of his student and simultaneously understand 24.000 types of wisdom moving through him or her.[48]

One of *Shaykh* Nazim's disciples reported to me that the *shaykh* visits (the hearts of) his disciples at least three times a day. That is not tied to them having formed a connection to him through imagination (*rabıta*) or not. These forms of daily visits can also be found with Kabbani. He remits that the *murshid* is able to look upon a number of his disciples simultaneously and influence their thoughts, feelings and actions through the "Science of Folding Time",[49] the power of the *tayy-ı zamān:*

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46 The Muslim scholar Bediuzzaman Said Nursi (1876–1960) came up with the term "telephone of the heard" ("*kalp telefonu*") in order to describe the technical dimension of spiritual connection (with the devine) through the medium of the heart (Nursi: The Words, 173). For more information on the mediality of the tongue, see Canlı: 'In einer Stunde nach Amerika und zurück . . . '.

47 Kabbani: Who are the Guides?, 152.

48 Ibid., 152.

49 Many of people I interviewed were not familiar with this term. The acceptance of the special status their *shaykh* beholds, makes a deeper understanding of the process superfluous. One of my informers explained: "As simple people we are not able to grasp everything with our limited intellect. *Evliyāullah* are very special people, who are not bound to their bodies as their souls have overcome the body [characteristica of a higher spiritual level in Sufism, RC]. For them it's no big deal keeping an eye out for thousands of people or traveling thousands of

> The Murshid [. . .] can follow your every breath! He can see deep inside us, as though he held a special X-ray camera. He can help his followers refine themselves, separating the fine from the coarse, discarding the bad and keeping the good.[50]

The highly specialized technology of "filtration" and "elimination" cannot be upheld by every spiritual leader, however. The true leader has the power "to send you desires in the struggle to overcome bad desires".[51] That is why the disciples inner conflict sometimes suddenly erupts:

> When this happens, know that the shykh is working on you at that moment. You find yourself wavering between yes and no, do it or don't do it. When you feel there is a struggle within you, at that moment look to your spiritual guide and he will open a way for you![52]

The *shaykh*'s leading position is expanded by him working with the initiator and further deepened by his role as a connecting link, bringing disciples and God closer to one another. The *shaykh* is even granted permission to influence the disciple's decisions and positions according to God's will. Other than the formerly discussed technical and human medium, in terms of the Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), a special form of participation evolves from the personal medium. Explained by the affinity to the superhuman, this form can be described as a "spiritual" medium.

The phenomena of *tayy-ı zamān* (time compression) can also be found in the Qur'an: "That Day, We will fold up Heaven like folding the pages of a book" (21:104). Derived from that, Kabbani summarizes:

> In 'folding time together like the pages of a book', space occupied by things is collapsed, making it possible for Allah's servants to see many things together at once, even though they may be far apart in ordinary, unfolded space. The space-time continuum can be shaped by invoking the power of 'tayy az-zamān'. This is how the Murshid [. . .] can see many of his students together, at a glance, even though they may be scattered across the globe.[53]

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kilometres in just a few minutes" (Conversation with a follower of the Naqshibandi brotherhood at the so-called Sufi Soul Festival in the 'Osmanische Herberge'/Eifel, July 18, 2010).

50 Kabbani: Who are the Guides?, 152. – Images of the *shaykh*, which are put up numerously and in varying formats on the walls of the meeting places and privat flats, are supposed to enable the imagination of the *shaykh*'s presence at any time of day. Additionally, the closess to God (*kurbiyet*) is supposed to be experienced thanks to his "controlling" closeness. On the topic of "Images as Alternative Embodiments", here of the *shaykh*, see Belting: Bild-Anthropologie. For more information regarding imagery and religion, see Morgan: *The Sacred Gaze* and *The Embodied Eye*.

51 Kabbani: Who are the Guides?, 133.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid., 104–105.

During my research stay in Konya for the investigation of cultural and medial practices of todays Mevlevi communities in Turkey, an informant reported to me that his deceased *shaykh* had once spoken with a small group about how he had just been to America – for just one hour and back again (Field note excerpt, Konya, December 2009). One of the *shaykh's* disciples in the Ottoman hostel in the Eifel said the following on that phenomena:

> This ceremony takes place at the same time all over the world and our *shaykh* is present at every one of these ceremonies. He was here, too. Didn't you see him? He was standing over there [points towards the middle of the crowd in which the representative of the *shaykh* as the ceremonial leader was standing, RC] Field note excerpt, Osmanische Herberge/Eifel, July 17, 2010.

From a Sufi point of view, these phenomena are all about mystical forms of presence – although not fully disregarding the concrete physical one[54] – and about a special way of creating presence via channels, which remain invisible (to the spiritual "incompetent").

The telepresence or rather omnipresence or the master's co-presence is to some extent about something which does not only happen within the relationship with the idealized master, who's will one is subject to, but which rather takes place in every similar form of interpersonal relations. This feeling of "tele-presence" is created by constantly thinking about the master and the feeling of continually being watched by him – or at least in certain moments. This feeling is the logical consequence of the commemoration practices (for example the *rabıta*) – it's a constant interaction between the active (envisioning the master's presence and affection) and the passive (feeling watched by the master and experiencing his affection). In other words, Bernhard Waldenfels talks about an experience of "responsitivity",[55] that is a feeling of "self-responsibility" evolving from one's own "responsitivity",[56] triggered by the commemorative practices.

54 Many of the people I interviewed spoke about cases in which the involvement of the physical level became necessary for evaluation. For example, one of my informants (Konya, January 2010) spoke about an *evliyā,* who was present at a different place thanks to spatial expansion and time compression. The people circled around him found dust and stains on his clothing shortly afterwards, which had not been there before. When asked where the dust had came from, he claimed it was from the place he had just been to.

55 Waldenfels: Grundmotive einer Phänomenologie des Fremden, 56.

56 Ibid., 57.

Sufimedial Practices between Sickness and Recovery

As is common among various religions, the healing properties tied to religious practices have been widely discussed in Islamic mysticism.[57] It is based on the fundamental belief that a human being seeks divine truth – something his mind aquired in unity with God on "*Alastu*-day".[58] The human physicality separated him and his creator from one another; he lives in exile on earth and in his body. This seperation is the main reason for his never-ending pursuit of happiness or even infinity. Pain or physical burdens are a result of the various attempts (romantic love, career, wealth) people make in order to chase this dream – most leading to disappointment. That is because they are only able to satisfy up to a certain point. According to the Qur'an sure 13 verse 28, there is only one way of working against it – by commemorating God. "Those who have believed (and become established in belief), and whose hearts find rest and contentment in remembrance of and whole-hearted devotion to God. Be aware that it is in the remembrance of and whole-hearted devotion to God that hearts find rest and contentment."[59]

That is why the field of psychology as well as "Life Skills Coaching" have embraced Mevlana Rumi or rather the whirling *sema*.[60] Both the Mevlevi Sufism and the *zikr/sema* are an integral part of certain treatments – the so-called "Traditional Oriental Music Therapy" (Altorientalische Musiktherapie) or Ethnomusic therapy. It was invented by the Istanbul musician and Ethnomusicologist Dr. Rahmi Oruç Güvenç who died in 2017. He traced the origin of his methods back to the time of the shamans and the historic culture of Central Asia.[61]

One example from my field research in the winter of 2010 is supposed to showcase how the *zikr* practices' healing properties are practically implemented

57 See i.e. Futterknecht/Noseck-Licul/Kremser: Heilung in den Religionen. Selim: Sufi body practices and therapeutic politics in Berlin.

58 According to Schimmel, the term defines "the chronological-history defying fact of a pre-temporal bond" (Schimmel: Die Zeichen Gottes, 46).

59 Ünal: Qur'an, 474.

60 *Mesnevi Terapi* by Nevzat Tarhan ('Mathnawi Therapie') or *Rumi and Aşkın Therapy* by Faik Özdengül ('Rumi and Love therapy') are examples for publications, in which psychotherapsists have attempted to develop treatment methods for physical strains and disorders based on the teachings of Mevlana Rumi.

61 For further information, go to https://tumata.com/en/, last accessed on September 24, 2019. See also Langer: Therapeutisch-religiöse Ritualperformanzen im sufischen Kontext.

when feelings of restlessness arise in every day life. My main informant Hasan,[62] who is a member of one of the Sufi groups I did research on in Konya, invited me to dinner one day. As is customary, I was not the family's only dinner guest. A single mother (Eslem) and her two daughters (sixteen and ten years old) had been invited, too. Eslem was from Italy. She had converted to Islam twenty years earlier. A young woman (Zeynep) from the *dergah* (Sufi gathering place) offered to help the hosts. Following the traditional Anatolian way of eating, we were encouraged to eat from a round, very low table (*yer sofrası*). Except for Hasan's wife Meryem, who was occupied in the kitchen, we all sat down at the table. It was set worthy for a king; as if Meryem had aspired to depict the whole of the Turkish cuisine. The sheer number of delicacies was astounding. The atmosphere was amicable. But then something happened, which I had never experienced before:

> After about 10 minutes Eslem asked to be excused to go to the bathroom. She left without coming back. Zeynep followed her. Neither of them returned. Meryem called for Hasan. He also left. Then Meryem joined us at the table. Zeynep walked back in shortly afterwards and said "Luckily Hasan abi (older brother) arrived on time. I wouldn't have been able to help her." Before I could ask why, *zikr* noises were to be heard – Hasan's voice. "Are they performing the *zikr*?" I asked. "Yes" said Zeynep. "She [Eslem] went to Mevlana today and was very touched by it. Apparentely she was crying the whole time. Now she is saying that she constantly feels the urge to cry but doesn't know why." "May I also go in?" I asked modestly. "Of course" Meryem replied. I followed the noise, which was coming from the kitchen. Eslem was sitting on a chair, her hand resting on her chest. Hasan stood next to her. He was performing the *zikr* with one hand firmly placed on her shoulder. His body was calm, he was taking deep breaths and speaking with a voice coming from the deep down in his chest. I sat down on the floor. Hasan got down on his knees shortly afterwards. He began to repeat "Hayyy" (God's name *el-Hay*: "He who brings to life"), followed by a prayer. "Hayyy . . . Huuu . . . " were the last words I heard before he lowered his head to the floor, kissed it and straigthened himself up again. Eslem was taking deep breaths and exhaling. She seemed to be a little bit relieved. From time to time Hasan would use his deep voice to quietly utter "Hayyy" as if to finish. Then we all sat back down at the table.[63]

When I later spoke to Hasan about the case, he said that many people who come to Mevlana Rumi from western countries feel an emptines inside. They are possibly lacking close family bonds as they tend to be alone and do not receive a lot of proper, deep love. They are therefore often overwhelmed by the spiritual atmosphere at Mevlana, the warmth and affection and the familiar atmosphere, too. They are also taken aback by the *dergah* community offering their help unconditionally. In today's capitalistic society everything has its price, all the rest gets left behind.

