

Article

‘S. W.’ and C. G. Jung: mediumship, psychiatry and serial exemplarity

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Abstract

On the basis of unpublished materials, this essay reconstructs Jung's seances with his cousin, Helene Preiswerk, which formed the basis of his 1902 medical dissertation, *The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena*. It separates out Jung's contemporaneous approach to the mediumistic phenomena she exhibited from his subsequent sceptical psychological reworking of the case. It traces the reception of the work and its significance for his own self-experimentation from 1913 onwards. Finally, it reconstructs the manner in which Jung continually returned to his first model and reframed it as an exemplar of his developing theories.

Keywords

Analytical psychology, C. G. Jung, dissociation, Eugen Bleuler, Justinus Kerner, mediumship, psychical research, spiritualism, Théodore Flournoy

'In 1896 something happened to me that served as an impetus for my future life', recalled C.G. Jung (1925: 3). 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* (Jung, 1902).

The first historian to study the case was Henri Ellenberger in his study, 'Psychiatry and its unknown history' (1961). For him, 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. (Ellenberger, 1961: 239–40, original italics)

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 (1975).¹ 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 in his student years with a young medium.' (Ellenberger, 1991: 291). However, fresh examination in turn shows this to be much more complicated than has hitherto been realized.

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 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 (Jung and Jaffé, 1962: 117). 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 Karl du Prel ... I dug up Eschenmeyer, Passavant, Justinus Kerner and Görres, and read seven volumes of Swedenborg. (Jung and Jaffé, 1962: 11–20)

The first contemporaneous notice of how Jung assimilated these authors is found in a lecture he delivered on 15 May 1897, entitled 'Some thoughts on psychology', at a meeting of the Zofingia Society (Jung, 1897: §23f.). 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 materializations. He singled out the spiritualistic work of the noted scientists, William Crookes, Johann Zöllner and Alfred Wallace for special praise, noting: ‘The phenomena we seek are the wondrous materializations observed by Crookes, Zöllner, Wilhelm Weber, Fechner, Wagner, Wallace and others.’ (Jung, 1897: §117). The astrophysicist Zöllner conducted seances with the American materialization 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* (1882) from Basle University Library.² 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 (Wallace, 1874). 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 were his seances with the medium Florence Cook, and his claim to have witnessed the materialization of the being known as ‘Katie King.’ (see Barrington, 1972).

Following Jung’s presentation at the Zofingia Society, 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 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. 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. Galluser 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 are 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, it 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 in conclusion, that the animistic facts had not been contested, and reminded everyone to study such things.³

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' (Jung, 1925: 3). 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 (1975: 54f.) 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.

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) started 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 (Jung, 1902: §45).

Zumstein-Preiswerk (1975: 54) 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 Luggy⁴ 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 ... 'Give penance and pray for Berthi. Berthi has just given birth to a small Negro. Helly came too late.'

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:⁵

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?'

'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 magnetized 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. They took the box away. ... The medium fell to the floor and remained quiet for a long time. She 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 magnetize 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 magnetizing, she could see again.

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 (Jung, 1902: §49). Zumstein-Preiswerk (1975: 68) said that Jung himself had given her Kerner's work as a gift on her fifteen birthday, in 1896. However, Jung took Kerner's book out of the Basle University library only on 17 August 1987.⁷ 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 (Jung, 1902: §49).

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) (Jung, 1902: §59). 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 who had

been 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 laws of reincarnation and the star dwellers, and in particular, gave a description of Mars and its inhabitants.⁸

Jung noted that the ghost-like look in her eyes led some to compare her to the Seeress of Prevoist. Jung says this suggestion was of consequence, as she then claimed to be the reincarnation of the Seeress (Jung, 1902: §63). Ivenes had to embody herself once every 200 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, she had been seduced by Goethe, and bore him a child. In the thirteenth 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* (Jung, 1902: §65). She then drew a detailed cosmological diagram, and explained, the functioning and interrelation of the various forces, which were split into several groups (Jung, 1902: fig. 2, 40). 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 Prevoist and Swedenborg, S.W. was a Magnesor medium.