62 All names have been changed.

63 Konya, diary entry, January 4, 2010.

What is important in this example is the obviously two-fold effect spirituality has. Visiting the shrine at the Mevlana Museum seems to cause a "disruption" or at least makes it come to light (being touched, crying). This has to be revoked by a Sufi actor using the Sufi practice of *zikr*. Hasan takes on the role of the healer by enacting the *zikr*. By making noises, through "contact magic"[64] and prayers – some kind of "healing techniques"[65] – he is able to make a connection between the meaning of God's names and Eslem, thus balancing out the haunting negative energy.

One evening in the *dergah,* the group leader's wife, whose husband is the deceised *shaykh's* representative, told me: "[He] doesn't give the young students, who come to him asking for training tasks, any excercises (*ders*, singular *zikr*) [. . .] It will harm their psyche if they can't deal with it. They could end up in a crisis. It's not a game."(Konya, diary entry, 10th December 2009). Another woman advised me to not actively partake in any *zikr*-ceremonies[66] – maybe I would not cope. She gave no reason for her exclamation even when I asked her for it. Other sources told me that God's names should not be used excessively as a *zikr*-practice or ritualised according to one's own discretion as each name has its own energy. An excess of a certain energy, which does not fit the ritual actors' capacaties, could do harm. It should only be performed under supervision by a teacher, as a "true" teacher acts like a "mental doctor" – he knows exactly in what frame of mind his pupil is in and will choose the training tasks accordingly. However, these apparent disruptions of the *zikr* were neither mentioned in tutorials nor in the Sufi literature I studied. Actually quite the opposite was the case: they pleaded for its implementation, although under the supervision of a master and a "true" one as such. That the spititual master's role or that of the cermonial leader is crucial for the success of the *zikr* became clear to me once I had spoken to Hasan about the ritual participants' behaviour, which appeared to paricularly ecstatic. What lead to this state of being? What did it mean? Was it a sign of a special and genuine divine connection which should be aimed for? Hasan replied that not everyone acting in a certain way (loud cries, jumping up and down) during the *zikr* is actually truly touched. Often it's just a sign of exuberance, they are putting on a show. The breathing

64 Zillinger: Die Trance, das Blut, die Kamera, 457.

65 Selim: Sufi body practices and therapeutic politics in Berlin, 258.

66 A *zikr*, as used here, describes a spiritual practicing of prayers in Sufi groups. It is practiced cermonialy and performatively both among individuals or in a collective. It is a vocal glorification of the Prophet as well as a repetition of God's names and other religious formulas such as the creed "*lā ilāhe illallāh*" ('there is no divinity, only God'). For more information regarding *zikr*, refer to note 26.

technique and such are learnable so that often it's concious and not as uncontrolled as it appears to be. The sheik's spiritual representative is the most senior in the *dergah* and highly regarded as such. Nonetheless, he is not the deceased *shaykh's* equal on a spiritual level. When leading the group during the collective *zikr,* he is too weak. He should step into the circle and stand in front of them to balance these energies in cases in which participants act effusively, also beause of the excess energy. The deceased master would have done that, he would not have tolerated such behaviour. To be able to lead a ritual ceremony trance-technically successful and salutary is therefore also one of the expectations the Sufis have of a "true" master.

During my research on the relationof disruptions and *sema/zikr*, I finally stumbled upon an article on the website rumimevlevi.vom,[67] which talks about the harm caused by evil spirits (*cin*) during *zikr*. The article is entitled "Sufi Meditasyon (Sema, Devran, Hatme.) ve Sufilik" ['Sufi meditation (Sema, Devran, Hatme.) and Sufism']. It does not mention its author however. There is only the designation "bârânî" at the end of the text. It stresses the master's roles'/ceremonial leader's roles' significance, whilst simultaneously criticising the lack of Sufi centres able to pass on their knowledge and the required experience to on-going spiritual masters. Regarding the master's function, it states:

> The receptivity of a person practicing Sufi meditation (Sema, Devran, Hatme.) is more and more externally influenced and impacted. To use a more technical term, one can say that the "physical field" is widened. [. . .] Don't forget: the aim of Sufi mediation [. . .] is to open the heart's doors. Otherwise the actual goal of Sufi meditation [. . .], namely bringing people into contact with their own identity, will not be reached . . . In all the previous initiatives the teachers mentally controlled their pupils' developments by referring to non-sensuary knowledge. A teacher supervising such a case would always have its pupil under control in order for him to avoid harm. In order to shield him from external influences, he even included him in his magnetic field during meditation . . . That is precisely where other major warning signs start to flash. There is always the possibility that other and unwelcome parasite energies will appear through the door which is being pushed open."[68]

In a nutshell: Applied to the collective *zikr*-ceremony, one can say that each and every participant sets energies loose, which reach the super natural world through the spiritual master's/ceremonial leader's influence (agency) via a secured and controlled "magnetic field" he is responsible for. The spirits' fields of action are included in this world, the evil ones remain dormant though. This results in a blessing of power/healing powers, which are spread among the actors.

67 A platform largely consisting of articles contributed by academic Sufi experts and spiritual authorities in area of Mevlevi Sufism.

68 www.rumi2007.com/tr/authors-society/23-barani/2525-sufi-meditasyon-sema-devran-hatme-ve-sufilik.

(see Figure 3 left). The absence of such a leader also leads to an absence of a secured field. The evil spirits' harmful energy reaches the participants' hearts through the door leading to the super natural, which was opened during the ritual. Instead of healing and soothing energies being set free, the evil spirits' (evil *cin)* harmful agency becomes more prominent (see Figure 3 right). This can lead to mental disorders, which again can only be lifted by "correctly" implementing the ritual practice. Hence, one and the same medium can have healing as well as harmful effects, depending on the shift of the *agency* (and the pupils' capacity).

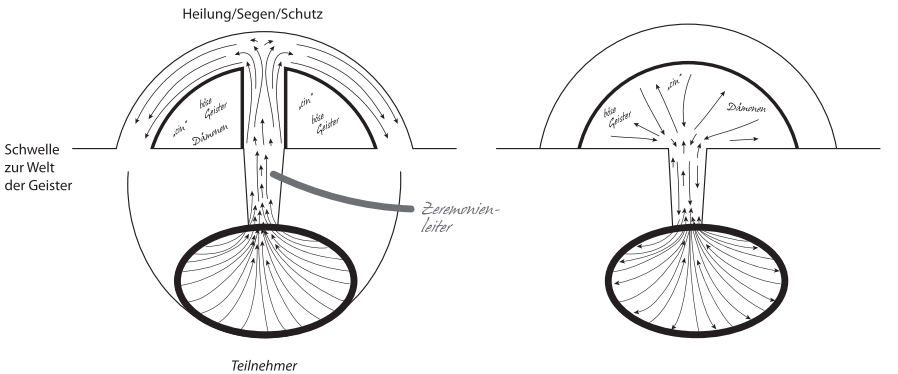


Figure 3: The moment of *zikr*, the master's role and the danger coming from evil spirits. Development and distribution of the blessing of power under the agency of a spiritual master/leader (left). The – harmful – agency of the evil spirits (evil *cin)* during the absence of a master, which would have had a channeling effect on the spiritual energies (right). [Visualisation: RC].

Trust and Doubt: Questioning Authenticity and Legitimacy

The justification for a Mevlevi *shaykh* comes from having served a deceased *shaykh* for a certain amount of time. He passes his leading role onto disciple, meaning the disciple is appointed his spiritual successor. Other means of justification are miraculous deeds or dreams for example. Only prophets are entitled to have performed miracles (*mucize*) in Islam. However, it is believed that humans who have reached a certain level of spirituality can act outstandingly (*kerāmet*), which can be counted as watered-down versions of miracles. Miracles are often and happily discussed among Sufis, in particular among those less

educated. Co-presences or rather events taking place on a super natural spatial and timely dimension are the most popular among the miraculous tales.

Howbeit, my main informants from one of the Sufi groups in Konya told me that it was characteristic for a relatively low level of spirituality to have something miraculous happen to you as one could get caught up in it by talking about it too often. This again would lead to a strengthening of the ego, which comes with the risk of overestimating yourself and hinders you in reaching the next spiritual level. A big ego stands in the way of spiritual maturity and thus is not welcomed. Nonetheless, such deeds are often talked about among the lower and middle class Sufis – its discourse alone seems to trigger collective, transcendental feelings (enthusiastic gestures, crying). These tales are used as a reference for a saint's integrity or for the right choice of the *tarikat* (way, path; in this context a certain school of sufi teachings and practices), which many initiate through their dreams. One of the leaders of a women's Mevlevi group in Konya was telling me about the many failed attempts over the years of finding a proper *shaykh*. "One does want to see something in him, some sort of *kerāmet*, to prove that he really is one of God's chosen ones" she admitted.[69]

Miraculous events and their stories are avoided and sought out at the same time. One of the reasons for avoiding them has been the recital of the Sufi saying "they (the miracles) urge the love of the loving, the disbelief of the non-believers" [*Aşıkın aşkını, fasıkın faskını artırır*]. Not everyone is capable and mature enough to understand this. Therefore it only harms the listener. Moreover, miracles and spiritual dreams are to be regarded as God given – if you do not act accordingly (silent, accepting and humble), then it could be that this gift is taken away from you or rather given to someone else. None of the explanations failed to mention that miracles/dreams should be treated with caution, as they could be fiendish or rather initiated by demons (*cin*).[70] Massively over evaluating these special events

69 Konya, conversation on December 17, 2010.

70 An example: My main informant in Konya introduced me to two elderly (Mevlevi) Sufis. One of them spoke abput the spiritual levels, focussing on the level of "*ilm-i ledun*" – the highest level of spiritual knowledge in Sufism; someone who has reached it, is capable of the super natural. He criticised that nowadays everyone went around calling himself a *shaykh*. He would have had to reach the first step of *ilm-i ledün*, which is challenging. The other Sufi (disciple of a deceased and as a Mevlevi teacher admired Sufi) spoke of the miraculous events, which accompany him every day and of doors that opened by themselves when he phoned Mevlana with this in mind. Vice versa, Mevlana Rumi directly addressed him at his grave (Konya, conversations on January 12, 2011). Those tales where all he talked to me about. He referred to a disciple, who stayed with him in order to become just that. Without doubt, the effect such stories have on his position as a spiritual actor is not to be underestimated.

or dreams would only harm you as a person. If anything, they should only be told to someone capable of adequately interpreting dreams as a dream can be compared with the "state of a bird whilst flying; when it is interpreted, it is as if the bird is setting out to land". Thus the interpretation determines how the dream is made to come true, whereby only the first interpretation is really relevant. This is why there is the demand to only, if anything, talk to a spiritually educated person about it – in the best case to one's own *shaykh*. One event can be interpreted in many ways, stating varying reasons for the appearance and thus depending on how it is dealt with, leading to different results.

The increasing modernisation and medialisation process requires a structural and conceptual reform – especially considering Turkey's current socio-political order. As the closing down of Sufi convents does not meet the requirements of a traditional Dervish – upbringing, teachers or those calling themselves such, are mistrusted. They are put under pressure, i.a. by Mevlana's blood relatives, to legitimise their position. Compared to 100 years ago, there are various forms of Mevlevi Sufism nowadays with diverging demands towards Mevlana, making the field a highly complex one.[71] The problem is that the conditions for legitimation are controversial – at least for outsiders or rather those without prior knowledge. The official legitimation for a *shaykh* by the *Makam-ı Çelebi* (the highest rank in Mevlevi Sufism, which is occupied by a blood relative) is not generally accepted by all of the participants. Many claim legitimacy without such an authority – that is independent of the leader. On the other hand, spiritual legitimacy – as gained by dreams or miraculous events – is rarely encouraged without an official letter of approval considering the impossibility of any form of verification. Hence, the approval of orally appointing a disciple through a deceased *shaykh* is tricky and so questioned, negating the claim on authority.[72]

In a nutshell: the ranking or rather the validity of the means of legitimation and the justification of the claims against Mevlana Rumi are questioned differently and mark an important friction point among Mevlevi actors. Whereas traditional media of legitimation such as 'placing orders' (*icazet*, both in written form – see Figure 4 – and in a dream), the ability of reading minds or making miracles happen can be denied, on-going students consider such material or immaterial media of legitimation as proof for a person's "sainthood".

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71 There are groups for example, who genuinely belong to another order, but still claim to have a Mevlevi legitimation. Additionally there are some, who exercise ritual Mevlevi Sufism practices (*sema*) without having been approved/legitimised by the *Makam-ı Çelebi*. A categorisation of today's appearances is therefore challenging.

72 For more information about authority and spiritual lecitimicy see Sorgenfrei: American Dervish.



Figure 4: 'Placing order' (*icazet*) oft the Postnishin Emin Işık (Mevlevi ceremonial master) as material media of legitimation (Istanbul, 4th February 2011).

Interfaces between Media and Religion and the Discourse of Authenticity

According to the "triad" of the "media-anthropological turn", formulated by Erhard Schüttpelz, in Mevlevi Sufism of today "signs" (verbal techniques), "persons" (ritual techniques) and "artifacts" (material techniques) are reassembled and renegotiated.[73] The concurrence of these three elements triggers "chains of operations" which are of transforming force for each of these elements and regarded as the big picture in the so-called "center". Thus, in this center, the "cyclization of technical derivation"[74] of signs, things and artifacts manifest themselves as processes of medialization. Transferred to the role of Sufi masters in ritual it can be said as a consequence: The Sufi master takes a role that controls and balances the spiritual energy. It simply acts as a medium as it provides a protected, coded mediation of the energy exchange between the world of the supernatural and the heart of the ritual participants for a protected

73 Schüttpelz: Die medienanthropologische Kehre der Kulturtechniken, 99.
74 Ibid., 96.

media field into which "parasitic energies" or the evil spirits can not break in to cause harm to participants. If this link is missing in the chain of operation or if it is too weak, then the misuse of the opening of the spiritual space can occur by those intangible "non-human actors"[75] which cause disturbances.

In addition to this essential insight into the mediality of Mevlevi Sufism, there are three outcomes that affect interactions or interferences between media/materiality/technical mediality and rituals/religion/Sufi mediality. The issue is always about authenticity of signs, persons (practices) and artifacts:

1. The spiritualist connotation of media and communication in Sufism can be found similarly in modern media technologies.[76] This means that there are analogies as well as reciprocal increases between the processes of (ritual) practices based on Sufi thought and modern media technical processes. Terms which are reverted to Sufi views even by Sufis are more likely technical media concepts.[77] These are among other things those which are used to explain the relationship between student and master, the phenomena of inner maturation as well as the overcoming of space (*tayy-ı mekān*) and time compression (*tayy-ı zamān*) (for example 'channel', 'electrical power', 'link', 'connection', 'camera' of the *shaykh*, Navigation, 'X-ray camera'). As the television or technology of internet reflects procedures of *tayy-ı zamān* and *tayy-ı mekân* by making it possible to participate in several events in distance (receptively),[78] the media of control in internet displays with its access to all sorts of information about the user (e.g. about the user

75 Oriented towards the Actor-Network-Theory (Belliger/Krieger: ANThology) and Bruno Latour's focus on the entanglement between 'humans and non-human actors' in networks (see Latour: Die Hoffnung der Pandora, 211ff.). Evil spirits are to be included through the expansion around the immaterial level.

76 For more details see Behrend: Electricity, Spirit Mediums, and the Media of Spirits, 187–200.

77 See Canlı: 'In einer Stunde nach Amerika und zurück . . . '

78 For more details see Moores' description of "concept of the doubling of place and [. . .] reflections on the altered 'possibilities of being' for media users" (The Doubling of Place, 21) as well as regarding to the co-presence supported by electrical media – with the result "that place, and experiences of being-in-place, can be pluralized in and by electronically mediated communication" (ibid., 32). At another Moore writes: "[. . .] social relationships of familiarity in the late modern age can be 'stretched' across distances. Telephones [. . .] are technologies that have clearly helped to facilitate this stretching or extension of relationships (which has been thought by some to involve a simultanous 'shrinking' or compression of the world [. . .])" (ibid., 31). Here we find analogies to Sufi concepts of space and time and imagination techniques. See Allon (An ontology of everyday control, 253–255) regarding the reconceptualisation of the concept of space and time as well as location and distance through modern media and communication technologies and their impact on social spaces and interactions.

behavior) strong parallels to 'quasi-omnipresence' of the *shaykh* who 'looks' of each of his students and wields influence with his knowledge. The orientation of a Sufi to visions/dreams also finds its counterpart in the technical medium of navigation, a term used by a Sufi at the same time to describe the legal function of his teacher for him.[79] Thus, as a signpost, the Sufi master navigates his students through life and the *zikr*. Co-presences can thus be connected with telemedia, media monitoring with the presence and omniscience of the master, and in a broader sense of God, the security key on transactions in the internet or virus programs on the PC with the protection of the "magnetic field" of the ceremony conductor. The legitimation of the authenticity of Sufi persons, things and artifacts in the form of comparison with the "original" or the tradition is just medialised as well (it can be both material and immaterial). The verification of the security of transactions in the network or internet applications (about customer satisfaction, integrity of the provider, rankings etc.) follows a similar pattern. Ritual formulas as verbal techniques find their counterpart in the technical system of coding that allows access to digital spheres and the exchange of information.

It is true that Sufi practical and technical medialities differ that mystical processes do not function 'at the touch of a button' but require an increased social and psychosomatic sensitivity and harmony (alignment, psychosomatic constitution, the role of the ceremony conductor, etc.) even if requirements of certain media competency exist at technical processes. Nevertheless, the more technical developments are progressing, the more the technical surfaces of Sufi (including spiritual) and technical media may coincide and light themselves.

2. Thinking of the construction of the whirling *sema* into a transnational and economic (also political) media event in the Mevlana cultural center it becomes obvious that today the religious "archaizing" of Sufi rituals obtains new "profane" traits.[80] This rejects the form of disappearance or the one of being replaced, which are postulated for religious rituals by modern and allegedly secular media techniques. Instead of this, both components interlock. Nevertheless, this leads to the fear of the decay of spiritual practices under modern conditions. Authenticity and credibility connected with modesty and simplicity are opposed to this perception of (mass media) representation. The accusation of certain actors to have economic interests in Mevlana Rumi is

79 The *shaykh* is like a "navigation", an adept said after a meeting og the International Mevlana Foundation in Switzerland: "It tells you which way you have to go to achieve the destination most rapidly. He announces, for example, when there are traffic jams" (Mannenbach/Switzerland, conversation on May 28, 2012).

80 Turner: Liminalität und Communitas.

justified by reference to the practice of the *sema*. It thus refers to the framing of the *sema* or its integration into different settings: The whirling ritual is redesigned (mostly because of touristic purposes), reformulated or completely redefined (also under media technical influence), which is misleading and only serves as marketing. The performance of "official" Sufis in the cultural center is considered by other Sufis as a sign of not being "true" Dervishes. The tension between commercialized service as "fake" or as a sign of insincerity versus service without reward as "authentic" spirituality are present everywhere in today's (Mevlevi)Sufism. Categories of religion, spirituality and authenticity counterpose to those of culture, (Sufi) tourism and economy – or rather it is again a coincidence and precisely what characterizes today's Mevlevi Sufism.