Jung's 1902 account suggests that he did not take any of this remotely seriously. However, there exists an undated 13-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 notes: 'To

understand how the separation of the physical forces into two 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.’⁹ The work to which Jung refers here was a presentation before the Zofingia society on 21 May 1898 (Jung, 1898: §166f.). On the top of page 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, and those that come into matter a posteriori. The first group consisted of weight, inertia, cohesion, adhesion, capillarity, elasticity, absorption and affinity. The second group consisted of light, heat, electricity, motion, magnetism. A distinction between the first and the second groups 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 (Jung, 1898: §212f.).

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. (Jung, 1898: 153; words in italics are underlined in the original)

‘Perispirit’ was a term from the French spiritualist Allan Kardec (the pseudonym of Hippolyte Rivail) for the fluidic body which connected the material to the immaterial. It enveloped the spirit. It was believed 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 to which certain people were particularly sensitive (see Reichenbach, 1846). The reference to Andrew Jackson Davis is further evidence of Jung's immersion in the spiritualistic literature at this time.

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. (Reichenbach, 1846: 154–5)

This discussion indicates that Jung may have been envisaging a work on Helene Preiswerk akin to Kerner's *The Seeress of Prevoist*. Intriguingly, Jung wrote in 1925 that he had observed her for two years and 'had given myself up to a study of detailed phenomena she presented, striving to get them into harmony with natural science' (Jung, 1925: 5–6).

In his 1902 account, he said that the quality of the material decreased, 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 (Jung, 1902: §43). Six months later, she was caught cheating, having concealed in her dress objects which she threw into the air during the darkened seances (Jung, 1902: §71). 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.¹⁰ Zumstein-Preiswerk (1975) 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 did not work. She was acting, and they realised this; they all started laughing, which Jung could not bear (Zumstein-Preiswerk, 1975: 92).

When the seances ended, it is likely that the study which Jung appears to have been preparing was put on one side. 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' (Jung and Jaffé, 1962: 130).¹¹

In 1900 Jung took up a position at the Burghölzli. Writing in 1958, he recalled that he asked Bleuler to suggest a theme for his medical dissertation. Bleuler suggested that he should make an experimental investigation of the disintegration of ideas in dementia praecox. Not knowing how to go about this, Jung chose 'a theme which on the one 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.' (Jung, 1958: §257).¹² To Aniela Jaffé, Jung recalled that when he presented his own plan, Bleuler 'remarkably, accepted'.¹³ 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 from the time of the seances, and in particular shows the strong impression on Jung of his reading of Théodore Flournoy's *From India to the Planet Mars*, which he had offered to translate (Flournoy, 1900/1994; Shamdasani, 1998).¹⁴ While it appears that the study that Jung was initially engaged with in the late 1890s on the seances was modelled on Kerner's book, his medical dissertation was clearly modelled on 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.

'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 gave 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’ (Jung, 1902: §34). 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 said that they could not 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’s and Myers’ subliminal psychology. In Jung’s new account, the automatism 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 somnambulist personalities had the medium’s memory at their disposal. They knew the visions she had in the waking state, but had 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 somnambulist ‘I’ who controlled S.W.’s semi-somnambulist 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 automatism, 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’ (Jung, 1902: §136). 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 (Jung, 1902: §149). 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. Among 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.’¹⁵ In 1903 Jung presented the case at a meeting of the Vereins Schweizerischer Irrenärzte in Rheinau with the title ‘On the psychology of the unconscious’. He began:

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 uncertain 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. (Jung, 1903)¹⁶

The case of Anna Rothe was highly topical at this time. She claimed to be able to produce flowers from the fourth dimension. In 1902 she was arrested and charged with fraud. In the following year, she was imprisoned for 18 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.¹⁷

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

German science has hardly accorded attention to spiritualism, up to the present. 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. (Flournoy, 1903)