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Graham M. Jones

Purity's Perils. Race, Republicanism, and Relevance of Magic in Contemporary France

It is well enough known that secular entertainment magicians, or illusionists, have long assumed an aggressively prosecutorial role in the mediumistic trials of spiritualists, psychics, fakirs, and other exponents of esoteric arts. At times, they have featured as expert witnesses in real legal proceedings.[1] More often, they have positioned themselves as self-appointed advocates on the behalf of an allegedly credulous public, whom they have sought to defend from the depredations of charlatanic mediums through feats of debunking.[2] These performances of disenchantment have been a way for illusionists to establish their credibility as experts, enact "professional vision,"[3] and – through a feat of what Latour calls "purification"[4] – define modern magic in opposition to the occult.[5]

Often, this dynamic has pit white, male illusionists against subaltern mediums and other exponents of magic in putatively primitive forms – women or ethnic others.[6] In this historical context, anthropologists and modern magicians have worked in tandem to define the primitive magician as the ultimate figure of transgressive alterity.[7] The juxtapositions they elaborated between disenchanted illusionism and enchanted mediumship rely on "semiotic ideologies"[8] around which modern magic has been constituted as a signifying medium: in mediumistic practices, paranormal effects (noises, excretions, materializations . . .) are generally an index of some other agent manifesting itself through an otherwise passive medium.[9] In modern magic, by contrast, paranormal effects are, normatively speaking, never an index of anything but an agentive performer's own skill.[10]

1 Dyson: 'Gentleman Mountebanks'; Young: Empowering Passivity.

2 Cook: Arts of Deception; During: Modern Enchantments; Lachapelle: Investigating the Supernatural; Lachapelle: Conjuring Science; Lamont: Extraordinary Beliefs; Mangan: Performing Dark Arts; Srinivas: Doubtful Illusions.

3 Goodwin: Professional Vision.

4 Latour: We Have Never Been Modern.

5 Lamont: Modern Magic.

6 McGarry: Ghosts of Futures Past; Owen: The Darkened Room.

7 Jones: Magic's Reason.

8 Keane: Semiotics.

9 Natale: The Medium on the Stage.

10 Jones: Magic with a Message.

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In this chapter, I want to reflect a bit further on the cultural conditions that allow modern magicians to embody this kind of self-referential skill. What kinds of subject positions and participation frameworks does the anti-mediumistic medium of their magic presuppose? In exploring these questions, I also reflect in greater length on the production of difference within entertainment magic itself as a community of practice. I have written elsewhere about highly marked gender stratification within this activity[11]; here my primary focus will be race and ethnicity, particularly as they are constructed and contested among illusionists in contemporary France. How does race shape membership in the French magic community and what does this reveal about the nature of citizenship in contemporary France? To answer these questions, I analyze an instance in which French magicians employed digital media to put the performances of a "Muslim French"[12] magician on trial. In examining their use of digital media to transact activities of assessing magic performances as a form of ethnic performativity, I also simultaneously describe a social drama that set the norms, forms, and "media ideologies"[13] of online sociality against offline sociality and vocational solidarity.

Mediating Expert Discourse

Like many subcultures, the French magic scene as I came to know it intimately over several years of participant observation fieldwork is both tight-knit and factious. Entertainment magicians are drawn together by their mutual investment in an esoteric and secretive activity that requires them to distinguish between insiders (those with whom secrets are exchanged) and outsiders (those to whom secrets are displayed but withheld). Yet the distinctive criteria of connoisseurship magicians share also serve as a basis for internal differentiation and hierarchical rankings of knowledge and skill.

Although there are principles of cooperation between magicians who help each other advance both technically and professionally, there are countervailing principles of competition. Thus, while magicians acquire knowledge by exchanging trade secrets, they also view each other as rivals in the pursuit of distinguishing or individuating skills – which serve as markers of prestige; and while they

11 Jones: Trade of the Tricks.
12 Fernando: The Republic Unsettled.
13 Gershon: Media Ideologies.

depend on their connections to other magicians within a professional network to find paying gigs, they are also locked in increasingly fierce competition for work. In this essay, I focus on small group dynamics of consensus and conflict that play out offstage and behind the scenes among magicians, particularly in respect to issues of community membership, and the scrutiny magicians subject each other to in policing boundaries between insiders and outsiders.

Magic is simultaneously a subculture and a speech community whose members have distinguishing ways of engaging in what Goffman calls "staging talk,"[14] conversation devoted to evaluating, theorizing, and strategizing performance. The advent of French-language magic magazines in the early twentieth century provided a means of extending Francophone magicians' staging talk in both time and space, consolidating the magic world both as a "public"[15] and as an "imagined community."[16] More recently, magic websites have emerged as the dominant channel of mediating talk and community among magicians, representing a relatively dialogic alternative to comparatively monologic print media. Today, several thousand Francophone magicians are connected online, posting hundreds of comments daily to Internet discussion forums – asynchronous, polyadic message boards. These comments constitute "threads," sequences of interactional turns that exhibit some of the same properties of dynamic emergence as conversation. As anthropologists have shown in a variety of diverse settings, discussion forum participants strategically use language and other semiotic resources to engage in culturally complex forms of co-constructed identity-work.[17]

In this essay, I analyze the one of the longest – and arguably most controversial – threads ever on the largest Francophone magic website. The thread unfolded on a part of the website where only verified members with a registered account could post, but which anyone online could read. Despite the consequently public nature of this conversation, I have anonymized it for the purposes of this analysis, in addition to translating all messages into colloquial English. Although the participants in the forum mostly used pseudonymous screen-names accompanied by generally fanciful profile images, they were hardly anonymous to each other. As I learned during fieldwork, although magicians who converse in online forums may not know each other directly, most

14 Goffman: The Presentation of Self, 175.

15 Cody: Publics and Politics.

16 Anderson: Imagined Communities.

17 For instance, Bernal: Nation as Network; Brink-Danan: The Meaning of Ladino; Jones and Schieffelin: Talking Text; Kramer: The Playful is Political; Starn: The Passion of Tiger Woods.

are in regular social and professional contact offline with other magicians, connected via a very real network of mutual acquaintance. Many conversations that begin online often carry over into face-to-face talk, and face-to-face talk often feeds back into the forums.

These forums are relatively democratic, insofar as there are no structural constraints on participation from young, novice, and/or amateur magicians, and no particular interactional advantage conferred upon experienced, senior or professional magicians – other than the considerable support that they can marshal or prestige that they can project. Situations where magicians with very different backgrounds, standards and aesthetic criteria engage in conversations on relatively equal footing often prove explosive, and some participants intentionally antagonize (or troll) others, but the levels of incivility are generally mitigated by the fact that most users are long-term participants in both the forums and the magic scene, who may, sooner or later, encounter each other in off-line settings. Moreover, the webmaster has been known to ban individuals for egregious and/or repeated transgressions of community norms.

This point was driven home on a visit to Paris in 2010. I was hoping to organize a party to reconnect with some of the magicians I had gotten to know during my fieldwork several years earlier. I was working on a guest-list with one of my closest friends in the magic world, and was surprised when he vetoed my suggestion of another magician we had both once been friendly with. "We can't be in the same room together," he said gravely.

I was shocked. "What happened?" I asked. "You guys used to be friends!"

"It was Kamel." He explained that an explosive online discussion thread about a series of televised performances by a young magician named Kamel had riven the French magic world into two bitterly opposed groups, and that this erstwhile friend was on the opposing side of the debate. How could this mediated conversation have grown so divisive that it effectively ended friendships? To answer this question, I go back to the thread itself as an instance of staging talk. The pivotal question that emerged was whether or not Kamel was a "good" magician worthy of featuring prominently on a much-watched primetime program, or if factors other than talent were involved in his success, namely his North African ethnic background.

The debate about the significance of ethnicity in explaining Kamel's success reflects vexed attitudes towards race in contemporary France. At the same time, French magicians' debate about the "deservedness" of Kamel's success also articulates with questions of professional theodicy: why does *anyone* succeed or fail in this line of work, and what does this reveal about magic as a genre, as a profession, and as a field of cultural production? Magicians who posted assessments of Kamel as a performer (and as a person) were also tacitly

claiming authority to so assess; their online assessments were performative "enactments of expertise"[18] directed to other magicians. Insofar as magicians' negative assessments of Kamel seemed to diverge from the perception and reception of Kamel by the French public at large, the topic of his activity provoked – within the thread – questions about whether or not particular magicians (and magicians in general) were good judges of magic.

Mediating Ethnicity in a White Public Space

When the young close-up magician Kamel Boutayeb began making regular appearances performing card tricks for guests on a primetime talk show in 2009, he was a rarity for conservative French television. He was not only *rebeu* – a descendent of Maghrebi (in his case, Moroccan) immigrants – but also a *banlieusard* – someone from the low-income, majority immigrant suburbs, or *banlieue*s, of Paris. In fact, Kamel had grown up in France's most notorious banlieue, Clichy-sous-Bois in Seine-St. Denis, where, in 2005, three teenagers were electrocuted – two fatally – while fleeing unprovoked police aggression, setting off waves of riots that convulsed the nation and captured the world's attention.

Kamel's televised appearances often accentuated tropes of urban authenticity such as hip-hop fashion, music, dance, and street art. In television specials, he often appeared in the company of other young people of African descent. Moreover, Kamel spoke in a banlieue sociolect[19] that audibly marked him as a banlieusard. If only for these reasons, Kamel represented a significant figure in the history French popular culture, enacting positively valanced ethnic identity in the otherwise "white public space"[20] of primetime French television.[21]

He was also a first for French magic. Several magicians of color had gained hard-won respect in the overwhelmingly white world of magic insiders, but none of them had achieved anything like the level of overnight celebrity and instant name recognition that Kamel came to enjoy vis-à-vis the public at large. And while other magicians of color dressed in (typical) formal attire or (stereotypical) oriental garb,[22] Kamel embraced a banlieue style that didn't fit easily

18 Carr: Enactments of Expertise.

19 Doran: Alternative French; Lehka-Lemarchand: Questionner la signification.

20 Hill: The Everyday Language of White Racism.

21 See also Belkacem: Expressing and Contesting Minoritization; Dotson-Renta: 'On n'est pas condamné à l'échec'.

22 See Goto-Jones: Conjuring Asia.

into magic's established typecasting. Sure, some white male magicians had already appropriated hip-hop music, dance, and fashion on stage, but these were generally interpreted positively as indexes of youth culture. In Kamel's case, magicians read them as potentially problematic markers of ethnic identity.

Kamel became an instant lighting rod. The most widely used Francophone magicians' forum lit up. The first of several comment threads about Kamel soon became the site's longest thread ever, swelling to over 600 messages with over 400,000 page views. The conversation was reactivated on a weekly basis every time Kamel made a television appearance – which participants either watched on air or streaming over the web before commenting online. Participants posted links to videos of Kamel in the thread itself, making it easy for both his supporters and detractors to watch and scrutinize each of his performances for evidence to support their respective assessments. They thereby constituted what Du Bois calls a "stance-rich environment,"[23] where stance is understood as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field."[24] In this thread, the primary object of evaluation was Kamel, a figure who proved particularly "good to think" with about a variety of issues.

The thread featured a handful of blatantly racist remarks: "I'm working on my own TV appearance with an extraordinary act," one poster mocked. "I magically change the places of my two veiled partners [. . .] And no one understands the trick . . . There's even a big fan to blow wind in the veils . . . I know men like that." Elsewhere the same person wrote, wrote "Yes Kamel has to work . . . it's a great savings for the welfare office . . . !!!" Such overt racism was generally not supported or well received. One active participant wrote early in the thread, once the captious tone had been established, "There's one thing I'll never understand, absolutely never, and that's how it's possible to make such categorical judgments about someone who's beginning his career. Behind all that I can only hear one thing: we don't want anyone like that. Get off the stage. Beat it." From relatively early on, participants leveled allegations of racism at each other, and even Kamel's fiercest critics mostly disavowed and denounced racist attitudes. Indeed, meta-conversation about whether or not the conversation itself was racist seemed to be a – if not the – major factor propelling the thread.

23 Du Bois: The Stance Triangle.
24 Ibid., 163.

Setting overtly racist comments aside, then, the topic of controversy seemed, by the standards of this (and perhaps any) community of practice, exceedingly banal: Kamel's level of skill. Was Kamel a good enough magician to really merit a position performing weekly on a much-watched primetime show, not to mention multiple television specials? This issue of deservedness, however, unleashed profound questions about not just what it means to be a magician but also the racialized nature of opportunity and entitlement in French society more broadly.[25]

Magicians always subject each other's performances to scrutiny, but seldom if ever with the intensity focused on Kamel. His supporters and detractors alike viewed and reviewed videos of his every performance, combing over them for signs of technical adequacy or inadequacy, and circulating hyperlinks as evidence to support their claims. For instance, one poster criticized Kamel's execution of the technique called a "break" used in manipulating cards: "What shocked me was the huuuuuuuuge break with the little finger." Posters went back and forth for weeks about whether or not the break was well-executed given the particular circumstances. In some cases, forum participants introduced transcriptions of particular interactions to analyze the quality of Kamel's patter. Devoting a long message to analyzing the patter and sleights over the course an entire performance, one of Kamel's staunchest supporters commented on the magician's adept verbal repartee at a particularly tense moment: "[the volunteer] says to him: 'I think I saw what you did.' Here it's starting to go bad for Kamel . . . But he responds, spur-of-the-moment: 'so that makes two of us who know'; I think that's proof of his experience because the 'bon mot' discharges immediately . . ."

Magicians are connoisseurs of each other's work, but the protracted forensic analysis of the minutiae of Kamel's every word and gesture, was unusual. I believe that it is impossible to explain the level of intense scrutiny that he provoked without reference to questions of race and ethnicity, which were never far from the surface in this thread. Reading through the comments, I felt like I was getting a behind-the-scenes look at the kind of amplified scrutiny people of color – particularly those of North African descent – are widely known to face in the French workplace.[26] To be clear, I am not describing an actual instance of workplace discrimination, but rather what may be an enactment of what sociologists call

25 See Poulin-Deltour: The prépa de proximité.

26 For instance, Duroy: North African Identity and Racial Discrimination in France; Silberman and Fournier: Second Generations on the Job Market in France.

"double standards"[27] or the gender- and race-based shifting standards of competence model,[28] according to which observers may require better performance from women or minorities before concluding that they have the same ability as white men.[29] Thus, even when women and minorities meet minimum standards, they still must work harder to prove that their performance is ability-based.

The fourth message in the thread contained the first overtly negative assessment of Kamel's performance: "I didn't like it at all. The persona is cloying and resembles a caricature of an amateur magician." Over the course of the thread, there were myriad other negative assessments. Many posters echoed complaints about lack of originality or sophistication. One wrote: "The persona is nice, young, playful . . . It's fine from that angle. But if you please, Mr. Kamel, give us something other than what any muggle [i.e., non-magician] could do in ten minutes after making a purchase at a magic shop!" Others complained about his lack of range: "in less than one month 3 times Slydini's toilet paper trick and 2 times 'Wow' and I haven't even seen all the shows. This reiteration could simply demonstrate a lack of magic culture, of research, of work on repertoire, and whatever else . . . But I'm going to be more frank. Kamel is not an Artist."

Some criticized Kamel's manners and speaking style: "he made some banknotes appear," one reported. "One of the guests wanted to take one and he asked her for a kiss in exchange for the money . . . Sorry, but that's anything but decorous." Another wrote: "Try to speak decent French (I'm not talking about 'patter' just 'speech' . . . agreed?)? Pfff, who cares? Try to write decent French, or at the very least write neatly? Pfff, who cares? I think Kamel is just someone who doesn't care. But who cares?"

Another serious criticism concerned the potential violation of intellectual property rights, as posters speculated (and subsequently confirmed) that Kamel had performed effects developed by other magicians without seeking customary permissions. For instance:

> I don't have anything against Kamel, but it must be said that there's an enormous difference between performing on TV a trick that is for sale in some format, and reworking a trick by someone else who earns their living with it, even though that trick has never been published or sold in any form. As we say, 'it's a no-no.' in Kamel's case, it's doubtlessly ignorance and not the intention to do harm that motivates him . . .

27 Foschi: Double Standards in the Evaluation of Men and Women; Foschi, Lai, and Sigerson: Gender and Double Standards.

28 Biernat and Kobrynowicz: Gender- and Race-Based Standards of Competence.

29 Compare Berger, Rosenholtz, and Zelditch: Status Organizing Processes; Pugh and Wahrman: Neutralizing Sexism.

As the posts multiplied, indexes of Kamel's non-membership in the community of magicians piled up: to critics, he appeared to have a limited repertoire, perform relatively elementary material, sometimes copy other magicians, and lack the kind of dexterity and polished stagecraft that magicians value as markers of expertise. That Kamel himself was not a participant in the online forum and could not defend himself – even when posters addressed him directly and beseeched him to respond ("Kamel, if you're reading this, send me a private message") – further accentuated his difference.

Almost everyone concurred that Kamel was not a technical virtuoso, but his performances nevertheless elicited a number of favorable reactions and endorsements. For instance:

> if we begin with the assumption that Kamel is not making art but rather entertaining, he's doing a pretty good job at it. He's an entertainer, he demonstrates that certain classic effects (some might say 'basic') are effective 'in their own right', and he adds an element of lightheartedness aimed at the '16th arrondissement homies' [i.e., wealthy television personalities]:-p that they seem to enjoy. I find the charges leveled at him in this thread a bit heavy, even if I understand their (noble?) motivation. Something tells me nevertheless that Kamel is holding up his end of the 'bargain' for the moment. He's kind of the 'friend who's a magician and does awesome things.' For the initiates, his breaks are monstrous, his techniques are crude, but famous magicians sometimes do much worse without anyone saying anything about it.

This message explicitly alleges that Kamel was being subjected to criticisms that established members of the magic community have been or would be spared. I want to draw out a few important points that it also raises and which are echoed elsewhere in the thread, beginning with the distinction between art and entertainment. Perhaps nowhere is this distinction more invidious than in France, where hierarchies of taste are closely linked with social hierarchies.[30] In this setting, magicians are acutely aware of the cultural status of magic (which is relatively low) and their social status as performers, which is not particularly high.[31] This poster asserts that Kamel is an entertainer, and that he should be assessed in terms of whether or not he successfully entertains, which he seems to do. Furthermore, the message distinguishes between non-magicians' criteria of assessment and magicians' criteria. Magicians are impressed by difficult sleight of hand and original interpretations of standard effects from the shared repertoire. Non-magicians are not capable of assessing

30 Bourdieu: Distinction.

31 Jones: New Magic as an Artification Movement.

the difficulty of sleight of hand, and do not possess the specialist knowledge of magic history necessary to appreciate an individual performer's originality.

Along these lines, a number of posters pointed out that magic is not the same as other forms of expressive culture – dance, singing, musicianship, acting, juggling, even cooking – in which a lay audience can judge a performer's skill relatively well. This is an important fact about the nature of magic as a genre: technical skill is invisible. This is a perpetual source of consternation among magicians, whose clients are not capable of objectively assessing the quality of their work on technical terms. Thus, one thread participant wrote: "to sum up Kamel has the level of skill of someone who started magic three months ago, is what he does good????? F*ck, I busted my [ass] for 15 years in magic before turning pro . . . I must be stupid and slow . . . or old."

For some forum participants, the paradox that Kamel should achieve stardom despite his lack of technical proficiency (according to magicians' standards), reflected the deplorable state of popular culture – in which magicians who work hard developing their skills could not expect to get ahead, and indeed, might be passed over for work in favor of less skilled performers with other desirable attributes. Many singled out the medium of television itself for particular censure. "It doesn't valorize magic," one wrote. "I blame TV in general, for only thinking about the short-term, profits, ratings. I know that's how things are and how society works today. [. . .] This microcosm, outgrowth of our society demonstrates all the idiocy, treachery of every sort and other baseness that our society engenders." For members of a community of practice that is organized around internal rankings of skill, it was particularly difficult to accept that there are factors involved in success other than skill – which is why I consider this an issue of theodicy.

Against this backdrop, Kamel's increasingly entrenched supporters contended that magicians' arcane standards of technical excellence were irrelevant. What mattered was Kamel's ability to entertain lay spectators who view magic in an entirely different light, and, by that standard, he seemed to be doing exceedingly well. Responding to commenters who offered to help Kamel, coach him, give him lessons, and "take him by the hand" as someone put it, the only female magician (to my knowledge) participating in the discussion asked,

> Help him with what? (I know, I know, to do the *triple double-lift* [a preposterously difficult-sounding sleight-of-hand maneuver] . . .) But since the way he presents himself and presents his tricks seems to please (wrongly so, I know) the producers and the public? And then, who knows, maybe he doesn't want someone to take him by the hand . . .

Calling attention to the patronizing and paternalistic undertones of offers to "help" a magician who has already become more successful, by some objective

measures, than most of his would-be mentors, this comment also satirizes magicians' condescension of the lay public's taste.