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 starting his engagement with Freud's work, the interest in the psychopathic inferiorities made way for hysteria (Jung, 1907: §10). Jung noted that in his 1902 study he had based himself on Flournoy (Jung, 1907: §58n). This pairing was coupled with a wider 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 on 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* (1912), 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 call 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 (Jung, 1912, *CW B*: §95). 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 on to claim that, if one left aside her poetic cast, there are elements that are probably in common with all girls of 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 recall his earlier experiments with Helene Preiswerk, with the difference that now Jung was his own medium (Jung, 2009). A critical development came in 1916, when he painted a work entitled the ‘Systema munditotius (system of all the worlds)’ (Jung, 2009: 364). 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 (Jung, 2009: 364f.). 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, *Liber Novus* (Jung, 2009: 361f.). 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 defined as the totality of the personality and the central archetype, whose symbols are indistinguishable from those of the Godhead (Jung, 1950: §627f.). He considered the realization 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. Though not explicitly stated, it is clear that he would have regarded S.W.’s diagram as an example of a mandala and indeed, 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' (Jung, 1921: §701n). 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 (Jung, 1925: 3). 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.' (p. 3). The language suggests that Jung was conducting hypnotic experimentation, *à la* Binet or Janet. He continued: 'I began to study the literature of spiritualism but could find no satisfaction there.' (p. 4). 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.¹⁸ 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' (p. 5). He parenthetically added that 'at this time I thought that after all there might be ghosts' (p. 5). 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 (p. 6).¹⁹ 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 Héléne Smith (Flournoy, 1902: 113).

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 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 dressmaker. 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'. (Jung, 1925: 6–7). 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 began 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. (Jung, 1933–4: page)

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 Foreword to the second edition of his book, *The Relations between the I and the Unconscious*, he wrote that the idea of the independence of the unconscious, which distinguished his views so radically from those of Freud, came to him in 1902, when he was studying the psychic history of a young somnambulist, referring to his dissertation (Jung, 1935: 123). 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 (Jung, 1939: §216f.). 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.’ (Jung, 1939: §219n.). 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.’ (Jung, 1943: §199). S.W. was refigured here as Jung’s ‘Anna O.’.

In the late 1950s, Jung undertook a series of biographical conversations with his friend and colleague, the English psychiatrist E.A. Bennet, who recorded 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. (Bennet, 1982: 93)

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 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 (see Shamdasani, 2008). 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.²⁰

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[Notes]

¹ Unfortunately, the sources of the information in this work were not always given.

² Basle University Library records.

³ Protocols of the Zofingia society, Staastarchiv, Basle.

⁴ Helene Preiswerk's sister.

⁵ Jung archive, Wissenschaftshistorische Sammlung, ETH, Zurich, Hs 1055:1a. The other participants were three other students, listed as R. Gonser stud. med., A. Müller stud. med., and E. Preiswerk stud. phil.

⁶ Moses, 18, 11: 'Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in 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.'

⁷ Basel University Library records.

⁸ Zumstein-Preiswerk (1975: 73) notes that she had read Flammarion's work on Mars.

⁹ Jung archive, Wissenschaftshistorische Sammlung, ETH, Zurich, Hs 1055: 469, 152–3.

¹⁰ 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 (see Zumstein-Preiswerk, 1975, 101f.). In 1911, she died of tuberculosis.

¹¹ 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 (Jaffé, 1989, 10).

¹² One presumes that the term Bleuler used in 1901 was 'dementia praecox.' On the work on dementia praecox at the Burghölzli at this time, see Bernet (2013).

¹³ Protocols of Aniela Jaffé's interviews with Jung for *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Library of Congress, Washington DC, 75.

¹⁴ On Jung's offer to translate Flournoy's work, see Jung's tribute in Flournoy (1900/1994: ix).

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ I thank Anatina Weiser for drawing my attention to this. On the Vereins Schweizerischer Irrenärzte, see Weiser (2001). On the Rothe case, see Treitel (2004: ch.7, 165–91). On the history of psychical research, see Sommer (2013) and Wolframm (2009).

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 22.

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ 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. (Carotenuto, 1984: 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.

²⁰ 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 strikingly 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, 1975: 182).