Even many of Kamel's detractors had to admit that he possessed a kind of charismatic charm that is almost impossible to learn. Like any form of charisma, though, it begged to be accounted for. Most forum participants linked Kamel's appeal, and success in the entertainment industry, to his ethnic and social identity. "Today it's in fashion," one wrote. "And you have to follow fashion. You have to be young, wear baggy jeans and underground t-shirts, speak 'the language of the street', *tutoyer* [i.e., address with the familiar pronoun] the spectator why not . . . and you please TV producers." The post calls attention to Kamel's hip-hop fashion, his style of speaking in a recognizably banlieue sociolect, and his use of the familiar "tu" in addressing high-status strangers, often a hallmark of Maghrebi French.

The seventh and subsequent message makes these ethnic undertones explicit:

> Yup meh . . .
> It's in fashion (without any racism please)
>
> [You've] got to come from the *banlieue* [inner city], be 'djeun' [i.e., young], arab or black preferably [. . .]
>
> ok fine it's in fashion and it's what the producers want well then why not get a good magician???? kamel is not the only one who meets those criteria ???

This theme of what I might call "ethnic fungibility" or tokenism comes up repeatedly – why not substitute for Kamel one of the other two or three Arab magicians who had managed, against all odds, to earn the white magic world's stamp of approval?

These commenters lamented that Kamel's putatively fashionable identity seemed to override considerations of technical skill that they thought should determine a magician's success under ideally meritocratic conditions. For those in the pro-Kamel camp, this distinctive identity added incalculable value to his performances, outweighing technique alone. One wrote, "You don't escape your time. What does Kamel evoke? Another culture, the banlieue, intermingling. He does magic? Hey I'm curious. To see him. Him. [. . .] Kamel in fashion? Yes. It's good for us? Yes. It's inspiring and liberating. A magician. An identity. That's it. Kamel, he has an identity." Another commented,

> the 'affirmative action' that people seem to implicitly accuse him of doesn't bother me, and I kind of like his 'rebeu from [Seine-St. Denis] whose gonna be on TV' tone. It's different from the rebeu who's torching cars or dealing drugs. Kamel also plays a social role of opening doors. [. . .] Kamel has a persona, an offbeat magician, at least because of his

> accent [. . .] You can't tell him to lose the tone, his banlieue speech that sets him apart from others and which he therefore perfectly embraces and uses as such. Why? I think he's right to play the cards he was dealt.

With this crowd, Kamel just couldn't win. Some commenters went so far as to criticize him for underemphasizing ethnic difference, suggesting he would do better with tricks that explicitly evoked banlieue culture or his North African origins. But many more accused him of overemphasizing his ethnic difference to compensate for his deplorable lack of skill as a magician:

> Kamel keeps saying over and over "hey guys! I'm a persecuted minority! And what I do isn't half bad! It's not cool for you to reject me!!!" No, sorry it doesn't work. I won't step inside his . . . trap. I think my previous messages have shown my rejection, my hatred of all racism, and of all generalizations about race, the color of skin . . . too easy, too . . . stupid! But that doesn't stop me from saying that Kamel is a big zero, that his "stratagem" of being like "come on, shit, you reject me because I'm *rebeu*!" it doesn't work . . . Work, Kamel, work . . . Your martyr complex, I could care less . . . Your sexuality, I could care less . . . Just do GOOD magic . . . I DON'T CARE who you are, I just want WHAT YOU GIVE ME TO BE GOOD.

Like most of the Kamel's vehement detractors, this commenter explicitly disavows and denounces racism. He then asserts that Kamel made explicit appeals for indulgence because of his ethnic background, although this simply is not true. In fact, all Kamel did was enact (or simply embody) attributes legible as markers ethnic difference, which would have been difficult for him to dissimulate anyway. These differences were then interpreted, by this commenter and others, as pathetic appeals for differential – and preferential – treatment.

I note, moreover, that this comment exhibits a widespread feature that I saw in at least twelve other messages: the use of hypothetical direct reported speech to depict Kamel's own inner thoughts or intentions,[32] as a way of characterizing the kind of person he must be using imagined quotations of his speech. In this way, Kamel became a character whom participants in the controversy verbally animated as if he were himself a party to their conversation. For instance, another commenter wrote:

> I think that where there's a very bad philosophy of life, which I'm an insurgent against, is in the aspect: "other people are idiots, ME I know how it's done WITHOUT WORK because I'm more clever, ME I take what I want (celebrity, money) and forget about criteria as imbecilic as quality, work, the image of art. I TAKE, I TAKE, I TAKE whenever I can, however, at whatever price, regardless of whether it hurts others, as long as it benefits ME."

32 See Jones and Schieffelin: Enquoting Voices, 92–93.

Along these lines, imagined reports of Kamel's self-directed speech typically portrayed him as lazy, self-serving, materialistic, and hostile to authority – all negative stereotypes commonly attributed to banlieue youth more broadly. In these practices of gatekeeping apparent in this contentious thread, the use of skill as an index of character and moral worth seems to conflate negative attitudes about amateurism with anxieties about racial difference. As a result, there is an emergent homology between Kamel's status as a member vis-à-vis the magic community and as a subject-citizen vis-à-vis the French Republic.

The idea that Kamel used affirmative action – fairly or unfairly – to gain celebrity status beyond what his technical competence legitimately qualified him for resounded throughout many comments. Such arguments must be viewed in the context of the French ideology of Republicanism, the belief that any signs of ethnic, linguistic, or cultural difference are inimical to political equality and national wellbeing. The case of magic reveals the fundamental contradiction that Fernando,[33] Silverstein[34] and others find at the heart of the Republican project: magic performance – like the performance of everyday life – must always be embodied by a person who, while doing tricks, also enacts race, gender, class, and other dimensions of identity. An ideal of skill that can be evaluated by its own merits alone – the disembodied skill of a universal subject – can only be realized by performers who inhabit an unmarked category: white men, like the authors of almost all of the 600 comments in this comment thread.

Being an entertainment magician, amateur or professional, entails the performance of not only tricks, but also of a role. In sociological terms, the role is a pattern of behavior deemed culturally appropriate for persons claiming a particular status or position.[35] It is an enactment of personal qualities corresponding to a set of expectations.[36] Today, audiences and performers alike approach magic with a set of expectations concretized through the epochal performances and enduring literary representations of the nineteenth-century "Founding Father of Modern Magic," Frenchman Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin.[37] The role of the magician as he defined it – closely associated with bourgeois, European masculinity, and unwelcoming to women and people of color – has been both empowering and constraining for subsequent generations of illusionists. For those

33 Fernando: The Republic Unsettled.
34 Silverstein: Algeria in France.
35 Turner: Role.
36 Sarbin: Role.
37 See Jones: The Family Romance of Modern Magic.

who identify closely with it, who do not experience sustained "role distance,"[38] magic may seem like a meritocratic field in which professional prospects should be determined by skill before all else. This may make it particularly difficult to accept that there are factors other than skill, and the mechanisms of ranking other than those internal insular, and mostly white, world of magic that could contribute – perhaps dramatically – to a performer's success.

Conclusion: Trials of an Anti-Mediumistic Medium

In the years that followed, Kamel went on to become a much more firmly established and generally well-regarded figure in the French magic world. But the shrill controversy surrounding his early television appearances retains its analytic interest because of the way it constituted a mediumistic trial in several intriguingly interrelated regards. First, and perhaps most pertinent to this collection, it assayed the cultural standing of modern magic itself as a medium of entertainment. If the justification for magical enchantments is understood in exclusively mechanistic terms then how to explain the success of colleague one views as technically maladroit? At the very least, this suggests a conundrum at the heart of modern magic. If its close association with the "normative ontology of western modernity"[39] has been a source of prestige and the basis for prestige-enhancing attacks on heterodox forms of mediumism (especially Spiritualism), modern magic's fixation with policing the deviance and alterity of mediumistic rivals has left little room within the genre for forms of signification that aren't, strictly speaking, technical.

For participants in the dispute, competing understandings about what makes magic entertaining called attention to the role of a second medium that was also simultaneously on trial: the television. The relationship between modern magic and mass media has been complicated and contradictory at least since the advent of cinema. On the one hand, stage magicians played a vital role in domesticating cinematic entertainments by incorporating them into their acts and by translating their performances into the medium of film.[40] Yet, cinema is also closely associated with the cultural shift that ushered the end of magic's golden age. Illusionists have since come to view television with ambivalence, as a rival both for spectators' limited attention and in the struggle over

38 Goffman: Encounters.
39 Jones: Modern Magic and the War on Miracles.
40 Solomon: Disappearing Tricks.

standards of taste, but also as perhaps the only viable avenue towards superstardom in today's cultural marketplace. In this sense, this mediumistic trial of television was also a debate about the nature of the intermedial relationship between the artisanal practice of sleight-of-hand magic and heteronomic televisual industries.

This social drama represents a mediumistic trial in a third, recursive sense, by pointing back to the contested nature of its own digital mediation. As I have shown elsewhere,[41] entertainment magicians have been ambivalent about mediated channels of vocational sociability at least since the advent of the first magazines devoted to their art in the early 1900s. From the subjective viewpoint of many of its devotees, the more mediated magic has become over the course of the past century with the proliferation of publications promulgating secrets in a growing variety of print, televisual, and now digital formats, the more it has flourished as an amateur community of practice, but the less viable it has become as a professional career path. The roiling online debate about the aesthetic merit, cultural relevance, and social significance of not just Kamel, but of magic in general, dramatized this tension. While the scope of the conversation is a striking illustration of how much digital media can energize magic as a loquacious subculture, it also suggests – as a number of commenters in this thread reflexively insisted – how irrelevant this speech community's digital discourse may be to the cultural production of magic as a mode of professional, mass-mediated entertainment.

The forms of mediumistic trial that overlap in the Kamel debate do not easily resolve into one coherent interpretation. Each has its own logic, respectively reflecting the hegemony of post-Enlightenment ontologies, the bruising political economy of postmodern entertainment industries, and the ambivalent relationship between face-to-face and computer-mediated speech communities. One common thread, however, appears to be the intersection between ethnicity and expertise as performative attributes of the self, enacted through both magic performance and metadiscourses about it. The issues of race and ethnicity call attention to the centrality of a forth medium – the body itself – particularly as it relates to citizenship and subjectivity in French Republicanism's ideology of colorblind meritocracy. In a national context where embodiments of difference can be viewed as threats to national unity, the markedness of Kamel's racialized body became a provocation for commentators striving either to elide race in order focus on issues of skill (as if it could be isolated from the body) or to foreground race as an alternative to skill. In this sense, the controversy surrounding

41 Jones: Trade of the Tricks.

Kamel can be viewed as a trial of the Arab body not just as a medium of magicianship, but also of French citizenship.

As in French Republicanism and liberal humanism more broadly,[42] race, gender, and rights to participations as an agent and subject have always been inextricably connected in modern magic, but in ways that often only become visible when the genre confronts embodiments of alterity. Historically, the purification of modern magic as an anti-mediumistic medium that signifies by pointing self-reflexivity to the magician's skill, coincided with an essentialization of the modern magician's status and role in terms of gender and ethnicity. In the symbolic economy of Western magical practices, modern magicians have generally been white men who acquire authority through agentive displays of skillful trickery and demystifications of the lesser trickery and passive magic of female and non-Western spirit mediums. As the case of Kamel suggests, the diversification of French magic today – and with it, the enactment of difference in the embodiment of magic as a form of expertise – may therefore prompt magicians to reflect on not only generically conventionalized ethnic categories, but also on fundamental assumptions about the nature of entertainment magic itself as a signifying medium. The alternative, many fear, may be irrelevance.

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42 Mahmud: The Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters.

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Epilogue

Ehler Voss

“I Believe in Science Now!” Skeptics Between Hope, Fear, and Loathing in Las Vegas

I

> This annual gathering of critical thinkers is an unparalleled opportunity to make like-minded friends, enjoy some of the brightest minds on issues important to us, and leave with tools for spreading a helpful and skeptical message to those who might be hurt by charlatans and unfounded belief. TAM is like vacation from the nonsense we confront every day, and a time to celebrate skepticism.

This is how *The Amazing Meeting*, abbreviated as *TAM*, was advertised on the Internet. This is the twelfth meeting of its kind, and the theme this year is *Skepticism and the Brain*. It is Summer 2014, and I land in Las Vegas, Nevada, the first station of my planned anthropological research on the controversy over the testing of so-called paranormal abilities. Skeptics, asks the taxi driver with the picture of a female stripper on his phone taking me to the huge casino hotel where the event is taking place, are those the people who are opposed to God? I didn’t know whether they are really all opposed to God, but at any rate, as a rule, they didn’t believe in the existence of paranormal abilities in human beings and they attempted to combat the belief in them, I answered. The driver said that he, too, had nothing to do with God and such things, but he always says that whoever wants to believe should do so, and those who don’t want to believe shouldn’t.

The approximately 1,000 mostly male skeptics who join the meeting this year are recognizable by corresponding signs around their necks. A second glance reveals a predilection for fun T-shirts, which those present often categorize as part of a “geek culture”. Among the imprints are “Don’t make stupid people famous”, “I only date atheists”, and “Unfollow God”. Initially, I suspect that the “Praise Bacon” T-shirts of the *United Church of Bacon* refer to Francis Bacon as a godhead, but then realize that their godhead is the food:

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"Unlike God, who is invisible, at least we can see bacon. Bacon is demonstrably real." This is their website's assessment of the significance of the sense of sight for recognizing reality. Five years after the *Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster*, this Church was founded in Las Vegas in 2010; by its own account, it has 13,000 members around the world. Wearing T-shirts from previous meetings is also common here: as with old T-shirts from concert tours, one can express how long one has belonged. Finding out when one attended one's first *TAM*, as I later experience, is part of beginning normal small talk among strangers here. Those who are not wearing a "First TAMer" button often greet each other delightedly, embrace, and pretend to be astonished that another year has already passed.

II

I'm sitting in one of the casino's fast food restaurants, which later turns out to be the traditional place to meet for drinks in the evening in a small circle of long-term participants. One of them says he has recently specialized in the battle against the idea of "chemtrails", a conspiracy theory according to which chemical substances are burned by airplanes to poison humankind. If one can read the signs, claims the chemtrail theory, one can distinguish chemtrails from ordinary condensation trails. The group is amused about this idea, which they consider utterly absurd. Another takes out his smartphone. He says he recently went for a stroll in his neighborhood and photographed pseudoscience, thereby racking up more than 20 pictures in a very short time; he fleetingly shows us photos of a Reiki studio, a homeopathic doctor's office, and a yoga center. The group comments them with words like "idiotic" and "insane".

On the first evening, 86-year-old James Randi greets the participants. He closes with the remark that he had been asked to point out that many people here had arrived alone. He recommended simply approaching the other participants, preferably at least two, which would make it easier. He himself had also already met many interesting people at this meeting, and many of them had become his friends.

III

James Randi – actually Randall James Hamilton Zwinge – is a stage magician born in Canada in 1928. He was still young when he began to make a name for himself as "The Amazing Randi" with performances in nightclubs and on

television shows. Randi's role model is Harry Houdini, the magician and escape artist who died two years before Randi's birth – a model he emulated and surpassed. First, in 1956, at the age of 28 and after ten years as a stage magician and escape artist, he spent 104 minutes under water in a sealed metal coffin – exactly eleven minutes longer than Houdini. And second, he professionalized and institutionalized Houdini's practice of exposing allegedly fraudulent magicians in a way that has made him one of today's leading stars, all over the world, of what is called the skeptical movement. He achieved his prominence especially in the 1970s with his criticism of Uri Geller, whose public demonstrations of paranormal abilities Randi, in accordance with the 19th-century mediumistic trial, sought to expose by replicating it with the aid of magic tricks.

In 1996, after the end of his stage career, he founded the *James Randi Educational Foundation*, or *JREF*, which has organized this annual skeptics' meeting in Las Vegas ever since and from which he draws an annual salary of 200,000 dollars. With financial support from Internet pioneer Rick Adams, the *JREF* offers a million dollars in prize money for a public demonstration proving paranormal abilities. A preliminary demonstration is thereby distinguished from a formal test; in the latter, the probability of a coincidental win is markedly slimmer. So far, no one has passed the preliminary demonstration.

At the meeting, the just-released biographical documentary film *An Honest Liar* is being shown. Its topics, along with Randi's stage and skeptic career, include his homosexuality, kept secret until a very few years ago, and his relationship to his 30-year-younger partner from Venezuela, which has lasted since the end of the 1980s. Great scope is thereby given to the problems that arose while shooting the film, after the State Department found out that Randi's partner has been living in the USA under a false identity since the beginning of their relationship. The degree to which Randi was an accessory and how much he knew about it remain unclear.

IV

In line for the breakfast buffet the next morning, I strike up a conversation with John. He's here for the second time and has already had his "coming out" as an atheist. He comes from Ann Arbor, Michigan, a very Catholic city, as he adds. Behind us stands Daniel and apologizes: he couldn't help but overhear us. He stands just before his own "coming out" and would like to know how John did it and what reactions he faced. Well, John answers, he is

50 years old now and can decide for himself. He is no longer on Facebook, because his three sisters, his three brothers, and all his other relatives no longer talk to him. They were all politically extremely "right wing", he said, and they spoke only with other believers anymore. His sisters had all had "faith" tattooed on their forearms. Daniel has to laugh, and it seems like he knows what John is talking about. He, too, is 50 years old and comes from Austin, Texas. "Oh, the Ann Arbor of Texas," comments John. I ask Daniel what he is afraid of. He says he isn't really sure, but he is especially afraid of the reaction of one of his sisters. She herself long ago had her "coming out" as a lesbian and had felt liberated afterward, but for some years now she no longer talked about it, but only about her religion. But at any rate, he had recently had a very positive experience. He had taken his ex-wife out to dinner and told her about it. She responded astonishingly coolly, saying "Hey, you are an atheist now! Cool! That's interesting." And then she repeated this word – "atheist" – in the restaurant so often and so loudly that it became unpleasant for him. He kept looking around, worried that the other guests could hear this. He shivers at the memory.

Later I get to know Gareth, who tells me his story: he, too, is around 50 years old, comes originally from Utah, but has been living in Los Angeles for a year. He says he grew up as a Mormon, has three daughters between 12 and 22 years old and a son in his early 20s – all of them also raised as Mormons. He used to have intense religious experiences, including very physical ones. But then he began having doubts. A friend gave him a podcast of an archaeologist; that was the main thing. The broadcast lasted two hours, and it thereby became clear to him that the content of the Book of Mormon was not true. He thereupon increasingly investigated this and soon knew he couldn't go on living that way. His wife blocked all his attempts to talk about it. A little later, they separated, although Mormons are actually supposed to stay together all their lives, he says. But they had nothing in common anymore. When his son wanted to begin training as a priest, he told the boy, "Hey I don't believe it anymore, I believe in science now!" Nevertheless, his son started the training, but broke it off again after a year – despite extreme social pressure not to do so. Now Gareth's wife held Gareth responsible for their son's ending of the training. He still has contact with his son, who had even briefly lived with him recently in Los Angeles, but his wife and his daughters no longer spoke with him. "Three beautiful daughters"; his eyes fill with tears when he speaks of it. He says the Mormons sell the American dream of remaining with one's family forever. People always say how good religion is for the family, but no one says how religion can destroy families. But overall, he says, losing his faith was a liberation: "It was amazing."

V

The program of the conference consists primarily of lectures and workshops. The lectures are held on a large stage facing rows of seats, where the many listeners follow the speeches. The front rows are separated as a VIP area that can be entered only with a clearly more expensive admission ticket. The lectures have titles like "Can Rationality be Taught?", "The Psychology of Pseudoscience in Medicine", "A Year of Skeptic Win", "Why Neuroscience Matters", "Junk Science", "Neuroscience, and Psychological Science", and "How to Think Like a Skeptical Neurologist"; the workshops are held in smaller rooms and generally in parallel. Some of their titles are "Rhetoric and Argumentation for the Skeptic", "Teaching Skepticism", "Advancing Skepticism in the Media", "Blogging Skepticism", "Million Dollar Challenge: How JREF Tests Paranormal Claims", and "What Can You Do to Fight the Woo". The speakers seem to me to be various levels of skeptic stars, and they visibly enjoy standing in the limelight. Just like the M.C. himself, who presents himself as a barrel of laughs and for whom I am repeatedly mistaken throughout the conference because we obviously look somewhat alike. The lectures make a big point of being good entertainment, with simple sentences, lots of jokes, and the accompanying pauses for the expected laughs. The audience absorbs the lectures gratefully, there were hardly any controversies or critical questions – the speeches seem like "preaching to the converted". After the end of the keynote from Billy Nye – "The Science Guy", as he calls himself – I hear a woman say to the person seated next to her: "Oh my god, he was such great fun!" Her neighbor agrees.

VI

In the corridor between the conference rooms are tables where individuals and groups present themselves. Among them are the *Committee for Skeptical Inquiry*, the *Center for Applied Rationality*, the *Foundation Beyond Belief*, *New York Skeptics*, the *Skeptics' Guide to the Universe*, the *Secular Coalition for America*, the *Secular Students Alliance*, and the *Skeptics Society* with its *Skeptic Magazine*. There is a book stand with new and remaindered books, where I purchase, among other things, a special edition of Carlos Castañeda's *The Teachings of Don Juan* for two dollars.

James Randi keeps turning up in the corridor and conversing with the participants who flock around him. He is good friends with everyone, conducts short talks, gives autographs, tells jokes, and occasionally makes something

disappear. He poses for photos and especially selfies, but usually then turns away fast. I ask him why *TAM* is held in Las Vegas. "Just for the rates," he answers. This is where they were made the best offer, and after all the conference is the main source of income for the *JREF*. That's why the aim was to make as much money as possible. Besides, Las Vegas is easily reached from everywhere.

At the lunch buffet, I ask about vegetarian food. After a long back and forth and a question from the staff outside the room, I'm finally directed to a dish that, in my opinion, clearly contains chicken. The man behind me in line sees things the same way, saying that the problem was that in the USA there were so many people with special kinds of diets; one first had to reach a consensus on exactly what one meant. And for the staff from India here, chicken wasn't meat, anyway. In all the years he had been coming here, there had never been real vegetarian food. It was rather interesting that it wasn't offered here among the skeptics, because after all people knew what ecological damage the worldwide meat consumption wreaked. That went to show you: there is always room for improvement – even here!

I also meet a woman from Germany. She is a chemist, about 30 years old, and a member of the German *Society for the Scientific Investigation of Parasciences* (*Gesellschaft für die wissenschaftliche Untersuchung von Parawissenschaften*, *GWUP*), founded in 1987. She says she thinks it is interesting that skeptics and atheists were together here and that religion was thereby made a focus. At the *GWUP*, religion was screened away. And among the skeptics there were also churchgoers. She actually considered the term "skeptics" unfortunate, because it wasn't clear whom or what one was skeptical about. After all, there were also climate change skeptics. The term thus also designated the people whom skeptics generally opposed. But it was great to be among so many likeminded people. Later I hear the latter remark again from a skeptic from Russia: people kept telling him that they were simply happy to be among people who thought exactly as they did. Normally they were in surroundings where everyone believed everything.

One day later, I meet John again, this time with his foot in a cast he'd acquired on the "Strip", that mixture of the Reeperbahn and Disneyland that puts a song by the German singer-songwriter Funny van Dannen in my ear. The lyrics translate as "It's a good thing that Germany has no city like Las Vegas" and I can't shake the song for a long time. Yesterday he had gone on an outing, John says, apologizing. He was here for the second time now, and the lectures were already very familiar to him. But it is difficult, of course, to produce something new every time. The first time, it had been an extreme experience to be among more than a thousand likeminded people. The second time was a lot less exciting. But here at least he didn't have to explain that ghosts didn't exist; that, at any rate, was very pleasant.

VII

In the talks among the participants, in accordance with the "instruction and example" tenor of the lectures and workshops, they often confirm each other's arguments that can be adduced against what one regards as unscientific. About homeopathy, for example, they say: If you look at it closely, you'll recognize that the medication consists solely of water. And if someone with a PhD after his name is cited again with an absurd statement about the scientific character of a specific therapy, then one must ask precisely what constitutes his qualifications. It often turns out, namely, that this person only has a PhD in English Literature or the like. A big problem today, I am told, is also that the media have the directive to report in a balanced way, and this is understood as meaning always presenting "the other side". For example, an article about climate change in which numerous scientists say it is a fact and a major problem can end with a quotation from a blog by some guy in Texas who claims the opposite. And then this opinion stands against the opinion of countless renowned scientists.

The theme of the conference is also repeatedly taken up and the uncertainty of human perception is emphasized. "Our brains bullshit us all the time," as one speaker puts it in her lecture. The senses cannot be trusted, participants assure each other. As evidence, usually the "God Helmet experiments" are cited, in which, to create in experimental subjects the feeling of an invisible presence, magnetic fields are applied to their heads. From this, it is asserted, one can conclude that God and ghosts are simply produced in the brain and have nothing to do with reality.

VIII

Ron from Florida stands in front of me in the line to the "Dark Stories", a magic show with a 19th-century ambience. I had already met Ron at Penn Jillette's concert, a traditional component of the meeting. Jillette is a nationally known star among the skeptics. Together with Raymond Teller, he has performed a comedy magic show since the 1970s and he has lived in Las Vegas for more than 15 years. The two of them became known through, among other things, the television series *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!*, in which they fulminate aggressively against "pseudoscience" and the state. Ron shows me the message he has just received on his smartphone from an old work colleague. It shows a picture with the slogan: "Sometimes it's better not to think, but simply to be there and breathe." "Look at that," he says. "I can't believe it." This colleague was

never really religious, Ron says, but my interlocutor has noticed that over the course of time she has become more and more "right wing".

A man from Sweden joins our conversation and the two of them are soon talking about sales strategies and tricks to persuade people. The Swede always uses the mirror technique. When someone doesn't speak much, he doesn't speak much either; if the other talks the whole time, then so does the Swede. His experience with this technique has been good. The other man's aim is above all to remain in people's memory. That's why he always has useful gifts with him. His visiting card, for example, consists of a spiral notebook the size of a visiting card. It's great, he says; some people call up just to ask where they can get one. Then it's always lying around at hand and people remember it. Not like when your address is saved somewhere in a smartphone.

IX

On the final evening, as in every year, the "One Million Dollar Paranormal Challenge" is held as a kind of climax of the meeting. Two skeptics, one in his mid-50s, the other in his early 60s, both professional stage magicians, greet the audience as masters of ceremonies, present the people taking part in developing this year's test, and emphasize how much work this was. A young woman, introduced as Associate Director of the *James Randi Educational Foundation*, enters the stage and describes this year's candidate for the prize: he is 32 years old, comes from southwestern China, and studied Math and Physics, but completed a B.A. in Marketing and then worked in the export trade. He claims to have noticed as early as high school that he could heal his own pains, but initially dismissed this as coincidence or the effect of positive thinking. Shortly after college, he healed the pain in a friend's shoulder and then, after receiving the suggestion, began learning Chi Gong, whereby his teacher was very impressed with him. He says he has the impression that his ability to distribute energy with his hands improved rapidly even without training, and he developed the desire to have this ability scientifically researched. But so far, that has led him only to Boston and a local "paranormal group" and a local Chinese organization for alternative medicine. The speaker thus concludes her introduction with the words, "So today marks his first official scientific test." While the candidate enters the stage, the moderators ask the audience to treat him with respect, which includes being quiet during the test and not giggling.

The goal is to test the claimed flow of energy between his hands. To this end, there are a table and a chair on the stage. On the table is a cardboard box

with an opening cut into it. One after the other, various test persons are to sit on the chair with their eyes closed while placing a hand in the opening in the box. After the test persons draw straws to decide who goes first, the candidate and a skeptic approach the table in that order and each holding the box with both hands, placed about 6 centimeters apart, for a minute. The candidate had claimed that the test persons would clearly feel the energy between his hands. In a procedure lasting several days, he had found all the test persons to be suitable. When asked after the test whether they felt anything, the individual test persons are to answer yes or no. If anyone answered this question with yes both after the candidate and after the skeptic, then they would be asked which time they felt it more strongly. If the test person felt nothing in either case, the case would be regarded as a failure. For the candidate to pass the test, eight out of nine attempts would have to have a positive result.

After an explanatory demonstration of the procedure for the audience, the test protocol is read aloud and signed on stage by the candidate and one of the skeptics. The test can begin. The first test person felt something from both persons. So she was asked which time the feeling was stronger. She said: the first time. This was the skeptic, so it was not a point. One mistake is permitted, but now no further one can come. Asked whether she felt anything in her hand with the first person, the second test person quickly and clearly answers no. She doesn't answer the question about the second person immediately. The moderating skeptic repeats, "Yes or no?" Then she says, "Yes", and once again this was the skeptic. Two attempts, two misses: that ends the test, and the skeptics are another failed preliminary demonstration richer.

The candidate stands, expressionless, on the stage and, when asked, confirms that everything proceeded as agreed in the protocol. The ensuing questions from the audience focus primarily on how he explains the malfunction and whether he now believes that he does not, after all, have the abilities. He says he doesn't know why it didn't work today and that in Boston he had been able to demonstrate his abilities, and here on stage was the first time it hadn't functioned, although he had felt his energy. In the wake of the test, I hear many skeptics say this explanation is typical: it always works, just not today. Some sound amused, some more resigned.

X

An information stand of the *Independent Investigations Group*, or *IIG* for short, is in the corridor. On its table are little cards with the question "Do you have

special powers?" The reverse side reads: "Can you show us?" and offers an Internet address. This is something like a smaller version of the Million Dollar Challenge, with less money, explains the man at the stand. The prize money here is only 50,000 dollars, but it is on offer at any time and not just once a year. I introduce myself and explain my plan to study, from an anthropological perspective, the testing of paranormal abilities. When I say that I am very interested in their tests and will be living in Northern California for a year starting next week, he calls over a man passing by. He himself was from the *IIG Los Angeles*, but this here was Joe from the *IIG San Francisco Bay Area*. Joe, apparently a bodybuilder and in a rather good mood, wears a washed-out *TAM* T-shirt from the early days, greets me effusively and takes out various visiting cards. Yes, he had a lot of irons in the fire. He decides on the card of one of his websites that propagate skepticism. I should get in touch when I'm in California; he would then introduce me to the group. "Believe me: that will be fun!"

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